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Surface Transportation Board Commissioners,

Railbanking has helped to protect thousands of miles of railroad right of way while providing crucial recreational and transportation alternatives to Americans across the country. The Surface Transportation Board's proposal to limit the total available time in which agreement for rail banking can be negotiated to only three years (Docket #EP_749_1) is a counterproductive proposal that limits the number of rail banking projects that can be approved over time. The public gains nothing by forcing rail lines to be abandoned when rail banking could be achieved with less restrictive deadlines.

The Surface Transportation Board should instead set a deadline that prevents negotiations from continuing endlessly. A ten-year limit on trail agreement negotiations would allow all the complex layers of agreement and financing that are often part of rail-to-trail agreements to be completed, while still providing parties a real deadline to force final action.

As an advocate for northern California's Great Redwood Trail, I am excited by the opportunities rail banking the old Northwestern Pacific rail line offers our region for transportation, recreation, and tourism. While I too would like to see the transition happen quickly, I also understand that such projects require careful planning to succeed, and I do not want an arbitrary timeline hampering our ability to successfully implement rail banking and trail development.

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