

From: [Debra Kagan](#)
To: [Tabachnick, Alan](#)
Subject: Harsimus Testimony
Date: Friday, September 29, 2023 12:25:07 PM
Attachments: [attachment.tiff](#)
[NJBWC Testimony - Harsimus Hearing.pdf](#)

Alan,

I had signed up to testify last night on the STB hearing on the Conrail abandonment of the Harsimus Branch and Embankment but I had to leave after two hours of waiting. Attached is my testimony on the issue.

Thank you,
Debra

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(she/her)



september 28, 2023

My name is Debra Kagan and I am the Executive Director of the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition.

NJBWC spearheaded the advocacy that resulted in the State's purchase of the old Boonton line to create the NJ Greenway as the next NJ State Park, one that the Governor referred to will be the crown jewel in the state park system. This ground-breaking infrastructure project for a walking and biking trail with potential for transit runs from Montclair to JC. It is PART of an envisioned regional greenway plan that will connect the two other rail to trail projects the Bergen Arches and the Harsimus Branch and Embankment to complete an alternative transportation and green infrastructure corridor from the western suburbs to the Hudson river.

Together, these historic rail lines will also provide an off-road route for the East Coast Greenway and the 9/11 National Memorial Trail This corridor is an essential component of a transportation network and open space asset that will have a transformational effect on the whole region. In Jersey City, this proposed route using old rail lines preserves historic resources and further enhances the historic significance of historic districts, sites, and buildings along the way.

It's critical for the STB as an agency serving the public interest to help the public preserve these resources and protect their future potential as part of this essential transportation corridor. As the STB OEA is obligated "to avoid, minimize or mitigate" adverse effects to historic resources in this case removing the Harsimus Branch from federal jurisdiction, under the current MOA issued, does not protect this invaluable historic icon for JC by simply calling for documentation and signage. It allows for this property to be developed privately and therefore removed from its potential to be a full public asset and exist only as a historical memory. This is clearly an adverse effect.

We mustn't lose the opportunity to preserve this unique historic space for generations to come and to position it to be incorporated into a regional greenway that will provide a multitude of benefits from combating the effects of climate change to economic to equitable mobility for literally millions of NJ residents. Now is the time to explore ways to truly mitigate the adverse effects and write it into a binding MOA. Our children will thank us for generations.

Thank you this opportunity to address the STB on the issue.



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