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Rule Making

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Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County NH

I am the Vice President of the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County, a 501(c) organization and these comments are in support of a petition by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for the Surface Transportation Board to establish a one-year period for the initial interim trail use negotiating period and to codify its authority to grant extensions of that negotiating period.

Our 37-mile trail stops seven miles short of its major goal, the City of Concord NH because these seven miles are owned by Pan Am, a local short line. Over the years we have tried to engage them in discussions about their plans for this section without success (although another local trail group has recently been more successful).

My take away from this experience is that for a short line railroad, the process of dealing with a small local trail group is well below their radar and it takes a long time to get them to even to consider negotiations, not because they are opposed to the process but rather it is so far down on their priority list that it just takes forever to get them to focus and respond.

As a small volunteer trail we need all the time we can get to get the railroad to focus on our issue. This proposed rule will allow us that time, and allowing more time has no adverse effect on the railroad and allows ultimately for the congressional intent behind rail banking to be effected.

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