

Mayor
Matthew Roath
Town Administrator
George Patchell



Perryville
Grounded in history. Focused on the future.

Commissioners
Michelle Linkey
Robert Taylor
Timothy Snelling
Christina Aldridge

Mr. Stephen Gardner
Chief Executive Officer
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
1 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Date: May 1, 2024

Dear Mr. Gardner,

I am writing to request that Amtrak immediately halt the demolition of the historic 1866 Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore (P,W&B) Railroad bridge piers in the Susquehanna River between Havre de Grace and Perryville. The reasons for this request include:

1. The federal EIS for Amtrak's Susquehanna River bridge replacement project called for the "preservation of the abutments from the original (1866) bridge, with consideration given to restoring them to their original appearance and function."
2. The historic bridge piers are not in the way of the alignment of Amtrak's proposed twin bridges or our preferred solution: AmeriStarRail's bilevel Bicentennial Bridge of American Railroads and the conversion of Amtrak's current bridge into the Trailway Across the Susquehanna for pedestrian and bicycle recreational use. For this reason, the largest demolition project on the Susquehanna River and the adverse impacts to the riverbed, the Chesapeake watershed and wildlife is unnecessary.
3. None of the events related to Black American history were described, documented or considered by the federal EIS or Amtrak. This risks the destruction of the largest surviving group of structures built during the Civil War and destroying the path followed by Underground Railroad ferries which passed alongside and between these piers during their construction from the 1850s until the end of the Civil War. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass also rode Baltimore and Ohio Railroad trains and Pennsylvania Railroad trains across these bridge piers numerous times from 1866 until his death in 1895.
4. An application is being filed with the National Park Service (NPS) to designate the historic P,W&B Railroad bridge piers as the **Underground Railroad Monuments of Freedom** as part of the NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. As such, the historic bridge piers will tell a powerful story for future generations and tourists about why the piers are standing there and, more importantly, what they stand for as a symbol of the freedom achieved for Black Americans by the Civil War.

In addition to halting the destruction of these irreplaceable structures of American engineering history, (they also supported America's first double-decker highway), I would like to request that Amtrak play a role to help preserve and promote the ***Underground Railroad Monuments of Freedom*** as a lasting legacy for American history. As you know, Amtrak is providing several neighborhoods in Baltimore with \$50 million in Community Investment Funds throughout the construction of the B&P replacement tunnels. Providing a commensurate amount of Community Investment Funds for our town, throughout the multi-year construction of the Susquehanna River Bridge, will allow a portion of those funds to generate economic activity related to tourists who will seek to visit the remarkable African American, Civil War and railroad engineering history related to the preservation of the P,W&B Railroad bridge piers.

We appreciate the prompt attention of Amtrak to halt the unnecessary destruction of the ***Underground Railroad Monuments of Freedom***.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Roath". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Roath
Mayor of Perryville

Cc:

Maryland Members of Congress
Governor Wes Moore
Paul J. Wiedefeld, Secretary, MDOT
Laura Mason, Amtrak EVP, Capital Delivery
Jason Hoover, Amtrak AVP, Capital Delivery - Bridges
Amtrak Susquehanna River Bridge Project Team