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Docket #: EP-753

Petition for Rulemaking

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These comments, filed on behalf of the Humboldt Trails Council (HTC), are in support of a petition by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy(RTC) for the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to establish a one year period for any initial interim trail use negotiating period. The RTC petition also seeks to codify the STB's authority to grant extensions of the negotiating period for 'good cause shown'.

HTC is a nonprofit agency that serves as a unified voice to support development, maintenance, and use of trails for recreation and transportation throughout Humboldt County, CA . HTC is currently involved in supporting a major rail-to-trail conversion that is preparing to enter into a rail-banking negotiating period with the STB. This trail, named the Great Redwood Trail (GRT) by the CA State Legislature, will link many communities on the North Coast of CA and be a major economic asset to the region.

The GRT passes through multiple jurisdictions, and there are environmental and historic preservation issues to be negotiated. The trail advocates and the railroad are all dedicated to making the conversion happen, but it will require public funding and legislative approval. At this point we have no idea how long this might take, and would greatly appreciate the regulatory relief of not having to apply to the STB for an extension after 6 months. Also, if the standard for future extensions was consistent with other STB rulings (good cause shown), we could be confident that our hard work will come to fruition.

Thank you for your consideration,

Bruce Silvey
Humboldt Trails Council