



Hunter Area Trail Coalition
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Recreation
Foundation*

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

RE: Docket EP 753 – Petition for Rulemaking

Dear Ms. Brown,

These comments, filed on behalf of Hunter Area Trail Coalition 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.

Our organization has been working on rail trail projects for a number of years. Our five-phase plan to turn former railroad beds into public walking trails is slowly coming to fruition in the Northern Catskill Park of NYS. Tourism is booming in the Catskill Park and there is great interest in opening abandoned railroads as trails to accommodate the growing visitors. As a coordinator responsible for the negotiations I can say with certitude, it takes a lot of time and patience. The longer the negotiating period the greater the likelihood of success.

It would be in the public's interest to codify the STB's authority to grant extensions for "good cause" and endorse the RTC's proposed rule in Docket No. EP 753. Outdoor recreation is becoming more popular in the northeast and the diversity rail trail projects offer is a big part of that. Anything the STB can do to support organizations like RTC in simplifying these complex, time-consuming negotiations will reap benefits well beyond our generation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Yost
WAP Coordinator