



National Association of
City Transportation Officials

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Executive Director

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Ms. Cynthia T. Brown
Chief, Section of Administration Office
of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW Washington,
DC 20423

RE: Docket EP 753 – Petition for Rulemaking

Dear Ms. Brown,

These comments, filed on behalf of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) are in support of a petition by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) for the Surface Transportation Board to establish a one-year negotiating period for railbanking and codify the STB's authority to extend the time allotted for good cause shown.

NACTO is a coalition of 79 North American cities and transit agencies working to provide communities with safe, sustainable transportation choices that support a strong economy and high quality of life. Recreational trails built along former rail corridors can restore vibrancy to abandoned areas while fulfilling a growing need for safe, multi-use public spaces. The practice of railbanking is essential for preserving these corridors and cities have long been leaders in negotiating to transform unused rights-of-way for transportation and recreational purposes.

The overwhelming majority of railbanking agreement negotiations take longer than the 180 day period currently allotted for these proceedings. Public entities must navigate complex regulatory and financing environments, which can lengthen negotiation processes for months or years. RTC's data on the time taken to meet the legal requirements for railbanking shows 78.1 percent of negotiations took over 180 days with half of all agreements taking one year to complete. For cities, especially those with fewer resources on hand, the ability to extend negotiation periods is critical for successful railbanking. A one-year negotiating period better reflects the needs of parties engaged in railbanking and would ease the administrative burden of requesting extensions.

Based on the considerations enumerated, we urge the Board to adopt RTC's proposed rule in Docket EP 753. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Corinne Kisner
Executive Director, NACTO

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