

EI-26139



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Katherine Marcopul
Administrator and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
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NJDEP PO Box 420 Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

July 7, 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 Surface Transportation Board's Cultural Resources Identification Report. Because Bike JC, as a local Jersey City stakeholder, wasn't aware of the STB's report until after its deadline, we ask that you include this letter with your comments to the STB.

The East Coast Greenway is an amazing concept. My hat's off to this vision of a single continuous connected trail, that would connect Florida to Maine; the entire east coast of the country! A trail that could be walked, hiked, biked and enjoyed by so many. A trail that will become a destination unto itself, thereby bringing economic benefits to the communities it passes through.

I did a morning bicycle ride this past week, as I needed to get to a meeting at the historic train station in Liberty State Park. I jumped on my bike and pedaled down the hill from my home in the Heights section of Jersey City and into the park where I attended a presentation / workshop entirely focused on the East Coast Greenway.

The trail isn't just a dream, it's slowly becoming a reality, but at this point in the project the biggest road-block toward completing the entire route is the passage from University Heights in Newark, NJ to Jersey City, NJ and the Hudson River waterfront.

At the workshop the planners showed us five options they had developed for connecting the East Coast Greenway through our area. We cast votes on which route we thought made the most sense for historical and practical purposes. The option that received the most positive votes included using the Harsimus Branch Embankment to bring the East Coast Greenway through Jersey City to the waterfront.

Across the country, old abandoned rail beds are being repurposed as off road trails and linear parks to provide recreation and transportation routes to connect people and places with safe, active transportation routes.

For all the various legitimate reasons that the Harsimus Branch Embankment should be preserved and reconnected across the local Jersey City streets that it intersects, using this off-road right of way for a part of the ECG might be the most significant. Bringing bikers, hikers and walkers from around the world through Jersey City to the banks of the Hudson River on this elevated historic site would be a visually stun-

ning way for the history of these great rail lines to be preserved and their story to be conveyed to the public for generations to come.

For these reasons Bike JC believes that the Harsimus Branch should be recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places..

We also ask that the STB allow an Offer of Financial Assistance to be put forward by the City of Jersey City. It is our understanding that such an OFA by Jersey City would preserve the Harsimus Branch and this is what Bike JC believes should happen.

Thank you in advance for conveying these comments to the STB.

Sincerely,

Patrick Conlon, president
Bike JC

Copies to Victoria Rutson, STB OEA
Joshua Wayland, STB OEA