

RESOLUTION PERTAINING TO KELLAR BRANCH RAIL LINE

WHEREAS, the Kellar Branch Rail Freight Line is an eight mile rail spur running from the edge of Peoria's Downtown north to Pioneer Parkway, with connections to the trail head of the Rock Island Trail State Park; built on vacated rail right-of-way, the Rock Island Trail runs twenty seven miles north from Alta to Toulon, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Kellar Trail provides the final 5 mile critical link to the over 70 mile regional trail system of Central Illinois connecting the Rock Island State Trail (and the communities of Alta, Dunlap, Princeville, Wyoming and Toulon) to communities such as Peoria, Peoria Heights, East Peoria, Morton, and Washington; and

WHEREAS, the eight miles of the Kellar spur runs through what has now become the central part of the City of Peoria and Village of Peoria Heights; 93% of the adjacent right-of-way is zoned residential; and

WHEREAS, there has been little or no rail business on the line for almost ten years; the one remaining user in Pioneer Park was receiving about one rail car per week; in the last two years - none; and

WHEREAS, two years ago the City of Peoria, with Federal grant monies, and local share, built a \$2.3 million direct western rail connection to Pioneer Park, as a replacement and upgrade for the eastern Kellar Branch, and to possibly attract more rail users to Pioneer Park; none came forward; and

WHEREAS, the Peoria Park District has received over \$4 million in grant money from the federal government and state government for the construction of the proposed Kellar Trail and has completed design work as well as construction of connections to the proposed trail; and proposals to place the trail adjacent to the rail (shared right-of-way) have been analyzed and proven unfeasible due to the extreme costs of overcoming the topographic and drainage challenges as well as safety concerns of rail cars moving in close proximity to trail users; and

WHEREAS, the rail companies continue to occupy and claim rights to the Kellar line - land owned by the City of Peoria and Village of Peoria Heights - without paying rent and without an operating agreement with either governmental unit; the Surface Transportation Board (STB), in its own rulings, has held that municipalities are entitled to a fair rent for the use of municipal property by rail companies; and

WHEREAS, the Kellar Trail enjoys wide support in the community; the trail has been endorsed by the Peoria Park District, Peoria County Board, the Peoria City Council, the Peoria Heights Village Board, the Peoria Heights Library Board and Tri-County Planning Commission; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Peoria, Illinois, that we have determined that the best use of the Kellar Branch Railroad property for all citizens and visitors to our community is to convert the railroad to a multi- use recreational trail system, providing potential connections to hundreds of miles of other trails throughout Illinois; and urge the STB to make a decision soon to allow our community to proceed with the development of a multi-use recreational trail on property that we own; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Peoria City Council ask Senators Richard Durbin and Barack Obama and all members of Congress from Illinois and all other elected officials throughout Central Illinois to support us in this matter.