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October 26, 2026

Debra Clinton
Chair, UC Housing and Transportation Committee
244 Fair Street
Kingston, NY 12401

RE: Review of Final Barton and Loguidice Report

Dear Chair Clinton,

The CMRR has reviewed the Barton and Loguidice report. The CMRR has summarized our review and recommendations for the Committee in this letter. I appreciate your invitation to walk the committee through these recommendations as part of the Committee's deliberations on Thursday, November 5th.

Two key issues have been left out of the B&L report. First is that there is an existing bicycle bypass for the U&D Corridor between Stony Hollow and Basin Road that is fully compliant with Empire State Trail Design Standards (via Basin Road and Route 28a). This by-pass, already in use by bicyclists, completely eliminates the need to build a bike trail in the U&D Corridor and remove the railroad.

Second, the report is missing a cost benefit analysis, which is the way that most governments make investment decisions. This was in the original scope of the RFP but was dropped from the final contract. The lack of a benefits review means that the B&L study provided only half of the necessary information needed for the Committee to make an informed decision, which includes the economic benefits from the additional visitor ridership the railroad extension will bring to the ART and Trolley service to Woodstock.

Nevertheless, below is our feedback on the three options that the H&T Committee is reviewing.

Rail Only

This is the least costly selection as the CMRR has agreed to pay 100% of the cost of renovating the existing track from Stony Hollow to Basin Road, and building a new Rail and Trail terminal at Basin Road.

The extension will allow the CMRR to serve a transportation function in Ulster County, in addition to a scenic and event train. Currently, the CMRR can carry over 400 people in the six coaches it uses in Kingston, but can't take them anywhere. This extension will allow the CMRR to run a rail shuttle to the Ashokan Reservoir, the "Ashokan Express", and from there to Woodstock by Trolley, the "Woodstock Express".

B&L computed a price tag of $4.45 million for this option. The CMRR can do the work much more cheaply as it would use a different methodology. B&L assumed the track would be 100% removed, the line regraded and 100% reconstructed, which is how the County would have to perform the work if it did so. The CMRR's methodology, which it has used for successfully renovating the existing 4.5-mile track from Kingston to Stony Hollow, is to replace individual ties and not remove the track. Using this method

the renovation costs are only 10% of what B&L has indicated and it is within the CMRR's means to do so.

The CMRR has obtained a $667,000 grant from NYSDOT to build a Rail and Trail Station at Basin Road, and leases the land through which the County only has a rail-only easement from FAI LLC. The CMRR has through its lease with FAI LLC obtained the right to put a parallel trail next to the tracks, obviating the County's need to buy out the easement. See this link:

https://catskillmountainrailroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/West-Hurley-Woodstock-Train-Station-June-2025.pdf

By creating a multimodal attraction that enhances both the Ashokan Rail Trail and the Railroad, combined with a Trolley, the CMRR estimates that with the extension it will increase its 2025 ridership of 61,677 (52,062 or 84.4% are visitors) by 25,000. It will also increase its current $834,000 payroll (3 full-time employees, 36 part time and 118 seasonal), current $558,000 of expenditures in Ulster County and $10.3 million current economic impact by 40%. This will increase its economic impact on Ulster County businesses by $4.5 million to $14.8 million per year. See this link:

https://catskillmountainrailroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/CMRR-Economic-Impact-2025.pdf

As stated above, this is the least costly option for the County. Note that, the train will allow bikes to be brought up from Kingston in a special car at the rear of the train.

Trail Only

This option is anticipated to cost $4.08 million as stated in the B&L study. The negatives of this option are that it does not allow a rail connection of the Ashokan Rail Trail to Kingston – only to Stony Hollow. This trail extension to Stony Hollow would have no measurable positive economic impact, and no more users than currently use the Ashokan Rail Trail. It would be a "**trail to nowhere'**. The B&L report has on page 74 a last-minute addition of the 2025 proposal by Legislator Collins to terminate trains at Stony Hollow and use this as a Trolley stop. However, that site is infeasible for such an operation and the Trolley service will only happen if the CMRR's operations are extended to Basin Road. No train rider will walk the three miles uphill from Stony Hollow to the Glenford Dike on the Ashokan Reservoir.

Given the high cost of this trail-only option, and lack of a destination, it would be very difficult for the County to fund this option using grants, and would likely have to pay the entire cost from the County's budget.

Another negative for this option is that it blocks any growth for the CMRR, and even if a small parking area is created at Stony Hollow, it cannot serve as a terminal for the railroad. It just continues to make the CMRR a "**train to nowhere**".

The other negative is that it provides no option to extend the trail to Kingston unless the railroad is fully eliminated. With the concept of Rail-with-Trail defeated, the CMRR expects the rest of the railroad to be converted to a trail after the end of its current permit in 2028 as that will be the only way to extend the trail to Kingston.

Alternate Bike Trail Option

However, there is an alternate option for a bicycle connection between Stony Hollow and Basin Road that has been completely overlooked, and is far cheaper than the option presented by B&L.

In reviewing the design for the Empire State Trail, many official segments of the trail have been routed on lower volume and speed limit roads, such as the segment in Dutchess County on River Road. These are called "shared roadways". These are roadways for the trail that have no bike shoulder where the cars and bikes share the road. See this link to the Empire State Trail Design Guide:

https://empiretrail.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/EST%20Design%20Guide%20Oct%202017_0.pdf#page=142

One such roadway is River Road north of Kingston which leads to Bard College (see below). This road has a count of 2,063 cars per day on the NYS Traffic Data Viewer and is posted at 30mph.

See this link to the shared roadway:

https://empiretrail.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/EST%20NYSDOT%20On-Road%20Routes%20Draft%20Jan%202018.pdf#page=125

Basin Road and Route 28A parallel the U&D Corridor from Stony Hollow to Basin Road. They are both posted at 35mph and have traffic counts of 1,304 and 1,509 per day respectively, lower than River Road (compared to 18,281 per day on State Route 28).

This alternate route is an existing bicycle route that already meets the design standards of the Empire State Trail. Signing this route and making minor modifications to Basin Road and Route 28A is the least costly way to route bicycles from Basin Road to Stony Hollow. It is in fact used by bicyclists today as a preferred alternate to State Route 28.

This alternate route also passes by the Woodstock Land Conservancy's Rock Oak Preserve at 230 Basin Road which is partially built on an older U&D ROW. The Preserve would be a nice rest stop for bicyclists using this route.

See how the Alternate Route parallels the U&D Corridor (on this map Route 28 is above the U&D Corridor and the Alternate Route is below it:

Please note that the Ulster County Traffic Safety Board Resolution 2025-01 passed on April 7, 2025 applied to State Route 28, not this alternate route.

Rail with Trail

This option accommodates both uses. It allows the CMRR to reach the Ashokan Reservoir, build a multi-modal terminal at Basin Road, serve as a jumping off point for its Trolley to Woodstock, and grow from a scenic/event operation to serve a transportation function in Ulster County.

It also ties in with the existing County policy of Rail-with-Trail that is currently in place from Kingston to Stony Hollow, creating a continuous policy of rail-with-trail from Kingston to the Ashokan Reservoir.

Barton and Loguidice found that there were no significant engineering or environmental issues that would prevent implementing the Rail-with-Trail option from Stony Hollow to Basin Road.

The main negative for this option was the cost calculated by B&L at $16.31 million. Since the CMRR would be paying the $4.45 million for the railroad portion, the actual County cost would be $11.86 million or $7.78 million more than trail-only of $4.08 million.

The CMRR has reviewed the B&L Report and believes this cost can be reduced significantly through value engineering. B&L stated on page 28 of their report these national standards for trail width:

Multi-use Trail Width:	8 ft. (Min.) when constrained by environmental conditions and property availability 10ft. (Recommended) 14ft. when available and based on volume and use

In the cost calculations, B&L assumed a 14-foot trail with four a foot drainage ditch. Reducing the trail width to the minimum 8 feet with a 2-foot ditch narrows the trail by nearly 50%. The narrowing of the ditch by 2 feet is discussed on page 48 of the B&L Report. The CMRR estimated that this reduction would reduce the amount of material needed to be excavated from the Rock Cut by 79%. Reduction of the amount of material would allow excavating rather than blasting, lowering the costs by an additional 77%.

The CMRR also believes that the railroad and the trail can share the Beesmer Road bridge (inspected by the CMRR in December 2025) instead of building a parallel trail bridge. This would mean that trains would have to stop before proceeding across the bridge using flaggers. This is how the CMRR currently crosses all roads without active crossing protection. This saves over $1.1 million in construction costs.

In all the CMRR believes the additional cost of Rail-with-Trail can be reduced by over 90% (see attached exhibit) from $7.78 million to under $1m with no other changes other than narrowing the trail width and sharing the Beesmer Road bridge. These reductions of cost can be independently calculated by Barton and Loguidice if asked by the H&T Committee.

Alternate Rail with Trail Option

If bicycles use the more scenic route between Basin Road and Stony Hollow along Basin Road, with a stop-off at the new Rock Oak Preserve at 230 Basin Road then on to State Route 28A to Stony Hollow, the costs of the Rail-with-Trail option can be reduced even further.

The trail could be narrowed further to the 3-to-6-foot widths typical of a pedestrian-only trail. It would avoid nearly all excavation in the Rock Cut and lessen the Stony Hollow fill excavation significantly.

It should be noted that the CMRR has railroad grant opportunities that need the County's cooperation to pursue. The CMRR applied for a RWT grant in 2025 but the County denied their support. A new round of funding will be available in 2027. The CMRR has obtained $4.5 million in railroad grants through NY State, but they are all being blocked by the County pending the outcome of the Housing and Transportation Committee's decision.

Conclusions

Of the three options, the lowest cost alternative is rail-only as the County pays nothing and receives the economic benefits of extending the railroad to the Ashokan Reservoir and starting its Trolley service to Woodstock.

The $4.08 trail-only option is expensive and may not qualify for funding given its lack of a destination.

Selecting this option of "Trail Only" in the U&D Corridor does not solve any problems by creating an expensive $4m "**trail to nowhere**" that cannot be funded by outside grants. It also sets up further conflict from Stony Hollow to Kingston, given that once the concept of "rail-with-trail" is defeated, there will be no other way to link the Ashokan Rail Trail to Kingston except by eliminating the railroad altogether.

However, by making minor changes to Basin Road and State Route 28A (County Route 50), this alternate option, which meets Empire State Trail design standards, can be implemented quickly at a minimal cost, and does not require the railroad to be removed.

The RWT option is optimal for dual use, and would establish a precedent for developing RWT plan all the way to Kingston. The main issue is how to reduce the cost.

The CMRR's three proposed value engineering options – 1) narrowing the trail to 8 feet with a 2 foot ditch, 2) sharing the Beesmer Road bridge, and/or 3) modifying Basin Road and Route 28A for bicycle use with a pedestrian-only trail in the U&D Corridor, should be evaluated by Barton and Loguidice with appropriate repricing for each option before the Committee makes its final recommendation to the UC Legislature as they would significantly reduce the cost of "Rail-with-Trail".

Selecting "Rail-with-Trail" will start the process of getting the CMRR and the Trail community to work together on a transformational joint project from Kingston to the Ashokan Reservoir that will create a destination tourist attraction for Ulster County.

Finally, the H&T Committee needs to review the economic benefits of each of the three options so that the option with the highest return on investment can be selected. This means asking B&L or another consultant to make these calculations before a final decision can be made. Basing the decision on cost alone is again, only half of the equation.

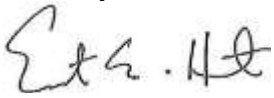
The CMRR favors either the rail-only option, the alternative trail option, or the value-engineered "Rail-with- Trail" option. The latter two are more difficult but obviously are the highest and best use of the U&D Corridor. However, it would be a huge mistake to remove the railroad when a bike bypass that already meets Empire State Trail Design Standards, and is currently used by bicyclists, already exists.

If the committee allows the Railroad to remain, the CMRR looks forward to working with the County and the trail community to make it work. But the railroad must stay.

Again, we appreciate the invitation to address the Housing and Transportation Committee at their November 5th meeting. However, we have also been invited by the Town of Woodstock to give a presentation and answer questions at a public forum on the subject of the CMRR extension and the proposed Trolley Service on November 18, 2026 at 6pm at the Woodstock Community Center, 56 Rock City Road, Woodstock, New York.

I suggest that all members of the H&T Committee, as well as any other interested members of the UC Legislature and County Executive's office attend the Woodstock meeting to gauge the public's input before any final vote is taken on a recommendation to the full Ulster County Legislature.

Sincerely,



Ernie Hunt
President CMRR

cc: UC Housing and Transportation Committee Members

Summary of Costs		Barton and Loguidice Report				CMRR	CMRR RWT
From Barton and Loguildice Study and CMRR		Trail Only	Rail Only	Rail with Trail	RWT vs Trail	Rail with Trail	vs B&L Trail
General Tree Removal		$50,000	$50,000	$50,000	$0	0	($50,000)
Rock Cut	Tree Removal			$430,000	$430,000	$50,000	$50,000
	Excavation			$4,242,000	$4,242,000	$210,236	$210,236
	Total Rock Cut	$0	$0	$4,672,000	$4,672,000	$260,236	$260,236
	Excavation Cubic Yards			19,100		4,043	4,043
	Price/Cubic Yard			$222		$52	
Rail Road	Track Removal and Tie Disposal	$384,000	$393,000	$393,000	$9,000	0	($384,000)
	RR Earthwork (Ballast)		$141,000	$141,000	$141,000	0	$0
	Railroad Reconstruction		$2,100,000	$2,089,000	$2,089,000	0	$0
	Total Railroad	$384,000	$2,634,000	$2,623,000	$2,239,000	$0	($384,000)
Stony Hollow FIll Earthwork		$494,000	$0	$1,299,000	$805,000	$1,299,000	$805,000
	Excavation Cubic Yards	9,500		27,500	18,000	27,500	18,000
	Price/Cubic Yard	$52		$47		$47	
Drainage/Storm Water Management		$102,000	$95,000	$102,000	$0	$102,000	$0
Stream and Water Protection		$143,000	$50,000	$293,000	$150,000	$293,000	$150,000
Total Drainage/Stream Protection		$245,000	$145,000	$395,000	$150,000	$395,000	$150,000
Beesmer	Renovate Rail Bridge	$150,000	$150,000	$150,000	$0	0	($150,000)
	Build Trail Bridge			$1,100,000	$1,100,000	$0	$0
	Total Beesmer	$150,000	$150,000	$1,250,000	$1,100,000	$0	($150,000)
Trail	Trail Constuction	$710,000		$710,000	$0	$710,000	$0
	Fencing/Landscaping/Benches/Interpretive Panels	$175,000		$188,000	$13,000	$188,000	$13,000
	Parking Area/Trailhead/Kiosk/Parking	$210,000			($210,000)		($210,000)
Total Trail		$1,095,000	$0	$898,000	($197,000)	$898,000	($197,000)
Subtotal Construction Costs		$2,418,000	$2,979,000	$11,187,000	$8,769,000	$2,852,236	$434,236
Land Title Costs		$225,000	$25,000	$225,000	$0	$225,000	$0
Total Direct Costs		$2,643,000	$3,004,000	$11,412,000	$8,769,000	$3,077,236	$434,236
Contingency		$483,600	$446,850	$2,237,400	$1,753,800	$603,313	$119,713
Total Construction/Land Title		$3,126,600	$3,450,850	$13,649,400	$10,522,800	$3,680,549	$553,949
Engineering		$250,000	$250,000	$450,000	$200,000	$250,000	$0
Construction Imspection		$250,000	$250,000	$400,000	$150,000	$250,000	$0
Inflation		$450,000	$496,000	$1,815,000	$1,365,000	$489,413	$39,413
Total Indirect Costs		$950,000	$996,000	$2,665,000	$1,715,000	$989,413	$39,413
Total Costs		**$4,076,600**	**$4,446,850**	**$16,314,400**	**$12,237,800**	**$4,669,962**	**$593,362**

Fully Costed	Barton and Loguidice Report				CMRR	CMRR RWT
Summary of Costs	Trail Only	Rail Only	Rail with Trail	RWT vs Trail	Rail with Trail	vs B&L Trail
General Tree Removal	$77,121	$74,015	$71,479	$0	$0	($68,323)
Rock Cut	$0	$0	$6,679,011	$6,520,128	$394,930	$355,600
Rail Road	$592,287	$3,899,135	$3,749,796	$3,124,693	$0	($524,717)
Stony Hollow FIll Earthwork	$761,952	$0	$1,857,028	$1,123,438	$1,971,341	$1,099,993
Total Drainage/Stream Protection	$377,891	$214,645	$564,685	$209,336	$599,445	$204,968
Beesmer	$231,362	$222,046	$1,786,979	$1,535,133	$0	($204,968)
Trail	$1,688,943	$0	$1,283,765	($274,928)	$1,362,790	($269,191)
Land Title Costs	$347,043	$37,008	$321,656	$0	$341,456	$0
Total	**$4,076,600**	**$4,446,850**	**$16,314,400**	**$12,237,800**	**$4,669,962**	**$593,362**