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Board of Commissioners
Surface Transportation Board
Docket No. EP 749-1

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Dear STB Commissioners,

Railbanking has been a vital means to *protect and use* thousands of miles of public right of way while those miles await use for trains. In the mean time, railbanked corridors with trails provide crucial recreational and transportation alternatives to Americans across the country. The Surface Transportation Board's proposal to limit the total available time in which a railbanking agreement can be negotiated to only three years (Docket #EP_749_1) is a short-sighted and counterproductive proposal that will curtail the number of railbanking projects that can be approved over time. The public gains nothing by forcing rail lines—public assets—to be abandoned when railbanking 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 railbanking the old Northwestern Pacific rail line offers our region for non-motorized 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 railbanking and trail development.

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