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Catherine Julie Golden
P.O. Box 340
Hopland, CA 95449

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Surface Transportation Board:

**RE: AB 1305 1 GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL AGENCY - ADVERSE ABANDONMENT -
MENDOCINO RAILWAY IN MENDOCINO COUNTY**

I'm writing to request that your board votes to not support the Rail Banking request by the Great Redwood Trail Agency for the portion of the rail line from Cloverdale to Willits.

As life-long citizen, business owner, mother and landowner/farmer I truly want to see a train returned to the line from Cloverdale to Willits. Our underserved community has a pressing need for public transportation while being forced to remove cars and transport vehicles from the roads. SMART train is running their line to Cloverdale and at that junction they or another carrier could run up to Willits, approximately 40 additional miles. Since the 2017 fires that started in five areas starting in Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino County we've seen a huge increase in commuters. Many have relocated to Willits and commute as far south as Petaluma each day, making that a 3-hour round-trip. We also have to deal with the price of fuel and many of the employees in the service industry can't afford to purchase fuel to commute from Ukiah to Hopland. In Hopland alone we have three major wineries: Fetzer, Duckhorn, Vintage Wine Estates which employ more than 300 employees that drive into our small town each day. We have a charter school where parents commute from Cloverdale, Willits and Ukiah each day, we have the Hopland Band of Pomo's where many of their children have to drive to High School in Ukiah. This is just a small example of the people that are on the road each day and could be riding a train. There are stations in Willits, Ukiah, Hopland and Cloverdale if used, would greatly benefit the underserved communities.

We also have many grape growers that would use the train to transport their wine grapes from Ukiah and Hopland to Geyserville or Santa Rosa. Taking large transport trucks off the road would be beneficial to all of us.

Senator Mike McGuire has stated on public record in November 2022 that the Great Redwood Trail would need to rail bank the line between Cloverdale and Willits so they could build the trail on top of the railbed. He said it's not financially feasible to build a trail alongside the rail. We all have read the statistics and know that "rail banking" is more of a term to gaslight the tax payers making them believe that a train would be able to return within a specific timeframe but after research I've found that only less than 1% of the rail banked lines ever see a train return. The

costs are too great once the steel rails are removed and sold and all of the other environmental issues addressed.

I'm 100% in support of a trail alongside the rail. I personally own a 2000 acre working ranch on the Ridgewood Grade which has 5 miles of rail running through it. I also own a 12-acre commercial parcel in Ukiah with the rail.

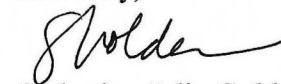
The issues I experience in Ukiah are many and horrific. The Great Redwood Trail has begun it's build-out in Ukiah and has a paved trail alongside the rail for a few miles both north and south of Ukiah. This improvement has made it very easy for the homeless to spread out of Ukiah and build camps on private property. It's more convenient and safer to live outside of Ukiah if you are homeless but you have to get to the center of town for all of the services they receive. I've had 2 big grass fires started on the 12 acre parcel and am thankful we've not lost any structures or had anyone harmed. I lease the land to 3 contractors who park their working trucks and trailers there after their work day and over the weekend. We've had to hire a 24-hour guard to work there 7 days a week to ensure the equipment is not vandalized or set on fire. I've very lucky that I've not had to report any loses to my insurance company. The insurance underwriters are already not insuring many of our homes and businesses because of the past fire issues here in our area, and when a few claims are paid out due to fires set on the rail corridor, I'm sure the underwriters will stop writing policies for any landowner who has property adjacent to the Great Redwood Trail. Senator McGuire has told the property owners that we would have to police our own property, provide our own insurance and bear the cost of cleaning up the garbage and human waste from all who use the trail alongside our land. This is also unacceptable.

Please do not Rail Bank this section of the line. If a rail service was restored we'd all welcome working with a transportation company that would provide insurance and security as well as allowing a trail to be built alongside the rail.

I along with most all of the landowners on this section of the rail truly hope that the STB will vote to turn down the rail banking of this section.

I certify that all parties to this proceeding have been served this letter.

Sincerely,



Catherine Julie Golden

Cc: weather@sonic.net; delliott@gklaw.com; wmillins@bakerandmiller.com; david@schonbrunn.org; brucesilvey@humtrails.org; eservice@stb.gov; MILSS@stb.gov