

Testimony in Opposition to LD 676

Simon Pitman

Bristol, NH

3/30/2025

To the Members of the Maine State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to LD 676, which seeks to remove the rails on the Mountain Division line and convert it into a trail. I am a frequent visitor to Western Maine and a railroad division operator in New Hampshire who is deeply concerned about the long-term consequences this bill would have on the future of both states.

This bill threatens to remove a vital transportation asset from the region of Western Maine forever. The Mountain Division rail line is a crucial part of the infrastructure in western Maine, providing an essential connection that supports economic growth and accessibility to the community of Maine. Removing the tracks will eliminate the opportunity for future rail service and effectively cut off the region from significant economic potential. Without the railroad, our ability to attract new businesses, support industries, and provide transportation options will be severely limited.

Furthermore, I want to bring to your attention that a railroad company, the Conway Scenic Railroad, has expressed a serious interest in running trains on this line. According to the Rail Preservation Act, any non-rail use of a rail corridor is to be treated as interim until a viable railroad operator comes forward. As the Conway Scenic Railroad has clearly shown its intention to operate on the Mountain Division line, I urge you to recognize that any plans for a trail should be halted immediately while this railroad's proposal is fully considered. This is in line with the established framework of the Rail Preservation Act, which prioritizes rail use over non-rail alternatives in areas like Maine.

If LD 676 were to pass and the tracks are removed, it would be an irreversible decision that would permanently sever a key part of your region's transportation system. The loss of the rail line would deprive western Maine communities of an essential economic asset and limit growth for generations to come. We cannot afford to make a decision that closes the door on potential opportunities and future prosperity.

I urge the committee members to carefully consider the long-term implications of this bill. Please vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 676 to preserve the Mountain Division rail line and protect the economic future of western Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Simon Pitman

Bristol, NH

