

March 25,2019

To the Members of the Sacramento City Council

Subject: Sacramento Southern Railroad and the Proposed Del Rio Trail Project

Born and raised in the Delta just two miles south of the historic town of Freeport, I grew up with the trains running to Isleton. In my time, the railroad no longer accommodated passengers but remained pivotal to the prosperous agricultural area south of Sacramento tying that region to the outlets, distribution and sales of their products.

This railroad is a wonderful example of branch line operations that occurred throughout California and the nation. The Sacramento Southern is, not only a piece of Sacramento history, it is a link to a much greater regional heritage of cultural and natural significance. It represents the fast disappearing scene which once commonly populated California. Sacramento has an opportunity to utilize this railroad connection to expand their popular Farm to Fork program.

I worked at the California State Railroad for over thirty years. I was fortunate enough to see this star of Sacramento open its treasures to visitors from all over the world. The final phase of the Museum, an operating railroad, became a reality in 1978 when Southern Pacific applied for abandonment of this line. Here was the opportunity to interpret railroading as it existed during the greater part of the Twentieth Century and offer the visitors an experience of riding a train that many people rarely do today. The Sacramento Southern has important qualities for becoming a tourist operation. First of all it is located within easy traveling distance of large metropolitan areas and secondly the corridor is mostly in a flat area with no heavy grades to challenge upkeep and thirdly it has interesting scenery along the river and through farms and countryside.

I support the railroad use of this corridor that has been a railroad for 110 years. The Sacramento Southern was built to save the Southern Pacific as their mainline across the marsh at Suisun Bay was sinking. The major line to the Bay was saved and the Sacramento Southern was never called upon as a main artery, becoming a key branch line.

Though the second track was never built, the right-of-way is wide enough to accommodate two passing trains. This extra width should accommodate both a train and bike path.

The loss of tracks on this transportation corridor would sever the ties to important regional history, effecting the heritage of a greater area than a few miles of Sacramento. The corridor through neighborhoods would be necessary only as a staging link to the town of Freeport where longer excursions would begin down river. Do not vote against the foundations that built Sacramento. This city is not only the capital of California but has deep roots in the story of agriculture and transportation. Now is the time to save this railroad from sinking into a murky unknown past.

Submitted by Marilyn Sommerdorf