

[DATE]

[RECIPIENT NAME]

[RECIPIENT TITLE]

[AGENCY / JURISDICTION]

[ADDRESS]

Re: A public-interest opportunity for the Tennessee Pass rail corridor during the Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger review

Dear [RECIPIENT]:

I am writing to encourage [RECIPIENT / JURISDICTION] to use this timely moment to help revive the Heart of the Rockies Rail-to-Trail project along the Tennessee Pass rail corridor.

This opportunity has a clear historical precedent. In 1996, as Union Pacific sought state support for its merger with Southern Pacific, the State of Colorado requested that Union Pacific participate in a feasibility study exploring potential public trail use of the Tennessee Pass rail line. Union Pacific agreed, and a letter of intent was signed by Governor Roy Romer and Union Pacific Chairman Richard Davidson.

Colorado State Parks subsequently completed the Heart of the Rockies Historic Corridor Scenic Trail Feasibility Study with support from Great Outdoors Colorado, local governments, public agencies, and corridor communities.

That work brought the project close to reality. The vision remains compelling today: a world-class public trail connecting communities; preserving an irreplaceable corridor for future public benefit; supporting recreation, health, tourism, and rural economies; protecting sensitive river headwaters; and creating a lasting asset for Eagle, Lake, and Chaffee counties, corridor communities, and the State of Colorado.

Union Pacific is now involved in another proposed major merger, this time with Norfolk Southern. The Surface Transportation Board is reviewing the proposed transaction in Docket FD 36873. This creates an important opportunity for Colorado and corridor communities to request a renewed public planning process for Tennessee Pass.

Any local or state letter, filing, or other expression of support for the merger should be conditioned on the merger applicants making a written commitment to engage in good-faith planning with the State of Colorado and corridor communities. That process should specifically explore railbanking and the potential public use of the Tennessee Pass corridor as a rail-to-trail.

Railbanking would preserve the corridor intact for potential future transportation use while allowing it to serve a meaningful public purpose as a regional trail. It would help prevent fragmentation, preserve future options, and create a predictable framework for communities, land managers, emergency responders, and public partners to coordinate access, safety, stewardship, and trail connections.

I respectfully ask [RECIPIENT / JURISDICTION] to support the following actions:

- **Written planning commitment.** A written commitment from the merger applicants to enter a good-faith planning process with the State of Colorado and corridor communities.
- **Renewed State-Union Pacific letter of intent.** A renewed letter of intent between the State of Colorado and Union Pacific to explore railbanking and potential public trail use of the Tennessee Pass corridor.
- **State-led feasibility study.** An updated feasibility study led by the State of Colorado in partnership with corridor counties, municipalities, federal land managers, public agencies, and community partners.
- **Reestablished corridor working group.** A working group to evaluate railbanking, public access, trail use, corridor preservation, environmental stewardship, community connectivity, and rural economic development.
- **Formal comments in Docket FD 36873.** Comments reflecting these requests and recognizing the 1996 Colorado-Union Pacific precedent.

This is a modest and measured request. I am not asking the railroads to abandon the corridor, begin an immediate trail conversion, or predetermine its future use. I am asking that meaningful dialogue and planning be made a condition of any support [RECIPIENT / JURISDICTION] provides for the merger.

A collaborative planning process would advance the public interest while preserving flexibility for the future. It would allow Colorado and affected communities to understand the corridor's potential before decisions are made that could foreclose future railbanking, public access, trail use, or other long-term public corridor opportunities.

This is a rare opportunity to preserve a strategic corridor, protect public access and the Eagle and Arkansas river headwaters, connect communities, support rural economic development, and understand the lasting public benefits the corridor could provide.

Your leadership can help turn decades of groundwork into a generational public asset. I hope [RECIPIENT / JURISDICTION] will help seize this moment and bring Colorado, Union Pacific, and corridor communities back to the table.

Sincerely,

[SENDER NAME]

[CITY, STATE / ZIP CODE]

[EMAIL] | [PHONE]