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These comments concern the railroad tracks between Westbrook and the New Hampshire State Line formerly a portion of what was known as the Mountain Division of the Maine Central Railroad.

I am opposed to the removal of the rails at this time under the pressure of various trail organizations desirous of using the right of way for trail purposes. The rails should be removed, if at all, only after serious considerations of all the issues involved. Once the rails are removed there is very little probability that they would ever be replaced even if there were the potential and need for rail service. I trust those charged with making this decision are aware of the broader importance of these tracks; they represent more than a local rail route for which as of this time there seems to be no use

Although at present there may be little call for rail service on the portion of the Mountain Division in the segment between Westbrook and the New Hampshire state line those responsible for making the decision must consider the future. The section under question is not a little used branch line for local service but is part of a through line between Portland and St. Johnsbury, Vermont where it connects with tracks from southern New England to Canada. To the best of my knowledge all portions of this line in New Hampshire and Vermont still remain extant and unbroken with a part in New Hampshire being used for rail service of various sorts.

As long as the line remains unbroken the potential remains for an alternative though rail route from Portland to points west and north. At this time when emphasis is being placed on energy efficient modes of transportation these are considerations that should be seriously studied with thoughts for the future and not rushed. The removal of the rails for trail purposes which would essential sever a portion of a through route can wait whereas once the rails are removed the action is final and the possibility of future use is eliminated.

Therefore I urge postponement of any decision to lift the rails at this time until a final judgement can be reached.

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