



**RAPID CITY AREA
METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

*300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, SD 57702
605-394-4120*

December 12, 2019

Mr. Jerry Cope, Chairman
South Dakota Railroad Board
700 E Broadway Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501-2586

Re: City of Rapid City's response regarding the Board's IFP for Purchasing State-Owned Railroad Property

Dear Mr. Cope:

As Chairman of the Executive Policy Committee for the Rapid City Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, I am contacting you to convey the Rapid City Area MPO's support for securing the Mitchell to Rapid City (MRC) railbanked property from Rapid City to Kadoka as publicly owned property in perpetuity.

Similar to the railroad line conversion now known as the George S. Mickelson Trail, the potential to convert this railbanked property into another "Rail-Trail Hall of Fame" will be possible.

The MPO is constantly searching for opportunities to provide multi-modal facilities for the region. Non-motorized transportation opportunities provide numerous health, recreational and tourism benefits; converting the railbanked property will provide the MPO residents and the millions of yearly tourists attracted to the region an opportunity to experience not only the beautiful Black Hills via the George S Mickelson Trail but also the prairie, farmland and Badlands along the proposed Mako Sica Trail.

The first step in securing this non-motorized multi-modal facility is to ensure that it remains publicly owned. As identified in the long range planning documents initiated and approved by all of the MPO members, the railbanked property provides a critical piece of the non-motorized transportation options.

The MPO members look forward to working with the SDDOT Railroad Board in securing opportunities to work with all entities, public and private, to ensure the public benefit of maintaining this railbanked property for public purposes.

Sincerely,

Larry Larson, Chair
City of Box Elder Mayor

c: Governor Kristi Noem