

**PUNXSUTAWNEY AREA
RAILS TO TRAILS ASSOCIATION**

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October 11, 2018

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Surface Transportation Board

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Re: Railbanking - **EP-749-1**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in my capacity as President of the Punxsutawney Area Rails to Trails Association. The purpose of this correspondence is to voice our organization's staunch opposition to the proposed rule changes that would significantly impair the ability of public-minded organizations and individuals to preserve rail corridors for interim trail use for the mechanism of railbanking. Our community of Punxsutawney, like many others, has experienced the tremendous economic, recreational and quality of life contribution that a rail trail system provides. The development of our trail was not without significant challenges, and, despite widespread support from the community and the local and county government, required eleven years from concept to completion.

The proposed changes to the railbanking rules would drastically impair the ability of trail developers and land managers to undertake the many complex tasks that are regularly involved in the process of railbanking. In particular, the proposed time limitations for negotiations are impractical, unworkable, and defy historical realities of a railbanking process. Had these restrictions been in place, it is doubtful that our trail would have been developed.

If the proposed changes are put into effect, the result will no doubt mean the permanent loss of historic and strategically important rail corridors which otherwise could have been preserved for future rail use as recreational greenway corridors. The preservation of these rail corridors are vital to our country's long term economic and infrastructure interests. The development of interim greenway usage is important to the health, recreation, and quality of life of our citizens.

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We respectfully request that the proposed rule changes be rejected in their entirety. Thank you for your consideration.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt B Taladay", with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end.

Matthew B. Taladay
President

MBT:kam