

Mountain Division Rail Corridor Use Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes 3/24/22

1. Roll Call

Paul Schumacher, Nate Howard, Theresa Egan, Katie Haley, David Kinsman, Dan Hester, Jack Sutton, Zach Mosher, Dwight Warren, Paul Hunt, Carolann Ouellette, Ian Moon from HNTB.

Funding for Rail Investments

Nate Howard presented on funding options for rail investments. A copy of the presentation is available at: <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/ruac/mdrcc/meetings/>.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes several programs for potential rail funding including:

- Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)
- Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail
- USDOT RAISE (formally TIGER)
- USDOT INFRA (formally Fastlane)
- FTA New Starts/Small Starts

2. Discussion of the Crown of New England passenger proposal

Jack Sutton, from the Maine Rail Group, gave a presentation on the Crown of New England passenger proposal. A copy of Jack's presentation is available at: <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/ruac/mdrcc/meetings/>.

3. Council Discussion

Dave Kinsman – The Mountain Division Alliance (formed in 1991) aims to connect Portland to Fryeburg with an alternative transportation corridor. Dave believes the proposed trail could be the busiest trail in New England. The only way the trail will get built is to remove the rails. Too costly otherwise. He believes it could be built in next couple of years.

Dan Hester – The two options (rail and trail) are mutually exclusive as the cost to construct a trail with rail is prohibitive.

Terry Egan – She is worried that if we try to do both options nothing will get built. There is support in Brownfield for converting the rail to a trail. We need to think about what is feasible and what is possible.

Dwight Warren – We support a trail system for bikes and pedestrians. Too expensive to rebuild for freight.

Katie Haley – Generally, support improving trail.

Jack Sutton – Mountain Division Alliance was once a trail and rail organization. That has changed. Now the group only advocates for trail.

Nate Howard – Once the committee makes a recommendation, MaineDOT will take that recommendation to the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation for consideration.

Dave Kinsman – The Mountain division trail will benefit all the towns between Portland and Fryeburg. Opportunity for economic growth. This will be a major trail.

4. Public Meeting Details

The public meeting is next Thursday, 4/31/22. Nate will provide a background on the rail use advisory council process. Ian will present summary of draft report.

5. Public Comment

Tony Donovan from the Maine Rail Transit Coalition. Rail advocates did not oppose the bill to establish the Mountain Division Rail Corridor Council. Not too many economic opportunities north of Standish. The Council should prepare for a train station at Mile Point 16.7 in Standish. Tony believes this will be a stop on an interurban light rail system. Any trail design should take this train service into account.

Andrew Walton – Will there be a limit of 3 minutes per person for the public to speak? Answer: We probably should have a time limit depending how many people attend the meeting.