



Cross New Hampshire Adventure Trail
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Subject: Strong Support for SB 274-FN

February 10, 2025

Dear Chairman Ricciardi and Senate Transportation Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Cross New Hampshire Adventure Trail (xNHAT) Board of Directors to express our strong support for SB 274. I am the founder and president of the xNHAT, as well as the vice president of the New Hampshire Rail Trails Coalition and NH co-chair of the Twin State Rail Trail Project.

The xNHAT is an 83-mile scenic, mostly off-road cycling route spanning 11 towns in Coos and Grafton Counties and extending into Maine: Woodsville, Bath, Landaff, Lisbon, Littleton, Bethlehem, Whitefield, Jefferson, Randolph, Gorham, and Shelburne, plus Gilead and Bethel, Maine. It is the first route of its kind in New Hampshire, designed to showcase our stunning North Country and attract cyclists seeking multi-day adventures.

Three of the four rail trails proposed for transfer under SB 274—the Presidential (Pondicherry section), Ammonoosuc, and New Littleton-Bethlehem section (Ammonoosuc extension)—are integral to the xNHAT. These trails are the scenic gems of the route.

Why These Rail Trails Matter

These rail trails provide **year-round recreation** for residents and visitors, offering bicycling, walking, running, horseback riding, snowmobiling, dog sledding, geocaching, and birdwatching. The Ammonoosuc Rail Trail also accommodates OHRV riding.

Beyond recreation, they serve as **essential off-road transportation corridors**, helping residents and visitors access local businesses for work and shopping. By improving these trails, we are **expanding access to people of all ages and abilities**, making them safer, more enjoyable, and more inclusive.

Crucially, these rail trails are **an emerging economic driver**—fueling a new facet of outdoor recreation to the North Country: **“cyclo-tourism”**. They are attracting visitors with their bicycles (and wallets) to explore North Country communities.

However, many sections remain **challenging to navigate** due to rough surfaces, flooding, and washouts—hence the word “Adventure” in xNHAT. **SB 274 provides a critical opportunity to enhance these trails, making them safer and more accessible for all users.**

Proven Economic and Tourism Benefits

The xNHAT is already delivering results:

- Since 2019, we have provided over **8,000 maps** and information packets to cyclists and walkers from **48 states and five countries**—more than **50% of inquiries come from out of state**.
- More than **1,500 individuals** have completed the full route as “End-to-Enders”—with **52% coming from out of state**—bringing direct spending to local businesses.
- The xNHAT has been **featured in major media**, including the TV shows *Windows to the Wild*, *NH Chronicle*, *Boston Chronicle*, *Weekends with Yankee*, plus *Yankee Magazine*, *New Hampshire Magazine*, *Rails to Trails Magazine*, and multiple local and regional newspapers.

Local businesses are benefiting:

- A **B&B in Jefferson** reported a **40% decline in Canadian tourists** but was able to recover much of that loss thanks to xNHAT cyclists and walkers.
- The **Israel River Campground in Jefferson** added **tent sites specifically for bikepackers** on the xNHAT route—traditionally an RV-focused campground.
- In **Littleton**, a newly renovated mill complex called *Rail Trail Village*—which includes **60 apartments, a cafe, gym, and indoor golf facility**—is actively marketing its location adjacent to the **Ammonoosuc Rail Trail** as a major amenity and selling point.

Traditionally, these rail trails have been used mostly by snowmobilers, but we are proving they can **support year-round, multi-user access**. This shift expands revenue streams, increases volunteer stewardship, and opens new funding opportunities for maintenance and improvement projects.

Proven Success in Trail Restoration

The xNHAT has successfully partnered with the **NH Bureau of Trails** on **30 rail trail restoration projects**, from small fixes (e.g., Beaver Deceivers) to major infrastructure repairs, including culverts, erosion control, and ADA-compliant surface improvements.

- Trail improvements have made trails **safer and more enjoyable for all users**, including snowmobilers in low-snow seasons.
- Our efforts have attracted **\$52,000 in direct user donations** and **\$210,000 in grant funding**, recognizing the **economic and community benefits of these trails**.

One major success story is the **Ammonoosuc Rail Trail**, which had a reputation for ruts, potholes, sand, ballast rocks, and dust. In collaboration with the **Ammonoosuc Valley ATV Club and NH Bureau of Trails**, we piloted a new hardpack surface mix to work for both motorized and non-motorized users. The result:

- A **solid, smooth, dust-free, and washout-resistant trail surface** that has required **zero maintenance in two years**.
- This work has cost about **\$50,000 per mile**
- Three miles of the 26-mile trail have been improved, but much more work is needed. SB 274 would provide the resources to **accelerate** these vital improvements.

Why SB 274 is Critical

The NH Bureau of Trails (NHBOT) receives **no state funding**, yet is responsible for maintaining a critical outdoor recreation infrastructure that supports **one of New Hampshire's largest economic drivers**.

- Flood and storm damage has severely impacted trails, with **some still unrepaired after two years** due to limited funding.
- OHRV, dirt bike, and snowmobile registrations—a primary funding source—are declining, likely due to poor weather and low-snow conditions.
- SB 274 provides a **sustainable path to accelerate trail restoration**, ensuring these scenic corridors can expand uses to benefit residents, visitors, and local businesses.

A Proven Model for Success

SB 274 establishes a **Pilot Program**—a smart, results-driven approach. The **strong and productive collaboration over the past 5 years** between NHBOT and partners like myself (xNHAT) and Mike Kowalczyk (Cheshire Rail Trail, the other rail trail in SB274) demonstrates that **we can deliver results**.

With this funding, we will **show you—and the agencies that have supported SB 274—that this pilot program works**. This success will pave the way for expanded funding to benefit other rail trails across New Hampshire.

Closing Statement:

SB 274 is a **win-win-win** for recreation, transportation, and economic development. These rail trails attract tourists, attract new residents, boost local businesses, generate tax revenue, and strengthen our rural communities.

I urge you to support SB 274 and help us **realize the full potential of New Hampshire's rail trails**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marianne Borowski

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Founder & President, Cross New Hampshire Adventure Trail
Vice President New Hampshire Rail Trails Coalition
NH Co-Chair of the Twin State Rail Trail Project

"Centerfold" of *Yankee Magazine*, May/June 2021. Presidential Rail Trail, bird's eye view. The article tells a great tale of traveling the xNHAT by bicycle with friends.

https://issuu.com/yankeemagazine/docs/yankeemagazine_mayjune2021

