

To: White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) Forest Supervisor Derek Ibarguen
From: Cara Noferi
RE: Waterville Valley Resort Proposed Expansion Project #289908

As an Osceola I Townhouse owner, I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to WVR's proposal for the gondola terminal in town square to a mid-station terminal at Tripoli Road (referred to as the bottom segment in the EIS). While my comments in the following sections mostly pertain to my personal impact of the proposed gondola, I too have the concerns that others have addressed regarding the environmental, wildlife, and traffic implications with the proposed expansion.

I am also concerned, like others, of the fundamental change of the valley's natural beauty, unique charm and character that will result should WVR's concept for their gondola-centered, large-scale commercial redevelopment of the town square be approved. While WRV's objective is to create a connection between the town and the ski resort, unfortunately, the impact of the bottom gondola segment on the Town, or any of WRV's conceptual plans for redevelopment of the Town, is not part of the EIS and the U.S. Forest Service's decision-making process. This leaves the Town with huge long-term risks that could result from unvetted planning and approvals, lack of developer capacity, and inadequate financing leading to stalled construction projects or abandoned plans.

Route of Bottom Segment of Gondola Corridor

Osceola 1 Townhouses consist of two buildings with 6 townhouse units in each. The proposed route of the village gondola terminal to the proposed mid-station terminal at Tripoli Road cuts through the two buildings on Osceola's property, which are approximately 35 feet apart. Squeezing this two-way skyway of towers, cables and cabins is akin to "threading a needle" and leaves a minimal margin for safety, particularly during construction.



As noted in the EIS, trees and brush would be removed within approximately 50 feet of each side of the gondola corridor to serve as permanent emergency access and maintenance purposes. The impact of this required 100-foot-wide corridor would result in the removal of nearly all wooded and landscaped areas from our property line at Snows Brook Road and down the slope to the Mad River. The route would then continue up the foothills to the proposed mid-station terminal.

The gondola cables and hanging cabins passing directly above our outdoor gathering common area would occupy and alter the vertical air space – encroaching on our common area and degrading the scenery, quiet enjoyment and privacy we currently have.



Operation Hours & Night-time Activities

The gondola would be used year-round, and I expect the operating hours to be from dawn to dusk. Also, WVR has stated they plan to have night-time activities at the mountain, serviced by the gondola. In addition to the Dark Skies regulations, I am very concerned about lighting in cabins, the unrelenting humming from cable movement, and privacy infringement throughout the night.

Noise Intrusion and the "Fishbowl" Privacy Violation

According to WVR, the anticipated capacity for the bottom gondola segment which will hold 10 people/cabin is 1800 people/hour. An approximate interval time between cabins traveling to the mountain would be every 15-20 seconds (this doesn't include cabins returning to the town terminal).

Because the clearance is so narrow, the acoustic impacts will be heavily amplified compared to a standard open-mountain installation. Instead of the sound dissipating into open nature, the 35-foot-wide gap between the buildings would likely create an echo effect, bouncing the sound off the exterior walls and elevating the interior noise.

All day, every day, there will be a constant low-frequency humming and rhythmic thumping effect from the cables moving and when a cabin passes over the wheels on the towers located near both ends of our property, leading to a feeling of constant acoustic fatigue indoors and outdoors.

Regarding the fishbowl analogy, gondolas move slowly (usually 10 to 12 mph). Passengers sitting in the cabins will be suspended 40-50 feet up, looking directly down onto our private front patios and back decks, and will have site lines through our living room and bedroom windows.

Real Estate Devaluation

My family has owned an Osceola I unit since the early 80's – we've immensely enjoyed the quiet, peaceful and natural setting, the front-row mountain views of Tecumseh and Osceola, the babbling sounds of the Mad River, as well as the convenience of a quick walk to town square, the tennis center, golf course, and trails for walking and cross-country skiing. Given these attributes it certainly is an ideal location and likely would be a sought-after property on the real estate market.

Should this gondola construction be approved, not only would our quiet enjoyment, privacy and natural scenic views be compromised, but the market devaluation could result in a 20-40% reduction with an active skyway directly over the property, operating year-round and likely during nighttime hours.

Construction Disturbance

The disturbance to the Osceola property for the construction of the gondola infrastructure would be quite extensive and the timeline for such a massive undertaking is unknown. The U.S. Forest Service decision for this project is estimated for May 2027, and if approved, I would expect ground-breaking activities to begin soon thereafter, although a construction schedule has not been provided. This would include clear-cutting of trees through our property and continuing up the mountain, and what appears to be on WVR's conceptual plan, the closing of Village Road and demolition of the existing town square building adjacent to the ice arena.

As described in the EIS, the "proposed lift foundations would be installed with a combination of excavator, helicopter, cement truck, and by hand. A helicopter would be used to install all lift towers and to pour cement for tower foundations in areas of steep terrain. Explosives may be used to reduce ledge during excavation. Tree felling would be a mixture of hand cutting with chainsaws, small machinery and other logging machinery where necessary. Grading would involve the use of excavation, bulldozers, and dump trucks to create level areas for the proposed lift terminals."

Conceptual Redevelopment of Town

WVR's conceptual plan is presented as a graphic map, shown below, with future ideas for two hotels with a total of approximately 400 rooms and a conference center, five proposed private condominium complexes, two multi-storied garages, various commercial amenities, with the gondola terminal and corridor at the heart of the new town core. This massive development project would create an industrial-scale construction zone for at least a decade. For residents, property owners and local business owners, this would mean enduring years of continuous heavy machinery, construction vehicles on roadways, blasting, dust, and acoustic pollution. It would impact traffic and pedestrian safety, could drive away long-time return visitors and be deleterious to the Town's existing hospitality economy.

One of my major concerns with constructing the bottom segment of the gondola first, along with the huge undertaking of the expansion plans of the ski resort should it be approved, is the future financial viability of even just building and operating the 325-room hotel, conference center and restaurant (B/B1), let alone the other boutique hotel and all the other structures and amenities drawn on the map.

Granting a permanent federal Special Use Permit or municipal variances for the town redevelopment without secured financing and non-binding conceptual plans creates a high-risk situation for the Town, its residents, property owners and small businesses.



Waterville Valley Resort/Tyrell Development Company – Conceptual Master Plan

Alternative approaches

One of WVR's stated primary objectives of the proposed project is to create a non-vehicular transportation link (i.e., the gondola) between the town and the ski resort to increase ease of access and reduce vehicle trips and transport times between the two areas. However, WRV will be discontinuing the decades-long shuttle service for residents, property owners and guests from the town to the mountain, which will result in hundreds more car trips, defeating the stated purpose of reducing vehicle trips and minutes to get to the mountain. And as mentioned, there are no binding guarantees when the hotels' construction and operations will begin to serve guests desiring the town-to-mountain gondola experience.

Some alternative approaches to the construction of the town square gondola terminal and maintenance corridor that address some transportation and traffic issues are listed below.

- Modernize and expand town to mountain shuttle service, including improving the mountain parking lot shuttles' frequency and coverage.
- Improve existing parking lot with paving and safe walkways up to base lodge.
- The #1 negative aspect of the WVR experience cited in their customer survey is the drop-off and parking; investing in redesigning and improving the base lodge drop-off area, using land from the adjacent parking lots to eliminate congestion and safety issues, will enhance a welcoming and stress-free user experience.
- Build just the upper segment of the lift from the proposed mid-station terminal at Tripoli Road to the summit of Green Peak, as well as add frequent shuttles servicing the mid-station and the base lodge to and from the Town.
- Expand the parking lot at the proposed mid-station terminal to accommodate increases in skiers (only 80 spots for both staff and skiers are specified in the EIS). This will also help with diverting traffic for those driving to the base lodge for drop-offs and existing parking lots.

Thank-you for the opportunity and your consideration of my comments in the decision-making process.

Sincerely,

Cara Noferi