

October 12, 2020

Ms. Cynthia Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Surface Transportation Board Office of Proceedings
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

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Office of Proceedings
October 14, 2020
Part of
Public Record

Re: R.J. Corman Railroad Property Abandonment in Scott, Campbell and Anderson Counties, Tennessee, AB-1296 (sub-no. 0x)

Dear Ms. Brown:

We write to highlight the significant economic opportunities in a Rails to Trails conversion on the R. J. Corman Railroad, the Tennessee New River line, in Scott, Campbell and Anderson counties, Tennessee. It is indisputable that the rail line travels through very scenic wildlands and the renowned New River. In addition to offering a world-class multi day scenic walking and bicycling path, a trail would offer access to water-related activities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

Our intention is to assist the Counties in pursuit of a trail that would be a near-term, sustainable utilization of this corridor by bolstering eco-tourism opportunities. Similar projects elsewhere demonstrate considerable economic benefit from such trail projects. Economic analyses conducted by Headwaters Economics estimate that similar rails-to-trails projects in Virginia, the New River Trail and the Virginia Creeper Trail, generate between \$1.6 million and \$3.4 million for the local economies. See <https://headwaterseconomics.org/trail/12-virginia-creeper-rail-trail/> and <https://headwaterseconomics.org/trail/66-new-river-state-park-water-trail/>.

We've had conversations with officials in two of the Counties which indicate that there would be interest in development of a rails-to-trails project. This proposed trail could easily connect to mainstays of the area's widely recognized outdoor recreation venues the Frozen Head State Park, Cumberland Trail State Park, and Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. Such synchronicity will strengthen area tourism efforts.

Presently, there is no economic benefit in preserving the railroad line. There are no existing or near-term customers ready to place orders for shipments and the owners have concluded that a Rail to Trail option is the

best option for any significant near-term economic benefit to the counties. The corridor will remain intact for later re-establishment of rail service under this option should such use be deemed needed and appropriate.

We ask the Board for a timely decision in favor of R. J. Corman Railroad's abandonment. We oppose staying this process.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David J. Corman".

Cumberland Trails Conference

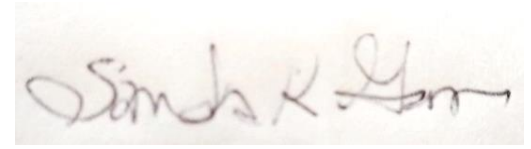
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Bevelhimer".

Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on October 14, 2020, I served the foregoing Reply using the below email addresses on all parties of record in this proceeding:

October 14, 2020



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