

**Hudson River
Valley Greenway**

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
July 14, 2021
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Public Record

Ms. Cynthia Brown
Secretary, Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company—Application for Adverse Discontinuance of Trackage Rights—Housatonic Railroad Company, STB Docket No. AB 1311.

Dear Ms. Brown,

The Hudson River Valley Greenway is a New York State agency charged with creating the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail, and facilitating creation of the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile bicycling and hiking route across New York State (see www.empiretrail.ny.gov).

We write to support Metro-North's application to discontinue trackage rights (e.g. abandon) the Beacon Line from the City of Beacon east to the Connecticut border. The majority of this rail corridor, from Hopewell Junction in Dutchess County to Brewster in Putnam County, hosts a recreational rail-trail that is a vital link in the Empire State Trail. The remaining section from Beacon to Hopewell Junction presents a unique opportunity to create an additional rail-trail segment.

The Greenway's support for discontinuing trackage rights is premised on a concurrent action to "rail bank" the Beacon Line corridor, allowing development and operation of public recreational trails, while preserving the corridor for transportation use in the event warranted in the future.

Discontinuance and abandonment of the corridor will not harm the public, as the Beacon Line has not has not hosted any rail traffic for many years. Construction and operation of recreational trails is the most beneficial public use of the Beacon Line corridor – providing outdoor recreation, tourism, and economic development benefits to local communities along the corridor and New York State residents and visitors.

In summary, the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Empire State Trail program strongly support Metro-North's Application for Adverse Discontinuance of Trackage Rights, coupled with "rail bank" designation of the Beacon Line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Keller".

Scott Keller
Executive Director
Hudson River Valley Greenway

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy Beers".

Andy Beers
Director
Empire State Trail

CC: All Parties of Record