

Surface Transportation Board
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Washington, DC 20423

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May 29, 2018

I'm the Chair of the Wilton NH Economic Development Team. When I heard of the request by the Boston and Maine Corporation and the Springfield Terminal Railway Company (collectively, Pan Am) to discontinue the operating authority held by the Milford-Bennington Railroad Company over a rail line on the Hillsborough Branch, I thought – not again. This battle between a mega-monopoly and a community-minded entrepreneur has been raging for years. Pan Am won't do the right thing, so the STB needs to step in. Pan Am hasn't maintained the railways, as contractually promised, so that the Milford Bennington line can service its customer Milford Granite.

I rode the train last fall to understand its potential for the small towns along its route. M-B has to slow to 5mph on Pan Am's portion of the track as it crosses in downtown Wilton, NH on its way to its customer in Milford, NH because of the disrepair of that portion of track. Easy

solution – deed that few miles of track to Milford-Bennington so they can upgrade and maintain it as they have the track running north that is owned by the NH Department of Transportation. Peter Leishman, owner and operator of the Milford-Bennington line with a stellar reputation, can serve his customer and Wilton has a chance to bring back its tourist train.

If we loose the rail, we loose it forever. And we loose the chance to breathe life back into the small rural towns of southern NH that are struggling to provide for their small businesses and citizens.

If Pan AM gets is way, we have 100 truckloads of gravel running through a one-sided Main St and across an already deficient bridge -- every day! And we lose the chance for a real game-changer for this region – bringing back the tourist train.

The Wilton Scenic Railroad

When Stuart Draper, business man, entrepreneur and philanthropist set in motion the Wilton Scenic Railroad, the floundering retail economy of Wilton, NH got a new lease on life. Hundreds of people from all over the country came to ride the train on the rail line north

through pristine woods, over breath-taking river views and through the small towns of southern NH. The train was Draper's passion. When he died – his wife sold it so fast, no one had a chance to save it. Ever since, the town's people of Wilton have recognized we've lost a reminder of times gone by --when riding the rail that made this country boom -- was an experience that put smiles on the faces of young and old alike. But recreation and community social connections are not all that has been lost. Wilton is bypassed by state highway 101. It now struggles to draw sufficient traffic to support its small shops and restaurants. The tourist train was the single most effective economic engine to attract tourists, and neighboring townspeople.

Please, do the right thing here. We need the Milford-Bennington line to continue to operate and we need to preserve the rail service that at some point will be recognized as the smart way to create a rapid transit system across this fine country.

I hope the STB will show inspired and visionary leadership in this matter – and leave a legacy.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Jennifer Scott Beck

Chair, Wilton Economic Development Team
Commissioner, Wilton Conservation Commission
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I certify that I have this day served copies of the
document upon the Parties of Record in this proceeding,
by E-mail.

Signature___/s/ Jennifer S. Beck_____

Date_____May 29, 2018_____