

Town of Greenfield
Economic Development Advisory Committee

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www.greenfield-nh.gov/economic-development-advisory-committee

January 1, 2019

To: Jennifer Beck – Chair, Wilton Economic Development Team

Fr: Kathleen Carpenter – Chair, Town of Greenfield, NH Economic Development Advisory Committee

Re: *Letter in Support of Public-Private Partnerships (P3) Application to Bring Back the Tourist Train Wilton to Greenfield Line*

I am writing in support of the P3 Application concerning bringing back the Tourist Train Wilton to Greenfield Line. The train was once operated for several years by Stewart Draper. The train was a big attraction for not only our local residents and their families, but also brought increased non-resident traffic to our town and its events.

Greenfield's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) was chartered to "advise and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board on issues relating to Economic Development." These recommendations include working with other town boards and groups such as the Conservation Commission, the Greenfield Historic Society, the Greenfield GIVERS and others to act as a development forum for Greenfield businesses and residents.

Greenfield is known for hosting many seasonal events which are held in our central Oak Park. The park grounds sit directly across from the entrance to the Greenfield State Park, which is often frequented by out of town and out of state families. The tourist train, while it was operating, had a stop at the State Park, and while the train did not run often enough to coordinate with the State Park to allow for swimming and other day activities, it provided tourists the opportunity to see the beauty of the park and encouraged their patronage. Bringing back the train and possibly coordinating day passes with the State Park would lead to more, and much needed, revenue for both the State Park and Greenfield's Oak Park.



Tourist Train stop at Greenfield State Park



When operating, the train went further along the route and made a stop at one of Greenfield's local farms, Spring Pond Alpaca Farm. The train allowed riders to take a lovely leisurely ride through the towns of Wilton, Lyndeborough and Greenfield, ending at the farm where families could disembark and enjoy the farm store, see the animals, and take part in a variety of activities including hay rides and the annual Wool Arts Tour. When the train ceased to operate there was a direct and measurable impact in decreased patronage for such Greenfield businesses and events.

In 2013-2014 the Town of Greenfield, in conjunction with Plan NH and several other sponsors, produced a Design Charrette (https://www.greenfield-nh.gov/sites/greenfieldnh/files/uploads/charrette_2014.pdf) meant to put to paper plans that would result in a more vibrant town center by promoting economic development that included the social, economic and cultural assets of the Village. Additionally, in 2017/8 the Town of Greenfield completed its Master Plan (https://www.greenfield-nh.gov/sites/greenfieldnh/files/uploads/complete_master_plan_final_2018.pdf). Within the pages of both documents the town has refined and solidified its interest and commitment for revitalizing our downtown Village, increasing opportunities for economic development and attracting new businesses to take up residence in town.

Unfortunately, within the past couple of years, our town has faced several challenges in bringing these design ideas to fruition. Additionally, some of our Village local businesses have experienced a reduction in patronage causing a downturn for them. The Greenfield Inn (a privately-owned Bed & Breakfast) is currently for sale, our restaurant in the Village Center is

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closed, the State Park is experiencing a decrease in patronage, a Main St vehicle repair shop is for sale and some other Village properties have become vacant and are currently for sale. As a result, some local residents and business owners have recently gotten together to form a group that meets regularly to come up with new ideas. Our town Library has begun efforts working with CrossLink to connect our local business owners as well as sponsoring a variety of events and learning activities designed to bring both residents and non-residents together on a regular basis. We have many annual events coming up in 2019 that would benefit greatly from increased participation from residents and out of state visitors.



Reviving the tourist train, perhaps even providing additional coordinated stops that would include one in downtown Greenfield, would be paramount in Greenfield's ongoing revitalization and economic development efforts. It would likely be the catalyst in bringing many of our, and our neighboring towns, development efforts to a central and focused point.

The tourist train would certainly attract many more visitors to our downtown Village area, to shop at our local store, help to possibly promote new ownership of the restaurant due to projected increased patronage, families could ride the train to attend the frequent activities at the Town Library, Oak Park or even spend the day at the State Park. The Greenfield Conservation Commission is discussing a project to open a flower/butterfly (pollinator) garden in our downtown area (within walking distance of the tracks), which could also be promoted to families visiting the area by train. Others have discussed taking advantage of Greenfield's historic cultivated blueberry legacy by bringing back the Blueberry Jamboree as well as creating centerpieces in town to mark the town as a historic location.

The return of the tourist train between Wilton and Greenfield (and potential expansion to Bennington) would provide the community with a wonderful opportunity to bring more patronage to Greenfield's businesses and provide a venue for our local NH families to enjoy on a regular basis. There has been overwhelming support from Greenfield residents and businesses for the return of the train, and some have even thought to put together a multi-town group that would help support the train's return and coordinate the train's runs with local events and activities. With this support it has the potential to become a main tourist attraction for each of the small New Hampshire towns on its route.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Carpenter, Chair
Economic Development Advisory Committee
Greenfield, New Hampshire