

# Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee

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Washington Lempster Marlow Gilsum Sullivan Surry Keene Swanzey Winchester Hinsdale

March 21, 2019

Lou Barker  
Railroad Planner  
NH Department of Transportation  
Bureau of Rail & Transit  
Concord, NH 03302-0483

RE: Sale of State-owned Railroad Property  
Ashuelot Branch Corridor, Winchester

Dear Mr. Barker:

The Ashuelot River LAC reviewed the materials provided by NHDOT regarding the possible sale of Ashuelot railroad land in Winchester which currently contains the former railroad depot.

The Ashuelot Rail Trail is noted as a recreational resource in our Corridor Management Plan as the trail weaves in and out of the river corridor for much of its length from Keene to Hinsdale. Over the years this trail has been upgraded in Keene and Swanzey to accommodate multi-use by the community, with an additional portion in Swanzey due for renovation this year. Since the improvements have been made there has been a significant increase in use by community members. It can be anticipated that in the future the Winchester and Hinsdale portions of the Ashuelot rail line will continue in this pattern of upgrades.

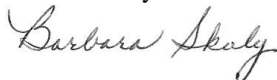
The importance of the rail line is reflected in the "Southwest Region Transportation Plan 2014-2035" describing objectives to support and encourage local efforts to improve bicycle path connectivity and to work to preserve elements of the region's transportation history including its historic bridges, trestle bridges, railroad depots, and rail rights of way. The Southwest Region Planning Commission is currently in the process of developing a plan for the Ashuelot Rail corridor collaborating with stakeholders throughout the rail corridor.

An important component of a successful rail trail is the availability of parking for users, whether as commuters or as recreationists. The parcel located in the village of Ashuelot would provide a needed location for parking not only for users of the Hinsdale/Winchester portion of the trail, but may also accommodate tourists who stop to admire and take in the beauty of the river and the Ashuelot Covered Bridge.

While it is understandable that the depot owner would like to own the land under the depot, we feel the potential use of the land for public benefit is of greater value. Perhaps an agreement could be met that allows a portion of the land to revert to the depot owner, but saving a reasonable portion that can be earmarked for public parking as the rail trail is developed.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Skuly



Chairman, ARLAC

Cc: Tracie Sales, NH Rivers & Lakes program  
Jen Drociak, NH Rivers & Lakes program  
Chris Gamache, Trails Bureau  
Winchester Con Comm