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December 15, 2003

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Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Room 500
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20423-001

AB-444 (SUB-NO. 1X)

Reference:

Surface Transportation Board, Docket No. AB-44 (Sub-No.1X)
Lamoille Valley R.R. Co. Abandonment Exemption in Caledonia, Washington
Orleans, Lamoille, and Franklin Counties, Vermont.

Dear Committee Members:

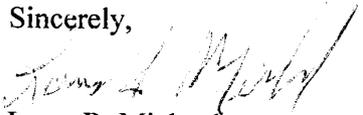
I am writing to express my strong support in the effort to "Rail-bank" the 96-mile corridor between Saint Johnsbury, Vermont and Swanton, Vermont -- to facilitate the conversion of this abandoned rail to an active trail. This is an extraordinary opportunity to provide area residents, visitors, and tourists with a place to enjoy healthy recreation activities to include: walking, bicycling, running, and cross-country skiing.

Beyond the recreation benefits stated above, this trail will provide a "place" for our youth, adults, and families to learn and enjoy lifelong healthy physical activities. The youth obesity epidemic in this country is out of control. According to reports by the Surgeon General's office youth obesity has tripled since the mid 70's (one in five for youth) and over 65% of adult Americans are either overweight or obese; these numbers are even higher in rural communities such as those located within a 15-minute drive of the proposed Lamoille Valley Recreation Trail. Later in life, these overweight and obese youth risk suffering from obesity's attendant diseases including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and arthritis.

Most people are no longer working in physically demanding jobs. People need safe places to exercise individually, with family, and with friends. This is an opportunity to "get on board" to positively affect our less physical active society. There are many other benefits to include linking communities, non-motorized transportation, and connection to one's place. Let's not miss this opportunity!

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Larry R. Michaels
Chair, Hardwick Trails Committee

Cc: James B. Fitzgerald, Lamoille Valley Railroad Company.
Becka Roof, Director, Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition.