

May 18, 2023

131<sup>st</sup> Maine Legislature

Committee on Transportation Members

Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Committee Members,

We are writing on behalf of the Town of Gorham to indicate our support of

**LD404: Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council”**

**and**

**LD 1450: An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory**

Since the inception of the Mountain Division Trail in 2003, the Town of Gorham has been a community partner of the Mountain Division Alliance and Maine DOT. We have had the opportunity to have the largest length of the trail constructed in Gorham, almost 5 miles. Being situated between Standish and Windham, we have been able to be the link to those two trail heads as well as have our own trail access at Shaw Park in Gorham.

The western expansion of the trail is very exciting to us. The work of the towns of Windham and Westbrook to expand the trail to the east is a critical link to reaching the Portland Trails network and opening up this amazing trail connection to allow users, eventually, to travel from Portland all the way to Fryeburg.

We know firsthand the multitude of users on the Gorham section of the Mt. Division. During the beginning of the pandemic, we saw the number of users explode! People found the trail a place to escape to, safely, and brought new users to an area they have never explored before. It has been a place where rollerbladers, walkers, runners, multi-age families on bicycles, snowmobilers, xc skiers and snowshoers alike have found exploring the out of doors to be so rewarding. We know the expansion of the trail will continue to benefit so many more people from all the communities along the corridor.

This renewed energy and interest among all the communities along the corridor is refreshing and we look forward to sharing this experience with all of them.

Sincerely,

Ephrem Paraschak, Town Manager

Cindy Hazelton, Parks and Recreation Director