



Ms. Danielle Grosselin
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Attention: Docket No. AB 290 (Sub-No. 394X)

December 31, 2018

Dear Ms. Gosselin:

As President and Director of the Aurora Historical Society & Museum, along with the Board of Trustees we are extremely displeased with the Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis' Section 106 review and the resulting proposed Memorandum of Agreement prepared in consultation with Norfolk Southern Railway Company and the Ohio State Historic Preservation Officer.

As clearly outlined in the Society's June 18, 2018 response to the Surface Transportation Board's request for the Society to be a "Consulting Party", the construction of the Erie Railroad in 1856 the line from Cleveland to Pittsburgh linked Aurora with the rest of the world and was instrumental in transforming the town into a dairy and recreational center. Virtually the entire 5.5 mile corridor through Aurora played an integral role in the historical development of our community. As the rail line first entered the northeast part of the city the train stopped at the Erie "Aurora Pond" Station located on the Northern edge of what came to be known as Geauga Lake. Besides transporting commuters to Cleveland, the train brought families to Geauga Lake Park as early as the 1880s.

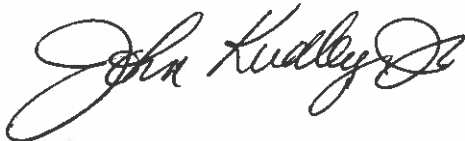
As the line progressed in a southeastern direction the trains would stop on a daily basis where it intersected with the famous Chillicothe Road (now Ohio Rte. 306) to pick up shipments of milk headed for the commercial dairies in Cleveland. The historic and Landmarked "Wee House" recently purchased by the City of Aurora was a pick up point for milk at that location. Continuing on the line ran to Aurora Station which was the primary commercial center of Aurora. Now the northern end of Aurora's Station District, the area was the site of grist mills, saw mills, a furniture maker, freight yard, the A.B. Hurd & Sons store and the Frank Treat & Sons store. Focal point of the district is the Aurora Station which is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Adjacent to the line and located along the Chagrin River were numerous cheese factories which are historically recognized through the Ohio Historic Marker Program.

Progressing in a southeastern direction and just beyond the Aurora Station is the location of what was "Factory Bridge" which spanned the Chagrin River and was destroyed by the historic "1913 Flood." The bridge was replaced in 1913 by a stone viaduct and became a landmark on first fairway of the Aurora Country Club built in 1926 as one of two, along with the Aurora Inn, focal points for Aurora's first "Commuter's Village" to be built by A.B. Smythe. Today, the former golf course is owned by the City of Aurora with conservation easements in place designed to protect the land from future growth and development.

The Aurora Historical Society's Board of Trustees is disheartened to believe that while the decision has been made to recognize the historical importance of the "Aurora Station" area, the historical significance of the other areas of the Railway as outlined above have been ignored.

While it seems that a final decision regarding Norfolk Southern Railway Company's petition to abandon the railway has been determined, it is important to remember that once abandoned the negative impact upon the preservation of Aurora's history will be irreversible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John Kudley, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Kudley, Jr.
President/Director
Aurora Historical Society
P.O. Box 241
Aurora, Ohio 44202

Email: director@aurorahistoricalsociety.org
Phone: 330-995-3336