

246651

EP 749 (1)

Gary A. Falxa
1615 Swanson Ln
Eureka, CA 95503-
garyfalxa@gmail.com

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
October 31, 2018
Part of
Public Record

Dear STB Commissioners,

I am writing to express my entire opposition to the Surface Transportation Board's proposal to limit the total available time in which a railbanking agreement can be negotiated to only three years (Docket #EP_749_1). Railbanking has helped to protect thousands of miles of railroad right of way while providing crucial recreational and transportation alternatives to Americans across the country. I have personally enjoyed rails-to-trails in Illinois and elsewhere.

The Surface Transportation Board's proposal (Docket #EP_749_1) to limit the negotiation time for railbanking agreements to 3 years is not consistent with the purpose, and reality of railbanking. This proposal is short-sighted and counterproductive in that it will limit the number of railbanking projects that can be approved over time. Railbanking can be a complicated process involving many landowners, and the process should not be time-limited, and certainly not to only 3 years. The public gains nothing by, under this proposal, forcing rail lines to be abandoned, when railbanking could be achieved with less restrictive deadlines.

The Surface Transportation Board should instead set a deadline that prevents negotiations from continuing endlessly. A ten-year limit on trail agreement negotiations would allow all the complex layers of agreement and financing that are often part of rail-to-trail agreements to be completed, while still providing parties a real deadline to force final action.

I reside in northwestern California, and am an advocate for northern California's Great Redwood Trail. I am excited by the opportunities that railbanking the old Northwestern Pacific rail line offers to our region--for non-motorized transportation, recreation, and tourism. While I too would like to see the transition happen quickly, I also understand that such projects require careful planning to succeed, and I do not want an arbitrary timeline hampering our ability to successfully implement railbanking and trail development.

Thank you.