

From: [Tabachnick, Alan](#)
To: [Maureen Crowley](#)
Cc: [Stephen Gucciardo](#); [Gosselin, Danielle](#); [Miller, Barbara](#); [Kitay, Evelyn](#); [Stevens, Karen](#); [Webster, Elizabeth](#)
Subject: RE: Hold the Date: Proposed Harsimus Branch Abandonment, Section 106 Online Public Meeting, September 28, 2023
Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2023 4:01:00 PM

Thank you for reaching out. OEA would like to answer your questions submitted on September 5th and provide some additional information and clarifications.

1. Thank you for setting up a public meeting. As the Coalition stated previously, we think the meeting should be in-person, here in Jersey City where the site that is the subject of a board decision so important to residents of the City and County is located. We reiterate our request for such a meeting.

Response: OEA is very interested in continuing our outreach efforts on this project. In response to a number of requests by the Consulting Parties, we have scheduled a virtual public meeting for September 28, 2023, from 5pm to 9pm. This meeting will offer the opportunity for any member of the community, including of the Consulting Parties, to provide input on the proposed Harsimus Branch abandonment. Virtual public meetings have become commonplace since the pandemic and allow all interested parties with an internet connection to easily participate. In-person meetings are not necessary for effective and full participation in the Section 106 process.

2. Who are the "Interested Parties" that received your notice and presumably will be invited to the virtual meeting? We would like to point out again that members of the general public may not be aware of the STB proceedings and/or especially the implications, both personal to them and for the region's future, of the board's expected decision. We also point out that not everyone has access to the internet or the skills necessary to navigate virtual meetings, so this meeting will necessarily be open only to a technically adept segment of the public you are able to reach.

Response: The term "interested parties" broadly refers to anyone who may have an interest in this proceeding. OEA is undertaking an extensive notification and publicity program to ensure that the upcoming meeting information is widely available. OEA has emailed meeting information to well over 1,000 people, advertised in the Jersey Journal (both online and paper versions), mailed information to 208 addresses along the Harsimus Branch, and asked the City of Jersey City to help publicize the meeting to their constituency. In addition, information about the meeting will be posted on the Board's website (www.stb.gov) in a press release. The technology needed to participate in the virtual meeting is widespread, and OEA will provide technical assistance on request. Internet access is also publicly available at various locations including public libraries. Participants may also call in to the meeting using the phone numbers we will provide.

3. Do the "interested parties" include property owners and residents along the Harsimus Branch who will be most directly affected by the board's decision? Or are these simply the contacts you have from the consulting parties or past commenters? Please publish a list of those you contacted.

Response: OEA sent a meeting notification with information on how to participate in the meeting to each property adjacent to the Harsimus Branch, from Marin Boulevard to north of Brunswick

Street. OEA also sent meeting information to individuals and organizations who have participated in the environmental and historic review process and provided their contact information, all of the Consulting Parties, community groups and other organizations identified by the City of Jersey City as part of their efforts to promote awareness of this public meeting, and public officials. This is a very comprehensive outreach program. Because people and groups contacted include people who have not consented to the distribution of their contact information and the identity of Consulting Parties and those who have commented during the environmental and historic review process is publicly available on the Board website, we will not be publishing a list of individuals who have been contacted.

4. What actions will you be taking to publicize this virtual meeting to the general public, not just "interested parties"?

Response: See response to question 2. above.

5. What is the anticipated capacity of the virtual meeting?

Response: The capacity for the virtual public meeting is 500 attendees.

6. How will the comments previously submitted and those presumably to be gathered at this planned meeting be presented to the board when it makes its decision regarding abandonment? The relationship of OEA, its recommendations to the board, and the board's ultimate decision remains opaque to us.

Response: All comments received after the June 8, 2023 Section 106 Consulting Parties meeting have been posted publicly on our website, under Docket Number AB 167 (Sub-No. 1189X) and are a formal part of the environmental record for the case. The transcript from that meeting including all comments and statements made during the meeting has also been posted and is part of the record. The transcript from the upcoming September 28, 2023 public meeting will be posted and become part of the record, as will any written comments submitted after the meeting. As we have previously explained, OEA conducts the NEPA and Section 106 review on behalf of the Board and then presents its findings and recommendations to the Board for consideration in the final decision on authorization. In making its decision on whether to authorize abandonment, the Board will weigh OEA's findings and recommendations, the entire environmental record (including comments and responses), and the transportation merits, and, after weighing those factors, will issue a final decision approving, denying, or approving with the imposition of conditions a grant of abandonment authority to Conrail.

Thank you again for your comments and questions. We look forward to meeting with you on September 28, 2023.

Alan Tabachnick

Federal Preservation Officer

Surface Transportation Board
Office of Environmental Analysis
395 E St SW
Washington, DC 20423

202-245-0367 (o)
202-934-8469 (c)
alan.tabachnick@stb.gov

From: Tabachnick, Alan
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 4:54 PM
To: Maureen Crowley <mcrowley@embankment.org>
Cc: Stephen Gucciardo <gucciardos@comcast.net>
Subject: RE: Hold the Date: Proposed Harsimus Branch Abandonment, Section 106 Online Public Meeting, September 28, 2023

Hi. We will be sending out a more detailed reply to your first email in the next day or so. We appreciate your disseminating the information to your contacts as much as you are able. We are mailing meeting information to properties adjacent to the Embankment blocks with an invitation to attend the meeting. We are also sending emails to over 1,000 people who have provided comments or input over the years on this case. In addition, Maggie O'Neill with Jersey City is sharing the meeting information with her network across the city, which is very helpful. And we are placing an advertisement in a local paper (both paper version and online) starting mid-next week. This is a robust outreach effort to the general public in the area, in addition, of course, to the core Consulting Parties. I apologize for not responding sooner but hope this overview information is helpful.

Alan Tabachnick

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From: Maureen Crowley <mcrowley@embankment.org>
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2023 1:42 PM
To: Tabachnick, Alan <alan.tabachnick@stb.gov>
Cc: Stephen Gucciardo <gucciardos@comcast.net>
Subject: Fw: Hold the Date: Proposed Harsimus Branch Abandonment, Section 106 Online Public Meeting, September 28, 2023

Hello, Alan,

The Coalition will do its best to inform people about this upcoming meeting, but we'd especially like to know if you plan to send mail to the owners of properties adjacent to the Branch, as they would be most immediately affected by demolition and redevelopment of the Embankment and the rest of the Branch - very likely including years of direct adverse effects to their properties and the well-being of residents.

Thank you for whatever info you can timely provide,

Maureen

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Maureen Crowley <mcrowley@embankment.org>

To: Tabachnick, Alan <alan.tabachnick@stb.gov>

Cc: Danielle Gosselin <danielle.gosselin@stb.gov>; Evelyn Kitay <evelyn.kitay.ctr@stb.gov>; Barbara Miller <barbara.miller@stb.gov>; Elizabeth Webster <elizabeth.webster@stb.gov>; Karen Stevens <karen.stevens@stb.gov>; Stephen Gucciardo <gucciardos@comcast.net>

Sent: Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 11:30:57 AM EDT

Subject: Re: Hold the Date: Proposed Harsimus Branch Abandonment, Section 106 Online Public Meeting, September 28, 2023

Good morning, Alan,

Thank you for setting up a public meeting. As the Coalition stated previously, we think the meeting should be in-person, here in Jersey City where the site that is the subject of a board decision so important to residents of the City and County is located. We reiterate our request for such a meeting.

We also have the following questions about the virtual meeting:

1. Who are the "Interested Parties" that received your notice and presumably will be invited to the virtual meeting? We would like to point out again that members of the general public may not be aware of the STB proceedings and/or especially the implications, both personal to them and for the region's future, of the board's expected decision. We also point out that not everyone has access to the internet or the skills necessary to navigate virtual meetings, so this meeting will necessarily be open only to a technically adept segment of the public you are able to reach.
2. Do the "interested parties" include property owners and residents along the Harsimus Branch who will be most directly affected by the board's decision? Or are these simply the contacts you have from the consulting parties or past commenters? Please publish a list of those you contacted.
3. What actions will you be taking to publicize this virtual meeting to the general public, not just "interested parties"?
4. What is the anticipated capacity of the virtual meeting?
5. How will the comments previously submitted and those presumably to be gathered at this

planned meeting be presented to the board when it makes its decision regarding abandonment? The relationship of OEA, its recommendations to the board, and the board's ultimate decision remains opaque to us.

Sincerely,
Maureen Crowley, Coordinator
Embankment Preservation Coalition

On Monday, August 28, 2023 at 04:16:35 PM EDT, Tabachnick, Alan <alan.tabachnick@stb.gov> wrote:

To: Interested Parties

Re: Hold the Date – Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act Online Public Meeting on September 28, 2023 re: Conrail's proposed abandonment of the Harsimus Branch in Jersey City, NJ, Docket No. AB-167 (Sub-No. 1189X)

The Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) is hosting a Section 106 public meeting online, on September 28, 2023, in the pending rail-line abandonment proceeding referenced above. The meeting will be held virtually and will start at 5:00pm Eastern and conclude at 9:00pm Eastern.

The purpose of this meeting is to update the public on the case and the status of the Section 106 process, and to provide the public with an additional opportunity to comment on the current status of the case.

Meeting details, including the agenda, log-in information, and other logistics will be circulated at least two weeks prior to the September 28 meeting. We encourage your participation and look forward to meeting with you, providing you with an update on the status of the case and the Section 106 process, and hearing your comments.

Alan Tabachnick

Federal Preservation Officer

Surface Transportation Board

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