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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 20423

Re: **Docket No. AB 290_117X**
NORFOLK AND WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY -- ABANDONMENT BETWEEN
INDIANAPOLIS AND TIPTON IN MARION, HAMILTON AND TIPTON COUNTIES, IN

Dear Ms. Brown:

Save the Nickel Plate, Inc. wishes to address its concerns with a recent development concerning the railbanking project currently underway by the municipal owners of a railroad, City of Fishers, City of Noblesville, and Hamilton County's ("Owners").

On July 27, 2018, the Indianapolis Star published an article (see attached) detailing the City of Fishers' plans to construct a tunnel underneath the road at a minimum of one of eleven locations where the railroad tracks cross the road at grade. It is our understanding that railbanking prohibits trail sponsors from constructing any permanent structures, altering the alignment, or changing the grade of a railbanked line so that rail service may be reactivated in the future. This article clearly articulates Fisher's plans to build a permanent structure and change the grade of the right-of-way in such a way as to severely diminish the practicality of reactivating rail service along the corridor at a future date and time.

It has become increasingly obvious that the current corridor owners are seeking to manipulate STB policy in such a way as to facilitate their unvetted and largely unpopular trail-use objectives, with no intentions of maintaining the railroad corridor for future rail use. They've long spoken of their hopes to foster real estate development along the trail, which would almost certainly hinder future rail passage. Now the Owners are implementing plans and policies diametrically opposed to what we understand as the spirit, intent, and protections of railbanking.

Please consider the attached story and details carefully prior to issuing any decisions relating to the pending motions and requested Notice of Interim Trail Use before the Board in relation to Docket# AB_290_117X.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Logan J. Day', with a stylized, cursive script.

Logan J. Day
Group Facilitator

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I certify that these comments have been provided to all applicable Parties of Record via email. /S/ Logan J. Day

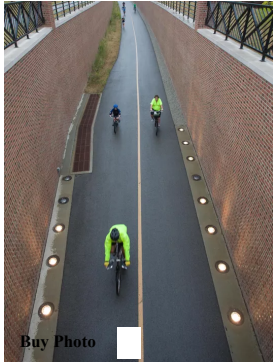
Attachments

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Dig this: Fishers plans tunnel under 116th for Nickel Plate Trail

John Tuohy, Indianapolis Star

Published 6:00 a.m. ET July 27, 2018 | Updated 9:07 a.m. ET July 27, 2018



(Photo: Kevin Elliott)

Even before announcing plans last year to [build a greenway](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/2018/06/01/feds-give-go-ahead-nickel-plate-greenway-hamilton-county/663203002/) on the Nickel Plate railroad tracks, Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness acknowledged 116th Street could be a dangerous crossing because of the road's heavy traffic.

If red lights for cars were lengthened to allow bikers and joggers to cross, rush-hour stop-and-go traffic would snarl even more. If trail users had to wait too long while cars had long green lights, they might try to cross against traffic or be deterred from the greenway altogether.

Now, the city has apparently settled on a solution: a tunnel. But that might be an expensive addition to the millions in local tax dollars Fishers intends to put toward the project.

Marion catches up with suburbs: [Marion County Election Board approves 6 early voting locations after federal court order](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2018/07/25/marion-county-early-voting-election-board-adds-6-satellite-locations/837862002/)

[locations/837862002/](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2018/07/25/marion-county-early-voting-election-board-adds-6-satellite-locations/837862002/)

Not a good fit: [J.J. Redick discusses why move to Indiana Pacers didn't work out](https://www.indystar.com/story/sports/nba/pacers/2018/07/26/nba-free-agency-j-j-redick-almost-signed-indiana-pacers/840693002/)

In seeking a master planner for the trail, the city says in solicitation documents the blueprint should include an underground passage at 116th Street in the heart of downtown. Trail planners said they determined quickly it was the only way to accommodate vehicles and people at the intersection.

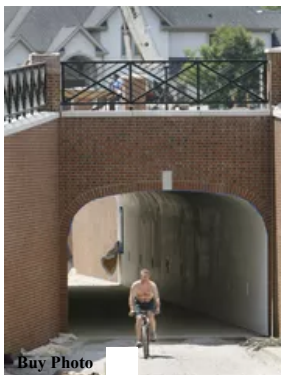
"We just didn't see a way of handling that crossing without a bridge or tunnel," City Councilman John Weingardt, co-chairman of the [Nickel Plate Trail Committee](https://www.fishers.in.us/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=625), said. "It is a very busy street, and I know I don't want trail users trying to cross there."

Though officials could not estimate what the tunnel at 116th would cost, it is expected to be much more than a street-level crossing but less than a bridge. In addition, bridges or tunnels might be needed at some of the other 11 crossings in Fishers, which include Hague Road, 106th Street and 131st Street, driving up the estimated \$9.3 million cost of the entire trail even more.

"Those crossings will be determined on a case-by-case basis by engineers," Ashley Elrod, a city spokeswoman, said.

In 2007, Carmel built a tunnel for the Monon Trail as part of a project that included widening 116th Street. The cost of the entire project was \$9 million, but city spokesman Dan McFeely did not know the cost of the tunnel, itself.

The next year, the city built a bridge along the Monon over West Carmel Drive that cost \$3 million.



Fishers, Noblesville and Hamilton County [announced in 2017](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/hamilton-county/2017/12/20/noblesville-evicts-indiana-transportation-museum-after-52-years/969387001/) that they would pull the rails from the Nickel Plate corridor and replace them with a 9-mile trail through Fishers and Noblesville. But the original cost estimate -- to be split between the cities -- assumed all crossings would be street-level, Elrod said.

Despite the cost of a tunnel, officials said it is cheaper -- and more practical -- than a bridge at 116th because no surrounding land needs to be bought.

"A bridge wouldn't work there, given the space limits," Weingardt said. "The pitch of a bridge would be so steep it would not be accessible for the disabled."

7/31/2018

A bicyclist ignores the construction barriers and uses the Monon Greenway tunnel under 116th in Carmel Saturday June 16. Story is on the Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation Department seeking sole jurisdiction to make decisions on any construction on the Monon Greenway. The item will be discussed at a plan commission meeting Tuesday June 19, 2007. (Joe Vitti/Indianapolis Star) (Photo: Joe Vitti, Indianapolis Star)

Fishers' Nickel Plate Trail could get tunnel at 116th Street

The Fishers document pointing to a tunnel at 116th, called a request for proposals (RFP), went out earlier this month, and nine companies sent in bids. The city narrowed the applicants to four finalists, and the contract to draw up the plan will be awarded Aug. 17. The cost of the master plan will be negotiated. Construction of the trail could begin in 2019 or 2020. Fishers is paying the full cost of its part of the trail, which will be funded as the city builds it.

The bid documents said the trail should feature "experiential amenities" that "harken the city's past while embracing its future." The features could include exercise stations, resting areas, water fountains, bathrooms, bike shares, bike racks, Wi-Fi access, water features, children's play areas, skate parks, dog parks and art installations.

The trail in Fishers will be built in three segments, and the architectural features should reflect its surroundings, according to the RFP. The segments are: 96th to 106th Street; 106th Street to 126th Street; and 126th Street to 146th Street.

Noblesville hasn't begun planning its portion of the Nickel Plate, city spokesman Robert Herrington said.

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