

Docket #: EP 753

Rail Banking

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Panhandle Rail Trail WV

April 5, 2018

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

Dear Ms. Brown,

These comments, filed on behalf of Panhandle Rail Trail Association of WV are in support of a petition by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) for the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to establish a one-year period for any initial interim trail use negotiating period and codify the STB's authority to grant extensions of the negotiating period for good cause shown.

The Panhandle Rail Trail is a rail banking of the CONRAIL's Carnegie Secondary rail line in WV and Western PA. The negotiations between Conrail, WV State Rail Authority, Allegheny County Pa, Washington County Pa. took more than a few years. The issues were not about money or ownership; they were about liability and environment concerns. Some day this rail corridor may be home to a high speed rail service between Columbus and Pittsburg. Today because of railbanking and interim trail use agreements the corridor is the home of the Panhandle Rail Trail – US Bike 50 our national east /west bike and hiking pathway. The trail is used by hundreds of citizens, local, regional, and national users. Negotiation between State's, Counties, and rail owners take time. Each government unit has laws, regulations, and agencies to review the process and to approve the agreements. This rule assist in making that time available, if the parties are making progress extensions should be available to complete the task

Based on our direct experience with railbanking negotiations before the STB, State, and local government bodies, we urge the Board to adopt RTC's proposed rule in Docket No. EP 753.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Cline,

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