

Amending Resolution No. 275 Of 2014 As Amended, Establishing A Policy For A “Rail With Trail” Along The County-Owned Ulster And Delaware Railroad Corridor For Increased Available Railroad Operation

Referred to: The Housing and Transportation Committee (Chairman Collins and Legislators Clinton, Corcoran, Harmon, Kitchen, McCollough, and Stewart)

Legislator Jason Kovacs offers the following:

WHEREAS, the County of Ulster purchased the 38.6-mile Ulster and Delaware Railroad (U&D) Corridor in 1979 to promote economic development, heritage tourism, and recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature in 2014 adopted Resolution No. 275 to establish a segmented “Rail with Trail” policy, designating portions of the Corridor for rail, trail, and co-location where feasible; and

WHEREAS, subsequent amendments in 2015 expanded and clarified this policy, including express support for tourism railroad operations west of the Ashokan Reservoir, and limited trail conversions east of the reservoir based on a report from Stone Consulting & Design, P.C.; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 241 of May 14, 2024 reestablished the U&D Corridor Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for the previously undesignated portion of the Corridor between MP 8.33 and Basin Road (“Undesignated Section”); and

WHEREAS, while the reestablished Committee held eleven meetings, considered public input, and reviewed consultant reports, including those from Stone Consulting & Design, P.C. and Greenman-Pedersen, Inc., both found that the option of “rail with trail” was feasible from MP 8.33 to MP 10.01; and

WHEREAS, the Catskill Mountain Railroad (CMRR), a proven tourism rail operator with decades of history, remains a vital contributor to Ulster County’s economic and cultural vitality, particularly in the communities along the U&D Corridor; and

WHEREAS, protecting the long-term viability of the U&D rail line from MP 8.33 to Basin Road is essential to fulfilling the original intent of the County’s acquisition and to preserving options for future regional rail connectivity and sustainable tourism; now, therefore be it

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RESOLVED, the segmented “Rail with Trail” policy established in Resolution No. 275 of 2014, as amended pursuant to Resolution No. 488 of 2015, shall be further amended as follows:

~~The segment between MP 8.33 and Basin Road will require further investigation on the future feasibility of rail with trail and shall be the last segment to be altered or converted on the east side of the Ashokan provided that trail connectivity co-located on the corridor shall be preserved.~~

“An increased available railroad segment shall exist, co-located with public trail wherever feasible, in the segment between MP 8.33 and Basin Road at MP 10.01, which would increase the potential for Kingston based tourism theme trains by allowing them to be linked to the Ashokan Rail Trail at Basin Road at MP 10.01 without sacrificing trail connectivity from Kingston to the Ashokan Reservoir”; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that Ulster County shall amend the existing and future permits for tourism railroad operations originating in Kingston so that their length is extended from the current western limit of MP 8.33 to Basin Road at MP 10.01; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the County Executive is hereby requested to submit a revised plan outlining necessary projects and secured funding sources to advance the updated policy, including planning, design, safety measures for any trail co-location, and long-term maintenance of both trail and railroad operations; and, be it further

RESOLVED, the “Rail with Trail” policy shall be further amended as follows, “No railroad tracks shall be removed in any segment except by resolution of the Ulster County Legislature, **adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Legislature,**”

and move its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

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Postponed in Committee: Housing and Transportation on July 3, 2025 with consent

No Action Taken in Committee: Housing and Transportation on August 7, 2025 with consent

No Action Taken in Committee: Housing and Transportation on September 4, 2025 with consent

Passed Committee: Housing and Transportation on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:
NONE