

Caleb Browne
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LD 676

Good morning to everyone on the Committee Board,

Thank you all for taking the time to read this.

The former Maine Central Railroad Mountain Division has a very rich and unique history compared to the other sections of the Maine Central's network. It was the only section that crossed over into another state, as it ran through Northern New Hampshire and into Vermont.

I have to highly stress that the removal of the Mountain Division would be a massive mistake and is simply the wrong decision.

The Mountain Division section in New Hampshire has seen new life by the Conway Scenic Railroad. CSR has done a phenomenal job in restoring the NH section from Conway-Whitefield. Every year thousands of tourists come to ride their trains up Crawford Notch and it brings an incredible amount of money for the towns it runs through. Less importantly but still notable to remember, it preserves the history of the Maine Central as well as our country's Golden Age of Railroads.

Conway Scenic has expressed interest in resuming operations of Maine's section of the Mountain Division. The right of way is still intact on the NH/ME border, and it would provide not only a connection between Portland and Northern NH again, which would bring even more tourists to both NH and ME, but allows Maine the opportunity to preserve its own history, as it's done a phenomenal job in other parts of the state.

In addition to tourism, the Mountain Division provides lots of potential for freight businesses in the railroad industry. Currently Vermont Rail System, which purchased the New Hampshire Central Railroad in 2024, is looking to revive their abandoned section of the Mountain Division up to Saint Johnsbury. This will allow them to explore tremendous opportunities for new freight business. Having the section in Maine be preserved and revived, would allow the entire line from Portland-Saint Johnsbury to be fully connected and intact again, giving all three states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont the opportunity to experience tremendous growth in freight business.

Lastly, I would kindly ask the Committee to refer themselves to the Rail Preservation Act. In this act, it states that any railroad line in non-use must be treated as interim until a railroad expresses interest in acquiring operational rights. As stated above, Conway Scenic Railroad has expressed a high interest in this line, and they should be granted the opportunity to operate this section.

Thank you to all members of the Committee once again for taking your time to read this, and I ask you all to vote "Ought not to pass" on LD 676.

-Caleb Browne