



The Valley Railroad Company

1 Railroad Avenue, PO Box 452, Essex, CT 06426

Phone: 860-767-0103 Fax: 860-767-0104

essexsteamtrain.com

July 3, 2018

Liz Glidden – Town Planner

Town Office Building,

30 Field Park Drive

Haddam, CT 06438

Dear Liz Glidden,

The Essex Steam Train and Riverboat is very encouraged by your decision to seek funding for pedestrian access improvements in the Haddam/East Haddam Swing Bridge region. This area contains some of the most unique cultural, economic, and environmental assets in the State of Connecticut, yet is currently lacking the pedestrian access needed to allow it to fulfill its potential. Your plan to link these assets together with safe sidewalks from the village of Tylerville extending across the East Haddam Swing Bridge into Goodspeed Landing in East Haddam is one of the most exciting and impactful public works projects to touch the area in memory.

The Connecticut River, and the iconic 1913 Swing Bridge, have long defined and anchored the region. The Goodspeed Opera House, home of the nationally renowned Goodspeed Musicals, has been at the epicenter of activity for over 50 years, drawing tens of thousands each year for Broadway-style productions on the eastern shore of the river in East Haddam. An intimate village containing Victorian-era homes and enticing restaurants, as well as a vibrant summer outdoor music scene, punctuate life at Goodspeed Landing. Across the bridge in Haddam, The Riverhouse banquet facility overlooking the river hosts hundreds of events per year. Eagle Landing State Park provides unparalleled access to the river and viewscape, as well as being a regular port for riverboats such as the Lady Katherine Cruise Line and the Riverquest. A gift and Americana shop in the historic train station has helped anchor the western shore for over 25 years.

The Essex Steam Train and Riverboat (growing with over 187,000 visitors in 2017) has been making significant investments in track, facilities, and operations in the area as it increases its presence on the belief that the region contains assets and attractions available nowhere else that are attractive to visitors. Dinner Trains, increased maritime operations, Fall Foliage day-trip excursions, eagle-watching trains, and trains that connect with the popular outdoor music series underscore our belief in, and our commitment to, the Swing Bridge region.

The missing link in fulfilling the promise of the area is the lack of pedestrian access across the historic East Haddam Bridge. Constructed in 1913 by forward-thinking community founders to



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economically link the two communities – even providing a set of tracks for anticipated trolley service - the traffic needs of 100 years later preclude this function for anything other than the automobile. While serving as the region's most recognizable focal point, at only 24' in width it currently does not possess space for a sidewalk on the existing structure, nor is walking across the narrow roadway a safe proposition. Events and activities tend to gravitate thusly toward one side of the river or the other, unless shuttle buses are used. Without a safe pedestrian walkway across the bridge, the region will fail to reach its ultimate potential. This is potentially the most significant missing piece of sidewalk in the State of Connecticut. 881' of missing sidewalk is separating this region from becoming one of the most treasured and walkable assets in the State.

Your efforts to secure funding for a cantilevered walkway along the edge of the bridge are commendable and to be lauded. Please know that the Essex Steam Train and Riverboat stands with the Town of Haddam in helping this area reach its full potential and accessibility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Bradway, Jr.", written over the typed name.

Robert W. Bradway, Jr.

Vice President

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