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Elder Law Associates

OF PENNSYLVANIA, A PRIVATE LAW FIRM

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FROM: DAVID R. MORRISON, YOUTH LEADER

RE: LOW GRADE RAIL TRAIL

DATE: NOVEMBER 19, 2003

I am appearing in my personal capacity only and not as a representative of any party or group.

For the past thirty years I have been active as a leader in the Boy Scouts of America holding the positions of Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster and member of Council. In that capacity I have hiked and bicycled throughout county and the Commonwealth. In the past ten years there has been a growing interest in cycling. Cycling merit badge may now be used to fulfill one of the requirements for the Eagle Scout award.

Unfortunately cycling by youth living in the southern part of the county presents major safety issues, as well as practical problems. The roads are narrow, sometimes too narrow to safely bike on. Route 324 is a good example of a beautiful road that is too narrow in a few sections with no real option to widen. Grades frequently exceed 10% which require walking the bicycle uphill. What is dangerous is the downhills where speeds in excess of 25MPH are quickly reached and braking distances substantially lengthened.

Youth in the southwestern section of our county should be able to safely ride their bikes like youth can do in the rest of the county. Permitting bikes on a rail trail meets this critical need.

There is also a health issue involved. Youth are not walking to school as in the past, and gym periods are more limited. Making exercise a fun activity can be the difference between fitness and obesity.

The Conestoga Trail uses part of the rail line, but when I was last there two years ago, there were no trespassing signs barring use of the low grade line.

Getting youth out exercising at a young age creates a pattern they carry with them for life. Giving youth a safe cycling option puts them on the road to lifetime fitness.

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