



## Public-Private Partnership (P3) – Call for Projects 2018/2019

### Applicant Information

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### Project Description

**Project Name:** Abandoned Rail Corridor Usage-Conway Branch  
**Type of Project:** Tourism

#### **Explanation of Project Need:**

I am looking to use approximately 3 miles of abandoned railroad track to operate a biking tourism attraction on the railroad tracks.

#### **Description of Project: (Include general scope, limits of work, duration of project, etc.)**

Tourists would have the opportunity to pedal either a four wheel 2 seat bike or a four wheel 4 seat bike that ride on the rails of abandoned railroad track. This would be a very safe tourist activity as tourist's would only be allowed to get off the bikes at the turn around point and then the finish point.

These rides would be conducted as tours where they have a tour guide on the front and rear bikes to insure a safe trip for everyone. The bikes would be spaced out so bikers can pedal at their own speed. Each bike has seatbelts and brakes which are controlled by the riders. The bikes have a low gear ratio making them easy to pedal with a typical travel speed of about 8 miles per hour.

My proposed interest would be to pay a usage fee to be able to use a 3 mile section of abandoned railroad track on the Conway Branch (specific section still to be identified) for the purpose of these bike tours. The section would be used in "as is" condition and be maintained by me for safe operation for the bike tours.

Most of these abandoned sections of the Conway Branch are used for snowmobiling in the winter months and known as Corridor 19. They are maintained by snowmobile clubs to be clear to pass and have had wood railings installed on bridges to protect snowmobiles from going off the edge, this adds to making the bike tours even safer. Furthermore, since these sections are safe to carry the weight of the snow plus a snowmobile and a couple riders, it stands to reason that it can carry the lesser weight of a bike and 4 riders.

Also, most of the Conway Branch abandoned rail sections are broken up by paved over roads, there is no chance of any active train traffic entering upon this abandoned track even accidentally.

## **Estimated Cost & Financing**

### ***Estimated Design/Planning Cost:***

No cost to the State. No design or planning costs are expected. If there were costs, they would be paid for by me as the contracted user.

### ***Cost of Property Acquisitions/Leases:***

Lease or rental agreement term and usage fee would need to be negotiated. Such agreement would also include insurance coverage to protect the state from all liability of the biking operations. Usage requirement period would be 6 months beginning May 15th through November 15, which includes setup and teardown time. All company owned assets and equipment would be completely removed and stored offsite prior to November 15th until setup again the following May 15th.

### ***Estimated Construction Cost:***

No cost to the State. Any construction cost would depend specifically on the section of track to be used and need to be determined at a later date. All costs would be my responsibility as the contracted user.

### ***Estimated Cost of Operations/Maintenance:***

No Cost to the State. All cost of maintaining the section of track to be clear and safe for bike tours would be my responsibility. This maintenance would not be intended to operate trains on, only bike usage. These costs would need to be determined based on the section of track and the required number of employees needed for safe operations.

### ***Total Estimated Project Cost:***

No cost to the State other than the paperwork administration for a signed usage agreement. My total project costs would need to be determined based on the section of track selected.

### ***Is this Project approved in a Transportation Plan such as an RPC/MPO Long Range Plan, NHDOT Ten Year Plan or Other Planning Document?***

Yes, based on the New Hampshire State Rail Plan 2012, in the New Hampshire Rail Plan Recommendations Summary (Table ES-1) Tourist/Excursion Service section it states "Support Tourist/Excursion Rail Services". See attached Excerpt #1.

Since my project is not a design-build-maintenance-operations project it is probably not a candidate for a P3 official project. My project is merely a private interest using abandoned inactive state owned railroad tracks in a "as is condition" for the purpose of promoting a new form of tourist attraction in the state of NH.

I've been working with the Rail and Transit Bureau Administrator Shelley Winters over the last 6 months to have this concept approved. Any assistance or guidance you can lend to help my project move forward would be great.

***Preliminary Financial Plan: (Description of initial funding proposal including any State, Federal or Local funding that may be required, as well as any fees or tolls that may be necessary to support the project. If the applicant has concerns relative to confidentiality, they should note those concerns and only provide the information they feel could be discussed in a public setting.)***

This proposal would require no public or State investment other than the paperwork administration for a signed agreement for the usage.

## **Project Readiness**

***Level of Planning/Design Completed: (Describe the degree of project planning and/or design that has been completed, including disposition of deliverables such as feasibility studies, conceptual plans, data collection, etc.)***

This project requires either a usage (lease or rental agreement) to be agreed upon and a section of abandoned track to be agreed upon in order to proceed with project planning and readiness.

***Project Milestones/Durations: (Provide duration and anticipated completion dates for major milestones such as planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance phases.)***

Project lead time needed after reaching a usage agreement and prior to starting operations is at least 3 months.

## **Private/Public Partners/Assets Necessary to Support Project**

***State or Municipal Agencies Impacted:***

NH DOT Rail & Transit Division.

***Private Entities Involved in Proposal:***

Gary LeBlanc as owner of a corporation to be created upon reaching an usage agreement.

***Public Assets Necessary to Advance Project:***

None

***Private Assets Necessary to Advance Project:***

Capital investments by Gary LeBlanc to prepare section of track for safe usage, to purchase company bikes, temporary fenced in pen to secure bikes while not in use, temporary ticket booth to conduct operations, landscape equipment to maintain track section plant growth, chairs and picnic tables to accommodate customers.

***Property/Facilities Impacted and Current Ownership:***

A three mile section of abandoned railroad track on the Conway Branch, owned by the State of NH.

## **Project Benefits**

***Benefits/How this Project Addresses a Need:***

- As stated in the attached Excerpt #3, tourism is the 2nd most important industry for the state's economy. My project would definitely provide additional tourism for the State of NH during the summer and fall months. I expect to pull in customers from neighboring states and have between 11,000-13,000 riders each summer with the ability to increase that capacity if needed. Many of these riders will create additional business for local restaurants, lodging, retail stores and even gas stations. All of this could potentially translate into additional rooms and meals tax for the state of New Hampshire while boosting the local economy. See attached Excerpt #2 for Tourist Railroads tourism dollars projections.
- My business would be similar to that of a tourist railroad except with a higher degree of safety and less environmental impact as it operates solely on human pedal power.
- Additional jobs would be created to operate these bike tours.

- Usage of this 3 mile section of track would assist in keeping it clear for winter snowmobile usage and helps maintain it should it come back into service at some point in the future.
- I would be providing additional income for the state via the usage fee paid each year.
- I would be making use of a section of track which most likely will not be brought back into service based on the 18.5 million estimated cost of repair needed to run trains according to the June 30, 2004 Conway Branch Railroad Line Feasibility Study. *See attached Excerpt #4.*

***Benefits of P3 Implementation versus Conventional Delivery:***

I don't believe there are any benefits of treating this project as a P3 implementation versus a conventional delivery via the Rail & Transit Bureau. Because of the nature of my project, I would think it would be easier to just reach an agreement with the Rail & Transit Bureau as sort of a modified tourist railroad contract adjusting for the removal of train related requirements and inserting any bike related requirements.

***Similar Project Examples: (Have any other States or Municipalities to your knowledge pursued a similar P3 project?)***

To my knowledge there are no other similar P3 projects, especially since this type of biking is only offered by less than a handful of companies in the entire US. The State of Maine leases a section of track to a tourist railroad called Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railway and they have operated both trains and pedal powered bikes on the same track since 2010 with no issues.

**Contact Information**

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**Supporting Documentation**

***List of Supporting Documentation & Attachments, Including Maps:***

Attachment A – Excerpts from NH DOT documentation.pdf

**It should be noted that this Letter of Interest is completely non-binding, but will be used by the Commission to establish the appropriate process and framework by which to evaluate and advance projects. Following review of this project proposal the Commission will contact the applicant to communicate the next steps in the process.**