



TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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March 21, 2022

Mr. Martin J. Oberman
Surface Transportation Board Chairman
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
March 21, 2022
Part of
Public Record

RE: STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 262X) – Union Pacific Railroad Company Abandonment and Discontinuance of Elm Industrial Lead in Fulton and Peoria Counties, Illinois

Mr. Oberman,

On behalf of the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Peoria-Pekin Urbanized Area, I encourage you to issue the substitute Notice of Interim Trail Use (NITU) and extend the NITU Negotiation Period for the Village of Hanna City. The current NITU Negotiation Period is set to expire on March 30, 2022.

Before 1980, the Union Pacific (UP) Elm Industrial Lead, known locally as the Hanna City Trail, was used as a railway by the UP Railroad. Since then, however, it has been inactive and needs special care to unearth a new regional gem. It wasn't until 2008 when the UP filed with the Surface Transportation Board an Abandonment and Discontinuance of the Elm Industrial Lead in Fulton and Peoria Counties, Illinois. Since the 2008 filing, local governments and stakeholders have been working together to try and purchase the corridor.

This corridor runs 24.7-miles from Kickapoo Creek in Peoria County to about five miles west of Farmington in rural Fulton County, potentially connecting to major nature areas including Wildlife Prairie Park and the Rock Island Trail. It crosses small communities including Bellevue, Hanna City (its namesake), and Farmington. The crucial linkage of the Hanna City Trail would not only bolster our region's environmental network, but it would also open the door to immense economic benefits.

In 2015, Peoria County was awarded funding through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Recreational Trails Program (RTP) to purchase the right-of-way. Unfortunately, due to the State of Illinois budget impasse, Peoria County was forced to return the grant funds to FHWA.

In 2020, TCRPC helped the Village of Hanna City apply for a \$2.1 million grant through the FHWA RTP and secure local match through an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to purchase the rail corridor. TCRPC staff hand-delivered the grant application on March 2, 2020, and it was

not until 22 months later, on January 10, 2022, that Hanna City received final confirmation that the grant was awarded.

This invaluable project has transcended decades, county lines, two economic downturns, and even a pandemic. The economic and recreational aspects of the proposed Hanna City Trail have the potential to have vast ripple effects throughout the region and state. These will bolster economic incentives already created by the Rock Island Trail and Greenway. The issuance of a substitute NITU and extension of NITU negotiation period will give Hanna City additional time needed to finalize the purchase and spur generations of trail users, inspire nature lovers, and ignite local community pride.

I would greatly appreciate your full and fair consideration of the Village of Hanna City's Motion for Issuance of a Substitute NITU and Motion for Adjustment of the Substitute NITU Negotiation Period. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Eric Miller
Executive Director

Parties of record have been given an email copy of this submission on 21 March 2022.

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