

Hiking & Biking Trails – Water Activities – Nature Tours – Environmental Preservation



Promoting Green Business, EcoEducation and EcoAdventures
P.O. Box 2002, Guerneville, CA 95446
www.ecoring.org

Commissioners
Service Transportation Board

Re: Railbanking Proposal (Docket #EP_749_1)

Dear STB Commissioners,

EcoRing is a nonprofit organization that promotes ecotourism and green travel in the North Bay. Our Partners are businesses in the tourism industry in Sonoma, Marin, Mendocino, Humboldt and San Francisco counties. EcoRing supports the creation of safe infrastructure for bicycles and other low-carbon transportation modes.

Railbanking has helped to protect thousands of miles of railroad right of way while providing 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 will limit the number of railbanking projects that can be approved, especially larger more complex projects with complex financing. A 3 year limit does not serve the public interest well.

Instead we encourage Surface Transportation Board to set a deadline that prevents negotiations from continuing endlessly while at the same time not rushing or terminating more complex projects. We suggest a limit on trail agreement negotiations of at least 10 years.

As an advocate for northern California's Great Redwood Trail, EcoRing and our Partners are concerned that limiting the window of opportunity to 3

years may complicate the conversion of the old Northwestern Pacific rail line to a world-class multi-use trail which would provide non-motorized transportation, recreation, and tourism. While we would like to see the transition happen quickly, we also understand that such projects require careful planning to succeed. An arbitrary timeline could hamper successful trail development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Coates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the name.

Rick Coates
Executive Director

EcoRing
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