

Hello,

Senate Chair Chipman and House Chair Williams and all the members of the Committee on Transportation. Thank you for taking the time to consider this critical and exciting legislation.

My name is Michael Shaughnessy. I live in Westbrook I am writing in support of LD 404 to allow the Mountain Division corridor to become a trail.

As a Westbrook resident and City Council member as well as one active in Presumpscot River and Westbrook Downtown issues, I strongly encourage you support for LD 404 (and LD 1450) as recommended by the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council

A trail of this sort will be a profound and exciting addition to the recreational portfolio of the communities between the Portland area and Fryeburg and effectively the White Mountains. Such a trail would allow a running, walking, biking and hiking route with the potential for additional tangential activities such as birding, fishing and paddling. This stretch will connect users to multiple trails and preserves and the Saco River.

This will be a cornerstone to the tourism of the area. It will be highly accessible and utilized multi-generationally, It will support local businesses and aid in the development of new and creative outdoor and tourism based enterprises along the entire corridor.

Running, biking, and hiking along with fishing are the 4 most popular outdoor recreational activities. This project has the potential to capitalize on all of these, while being very low impact environmentally.

(These are links to two articles on outdoor recreation trends.)

<https://travelness.com/most-popular-outdoor-activities>

<https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2021-Outdoor-Participation-Trends-Report.pdf>

The existing rail line is not being utilized. There is not the critical mass to support a commuter line and for freight it must have major restrictions due to running through the area of the intake of the Portland Water District. I would expect that given the age of the existing tracks it would need to be removed and fully rebuilt if rail transport were to return. None the less this use does not preclude the possibility of an eventual conversion to rail. It only allows until when, and if, that may happen for this to be used as and gain the benefits from a first rate and beautiful trail. A trail that will be unique enough that it will be a major attraction.

It will no doubt be a benefit in many ways to the health and well-being of the people that use it and to the communities it is connected to.

Thank you,
Michael Shaughnessy

Michael Shaughnessy
Westbrook
LD 404

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