

Italian Educational & Cultural Center Center for the Arts at Casa Colombo



Casa Colombo

July 27, 2016

Victoria Rutson, Director
Office of Environmental Analysis and Federal Preservation Officer
Surface Transportation Board Office of Environmental Analysis
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Honorary Trustee
Most Reverend
Nicholas Di Marzio

Re: Conrail Harasmus Branch, AB 167_1189X, NHPA Section 106 review

Board of Trustees:
Chairman
Dr. Louis Iozzi

Dear Ms. Rutson:

The Italian Educational and Cultural Center and Center for the Arts at Casa Colombo maintain core collections on the Italian immigrant experience, particularly in Jersey City and Hudson County. We sponsor educational exhibits and cultural events related to Italian heritage, and seek to ensure that Casa Colombo, built in 1936 by Italian immigrant craftsmen, is assured a proper place in the history of Italian immigration in New Jersey.

Secretary
Augusto Ferretti

Vice Chairman
Michael Colucci

Treasurer
Daniel Apruzzese

We recently provided facilities to your Office for an introductory meeting for consulting parties in a mandated National Historic Preservation Act review for the Harasmus Branch. We note that the 2008 Area of Potential Effects Report and Proposed Methodology for Section 106 Consultation: Conrail Harasmus Branch Abandonment does not adequately treat the cultural importance of historic properties along the Branch. Because examination has so far been limited to architecture and archeology, the preliminary findings of Conrail consultants even recommend that Holy Rosary Church, the first Italian parish in New Jersey and the center of religious, educational, and social life for the Italian community here for more than a century, not be recommended for the National Register of Historic Places because of renovations. Yet these renovations largely took place more than 50 years ago and in themselves speak to our history. Italian immigrants built the 1901 church by contributing 5 cents a brick, and the carved marble altar and the addition of an oak pulpit and an organ, all demonstrate the importance of Holy Rosary to an immigrant population struggling simultaneously to achieve life's material necessities.

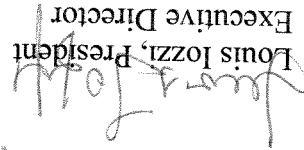
Trustees:
Virginia Aprigliano
-Laughlin
Anita Apruzzese
Rosemary Bergamo
Frances DePalma-Iozzi
Tony Franciosa
Nicholas Grillo
Vincent La Paglia
Giuseppe Minajo

Executive Director:
Carla Truncillo-
Mastropiero

Other Italian Village resources are also not considered. The Italian Village itself grew between the railroads that threaded their way through Downton Jersey City, and the remaining Harsimus Branch, running as it does past Holy Rosary and through the Village, is integral to this history.

We ask that consideration be given to the history and culture, as well as architecture, of the Village area, including our institution and its building, to Holy Rosary, and to other Village resources, as you continue your review of the Area of Potential Effect and potential adverse effects on the Harsimus Branch. We especially ask that you recommend complete preservation of the Harsimus Branch and its Embankment to your board.

Sincerely,

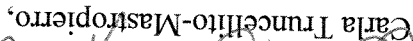

Louis Iozzi, President
Executive Director

Copies via email:

OEA: Cathy Nadals, catherine.nadals@sib.dot.gov.

ACHP: John Fowler, jfowler@achp.gov; Charlene Dwin Vaughn, cvaughn@achp.gov; Najah Duval-Gabriel, ngabriel@achp.gov

SHPO: Kate Marcopul, kate.marcopul@dep.state.nj.us; Andrea Tinguy, andrea.tinguy@dep.state.nj.us


Carla Truncellito-Mastropiero,