

Mayor
Matthew Roath
Town Administrator
George Patchell



Perryville
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Commissioners
Michelle Linkey
Robert Taylor
Timothy Snelling
Christina Aldridge

May 3, 2024

Mr. William Morgante, PWS
Wetlands Administrator
State of Maryland
Board of Public Works
Wetlands Administration
80 Calvert Street, Room 117
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Administrator Morgante,

We, the undersigned, are writing to you with an urgent request to immediately revoke Amtrak's Wetlands License No. 22-1137 and Maryland's authorization for Amtrak to demolish the historic 1866 Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore (P,W&B) Railroad bridge piers in the Susquehanna River between Havre de Grace and Perryville.

The basis for our request is due to a number of errors, omissions and deficiencies in Amtrak's plans to conduct the largest demolition project ever on the Susquehanna River. These include:

ERRORS

1. The license to demolish violates the federal EIS for the project which called for the P,W&B railroad bridge piers to be preserved.

This is from Page 113 (6-4) of the EIS document Appendix D, Cultural Resources:

"Preservation of the abutments from the original (1866) bridge, with consideration given to restoring them to their original appearance and function."

2. The license to demolish incorrectly treats the licensee (Amtrak) as the owner of the bridge piers. The State of Maryland is the actual owner of the bridge piers. There is no documentation of the transfer of State property to Amtrak which the USDOT says is a for-profit corporation. This violates item 10 of the license conditions authorizing the demolition:

"This License does not transfer a property interest of the State."

3. Amtrak falsely implied that preserving the P,W&B railroad bridge piers would be in the way of their proposed twin bridges. As found in Attachment B of the Wetlands License, a March 8, 2023 Amtrak letter to the Maryland Department of Environment regarding public comment on their demolition application, Amtrak said that saving even one bridge pier as a historical monument "may conflict with the proposed alignment". Amtrak knows that the alignment of their proposed twin bridges are upriver and North of the historic P,W&B railroad piers.

OMISSIONS and DEFICIENCIES

1. As found in Attachment A of the Wetlands License, unlike Havre de Grace, the Mayor and Town Council of Perryville did not receive public notice of the demolition application
2. A public hearing should have been held to consider the application because this is part of the largest demolition project ever on the Susquehanna River. Because of this, many citizens and groups such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation had no knowledge of Amtrak's demolition plans until last month.
3. Amtrak made a decision to demolish the historic piers with no public approval of changing the findings of the federal EIS for the project to preserve the 1866 P,W&B RR bridge piers.
4. Although the Federal EIS did not determine the eligibility of the historic bridge piers to be included on the National Register of Historic Places, none of the events related to Black American history were described, documented or considered by the Federal EIS or Amtrak in its application to demolish the piers. This risks the destruction of the largest surviving group of structures built during the Civil War and the identification of the path of the 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 trains across these bridge piers numerous times from 1866 until his death in 1895.

We appreciate your consideration of this request for the MDE to revoke the wetlands license for Amtrak to demolish the historic P,W&B railroad piers. This will avoid unnecessary environmental disruption to the Susquehanna riverbed and Chesapeake watershed and preserve remarkable historic monuments to freedom and American history events which also includes America's first doubledecker highway bridge which connected Havre de Grace and Perryville until 1940.

Sincerely,



Matt Roath
Mayor of Perryville



Ted Evegeniadis
Executive Director
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association