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Ms. Cynthia T. Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

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RE: Docket EP-749-1 – Proposed Rulemaking to Limit NITU's to a Maximum of Six (6) 180-Day Extensions

I am filing these comments in behalf of myself and others who actively and daily use rail-trails in daily activities. I am in opposition to the proposed rule by the STB which would limit the number of extension periods for trail use negotiations. I ask that there be no limit to the period(s) of negotiation once begun and maintained.

Railbanking allows states to preserve railroad rights-of-way for interim non-motorized trail use. It has provided safe public spaces for recreation and transportation and conserved thousands of miles of rail corridor from abandonment or worse: the loss of a national resource. Assembling such rights-of-way in current times would be nearly impossible because of the discriminatory preference of national transportation policy for road building over other transportation modes. *Railbanking* keeps these historically granted rail corridors intact.

65 *railbanked* corridors needed more than 3 years for negotiation between the railroad and the CITU/NITU holder to complete. There are many reasons the process of *railbanking* can be delayed ranging from governmental regulation to funding acquisition to participant foot-dragging. I do not see why the Surface Transportation Board should want to limit the process and risk loss to this heritage of the nation.

I am and have been a regular user of trails which needed more than three years to finalize agreements before any development work was able to be planned. I have used the Oak Leaf Trail in Milwaukee County WI (for 25 years) and the Fox River Trail in Brown County WI (for 9 years) as primary transportation routes during periods of employment in those locations, as well as for recreation. I continue to use the Oak Leaf Trail as my route to and from work. My business is in bicycle sales and service. Most of my customers rely on *railbanked* facilities for their bicycling endeavors.

Please do not limit the period of negotiation to secure rail rights of way as *railbanked* corridors for use as public non-motorized recreation and transportation facilities. We should be working to link these facilities together to make an extensive, connected network of rail trails across states and the country. Rail trails have long ago proven themselves to be economic boons to the communities who are able to implement them. The STB should be a partner in helping move these programs forward to augment the transportation security of the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Roger Retzlaff