

Senate Transportation Committee

Kirsten Koch 271-3266

HB 311, establishing a committee to study rail trail best management practices.

Hearing Date: March 16, 2021

Time Opened: 1:45 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:54 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Birdsell, Watters, Ricciardi, Ward and Sherman

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes a committee to study and develop rail trail best management practices.

Sponsors:

Rep. Suzanne Smith

Rep. Weston

Rep. Gould

Who supports the bill: Rep. Suzanne Smith, Grafton 8; Rep. Andrew Renzullo, Hillsborough 37; Wendy Thomas; Joyce Weston; Robert Johnson, NH Farm Bureau Federation; Abby Evanknow, NH Rail Trails Coalition; Robin Vogt.

Who opposes the bill: Debbie Briscoe

Who is neutral on the bill: None.

Summary of Testimony Presented:

Rep. Suzanne Smith, Grafton 8

- Rep. Smith testified in support of the bill.
- Rep. Smith said this bill establishes a committee to study rail trail best management practices.
- Rep. Smith shared an anecdote about how a committee she was on took trip to the Presidential Rail Trail on OHRVs.
- Rep. Smith said, Rails to Trails found residual contaminants in dust which potentially includes chemicals, lead, arsenic, oil, gasoline, herbicides, and various metals including zinc and copper.
- Rep. Smith said, this bill establishes a committee to study how to reduce or limit exposure and the impact on trail users. The committee will seek input from DES, DHHS, and other experts.
- Rep. Smith said, the study committee includes three House Representatives and one Senator.

- Rep. Smith said, trail users will benefit from this bill.
- Rep. Smith said, there could be an amendment to change the requirement of the senator being from the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to the Transportation Committee, or the senators could also just add another House Representative instead of a Senator to the committee.
- Senator Watters said, I do not have a preference which committee the senator comes from. As for not having a Senator at all, is there precedent for a study committee without senators at all?
 - Rep. Smith did not have the answer but said she just offered it as an option.
- Senator Birdsell said, I think there has been committees in the past without senators on it.

Hon. Wendy Thomas, Merrimack, NH

- Ms. Thomas testified in support of the bill.
- Ms. Thomas said, this bill resulted from “we didn’t know what we didn’t know.”
- Ms. Thomas said this bill will help to those that live next to trails.
- Ms. Thomas said, we realized we have no best practices to protect against exposure to polluted soil. There are health concerns regarding abandoned trail tracks, asbestos in trains, oil spilled, and the fact that there are areas on these trails where no vegetation is growing.
- Ms. Thomas said, the rail trails used for tourism and recreation.
- Ms. Thomas said, we must protect ongoing maintenance and development of rail trails as well as prevent contamination of fugitive dust.

KNK

Date Hearing Report completed: March 17, 2021