



April 19, 2016

Honorable Anthony Foxx, Secretary of Transportation
U.S Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC, 20590

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Dear Secretary Foxx:

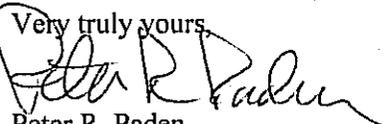
I am writing on behalf of the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) in support of the application by Dutchess County, New York and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association (HVRTA) for funding to complete a key segment of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.

CLC is a community-based land trust that operates throughout Columbia County, New York. We work in many ways to conserve the exceptional scenic and ecological resources of this area and to strengthen connections between people and the land. We have for years been working with organizations throughout the county that are creating trails and open spaces in their communities. We recently founded a county-wide Trails Taskforce whose purpose is to advocate for the creation of a trail network that will link our communities and connect with an existing trail system in the greater New York Capitol District Region. We have been an active proponent of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail since its inception.

When completed, the Harlem Valley Rail Trail will form the central spine of the trail network we envision. The funding sought will complete three critical components of the trail: an eight-mile connection between the Village of Millerton (Dutchess County) and Under Mountain Road in the Town of Ancram (Columbia County); a tunnel crossing of State Route 22 at the intersection of State Route 22 and Orphan Farm Rd. (Copake Falls, Columbia County); and three pedestrian bridges to connect to the trail at Black Grocery Rd. in Copake (Columbia County). These three components will complete approximately 28 miles of trail from Wassaic (Dutchess County) to Hillsdale (Columbia County), linking the trail to New York City via Metro North Railroad which terminates in Wassaic.

This project represents the collaborative effort over more than thirty years of two counties, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the HVRTA and CLC. The portions of the trail that are already built are heavily used, and there is great enthusiasm within the community to see continued progress. Indeed, the creation of outdoor recreational trails such as this one has been identified as a central objective in a recently released strategic plan of the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully urge that you and the review committee give serious consideration to the application of Dutchess County and the HVRTA for this critically important project.

Very truly yours,

Peter R. Paden
Executive Director

Keeping it rural for thirty years