



August 31, 2021

Dawn Distler
Chief Executive Officer
Metro Regional Transit Authority
416 Kenmore Blvd.
Akron, Ohio 44301

Re: Veteran's Trail

Dear Ms. Distler,

I sincerely appreciate your taking time over the last several weeks to discuss this matter and inform me of the progress that has been made by you and your team in partnership with Summit Metro Parks and our municipal partners to find a public use for the Akron Secondary Line. My office is generally supportive of bike and hike trails as we believe they enhance the quality of life for many of our residents.

The first phase of the proposed Veterans Trail which runs from Freedom Trail in Akron to Springdale Drive in Stow (Phase One) has support and agreement from the cities involved and Summit Metro Parks. Construction funding has been secured, plans and timelines are in place, and the responsible party to maintain the trail into the future has been identified. All appears ready to move forward towards implementation. Therefore, my office concurs with making a request to the FTA for approval on this first phase.

The second phase, which would run from Springdale Drive to Barlow Road (Phase Two) has support from Cities of Stow and Hudson. However, several items remain to be addressed. Funding for construction of this phase has not yet been secured. The party responsible to maintain the trail on an ongoing basis is still an open issue. Currently there are two other trails in the area maintained by Summit Metro Parks thus they have not, to date, agreed to maintain another trail in that area. In other words, there is work yet to be done, questions to be answered, and consensus to be built amongst the parties before moving forward with constructing a trail could even begin to take place.

Given the work that needs to be done, moving forward with the FTA request on Phase Two is premature.

Maintaining the right of way until such time it is clear that those parcels have been put into productive use and the right of way is no longer needed, helps to create a clear path forward. Until such time, the ability to leverage potential rail for economic development should remain an option.



**ILENE
SHAPIRO**
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Therefore, Executive's Office recommendation is for Metro RTA move forward to obtain FTA approval on Phase One but to wait to request approval from the FTA on Phase Two. At such time as all open items are addressed and agreed upon by the relevant parties this issue could be revisited.

Thank you and the Board for engaging us in the conversation. We appreciate your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Ilene Shapiro
Executive, County of Summit

Cc: Brian Nelsen, Chief of Staff, County of Summit
Brian Herschel, Senior Administrator, County of Summit
Deb Matz, Law Director, County of Summit
Valerie Shea, Metro RTA
John Pribonic, Mayor, City of Stow
Dan Horrigan, Mayor, City of Akron
Don Walters, Mayor, City of Cuyahoga Falls
Bernie Hovey, Mayor, Village of Silver Lake
Jane Howington, City Manager, City of Hudson
Thom Sheridan, City of Hudson
Lisa King, Director, Summit Metro Parks