

To the State Railroad Board,

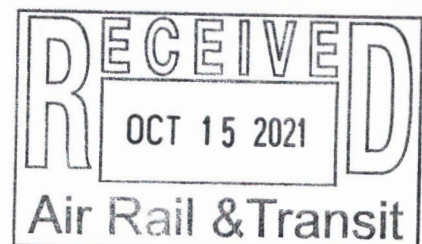
This letter is in regard to your September 29th, 2021 meeting. First I want to say thank you for delaying your decision on the Tabor-Platte trail. This gives us more time to address unanswered questions that need to be investigated.

In the document submitted to your board by "Tabor to Platte Trail" board, they expressed that operating cost, though not determined yet, would be much less than the Michelson Trail. There are areas of track that receive flood waters from heavy rainfall and spring snow melt. One of these areas lies along the Choteau Creek running next to the track. The last time this happened was in 2019. When this happens the damage done could be costly to put the trail back into service. This may occur in other areas as the rail runs along other creeks.

They also talked about liability insurance and plan to engage in lease-type legal structure with the Rail Authority. Does this mean that the Rail Authority would be held responsible for all liabilities, which would be the state a.k.a. the tax payer or the Tabor to Platte trail board?

Also the document states that a full Environment Impact Study does not need to be done simply because of geographic scope and previously disturbed ground. Why not! Years have gone by, things change.

It was stated that the ground is underutilized asset of the State, which is not true. Farmers have made good use of the ground for years and yes made a little money by its use, which gave them some money to spend, putting cash in the hands of local businesses and tax to be used by the state and keeping the ground productive even after the train stopped running. A win, win for all, so it cannot be called useless ground. We as farmers were always willing to work with the railroad when it came to care of the ground, from spraying weeds, fixing fence, which cost them but gave them cash back in return. I feel farmers will not look at the trail in the way because they won't receive the same benefit from it, only seeing it as another tax payer expense.



In reviewing the lay of the land that the trail will be running on I see problems, two of them being extreme cost to develop the area and location of the trail, if the trail is to be developed there.

I also have a question about the Michelson Trail in the Black Hills does it generate income enough to cover the maintenance cost, is it advantageous only because of its location in a tourist area? How does it benefit the Game, Fish and Parks who control it? If the figures stated in the document are correct, \$200,000 or \$2000 or per mile is budgeted for ongoing care of the Michelson Trail, which is a lot of tax dollars, that being stated, it may see a better tax dollar return since it is a high tourist area. I don't feel that will be the case with this proposed trail.

Even if a grant is received for the project there is a cost to be covered in the 20% share, this could also fall on the tax payer, and as I see it only benefits a few. So it looks like there are only two sources for revenue one from trail income and the other from tax payers.

I do not favor having this trail running thru our land nor my neighbors land as we share the same views on this project and am asking that you do not approve this proposal. One more thing that has not been considered in all this, what happens if the time comes and we need a train, maybe because of rising energy costs used to transport products. "What then"? Thank you for your attention in this matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mrs. Earl Burma". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'B'.

To Whom It May Concern:

We are land owners with abutting land to the railroad tracks southeast of Platte. We own 614 acres and the rail runs through our property for 1 mile on both sides of the tracks. We have a house that sits 91 feet from the railroad right of way. There are several safety concerns in regards to this project: Who will be on this trail at all hours of the day? Who is going to police this trail and protect our house and equipment? We have a machine shed that sits 56 feet from the railroad right of way. Converting the railroad tracks will significantly diminish the value of our property, as who wants to live on a trail that can be accessed by anyone and everyone? We have livestock and moving them from the farm site to the pasture will become a bigger obstacle.

We also run a small hunting operation. For almost a mile our food plots are along the fence line abutting the railroad tracks.

Who is going to physically and financially maintain the fences, weed control, and maintenance of the trail? Who is liable if someone gets onto our property and gets hurt?

The Bovee area south of our property also has railroad tracks going through them. The majority of that rail bank is gone. On a wet year it is completely under water. There are rails there without ties and no dirt or rail bank under them. Northwestern Energy is abandoning their utility lines because it is impossible to maintain.

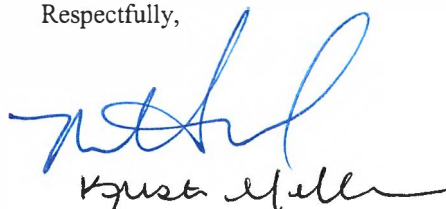
The first mile of the proposed trail south from Platte was sold back to the abutting land owner. What is the route to the trail? Have the safety concerns been addressed on gravel roads where trail users will encounter large pieces of farm equipment, trucks, tractors, combines, sprayers ect? Who is Liable if a trail user is injured?

We have had heard the potential Rails to Trails be compared to the Mickelson Trail. They are not at all the same! The Mickelson Trail runs through almost all of the Black Hills National Forest, BLM, city owned property, government owned property, and it is primarily along or near roads. The proposed Rails to Trails project runs through the center of individual farms and ranches.

One would also think the State of South Dakota should require a third party feasibility study to be completed and paid for by the Rails to Trails project. What is the cost to construct and maintain this project (trail, weed, maintenance, fences, crossings, staging areas, insurance etc). Who will protect the landowners and people using the trail? Who is liable? Will taxes increase as a result of this project? What amount of money has been projected to be needed on hand for all expenses initially and annually?

For the many reasons listed above we are against the Rails to Trails project.

Respectfully,



Michael & Kristi Miller

Kroll, Kari

From: Dokken, Jack
Sent: Monday, October 18, 2021 11:10 AM
To: Jundt, Joel; Beck, Kellie; Kroll, Kari
Subject: FW: [EXT] Napa Junction to Platte

FYI – this can be included in all the letters to the Board.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, October 16, 2021 7:56 AM
To: Dokken, Jack <Jack.Dokken@state.sd.us>; kristi.noem@state.sd.us
Subject: FW: [EXT] Napa Junction to Platte

It has come to my attention the Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail is petitioning the State to grant a lease to construct a walking path along the Napa Junction to Platte. I am opposed to this request.

My family's farm happens to be the first parcel of property's Southeast of Platte, this is the first section outside of Platte that the railbanked right of way starts, the property North West has already been sold back to adjacent property owner. It would be my ask that the State of South Dakota and the South Dakota State Railroad Board would deny the request for the lease.

I understand that I am finding old information but, the State did just try and sale several parcels of railroad including the Napa Junction to Platte section. I do not recall any engagement with the current adjacent property owners to see if they would like to purchase this right of way back, I know if at the time my family would have been aware of the possibility, we would have pursued it.

When Mr. Hoffman bought his section of railroad back from the State every other property owner signed petitions to do the same however, these requests have gone unanswered.

In the late 1800's and early 1900's our forefathers sacrificed acres of land to grant these right of way deeds knowing the transporting of their crops would out way the loss of production acers. Now that the railroad right of way is no longer used it is time for the State to sale back the land and to let us do what we do best and farm the ground.

Please let the adjacent property owners who have maintained the railroad right of way for over one hundred years have a chance to make our farms whole again.

Thank you,

Michael Vanden Bos

Kroll, Kari

From: Kroll, Kari
Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 1:37 PM
To: Kroll, Kari
Subject: FW: [EXT] Rail to trail proposal

To: Dokken, Jack <Jack.Dokken@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] Rail to trail proposal

The South Dakota Railroad Board,

I write to you with great concern over the Rail to Trail proposal that is being set before you. My father's family has homesteaded this land since the early 1900s, at that time the railroad was a necessity. The land that was used to supply this rail road into Platte spans across two quarters of our land.

In 2005 a farmer Herbert Hoffman was able to purchase his rail land back with the help of Governor Mike Rounds. Many times since, my mother and father have contacted the State Railroad office in attempt to gain back the land used so they could expand their acreage for farming and pasture land.

In May of this year my father died unexpectedly, I know he would want us to continue what he's so earnestly wanted, to regain the acres lost to the rail line so long ago.

South Dakota is a strong leader in its agriculture and life stock production. Farmers along this rail deserve to turn the land back into farm and pasture land. There is no other profession that depends on the land and God to supply their way of life more than our farmers. Our communities and state are supported by local farmers far more than a hiking path that will span thousands of acres that our farmers need. A realtor once told me, "There is only so much land, we can't make more."

I ask you to read and consider the obvious reasons this rail line should not be used for a trail, there are so many other options and areas of this great state where such a trail would enhance the visitors experience and the communities we live in.

The following is the letter written and read by myself along with my mother on October 13 and 14, 2021 at the Platte and Lake Andes rail to trail informational meetings.

I am speaking this on behalf of my mother, Ruth VandenBos and my father, the late Delmer VandenBos, my brothers and myself as trustees of the VandenBos Living Trust.

We appreciate you wanting to better Platte, other towns and its people. We believe there are many roadblocks that the public and these organizers have not taken into consideration or are not aware of.

The VandenBos family has farmed this land since the early 1900s. Many hours have been spent working our land for crops and cattle. Along these miles of railway, once used for a great purpose to help our state and its people prosper are such things as powerlines, bridges, South Dakota Game Fish and Park State wildlife game hunting walk-ins and rails that are now underwater and over ran with trees.

The community and its members that support this trail are unaware that the rail line doesn't actually enter into Platte. One farmer, just east of town was able to purchase his rails many years ago and has leveled and planted them into farmland, which his grandson now farms.

This presented trail would have to start two miles away from the center of Platte. People, pets, and bicyclists would have to travel along the busy highway and a heavily traveled gravel road to get to it's starting point. The road 368th Ave., on which my family farm resides, has seen many accidents in the past years caused by reckless driving, fast speeds and loose gravel. One of such accidents landed a car on its top on the rail line. Not only this gravel road, but every single one down the rail are traveled by car,

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pick up, ATVs, semi trucks and many other farm equipment. I ask what the plan is for pedestrian safety when crossing these roads, as many of these vehicles travel that fast speeds with limited visibility due to dirt and dust. Not only does this proposed trail cross gravel roads, it also crosses many highways. The fact that high-voltage powerlines are also present next to these rail lines should be a red flag to many people. The medical community (WHO) has recognized the danger and health risks associated with being in contact with such power lines. Cancer, headaches, fatigue, prickling and burning skin are some of these risks.

I'd like to point out in the event of an emergency while on the trail, the services would be slowed significantly because of the distance from town and the time it would take to locate your emergency on such a trail. Is this the most safe and desirable thing for visitors and residents of South Dakota to be on? As I have mentioned earlier the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks state game wildlife walk-ins are used heavily by hunters and outdoor enthusiast young and old. They use such things as guns, bows and arrows. Not only are these public areas used for hunting, many land owners and their families hunt their own property to protect their livestock and land from vermin and predators. We can all agree that this would be dangerous for all users of the proposed trail.

The additional upkeep and safety of our farmers and landowners is being overlooked. Such things include trash, trespassing, personal safety, damage to their land, crops and livestock. Those of you not raised on a farm may not be aware of the common things like the odors of livestock yards, skunks and many wildlife not pleasant to run into. Other undesirables being mud, bugs, dust and pollen from crops among other things.

As much as I want to believe all people are upstanding citizens, many aren't. Much of the trail comes within feet of peoples homes, no one wants strangers walking and biking through their yards and farms. The privacy of such families will be invaded on so many levels. Things such as theft will be more likely because of the proximity. We in the community of Platte have been experiencing these break-ins and theft in the last month, stopping them has been impossible and I expect this continue with such a trail. I know that grant money is supposed to fund this project however, I think there are so many other improvements that can be made in this state and our cities.

The fact that you were comparing the Napa to Platte Trail to the Mickelson Trail is not even close to reality. This proposal cuts through farmland and pasture which can be farmed by South Dakota farmers. The Mickelson Trail is placed at the foothills of the Black Hills, a scenic wandering path that goes for miles. This path doesn't hold back it's landowners ability to produce much needed crops and support for their families.

My mother and father have been trying well over the past five years to get the rail land back and convert it to agricultural land.

Many of us feel if anyone should be allowed to use this land again it should be the farmers who had given the railroad the right of passage back in the early 1900s. Farmers will support their communities by purchasing seed, fertilizer, gas and food, farmers are the backbone to our small towns.

So many people over my lifetime have said the community of Platte is clean and well-maintained. I think that we should give visitors and residents a reason to come to Platte and it's surrounding towns instead of walk away from them.

Thank you for your careful consideration on this proposal and my spoken words against it. You are the heart and soul of our state and it's great people. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Amy (VandenBos) Allhiser

Kroll, Kari

From: Dokken, Jack
Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 3:38 PM
To: Kroll, Kari
Subject: FW: [EXT] Rail to trails

From: MICHAEL MILLER [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 2:53 PM
To: Dokken, Jack <Jack.Dokken@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] Rail to trails

Jack,

I am emailing you I am in opposition of the Rails to trails proposal. Diverting people on a 28 mile trail to roads for 5 miles is dangerous. Where does the liability fall? The Rails to Trails board, State of SD, Townships, Charles Mix County, the farmer on the road? When someone gets hurt they will all get listed in the lawsuit!

I asked Ron Wagner at the Platte meeting. Where does the money come from to maintain the trail? His response was we don't know!

If they get a grant it is like wining the lottery and spending all your money on a home you can't afford the taxes, up keep and insurance on.

If given the chance every land owner along the rail road tracks would purchase there portion back with the understanding if a viable rail road would ever be used the State could buy it back and all utility easements would stay in place.

Thanks,

Mike