

August 17, 2017

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Ms. Cynthia T. Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, S.W., Room 1034
Washington, DC 20024

244184

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
August 28, 2017
Part of
Public Record

Re: Docket No. FD 36137

**City of Fishers, City of Noblesville, and Hamilton County, Indiana
Petition for Partial Revocation of Exemption**

Dear Ms. Brown:

Enclosed for filing to the above-captioned proceeding are an original and ten copies of written comment regarding the "Petition for Partial Revocation of Exemption" filed on August 1, 2017 with the Surface Transportation Board (the "Board"). A copy of this comment has also been served on the attorney, Robert A. Wimbish, who is representing the collective owners, City of Fishers, City of Noblesville, and Hamilton County (the "Owners"), of a railroad line in Indiana.

My first point to make is that I am adamantly opposed to the destruction of the rail section between Noblesville and Fishers, Indiana by using the railbanking process. It is clear to me that once these rails are removed they will never be replaced. I cannot comprehend the reasoning behind eliminating an economically feasible rail transportation corridor based solely on some hidden agenda preferences of 2 individuals, the mayors of the two communities. The entire corridor has functioned as a financially viable passenger rail operation for over 24 years. As future transportation needs of the region evolve, the rail corridor and operation of it will prove to be a valuable asset for utilization.

The second point I would like to make is that this entire project has been planned, promoted, and initially implemented totally behind closed doors. It is unclear to the residents of our communities who the project has been promoted to/for and how those parties have influenced the executive branches to promote and influence the voting of the only governing body with oversight of the right of way (Hoosier Heritage Port Authority). The Port Authority members are appointed by the mayors of the 2 communities and the commissioners of the county. In communication with the legislative body members of the communities and county involved I find that they are grossly unaware of the planning, promoting, and implementing processes as well. The limited amount of communication to the public through the press has been filled with inaccuracies, exaggerations, and misrepresentation of facts and data.

Railroads petition the Board for an abandonment exemption when service on their line proves to be financially unsustainable. However, in this unique situation, the railroad is owned by municipal bodies and was operated by a third-party, non-profit operator as a heritage railway. The railroad was sustained and maintained almost exclusively by ticket revenue and donations. While there is not presently a physical connection to the national railroad network, it is believed that the necessary Right-of-Way still exists to easily reconnect the Line with Norfolk Southern to the North or CSX to the South.

It appears to me that although the process of developing this project has apparently followed legally required guidelines, the ethical and community resident considerations have been omitted from the process. The operation of the railroad has been and can continue to be financially sustainable. It is my request that the Board not allow any action that would encumber or otherwise diminish the effect of public participation in the exemption revocation or eventual abandonment proceedings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CRG' followed by a stylized flourish.

Charles R. Connett