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July 19, 2021

Ms. Cynthia Brown
Secretary, Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

*Re: Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company–Application for Adverse
Discontinuance of Trackage Rights–Housatonic Railroad Company, STB Docket
No. AB 1311*

Dear Ms. Brown,

On behalf of Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), I write to express my strong support for the Metro-North Commuter Railroad's application to discontinue trackage rights on the Beacon Line from the City of Beacon east to the Connecticut border. PTNY's support for this application is premised on a concurrent action to "rail bank" the Beacon Line corridor, allowing development and operation of a multi-use trail, while preserving the corridor for rail use in the event warranted in the future.

The majority of this rail corridor, from Hopewell Junction in Dutchess County to Brewster in Putnam County, hosts a rail-trail that is a vital link in New York State's 750-mile Empire State Trail. The remaining section from Beacon to Hopewell Junction presents a unique opportunity to create an additional rail-trail segment that would provide transportation options for thousands of residents in the Hudson Valley with a direct connection to Beacon, where trail users would have the ability to connect with Metro-North's existing commuter rail network.

For more than 30 years, PTNY has helped to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout our state for use and enjoyment by all. Connecting destinations through a network of safe, enjoyable, and accessible trails and greenways has been a major focus of our work throughout this time. PTNY was intimately involved in the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Statewide Greenway Trails Plan, released earlier this year in accordance with New York State law. The Greenway Trails Plan envisions a network of shared use paths that provide all New Yorkers and visitors opportunities for healthy and active recreation, routes for alternative transportation, and the ability to connect to and enrich our communities and natural landscapes in urban, suburban, and rural settings. This state plan identifies the Beacon Line corridor as an important potential trail, providing a connection from the City of Beacon to the Empire State Trail.

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Discontinuance and abandonment of the corridor will not harm the public, as the Beacon Line has not hosted any rail traffic for many years. Construction and operation of a multi-use trail along the corridor is the most beneficial public use of the Beacon Line – providing transportation options for nearby residents, as well as outdoor recreation, tourism, and economic development benefits to local communities along the corridor and to New York State residents and visitors.

Parks & Trails New York strongly supports Metro-North's Application for Adverse Discontinuance of Trackage Rights, coupled with "rail bank" designation of the Beacon Line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robin Dropkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robin" and last name "Dropkin" clearly distinguishable.

Robin Dropkin
Executive Director

cc: All parties of record