Subject: Conway Advisory Committee Meeting #5 5/6/2026 at 1:00pm at Ossipee Freight House

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In attendance:

Appointer	Member	In Attendance (Y/N)
Tamworth (2)	Jeremy Phillips/ Karl Behr	NO/NO
Madison (2)	Tia Gagnon/TBD	Yes/ N/A
Ossipee (2)	Kyle Copeland/Chris Elliot	Yes/Yes
Albany (2)	Jim Drouin/TBD	NO/N/A
Conway (2)	Erik Corbett/Ryan Shepard	Yes/Yes
Recreational/Tourism	Bob Boose	Yes
NH Horse Council	Debbie Briscoe	Yes
NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)	Sean Pinard	NO
NH Off-Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	Steve Wilkie	Yes (online)
NH Rail Trail Coalition (NHRTC)	Marianne Borowski	Yes
Friends of Ossipee Rail Trail (FORT)	Philip Villari	Yes
Cotton Valley Rail Trail Coalition (CVRTC)	Bruce Stewart	Yes
DPR Planning	Johanna Lyons	Yes
DPR Trails Bureau Chief	Craig Rennie	Yes
DPR Trails Bureau District Supervisor	Mike Weeks	Yes

Agenda

- Call to Order at 1:00 PM.
- Welcome & introductions
    - People on teams (not all recorded). Estimated head count of audience members in person & on teams: ~35-40.
    - Motion & acceptance of the minutes from previous meeting of 3/19/2026 with some corrections.

- Trails Bureau Chief presented slides showing the bureau's proposal to build a trail adjacent to the rails in the ~2.8 mile section from Moultonville Road to Rt 16 crossing in Ossipee. This section has been identified by the committee as a priority area for citizen use. The trail will be built entirely on the east side of the tracks and only need to cross the tracks just to cross the one bridge in this section. That area will have transition platforms and signs added to warn users to use caution crossing tracks. The trail will be 8' wide, level with the tracks themselves and will be entirely funded by Trails Bureau funds using their own forces and equipment. Estimated ~$25k/mile in materials needed. Estimated timeline for completion is 5-6 weeks. Culverts are in good shape, but just need to be cleaned. Trail will be accessible. Materials will be brought in to make new section level and smooth out any dips, berms, etc. Courser fills will be used below to level out with compacted stone dust on top. No planned retaining walls at this time, but if needed, the bureau will adjust materials to compensate.
    - Question about this effecting snowmobile grooming? Bureau replies that the grooming will be on the 8' wide segment which will be easier to groom. With the brushing opening up the canopy, this will allow for more snow to accumulate on this new 8' section and rails.
    - Question about the ties underneath rotting/eroding near the new trail edge/under the new gravel. Bureau replied with we can bring in more fill and regrade surface.
    - Question about the drop off to the edge of the trail, how do we envision keeping people from falling off the edge? Do you add fencing? Bureau replied that only railings will be on bridges. The entire rail trail system throughout the state has high fill ballast and has steep drop offs everywhere. This is no different then hiking a trail with a steep cliff. You recreate at your own risk.
    - Question about passing with horses/snowmobiles, is 8' wide enough? Bureau replied that that can be determined after the assessment is complete with additional construction. This proposal is just to get started with public access. Trail etiquette will be important in heavily used areas which we can add signs for.

- Question about rail use, has the CVRTC used this segment for recreation? CVRTC replied for 22 years.
  - Does the CVRTC have difficulty crossing roads without tracks? CVRTC replied no, the putt-putt are only 400-600lbs.
  - How many times/year does CVRTC use this segment? CVRTC replied 5 Sundays/year and intermittently during the week. With about 18-20 putt-putt cars and ~45 people. Not sure where users are from.
- Question about pricing, how are you building this for only 25K/mile? Bureau replied that we are using our own forces and equipment. Were also buying materials off state contracts which may have better pricing then the general public. If this was publicly bided, then it would be much more costly.
- Questions about process, does this need public approval? Bureau presented this option at the last meeting and have been taking public comments through parks planner. This segment may still have future changes after the assessment is completed and when the commissioner makes the final decision for this segment.
- Question about the level of service rating for this segment? Bureau replied that the consultant could assist with that determination. (NOTE: A "Level of Service Calculator" is a guide from Federal Highway Administration published in 2006. It is used for paved paths only. Clint this link: Shared-Use Path Level of Service Calculator—A User's Guide - Rails to Trails Conservancy | Rails to Trails Conservancy.)
- Question about after assessment is complete, what if the assessment says this should not be preferred option? Bureau replied that we build a lot of trails all around the state for as many user groups as possible (which is why compacted stone dust is preferred over pavement). It will be relatively easy for our staff to complete. This segment can still be altered even after we install this proposed trail adjacent to the tracks. The rest of this 21 mile trail will be much more complicated to construct, which is why we want to see the assessment completed.
- Question about Mountain View Estates, are they aware of this proposal? Bureau replied our legal team is looking into encroachments in that area.

- Trails Bureau Chief and District 2 Supervisor presented additional slides about the Chain of ponds segment in Madison. There was beaver activity causing flooding. Our partners have installed beaver deceivers this spring to allow cross drainage and keep the water from flooding the trail. This is a normal maintenance activity we do with our partners. A beaver deceiver is a cage that covers the inlet and outlet of the culvert and located beneath the surface of the water to lessen the noise from the flowing water. Beaver don't need to be relocated because they cannot plug the culvert with the cage blocking it.
  - Question about this segment, because if these deceivers, can this segment be opened to pedestrian use? Bureau replied no, these deceivers are to just to keep the surface from becoming more flooded and even more eroded/degraded. The surface itself is not ready for pedestrians.

- FORT/Committee Chair presented their own slides for the Rt 16 to Rt 28 segment as their proposal for option #3. FORT is presenting this option as a compromise to allow for different user groups including the CVRTC on some parts after taking community input. FORT's goal is to provide to the town with an 8-9' hardpack surface with shoulders and curves. FORT is proposing to remove rails & ties from northern 2.8 mile section (from Moultonville Road to Rt 16 crossing in Ossipee) but leave rails in place for southern section of 4.8 miles for CVRTC use. FORT believe scrap value from rails will offset rail pull cost. FORT has preferred vendor and could start asap.
  - Question about the Silver Lake section (in Madison), is this segment of rails open to CVRTC use? CVRTC replies with no, they assist with maintenance if needed but not with recreation. Bureau commented the agreements with private landowner would need to be changed.
  - Question about the 25K warrant article from the Town of Ossipee, can that be applied to the bureau's option or is it just for rail pulling? Town of Ossipee says the warrant article could be used for either option.
    - What about the anonymous doner, can that be used for either option? FORT replied with that was specific to rail pull.

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        - Parks planner suggested the warrant article could be used for future ancillary things like parking, kiosks, brochures. Things that can be bought more easily outside of a state contract. All sorts of opportunities to use funding for different items.
            - FORT stated the community (~4500 residents in Ossipee) is supportive to do this. Extra fundraising for all sorts of things.
            - Question about this proposal was endorsed by various groups? FORT replied that pulling the rails and developing the rail trail in that section was supported. The Bureau option was not discussed by the groups as the presentation was today.
    - Bureau states that this trail is state owned and cannot have a contractor pull rails without going through the state request for proposal (RFP) and governor and council (G&C) process. The steel is also worth a lot more than the cost of building the trail. This could be a future option once the commissioner has made decisions after assessment is completed.
    - Question about environmental issues with bats? Bureau replied with federal funds, you have time limits for brushing/tree cutting to accommodate endangered species. Culverts are also being looked at for bat habitats.
    - Question about removing the tracks and ties for better snowmobile use, can we hear a comment from a snowmobile club? (Note: NHSA representative is absent for this meeting).
        - Comment from audience member (President of Ossipee Valley Snowmobile club): Club would prefer to remove rails because the sun heats the rails and melts the snow faster. Club believes the 8' wide trail adjacent to the trail will not extend the snowmobile season in this area as they have difficulty staying on rails. Club also believes the canopy brushing lessen the season because of the additional exposure to the sun. This corridor is used by thousands of riders and connects to many other club trail systems.
            - Comment from NHOHVA, a narrower 6' groomer and drag could eliminate the challenge of staying on the 8' wide segment and rails could stay and still extend the snowmobile season.
    - Comment from Town of Ossipee, our role is doing what benefits the most number of people. Common sense wise is runners, bikers and other users all benefit from the rails being removed. Only one group does not and we understand the CVRTC have been using this segment for a long time. The town did not know the state/bureau would have their modified option 2 presented today. Very small number of users using these rails vs. thousands of other users.
    - CVRTC commented that the club is not looking for 21 miles but looking to be a part of 9 miles. In 2014, CVRTC helped write legislation to protect our rights as a group and how we recreate to have some sort of venue to do that. Club members register this putt-putt as machines to pay into the state system for maintenance along with OHRVs and snowmobiles. All other users use for free.

- Request for proposal – consultant services. Draft RFP review & schedule (attached). Parks planner reworked the RFQ to an RFP so it shouldn't be a surprise as it's the same. Commissioner has asked to slow the schedule by a month. If the group has questions/comments or clarifications. It's ready to go once commissioner gives ok to send.
    - Comment for in section 5, can you re-add in culverts and parking with horse trailers and identify where the narrow areas are and what the width is? Parks planner agreed.

- Committee member updates
    - Parks planner commented that we have long term goals. There are 3 options but we have something that can be done sooner rather than later that doesn't preclude anything later in the future. Reality will be at least a year for the study. Takes another year for priority & funding.
    - Audience member comments (State Representative Jon Smith): This was my bill. FORT's idea is a down the road project, but what DNCR/bureau is offering is a gift and can be done this year. We can use this while the group can figure out what to do with the rest of the trail. What DNCR is giving us is a huge advantage.

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- Town of Conway says the bureau's proposal is best short term option. Will takes years of proposals and contracts for long term.
- NH Horse council supports the long term option 3 of removing the rails. Second pick was rail with trail. The Cotton Valley Rail Trail design as proposed was concerning with equestrians as users being restricted. What bureau has proposed will not limit future trail building.
- Town of Ossipee stated they have had lots of communication with users and what's in the best interest for Ossipee and pulling rails will be most user friendly. For the short term, the bureau's proposal is ok. But concerns are if we spend money will down the road decisions say we can't spend any more because we already have. And will that money already spend be wasted down the line? Urge everyone to continue to listen to public input. No one likes crossing the rails and town would be very upset if this section becomes multiple rail crossings. Cotton Valley Rail trail is not a good bike trail because of all the crossings.
- Second Town of Conway rep stated that this meeting was very informative and what Conway may see in future.
- NHRTC express concern about biking safely because many people do not cross rails correctly. NHRTC supports option 3 as best for the long term plan for the trail as snowmobile clubs do not like rails. States that option 2 (rail w/ trail) is ok for bikes and equestrians not great for snowmobiles. An idea could be for the CVRTC to request recreational opportunities in other locations where there are rail pedal bikes being used as a way to give back what may be taken away.
- Town of Madison's priority is for ADA/accessible trails. The town heard from abutters and other residents and folks want to be able to walk. The town also wants transparency around the process of receiving public feedback. The town feels for 2.8 section that the town of Ossipee did the work for collecting public feedback and supports their choice. The town's long term priority for the entire trail is public recreation first and commercial operations second. The towns' other concern is making decisions without consultant's assessment.
- NHOHVA supports the bureau's proposal to build trail next to the current rails which leaves all options on the table for the future and gets people immediate access for use and time to find funding for final solution.
- FORT believes what bureau presented is advantageous for the users short term. FORT and economic council's desire is to pull rails for a long term solution and make this a showplace for the rec trail. FORT would love to see this 2.8 section completely stone dust. FORT's long term option is the southern section keeps rails with north 2.8 section remove rails. FORT's concern is after the bureau starts you don't say we didn't realize something about where trail has to weave making it cross rails multiple times.
- Town of Ossipee second rep says town received public input from chamber and Ossipee council, and believes short term benefit is bureau's option but wants to reserve the right to have a long term solution of removing rails.
- CVRTC fully supports bureau option for short term. Gives us time for a breather for this section. Regarding the snowmobile season virtually every trail was closed within 7 days time including trails without rails. For this section, the bureau option gets snowmobiles off rails. The Cotton Valley rail trail has 30 years of trail work with many years owned by bureau of rail & transit at DOT. There are many things DOT would not allow and the goals for the Cotton Valley back in the 90s were different then they are today.
- Tourism representative states that outdoor recreational activity is great in NH. Our members want to see how we maximize what we can do. We support the bureau's proposal and like that it is ADA compliant. Other towns benefit from something like this rail trail and want it for people's use and not just businesses.
- Parks Planner stated that when this property was transferred and this committee was established, it was to show transparency and collaboration. Parks is well poised at this point to accomplish some tasks but we only had one year to become familiar with this trail and community needs. The bureau's proposal is a good short term option. Parks still is seeking public input which will be organized in a spreadsheet.

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Letters from public sometimes state what users do for recreation. Parks is looking for facts to help the Department make an informed decision so being for or against doesn't help. What we want are the facts that guide the public's opinion.

- Public Comment
    - Comments: When CVRTC comes up for our meetings with our group 5 times/year. Our members clean up trash all the time. What about federal EPA requirements? Removing rails makes a hazard.
        - Parks: that's a great written comment. We follow all sorts of BMPs and will get any necessary permits.
    - Comment: how are short and long term decisions fitting in with a consultant. What role do they have at arriving at decisions?
        - Parks: the bureau's proposal doesn't preclude any recommendations. The consultant does not provide any decision, they provide info to guide the department.
    - Comment: any way we can expedite the consultant process? Is it counter intuitive to have discussions now?
        - Parks: unlikely to be faster, it takes that long from our experience from advertising, selecting, going through governor and council process, etc.
    - Comment: in Ossipee community there are a lot of highways that make cycling unsafe around here. Please keep retirees in mind. Want rails pulled long term.
    - Comment: this town needs infusion for visitors. Where are you measuring from? From edge of rail? (yes). What about any changes in temp or vibration, will that make riding by the ties dangerous. Find the Cotton Valley Rail Trail frightening to bike on.
    - Comments (on behalf of Silver Lake RR): Silver Lake Rail Riders is a stakeholder in corridor and wants a position on this committee.
    - Comment: appreciate the inclusivity of all of us using the trails. The section with the bureau's proposal is a great idea. The paved Conway Rec Path is amazing.
    - Comment: so excited to send bicyclists up here from Cotton Valley Rail Trail. Cotton Valley has to deal with the platforms and people don't read signs and take short cuts and get hurt. Support the bureau's proposal.
    - Comment: 2 things with major complaints is the roll off and being so close to rails. We know the corridor is wide. Would it make sense and shift trail 15-20' to the side of the rails to help will roll off issues and rail? What would be the cost of that & timeline?
        - Bureau: cost would be more than our budget could handle. Your asking about filling in the ROW width that is outside the fill area. More than we can handle. And would take much more time.
    - Comment: it would be easy to build a trail with tracks in this section. Supports long term rail with trail.
    - Comment: reconsider option 3 because once trail tracks are removed they are gone. Freight could come back and Conway Scenic run 3 routes a day. 22,000 miles of railroad has been taken up in US. Only 12 miles were restored. (Note: did not provide source of info).
    - Comment: confused by bureau's plan and FORTs. How do we know if the department is going with the bureau's plan? Where did FORT's plan come from?
        - Parks: as the landowner, after conversations with committee we laid out 3 types of rail trail development. We presented a preferred option. FORT's presentation is just to present more info about option 3 is.
        - FORT: when presented with 3 options from DNCR, at that time no one understood what was possible with a rail with trail. Everyone thought of the Cotton Valley rail trail with all the crisscrossing. The bureau presented today a clarification of what a rail with trail could be for this segment. FORT presented a clarification of option 3 because people didn't understand financial aspect of this.
        - Comment: when will DNCR make a decision on bureau option?
            - Bureau: that's what this meeting is for. Compile comments and ask the Commissioner of DNCR who will make a decision.

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- Comment: do you have permitting needs for your option?
    - Bureau: No as there are no wetlands in this segment and no culvert work needed (just cleaning them). No alteration of terrain needs. We meet all permitting needs for short term.
- Comment (teams): Silver Lake Rail Riders raised a good point asking for seat at table, now that Silver Lake RR is up and running. Only 18 miles of rails for the speeder club (CVRTC). There is potential for speeders, bikes, etc. when there is rail w/ trail. Cotton Valley Rail Trail is very rare with its configuration. This proposed design in Ossipee is a huge improvement with limited crossings. And instead of pulling the rails, flood them (with gravel) so the potential is there for future use if that is decided.
- Comment: wasn't the original estimate for removing rails and ties at $55K/mile?
    - FORT: that estimate was not based on fact. And steel costs have changed.
- Comment: is this committee open to adding other people?
    - Parks: not our decision, that would be the commissioner's but there are no individual businesses on this committee. We have a chamber of commerce on this committee. You are welcome to contact our commissioner. We have submitted it as it stands for the legislature. Can be established through legislative process or executive order from governor.

- NHRTC: What about rail service? Is this something that needs to be considered.
    - Bureau: if a train came back, the federal standards wouldn't allow for rail with trail and it would take a decade to get a train back.
    - Parks: DOT received an unsolicited proposal for freight. Until those steps are considered we are not putting the RFP out for the consultant.

- Motion to adjourn, seconded. All in favor. At 3:41 pm.

Meeting minutes taken by:
Name: Alexis Rudko
Title: Deputy Chief of NH Bureau of Trails

Signature: Alexis.M.Rudko@dncr.nh.gov Digitally signed by Alexis.M.Rudko@dncr.nh.gov Date: 2026.05.13 14:05:43 -04'00'

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