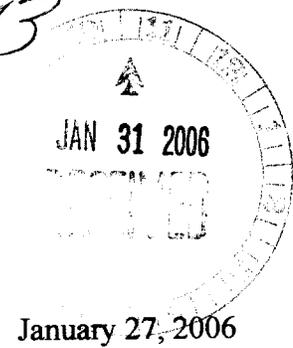


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**Secretary  
Surface Transportation Board  
Washington, DC 20423**

**Re: Jersey City -- Petition for a Declaratory Order, STB Finance Docket 34818**

Dear Secretary:

Founded in 1978, Preservation New Jersey is the only statewide private membership-supported historic preservation organization in New Jersey. Our mission is to sustain and enhance the vitality of New Jersey's communities by promoting and preserving their diverse historic resources. Revitalization and reuse of cultural and historic resources in already developed cities and towns has simultaneously advanced both preservation and Smart Growth goals in many places across the state. PNJ and our preservation partners are increasingly alarmed, however, at redevelopment efforts in a number of communities that are endangering or destroying historic buildings and places with little or no regard for their importance to the community.

The Harsimus Branch Embankment in Jersey City is one such historic site that is under threat by a developer. This developer has already removed one stanchion on a non-landmarked parcel and has challenged the municipal landmark designation for four of six blocks that were designated a local landmark in 2003, have been on the State Register of Historic Places since 1999, and are eligible for the National Register (owner objection). We believe the actions of this developer are premature, as research indicates Conrail never abandoned the rail line according to federal regulations, thus depriving the public of National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 review and environmental oversight, as well as short-circuiting City efforts to acquire the property, as it has expressed interest in doing.

The seven-track Harsimus Branch Embankment structure was built circa 1902 to replace an earlier two-track elevated structure, on an even earlier rail right-of-way. It was the Pennsylvania Railroad's main freight line to the Hudson River waterfront, where cargo from the American Midwest continued on its way to Manhattan and beyond on boats leaving from the Harsimus Docks. The massive stone structure is an important physical reminder of the Golden Age of Railroads and the preeminence of the Pennsylvania Railroad, as well as of the grade-separation campaigns that took place in the metropolitan area around the turn of the 19th century. Its

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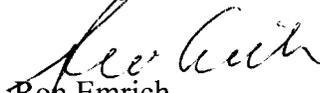
Ron Emrich  
*Executive Director*

reminder of the Golden Age of Railroads and the preeminence of the Pennsylvania Railroad, as well as of the grade-separation campaigns that took place in the metropolitan area around the turn of the 19th century. Its engineer was James J. Ferris, a local progressive politician of note. The structure has the potential of being an important historic site destination as well as providing continued use to the public as light rail corridor, open space and habitat corridor, and greenway.

We therefore support the Petition for a Declaratory Order filed by the City of Jersey City, Rails to Trails Conservancy, the Embankment Preservation Coalition, and NJ State Assemblyman Louis Manzo re the Harsimus Branch rail line. We ask you to begin a proceeding, or order Conrail to comply with 49 USC 10903 by seeking an abandonment authorization.

Please include this letter as part of the record of the proceeding. Attached for the record are letters from the Jersey City Landmarks Conservancy and the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. Representatives of the parties have been sent copies of this correspondence by US mail (see the CC: list below).

Sincerely,



Ron Emrich  
Executive Director

cc: Jonathan Broder, VP and GC  
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