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September 4, 2025

To: Jarod Maxfield, Chairman Windham Town Council
Windham Town Council Members
cc: Robert Burns, Town Manager, Linda Brooks, Dir. Parks & Recreation

From: Doug Smith, President, Friends Of The Mountain Division Trail

Re: Concerns regarding the proposed Town Recreation Park between the Windham Youth Soccer Fields and Laskey Road.

Our organization, a non-profit corporation, was founded in 1994. It was and continues to be an advocacy organization, initially focused on persuading State of Maine to purchase the rights to the railroad line from Portland to Fryeburg. Over the years we have been successful, the state purchased railroad rights for track from Fryeburg to Westbrook. Asphalt trail segments were built in Windham/ Gorham/Westbrook (5 miles) and Fryeburg (4.5 miles). In July 2003, Governor Mills signed into law LD 404 authorizing the removal of 31 miles of track and construction of a trail until rail from Fryeburg to South Windham – over 41 miles. The first 10 miles of new trail is in the final design stage with construction expected to start in late 2026.

In 2020, the organization was reformed and renamed *The Friends of the Mountain Division Trail* (FOTMDT) and relaunched with a new mission.

Mission: is to work with the nine communities along the Mountain Division rail corridor, Maine Department of Transportation, and other organizations and stakeholders to create a safe, welcoming, contiguous trail that connects existing paved portions of the trail to provide for active transportation and recreation opportunities from Fryeburg to Portland.

Throughout our 31-year history, one of the hallmarks of our advocacy has been safe recreation.

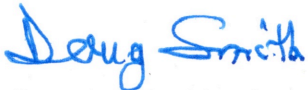
The purpose of this letter is to highlight major concerns depicted in ALL Park Concept drawing presented by DuBois and King at the recent public forum.

Presently, visitors to the Mountain Division Trail do not have to cross an active road while recreating near the Windham parking area. The Park Concepts depicts a new access road (Cherry Rd.) to the new recreational park (50 acres purchased by Windham) AND the existing soccer fields that Trail Visitors (pedestrians, baby carriages, cyclists, rollerbladers, and dogs) must cross at least once. On soccer game days, the volume of traffic can be very high. Without adequate signage and other precautions this crossing is a place where an accident is just waiting to happen.

Based on our trail counts over the last 3 years, when Trail promotion is successful, there are significantly more visitors. If the new recreation area and Cherry Rd access are built out as depicted, the traffic and risk would increase dramatically. In summer of 2023, the average daily trail visitor count in the Windham/Gorham section was 194/day. In the summer of 2025, the average daily trail visitor count rose to 344/day a 77% increase in 2 years (composition: 1/3 cyclists, 2/3 pedestrians). Also, with each additional mile of trail added (31+ miles in the years to come) and continuing promotion the daily volume of visitors will increase dramatically.

Isn't there another entrance and exit route that can be used to avoid adding 344 visitor road crossing a day? Can't the current Soccer Rd access road and traffic pattern be re-engineered to be safe with higher volumes of cars and visitors without requiring a new access road (Cherry Lane)?

Sincerely,



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