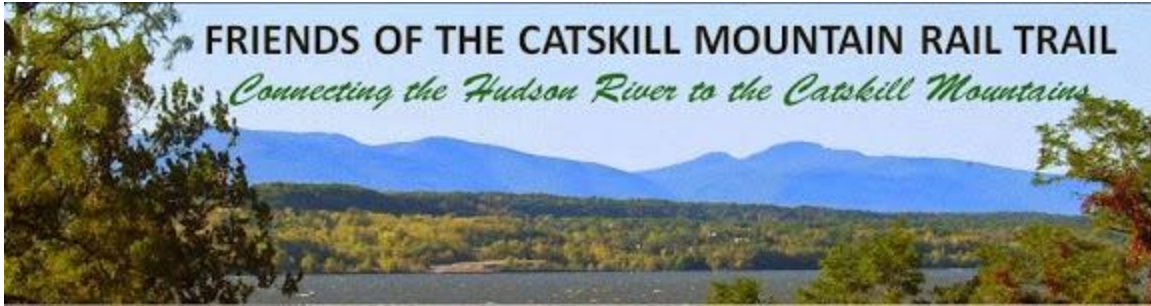




Facts are Stubborn Things

In the era of “alternative facts,” it’s easy to fall for emotions, misrepresentation and bias. But, as Mark Twain once said, “facts are stubborn things.”

The failure of the Ulster County legislature to pass Resolution 451 is a disappointment. The Catskill Mountain Railroad’s (CMRR) pressure campaign, characterized by personal attacks and misleading statements, distracted the legislature from serving county residents.

Ulster County must pass a resolution like 451 in early 2026 for several unambiguous reasons:

- The county-owned trestle over Basin Road, repeatedly struck by trucks, is a safety hazard and creates unnecessary liability.
- Removing the trestle is necessary for NYCDEP truck access during Ashokan Reservoir renovations. Keeping it would force a detour, adding 750,000 polluting truck miles and wear-and-tear on local roads.
- Simply removing the trestle without replacement would violate county policy, preventing future connectivity between the Ashokan Rail Trail (ART), CMRR’s tourist rides, and Kingston’s trail system.
- Replacing the trestle with a bike and pedestrian bridge serves rail supporters and trail advocates, since both groups seek walking and biking access to the reservoir property, providing safe non-motorized access to the ART.
- Resolution 451 shifts the cost of the necessary replacement to NYCDEP, saving Ulster County taxpayers.

Any controversy stems from the CMRR's long-standing "it's our way or the highway" ultimatum. To recap:

- For nearly 30 years, CMRR held exclusive control of the 38.6-mile corridor.
- In 2013, due to CMRR neglect and lease violations, the county took back portions for public use.
- CMRR sued the county but settled, agreeing not to interfere with the creation of the ART.
- The county then granted CMRR five-year permits (2015 and 2023) to operate tourist rides in the Kingston-to-Stony Hollow section, with the explicit condition that it bars applying for state railroad grants inconsistent with county policy or operating outside the designated area.
- CMRR has consistently violated these terms, including applying for state grants without approval (2023) and operating, installing fixtures, cutting trees, and applying herbicide outside the permit area (2024).

By aggressively opposing Resolution 451, CMRR has shown its true intention: to undo the progress of the past decade and expand into reservoir property, destroying the beloved Ashokan Rail Trail. A recent letter from the CMRR President confirmed the company's ambition to run trains across Basin Road. However, long-standing agreements with NYCDEP, which CMRR previously supported, closed that option more than a decade ago. Allowing trains there would require ripping up the ART and could potentially force the county to repay grants, all at taxpayer expense.

Ulster County residents deserve a partner, not an aggressor. We urge all parties to put the interests of county residents above the interest of a private business in the new legislative session by passing a resolution and finally confronting the CMRR's tactics with facts, reason, and courage.

About Friends of the Catskill Mountain Rail Trail

Friends of the Catskill Mountain Rail Trail is a volunteer coalition organized by the Woodstock Land Conservancy to advocate for a trail connection from the Ashokan Rail Trail to Kingston. It is composed of nonprofit organizations and concerned citizens from multiple communities along the Ulster & Delaware Corridor in Ulster County.

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