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Cynthia T. Brown, Chief
Section of Administration, Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20434-0001

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Re: Norfolk Southern Railway Company, Abandonment Exemption, Hudson and Essex Counties, NJ, AB 290 (Sub-no. 1408X)

Dear Ms. Brown:

On behalf of the East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECG) and the New Jersey Committee, we are pleased to endorse and support the issuance of an abandonment/railbanking authorization in this proceeding for the entire line at issue to facilitate Norfolk Southern Railway's (NSR's) sale of the line to the Open Space Institute for trail, greenway and compatible public purposes. This line is the recommended off-road route for the ECG.

The ECG "spine" trail runs 100 miles through New Jersey and is 56% complete. The Essex-Hudson Connector is a major gap within that spine, with important local, regional and state-wide implications. The ECG in New Jersey passes through bustling urban areas — Trenton, New Brunswick, Newark, and Jersey City — as well as quiet suburban settings and more rural landscapes than one might expect. The route includes 36 miles of the much-enjoyed D&R Canal Towpath. This major gap between Jersey City and Newark is the most dense, as well as the most dangerous, on-road section left in the New Jersey system.

The line has not been used for rail purposes for years. Conversion of this otherwise unused rail line to public use would support the growing regional trail network (through interconnections with proposed trails through the Bergen Arches/Erie Cut, the Harsimus Branch, and County Parks), recreational opportunities, and a multitude of other public objectives. The ECG is a 3,000-mile walking and biking trail being stitched together from Maine to Florida and is 33% completed. This improvement will increase the quality of life for residents in New Jersey, attract tourists to this world-class facility, and provide a safe, high-quality alternative to commuting by car.

Sincerely,

Tri-State Coordinator, East Coast Greenway Alliance
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