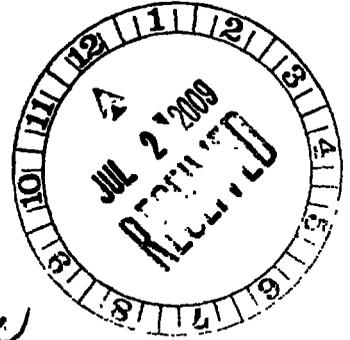


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Friends of the Rock Island Trail, Inc.
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May 22, 2009

Hon. Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C.

ex parte 690

Dear Ray:

As you may know the SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD is holding a Public & Media Advisory hearing on the Impact, Effectiveness and Future of Rail Banking under Section 8(d) of the National Trails System Act on July 8, 2009 at 9:00 A.M. in the Board's Hearing Room on the 1st floor of the agency's headquarters at Patriot's Plaza, 395 E. Street, S.W. Washington, D.C.

Our present 12 year effort to convert the Kellar Branch spur line into an all season recreational trail and a second 25 mile trail conversion now underway on the Union Pacific line through Trivoli, Hanna City and Bartonville could be seriously jeopardized if this Act would be eliminated or changed in any way that would make it more difficult to preserve these corridors for future public use and grant interim trail use. I am sure there are several factions that would like to see all transportation money be used for only motorized use. After a temporary lull, the gas prices just jumped \$.25 in one week with no end in sight. Alternative modes of transportation should be encouraged and not discouraged. We would appreciate you and your staff trying to learn whether efforts will be made to derail this amendment (if possible) and letting our group know as soon as possible in order that we can write letters of support that must be received not later than June 29, 2009. I will be advising all our members of this hearing and will be urging them to write in support of the continuance of the act. If there are any suggestions for improvements that we need to add please feel free to let me know. Thanks for your continued support on the Kellar Branch.

Sincerely,

George M. Burrier

George M. Burrier, Jr.
Friends of Rock Island Trail, Inc. president
Recreational Trail Advocates, Inc. president
Illinois Trails Conservancy, director