



Didi Barrett

Assemblymember 106th District
Columbia County
Dutchess County

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October 21, 2019

Mr. Ron Epstein, Executive Deputy Commissioner
NYS Department of Transportation
50 Wolf Road
Albany, NY 12232

Dear Mr. Epstein,

I want to thank you for your leadership and support in the effort to find a compromise solution to Amtrak's concerns about access to the Hudson River. As you know, this is an issue that impacts my constituents profoundly and in just about every way possible – from economics and the environment to safety and recreation. As the Department of Transportation continues to work with the Department of State, Amtrak, and local stakeholders on revisions to Amtrak's proposal, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my priorities and those of my constituents.

First, it is my understanding that the revised proposal will no longer include 8-foot iron fences along the corridor. I want to thank you and Amtrak for your flexibility on this piece of the proposal. Shorter fences will help retain sightlines and allow for much-loved views of the majestic Hudson River. I hope the revised plan will replace iron fencing with split-rail fencing, as that will be the least obtrusive barrier for both people and animals.

Second, I strongly oppose the installation of gates at access points in Columbia or Dutchess counties. In Germantown, especially, there is a great deal at stake. Gates threaten longstanding access to the Hudson River for so many residents who use the right-of-way, and the community has a pending Local Waterfront Revitalization Program application that would be undermined by gates. In addition, gates are a concern for first responders who risk an increased response time in an emergency and may in fact conflict with the NYS Coastal Management Plan. As you can see, there are many reasons why gates are not in the public interest, and I urge you to remove them from the revised plans.

Lastly, I encourage DOT and Amtrak to engage in an open process with local officials and the public, so that the final plans reflect the input of the entire community. It is in the interest of all stakeholders to communicate honestly and openly about the impact of this project, to ensure an acceptable final outcome.

I truly believe the final plan can maintain open access to the river, while at the same time improving safety. The best ways to achieve both goals would be a four foot, split rail fence separating the tracks and the right of way, with no gates blocking access points. I would be happy to discuss this with you further. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Didi Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Didi Barrett
Member of Assembly, 106th District

cc: Bill Hollister, Northeast Government Affairs Senior Manger, Amtrak
Kisha Santiago, Deputy Secretary of State
Matt Murell, Chairman, Columbia County Board of Supervisors
Robert Beaury, Supervisor, Town of Germantown