



For Immediate Release:

Jan. 24, 2019

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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Says Enthusiasm for Rock Island Trail Remains Strong as State Requests Extension for Railbanking Negotiations

WASHINGTON—Enthusiasm continues to build in favor of the Rock Island Trail, says Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) as the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Missouri Central Railroad, a subsidiary of Ameren, Inc., continue to negotiate the details of a long-awaited railbanking agreement for the 144-mile railroad corridor.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources announced last week that it has filed for an extension with the Surface Transportation Board to continue negotiations for the corridor beyond the Feb. 21, 2019 deadline. With more than 27,000 public comments on the record in favor of the trail, RTC is calling on those who support the trail to continue to voice their enthusiasm to the state, cautioning that the extension is a procedural action rather than a victory for the corridor.

“It is promising that the state has taken the necessary action to allow negotiations over the Rock Island Trail to continue, but our work is far from over,” said Keith Laughlin, RTC President. “The Rock Island corridor represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a world-class trail system for Missouri. We will continue to make clear the invaluable economic and tourism benefits that this corridor represents, and we will hold up the voices of the tens of thousands who want this trail. We are committed to seeing the state accept the corridor.”

The Rock Island corridor could become a piece of one of world’s largest trail loops—when complete, it will connect with the Katy Trail, stretching over 450 miles across the state. The trail’s potential economic benefit has already been demonstrated by the Katy Trail, which, according to a 2012 Missouri State Parks report, attracts 400,000 visitors annually and generates a total economic impact of over \$18 million. The Rock Island Trail would serve as a multiplier of these benefits.

RTC is joined by local Missouri advocacy groups in calling on the state to take necessary steps to preserve the 144-mile Rock Island corridor between Windsor and Beaufort. For more information, visit [RTC’s website](#).

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).