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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE, VICE CHAIR
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

304650

May 26, 2022

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
May 27, 2022
Part of
Public Record

Honorable Martin J. Oberman
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Re: Docket No. AB 1316X

Dear Chairman Oberman:

I am writing in support of GNP RLY, Inc. ("GNP")'s proposal presented in the above-referenced docket before the STB to abandon rail service and to "railbank" a 2.58 mile segment of rail line that traverses the City of Woodinville. It is my understanding from GNP representatives that no rail traffic has moved on that line in more than two years, the line has been embargoed for safety reasons, and GNP filed a notice under the Board's exemption rules to abandon service on the Woodinville segment of the line as the requisite first step in the railbanking process.

I have supported the City of Woodinville, along with numerous other cities, King County, and private interests coming together to create the 42+ mile long regional trail network known as the Eastrail corridor. While other jurisdictions along this corridor have been able to progress that work thanks to previous railbanking efforts along their respective portions of the corridor, Woodinville has been unable to proceed because the Woodinville segment of the line has not yet been railbanked.

I understand that the City of Woodinville has worked closely with GNP, and in fact has an agreement with GNP, to mutually pursue railbanking and the City's goal of bringing its portion of the Eastrail regional trail system to fruition. This agreement, shared with the STB in a May 4 filing, stipulates that the City will acquire the easement from GNP and will become the trail manager with financial responsibility for maintenance of the Woodinville segment.

The conversion of the Woodinville segment to trail use has the support of the rail carrier (GNP), the last shipper that received freight service on the Line, King County and the other partner cities that have invested in development of the Eastrail project. I understand that the Office of Proceedings, on April 11, issued a short order that held GNP's exemption proceeding in abeyance, out of concern that GNP might abandon (rather than railbank) the Woodinville segment, and thereby strand miles of railbanked lines south of Woodinville, the same lines that are currently being developed as the Eastrail regional trail project. I understand that both the City and GNP submitted supplemental filings confirming the intent to railbank rather than abandon the corridor to assuage those concerns and trust those will address the concerns of the STB and allow lifting of that abeyance order.

The City and GNP each have strong interests in completing the railbanking process as soon as possible and have yet to hear from the Board they have satisfactorily addressed the “stranding” concern flagged in the April 11 Order and whether the abeyance order can be promptly lifted so that GNP and Woodinville can complete the class exemption process to railbank the Woodinville segment.

Given that the rail carrier and all of the public stakeholders are aligned with the Board on this issue, I write in support of this very important project that hinges on the support of your Board. I urge your expeditious, full, and fair consideration on this proceeding.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzan K. DelBene", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress