

ASHLAND HERITAGE COMMISSION

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ASHLAND, N.H. 03217

March 11, 2016

New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee
21 South Fruit Street, Suite 10
Concord NH 03301

Dear Sirs;

The Ashland Heritage Commission is sending this letter to express its concern about the adverse impact the Northern Pass power line project could have on historic structures in Ashland, notably the railroad bridge and the highway bridge over the Pemigewasset River connecting Ashland and Bridgewater. In the current plans for the project, the overhead power line would cross the river just downstream (south) of the railroad bridge and within sight of both bridges, and the transition station would be built in Bridgewater just northwest of both bridges.

Our search of the NH Division of Historical Resources archives did not find any evidence that either bridge has ever been the subject of an historic inventory form or a determination of eligibility. But, we are certain that both would be found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

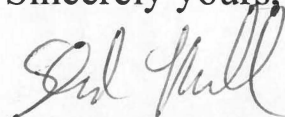
The railroad bridge was built for the Boston & Maine Railroad to replace a wooden covered bridge that burned in January of 1902. A new steel bridge was designed by John Storrs, the well known New Hampshire engineer, fabricated by the American Bridge Company in 1902, and erected in early 1903. It has been little changed since then. Glenn Knoblock chose the railroad bridge as one of the 37 New Hampshire bridges he featured in his book HISTORIC IRON AND STEEL BRIDGES IN MAINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE AND VERMONT (pages 125-126), an indication of its

historical importance. In 2002, the NH Division of Historical Resources found, in reviewing an area form for the Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad, prepared for a railroad bridge in New Hampton, that the surviving portion of the railroad line would be eligible, stating "Given the line's historical significance and intact integrity from Concord to Plymouth, at least that section of the BC&M appears to be eligible for the National Register as a linear transportation district." The DOE Committee decided that more research was needed to determine what to include in such a district, But, the Ashland-Bridgewater bridge, always one of the most important structures on the rail line, would certainly be a major contributing structure in such a district, and would no doubt also be eligible for the National Register as an individual structure.

The Route 3 highway bridge, known locally as Union Bridge, was designed by state highway engineers, fabricated by the American Bridge Company, and erected in 1938, to eliminate sharp turns at each end of the existing bridge and to raise the highway over the railroad tracks in Bridgewater. In 1988, a committee of officials from the State Historic Preservation Office, the N.H. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, reviewing the bridge along with other steel deck truss bridges for an HISTORIC BRIDGES INVENTORY, concluded that it had sufficient historical and technical significance and integrity to be inventoried on the National Park Service Registration Form. This was not a determination of eligibility, but it does indicate that the bridge possesses those qualities of significance and integrity that would place it on the National Register.

We believe that the review process for the power line should consider the National Register eligibility of both bridges and should carefully examine the impact of the project on these important historic structures.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Ruell", written in a cursive style.

David Ruell, Recording Secretary
Ashland Heritage Commission