

October 24, 2024

Ms. Barbara Frederick, Environmental Review Division Manager  
Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office  
Commonwealth Keystone Building, Second Floor  
400 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Ms. Frederick:

In response to your letter of October 2, 2024, we offer the following responses.

**Comment 1:** Regarding mitigation, we have received your proposal to repair and paint the wrought-iron fencings along the south side of the rail corridor within the Allegheny Commons Historic District between the West North Avenue and Allegheny Commons Pedestrian Bridge. Our letter of June 13, 2023, notes the following as an identified minimization measure: "Protection for/repairs to contributing features within the Pennsylvania Railroad district including bridge abutments, retaining walls, and decorative fencing." Were repairs to the fencing, which is a contributing feature within the railroad district, part of the larger project, or is this an item that is being added to offset the loss of the West North Avenue Bridge, also a contributing resource to the Pennsylvania Railroad district?

Additional mitigation ideas have been presented over the course of the consultation for the project. Please provide documentation of consideration of these ideas and any other suggested by consulting parties to the project:

- Placement of public art (murals) within the railroad corridor
- Restoration of stone building near the tennis courts
- Additional ideas outlined in the plan for Allegheny Commons Park

**Response 1:** The repairs to the wrought-iron fencing along the south side of the railroad corridor are a project addition to mitigate the replacement of the W. North Avenue Bridge, a contributing element of the railroad corridor historic district.

Although the addition of public art was discussed during the design advisory team meetings, the art installation was to be a free-standing focal point on the W. North Avenue Bridge deck. Murals within the railroad corridor were not discussed. The project plans make provisions for public art in the southwest plaza, but the design, fabrication, and installation must be undertaken by a third party in cooperation with the City of Pittsburgh.

Third parties can submit proposals to the Northside Leadership Conference regarding the public art and other projects within Allegheny Commons, such as the renovation of the restroom building and other master plan improvements, through funding totaling \$1.25 million made available by the Norfolk Southern Foundation to the Northside Community Enhancement Fund as part of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission mediation process. The proposed project activities do not result in an adverse effect on the Allegheny Commons Historic District, and such improvements as mitigation are not related to the adverse effect on the railroad corridor historic district.

PennDOT and Norfolk Southern agree that the costs of the proposed minimization and mitigation measures summarized below are commensurate with undertaking’s adverse effect.

Proposed Minimization and Mitigation Costs		
International Harvester Building planters (includes river rock)	Minimization	\$57,900
On-structure planters for W. North Avenue Bridge	Minimization	\$50,000
Three benches for W. North Avenue Bridge plazas	Minimization	\$8,400
Off-structure planter for W. North Avenue Bridge (includes topsoil and seeding)	Minimization	\$29,000
Brick park wall repair and reconstruction	Minimization	\$186,000
Replace fence between Brighton Road and the Allegheny Commons Pedestrian Bridge (16 panels, 42 posts, and 277 feet)	Mitigation	\$168,896
<b>Total Minimization and Mitigation Costs*</b>		<b>\$500,196</b>

\*These totals do not reflect costs incurred for all context-sensitive design elements, bridge and retaining wall panels, concrete painting, painted ornamental fencing, ornamental lighting, bridge façade panels and girder cover plates (pedestrian bridge), pedestrian bridge plazas, benches, and pylons, and railroad signal cabinet screening.

**Comment 2:** The local preservation interests have until October 12, 2024, to provide their comments on the Determination of Effect Report. Please provide a copy of any comments received to our office.

**Response 2:** No other consulting party comments were received.

We request your concurrence within 14 days on the following proposed stipulations to minimize effects on the International Harvester Company of America: Pittsburgh Branch House and the Allegheny Commons Historic District and the Pennsylvania Railroad: Main Line (Pittsburgh to Ohio State Line) Railroad Corridor Historic District and to mitigate adverse effects to the railroad corridor historic district. Note that the full text of the stipulation attachments is contained in the effects report appendix. A draft memorandum of understanding will be circulated after receiving your response.

**A. Minimization**

Norfolk Southern will complete the following minimization actions, which have been reviewed by PHMC and consulting parties to this agreement:

1. The sidewalk fronting the International Harvester Company of America: Pittsburgh Branch House will be narrowed and separated from the front of the building by a curb to avoid obscuring any of the first-floor display windows, and planter boxes will be placed in front of the display windows in accordance with Sheet 1 of the North Avenue Plan Sheet 100-Percent Submission and Sheet 1 of the North Avenue Typical Sections 100-Percent Submission;
2. Replacement of the W. North Avenue Bridge will be completed in accordance with the DAT-approved, context-sensitive design elements contained in the 100-Percent Plans for the bridge, associated walls and barriers, on-structure and off-structure planters, and benches;
3. Replacement of the missing brick garden wall along W. North Avenue and Brighton Road between the sidewalk and Allegheny Commons Historic District will be completed in accordance with the SOI Standards and as detailed in Project Specifications: Reconstruction of Missing Brick Garden Wall in Allegheny Commons Historic District; and
4. Replacement of the Allegheny Commons Pedestrian Bridge will be completed in accordance with the DAT-approved, context-sensitive design elements contained in the 90-Percent Plans).

B. Mitigation

Norfolk Southern will complete the following mitigation actions, which have been reviewed by PHMC and consulting parties to this agreement:

1. Repair and paint the wrought-iron fencing along the south side of the rail corridor within Allegheny Commons Park from W. North Avenue to the Allegheny Commons Pedestrian Bridge in accordance with the SOI Standards and as detailed in Project Specifications: Decorative Fence Repair and Painting.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL BAKER INTERNATIONAL, INC.



Timothy G. Zinn  
Department Manager, Historic Preservation