

Adam Cook  
Bridgton  
LD 404

I would like to testify against the recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council for several reasons. Firstly I believe rail with trail for the 31 mile track section in question, while more expensive, would ultimately be better for the economic outlook of the region alongside appeasing both the railroad and trail groups. As this would supply a trail while also allowing the rail corridor to remain open for future development.

Secondly, and speaking of future development of rail travel in Maine, several major things have changed since the advisory council made their 10-1 vote in favor of trail only. The purchase of Pan-AM Railways by CSX has seen the latter company start to make heavy investment in rail infrastructure in the state to not only improve existing freight and rail traffic, but to hopefully draw in new customers to increase traffic. While any freight traffic on the Maine section of the mountain division would currently be limited in scope that is largely because at the moment few companies were considering rail shipment due to Pan-Am Railways poor performance their lack of potential investment to re-open the mountain division.

Thirdly, it is my firm belief that given a few more years the ever increasing nature of North Conway NH as a popular summer and winter vacation destination a passenger rail service from Portland to North Conway NH could be a lucrative venture, given that Portland is already a popular destination for cruise ships. NH DOT has already invested in rehabilitating a portion of the old Mountain Division on their side of the border and unlike the 2008 viability study, re-activating to North Conway alone I think would be a viable project between the two states and would also fit within the state of Maine's current objectives to increase passenger rail travel within the state, a classic case of build it and they will come.

Fourth. It is in my humble opinion the Advisory Council completely overlooked other possible uses for the currently existent rails, including heritage/tourist rail operations which were overlooked in the studies. Self guided railbikes and other such businesses that require less maintenance and repair of the corridor to be a viable rail businesses were also omitted, I remember at least one such entrepreneur at one of the workshops regarding the mountain division which wanted to setup such a business along the old rail corridor.

Fifth. Economically leaving the rails in place and not modifying the railbed with a trail makes more economic sense for any railway which would look to reactivate the corridor for any reason. As per the workshops that reached to trail only conclusion, rehabilitating the line as is would cost 2 million a mile, maybe more or less depending on section. Conversely if the line is ripped up it would cost a railroad at least 4 million, if not more in the future, per mile, at which point it becomes increasingly unlikely the corridor would ever see a train again.

Sincerely,  
Adam Cook