

May 10, 2018

Dear TSB folks,

Re: Docket No. AB 1256

I am writing this letter as a plea that you **disallow** Pan Am's efforts to close the tracks that are currently used by the Bennington-Milford Rail line through Wilton, NH. These tracks and their current and historic use have been an important component of our community's history as well as its future. Let me tell you why.

Downtown Wilton has one Main Street that carries local traffic. It is flanked by old, mostly brick buildings that boarder the Souhegan River on one side and the hillside where our brick town hall, a long granite retaining wall and a small park are situated. The road, just as old as these buildings, is in constant need of up-keep which our local road agents are able to do with help each March from those voting at our town meeting to pour our limited financial resources into keeping this road and the others in the broader community in repair. Large trucks are discouraged from traveling through town due to the damage they cause to the road and adjoining buildings from the weight of their loads.

Historically, Wilton grew with the help of the Boston and Maine Railroad that came to our town sometime around 1844 (on tracks currently used by the Milford-Bennington Railroad Company owned by Pan Am.) That railroad brought business to the community, visitors for our town's Winter Carnival and summer guests to stay in several hotels that were once a part of our Main Street. It also served as a means of transportation for local Wiltonians who worked outside the area or those who chose rail travel for vacations and business trips. In addition, it was a freight line for local goods and materials into and out of Wilton. Over the years, Wilton shrank in population, but the railroad was still a presence.

Until recently, Wilton even had a thriving Wilton Scenic Railroad on these tracks that brought thousands of visitors to our community and added to the fiscal health of the town. Sadly, it was closed with the death of its owner, Stuart Draper, twelve years ago. It wasn't long after Stuart passed away, that talk began to try to reestablish this valuable town resource as the local store and guest house owners saw a steep decline in business without the Scenic railroad in operation. It has taken several years, but our Wilton Economic Development team has worked tirelessly to move this effort along with hopes to have it again in operation later this year or early next.

Just as, or even more, important is the fact that one of the main industries in Wilton is our local quarry/gravel pit where trainloads of granite are excavated and transported via these rails to Granite State concrete in the neighboring town of Milford. This keeps up to 90 truck-loads of gravel per day off our roadways and particularly, off our Main Street. The street is narrow, with a constant flow of people from one side where the parking is to the other to fulfill duties and needs at our Town Hall as well as attend the movies shown in the upper reaches of the building in our Town Hall Theater which is a regional treasure. If these trucks rumbled through town daily, there is no doubt that not only would the

road immediately suffer to the point where one wonders how the town could afford the upkeep. Even more, the buildings would also stand a chance of damage or even crumbling due to their brick and mortar construction. When this town was built nothing like the weight of trucks carrying gravel on the only road from the gravel pit to its final destination in Milford was contemplated. The pit was established and grew with the rail line as its only feasible means of transporting the gravel to Milford.

Hence, if the rail line was to be closed the consequences would be dire to the town, its infrastructure, its businesses, and its citizens, its tranquility and small-town ambiance, a thriving business would have a questionable future, and without the use of the tracks all further efforts to bring back the one venture the town is counting on to hasten its revitalization, the Scenic Railroad, would have to stop. It would also cut off some of the energy behind the current efforts to bring rail service back into the state with our Bennington/Wilton/Milford/Amherst/Nashua component an important part of the picture for this southern portion of the state.

Please, please, please consider these consequences and allow us to retain the use of this extremely valuable resource, and disallow Pan Am's efforts to close these tracks.

Sincerely,

Gail and Andrew Hoar

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Signature /s/Gail Hoar /s/ Andrew Hoar

Date__5/14/2018_____