

August 5, 2017

Bruce L. Richter
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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

**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.

I am a resident of Noblesville, IN wishing to express my opposition to the proposed railbanking and interim trail use of the subject railroad line (the "Line") from milepost I- 2.13 at Indianapolis, Indiana, to milepost I-39.69 at Tipton, Indiana. The Owners have petitioned the Board requesting partial revocation extending "only so far as is necessary to facilitate the Owners' objectives" in order to permit them to expedite and simplify the process of railbanking the Line and converting it to a trail for interim use. Allowing the Owners to circumvent the full process of revocation, abandonment, and railbanking proceedings could potentially diminish the public's role and effect in this case. The city and county residents have not been afforded adequate opportunity to engage the Owners in genuine discussion or feedback regarding the plan to railbank this publicly owned Line.

It greatly disturbs me that the public have in effect been shut out of this important input process. Elected officials are duly elected to also serve as representatives of their constituents and to hear the concerns of their constituents. So far, the meetings held for these most important changes have only been one-sided, not allowing fair and equal discussion from those who would like to see the Train back up and running. The City and County have unilaterally decided on their ownm without a referendum vote, that a trail would be in the 'best interest' of whom they are concerned. Those of us who support the preservation of the train disagree and are not allowed an open forum to discuss our concerns about a trail over preserving the train.

Since service of the Train has been suspended, it has placed a burden on those who use it for transport to the State Fair in Indianapolis. Now tourists and resident can no longer take a more efficient way to attend the Fair. Ridership and attendance of usage of the Fair Train was at its highest point the last season it was running. Now tourists can no longer enjoy what the train had to offer, and since its decommission is no longer a unique tourist attracting feature for Noblesville and Fishers.

A private report commissioned by the Port Authority did find areas of the train tracks that needed some repairs, but never said the tracks were endangering the Train. However, the Port Authority saw fit to suspend the Train entirely taking it out of service. The Train has been running successfully, without incident, for years prior to this suspension of service even with the findings of the private report. This impediment has caused lost revenue to the Train and the Heritage Museum that was starting to see higher revenues in more fares and usage of the Train.

The manner in how a new rail operator was selected does not appear to be fair and ethical. The ostensive proposal that was selected is one that also seems to align with the Noblesville mayor's trail agenda—to only use the north portion of the tracks for a Train while using the southern portion for a trail. However, there is word that this proposal was already created by Hamilton County Tourism, Inc months before an announcement of a Request of Proposal by the Port Authority, thus making it seem that the Noblesville mayor, and others, already decided the outcome before any proposal was submitted.

It is my deepest concern that the governing bodies have not acted in good faith to the residents of these communities. They have not allowed for fair debates to take place. There has been no mention to even put this on a referendum to allow the residents' voices to be heard through their votes. The governing bodies have in so far shown contempt towards those who oppose their agenda by disregarding any attempt for discussion and input. This is a very important matter on an integral part of these communities with deep ties to the history and heritage of each. The decision to remove and replace such an important historical asset to these communities should be for all who live there to decide in a fair and democratic manner. It should not be left for a handful of bureaucrats alone to act on their whims and fancy to forever alter the face of these communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce L. Richter". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bruce L. Richter