



August 12, 2026

Maine Department of Transportation
Attn: Commissioner Dale F. Doughty
16 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333-0016

Dear Commissioner Doughty,

As a collective, the City of Westbrook and Towns of Windham & Gorham, are petitioning the Commissioner of Transportation to establish a Rail Corridor Use Advisory Council (RUAC) to review our communities request to allow an interim regional recreational trail in the rail bed of the remaining portion of the MDOT owned section of the Mountain Division Trail (MDT). The section we are requesting this review of for an interim trail status is from the southerly end of the Mountain Division Trail section recently granted such status in Standish, through Gorham & Windham to the southern end of the MDOT owned right of way in Westbrook, just south of Bridge St. Such status is clearly understood that it is trail until rail.

Westbrook and Windham in partnership with MDOT have undertaken the PDR process to design a recreational trail beside the rail bed along the 5-mile section of the MDT through our communities to extend the current multiuse trail southerly for the region to have safe access to the Sebago to the Sea Trail. With the final design completed in 2024 and an estimated cost of \$12.7 Million to undertake at the time not including ROW acquisition, the project team had deemed the current proposal to place the trail beside the rail to be cost prohibitive to proceed. We investigated federal trail grants, but it was determined the proposal would not be competitive due to its high price tag.

With the action taken on the northern portion of the Mountain Division Trail from Fryeburg to Standish to allow for an interim trail in the rail bed, MDOT and City staffers met in 2024 to discuss the opportunity of the RUAC process and how this process would significantly reduce the construction costs of the project and make the recreational trail project viable. Preliminary cost estimates in 2024 by the Engineer of Record determined a revised cost of \$6.4 Million dollars for the interim trail project in the rail bed, plus a significant reduction in impacts to abutting property owners along the route. This represents almost a 50% reduction in the project costs to construct the trail in the rail bed. Additionally, existing bridges/crossings can be utilized in these efforts vs building new bridges/crossings which is a much more sustainable approach at this time. Wetland impacts are significantly reduced as well.

In these discussions with MDOT staff on the RUAC process, MDOT staff supported the idea of including the Gorham section of the MDT in this petition as that section would be the only section of the MDT not included in this "interim designation" and would end up creating inconsistencies in maintenance of the Mountain Division Trail. Currently, there are issues on the Gorham section of the existing trail that the current setbacks from the rail bed are creating limitations on those maintenance issues being addressed. Consequently, Gorham supports this petition as well.

In summary, we hope you find our request warranted and look forward to the next steps in this process.

Respectfully,

David C. Morse
Mayor
City of Westbrook

Robert Burns
Town Manager
Town of Windham

Ephrem J. Paraschak
Town Manager
Town of Gorham