



To: City of Saluda Board of Commissioners

From: Saluda Business Association

April 10, 2017

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

At the April 2017 meeting of the Saluda Business Association the possible future conversion of the Norfolk Southern Rail right-of-way to a "rails to trails" project was discussed by the members. It was unanimously agreed that the SBA would support the effort by the Saluda Grade Trail Committee should the right of way between Landrum and Saluda be retired or rail banked, and that we would ask the City Board of Commissioners to consider passing a resolution of support as well.

Recognizing the importance of the railroad to Saluda's history and flourishing during the 20th century, and recognizing that the line between Landrum and Saluda has not been used for over 15 years, we are enthusiastic about the potential for renewed growth with the possible conversion to a suitable use for the 21st century.

Rails to trails projects have revitalized other communities in our region that rely on tourism for economic health. We believe such a project would enhance the quality of life and the health of business in Saluda and would

- Provide a safe and uniquely beautiful area for recreational use by residents and visitors
- Encourage clean environmentally friendly tourism related businesses
- Increase sales and hospitality taxes as a result of increased visitors and retail activity
- Preserve the scenic Saluda Grade, a renowned and historically significant rail line
- Promote health, fitness and welfare to all who use it
- Serve to connect Saluda to other towns situated along the same rail line

We encourage you to research the positive economic impact that similar projects have provided our region like the Swamp Rabbit Trail between Travelers Rest and Greenville SC and the Virginia Creeper Trail in Abingdon VA.

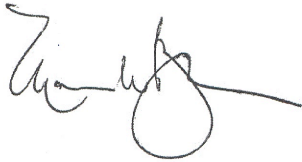
The Saluda Business Association also believes that the possible future rails to trails project is perfectly compatible with the mission statement created through our involvement in the North Carolina Small Town Main Street program:

- Showcasing our past while creating our future, downtown Saluda celebrates its artistic community and connects outdoor recreational opportunities to our historic

downtown district where unique shopping, dining, and lodging complete this sustainable four season destination.

This letter serves as an endorsement by the Saluda Business Association to support a resolution by the City of Saluda to support the mission of the Saluda Grade Trail Committee. It is with the hope that said Committee will accomplish its mission to build a Saluda Grade Rails to Trails from Saluda to Landrum that will preserve the heritage of the Saluda Grade, and positively impact the health of the Saluda community and economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Blazar', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Marc Blazar, President
Saluda Business Association