



King County

Parks and Recreation Division

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

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April 8, 2019

RE: Docket EP 753 – Petition for Rulemaking

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

Dear Ms. Brown,

These comments, filed on behalf of King County Parks and Recreation, 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 an initial interim trail use negotiating period and codify the STB's authority to grant extensions of the negotiating period for good cause shown.

King County is home to over 300 miles of regional trails, many of which are railbanked. King County Parks owns and manages many railbanked trails including the East Lake Sammamish Trail, Eastside Rail Corridor, Cedar River Trail, and the Snoqualmie Valley Trail. These railbanked trails are an integral part of a system that provides residents access to nature, promotes tourism and economic development, and creates transportation alternatives in a rapidly growing region.

Over the decades railbanking has been successful in preserving railroad corridors to allow for trail use. This trail use provides open, accessible public spaces for people to enjoy, recreate, and commute while maintaining the integrity of corridors that would be nearly impossible to acquire in this rapidly growing region.

King County Parks supports RTC's petition to the STB in docket EP-753 to institute a separate rulemaking proceeding that would (1) extend the initial railbanking negotiating period from 180 days to one year and (2) codify the STB's authority to grant extensions for "good cause." Currently, the extension process isn't referenced in the Code of Federal Regulations, but the rule proposed in EP-749-1 would bar extensions beyond six "absent extraordinary circumstances." We support language that matches the "good cause" standard used in other contexts with the STB. Both components of the proposed rule would increase the clarity of the railbanking process, while a one-year initial negotiating period would also

reduce the number of times trail use proponents and railroads are required to file with the STB, increasing the efficiency of railbanking negotiations.

Based on our direct experience with railbanking negotiations before the STB, we urge the Board to adopt RTC's proposed rule in Docket No. EP 753.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathryn Terry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kathryn" and last name "Terry" clearly distinguishable.

Kathryn Terry
Acting Director, Parks and Recreation Division
King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks