

David Kinsman
Lovell
LD 676

I served on the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council in 2021. During the 9 monthly meetings we heard from rail and trail advocates, planning commissions and engineers as well as town and state officials.

In the end the RUAC voted 11:1 to recommend the interim conversion of 31 miles of existing railroad track to an interim 10' wide, paved bicycle and pedestrian trail-until-rail. This was the least expensive alternative and would be 1/7 the cost of a rail with trail.

Some of the things we learned along the way from presentation and discussions are:

Bicycle trails have proven to bring thousands if not millions of dollars to the communities they pass through. Bicyclists stop and eat, drink, sleep and repeat on their trips through towns that have bike/ped trails passing through.

Trains passing through the small towns on the trail would do nothing for the economy in any of these towns. Passengers would wave as they passed through.

With 30 at grade crossings between Portland and Fryeburg, it would be a very long train ride at 10-15 mph from Portland to Standish to Fryeburg and beyond.

The 2 current sections of the Mountain Division Trail are each used by between 100 and 200 visitors per day in the non-winter months.

93 miles of rails have already been removed from the Mountain Division Rail Line in Vermont and converted to the Lamoille Valley Trail. Businesses including shuttle services, cafes, brew pubs, bike rental shops and places of lodging have cropped up in Vermont small towns along the trail since it opened.

On July 6, 2023, Governor Mills signed off on the bill to remove the rails between Standish and Fryeburg and convert the rail line to a trail-until-rail.

The rail removal and construction of the Mountain Division Trail from Standish to Fryeburg has the support of each of the towns it will pass through.

It has been 65 years since passenger service stopped and 42 years since the last freight train. The ties have deteriorated beyond use and the rails are in questionable condition.

A 60-mile trail connecting Portland Maine with the Mt Washington Valley would most likely be the most successful trail in New England with tourists traveling in both directions and bringing much needed economic activity to the nine Maine towns along the way.

Now LD 676, an act to fund the recommendations of the Mountain Division RUAC is before the Transportation Committee. The Bill includes a one-time, \$500 placeholder for any funds received from outside sources designated for MDOT to spend on replacement of the tracks on the 31 miles of the rail corridor between the towns of Fryeburg and Standish per the recommendation of the Mountain Division Rail RUAC.

I thank committee members for their consideration and urge them to vote: "Ought to Pass" "

Respectfully,
David Kinsman
Lovell, Maine