

# THE FRIENDS OF LIBERTY STATE PARK

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Katherine Marcopul  
Administrator and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mail Code 501-04B  
NJDEP PO Box 420 Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

June 29, 2017

Re: AB\_167-1189X. Harsimus Branch Cultural Resources ID Report Issued by STB May 5, 2017

Dear Ms. Marcopul,

I'm writing to you regarding the STB's Cultural Resources Identification Report. Because The Friends of Liberty State Park as a consulting party wasn't aware of the STB's report until after its deadline, we respectfully request that you include this letter with your comments to the STB.

The Friends of Liberty State Park believe that the Harsimus Branch, with its major historic and cultural significance and clearly retaining its "integrity," should be recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Liberty State Park with its Central Railroad Terminal and the Harsimus Branch have an interconnected local, state and national historic significance. Along with the Pennsylvania Railroad passenger line, the Erie, and other railroads, the Central Railroad and the Harsimus Branch shaped our Downtown.

My father, Morris Pesin, the "Father" of LSP, taught me a great deal about the railroad history of Jersey City and his late 1950's vision was to transform the desolate waterfront wasteland of abandoned rail yards and decaying piers into a great park, which would serve as a historical, cultural, recreational and natural public resource. Now the City of Jersey City has promised to preserve the Harsimus Branch for trails, light rail and rare open space for our densely populated concrete city. Also, the East Coast Greenway would connect the Harsimus Branch to Liberty State Park via the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway, and New Jersey's Delaware Water Gap-Liberty trail would also use part of the East Coast Greenway route.

We disagree with the Report that the Harsimus Branch lacks "integrity." I live in downtown Jersey City, having moved here from the Journal Square area after my mother whom I lived with, died, and it's clear

that the Harsimus Branch is an historic line intact enough to tell its story, from Marin Blvd to the Palisades (where my parents went to high school) and then onto the Journal Square area.

The Pennsylvania RR (PRR) was at one time one of our nation's most powerful economic engines. The PRR Harsimus Branch was dedicated to handling freight traffic in Jersey City and is an integral, immeasurably significant part of Jersey City's history and the NY Port's history.

The railroads for decades dominated the waterfront, walling it off from public access in order to serve the economy, and the railroads were a signature element in our history. Now that Liberty State Park and the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway have reclaimed that public access and the waterfront features skyscrapers instead of train tracks, we must honor and teach about our transportation, commerce and industrial past to new generations.

We don't understand how a fair review process can be conducted by the STB with consultants who first worked for Conrail. I also attended a meeting in Jersey City last year with STB representatives who didn't take minutes at all. Our board on behalf of our members urges the STB to correct the process, hold another public meeting and for minutes to be taken.

We recommend that the STB allow the City of Jersey City to pursue an Offer of Financial Assistance. We understand that such an OFA by Jersey City would preserve the Harsimus Branch for public purposes and enhance people's quality of life and preserve history for future generations.

The Friends are very grateful to SHPO as it has been a strong advocate for historic preservation decisions for Liberty State Park, since it opened in 1976. Thank you in advance for conveying these comments to the STB.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Pesin".

Sam Pesin, president

Copies to Victoria Rutson, STB OEA

Joshua Wayland, STB OEA