

May 28, 2024

Diana Wood
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Re: Docket No. AB 1332X – Athens Transportation Partners, LLC Abandonment Exemption

Dear Ms. Wood,

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) notes that the rail line under consideration for abandonment is recognized as a Regionally Important Resource (RIR) in the *Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources* (2018). Also, the Athens Line is adjacent to another RIR, the Oconee Hill Cemetery. An RIR is a regionally significant natural or cultural resource area that has been identified for protection. This plan also identifies the rail line as being within the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network for its potential to contribute to part of a strategically planned and managed network of parks, greenways, and conservation easements that improve the health and quality of life for the communities sharing the network.

While the Resource Management Plan notes line abandonment as a potential threat to the integrity of the resource, the description of what the University of Georgia intends to use the Athens-Clarke County portion of the corridor for post-abandonment (e.g. using the corridor for multi-modal purposes) aligns with what our office included in our assessment as a potential future use for this segment. We do not foresee any adverse environmental effects from the proposed line abandonment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Mark Beatty
Director, Planning and Government Services