

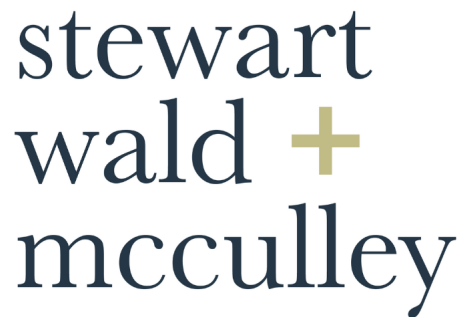
Rail-Trail Law Firm Scheduled to Hold Meetings With Landowners Along Empire State Trail Extension in the Hudson Valley

FISHKILL, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES , March 23, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Stewart, Wald & McCulley](#) ("SWM"), has been reaching out to landowners who will be affected by the Metro-North rail-trail conversion. The firm has been watching the developments and rail-trail plans of Metro-North for years.

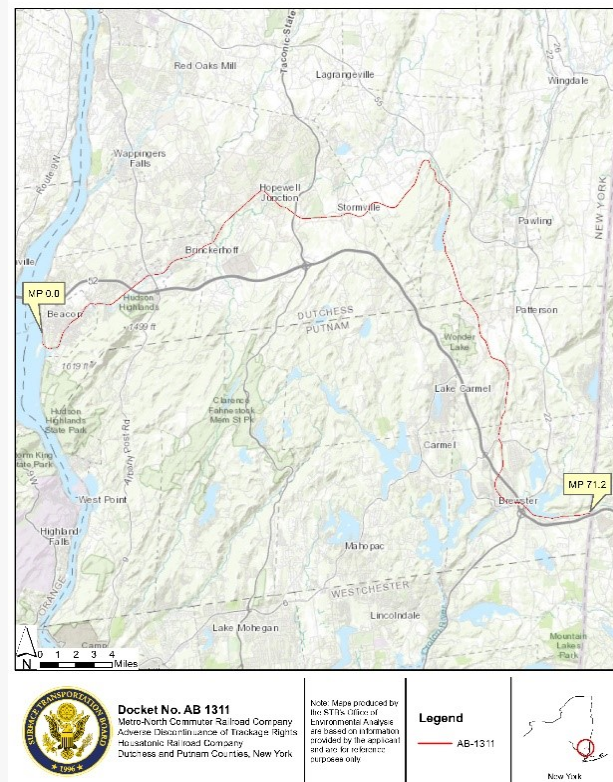
For some time now, government entities from Dutchess and Putnam Counties along with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority ("MTA") have been devising a plan to turn the inactive Metro-North railway from Beacon to the border of New York and Connecticut into a hiking trail or linear park.

This trail will run along the abandoned railroad, starting at the Beacon waterfront and heading east. It will go through Beacon, Fishkill, Hopewell Junction, Stormville, and into Putnam County. This would connect with the Dutchess Rail Trail, and the 750-mile Empire State Trail.

In 2021, Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company ("Metro-North") filed an Application for Discontinuance with the United States Surface Transportation Board ("STB") to



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Dutchess & Putnam, NY Map of Potential Rail Trail Route

discontinue service over the 41.1 miles of railroad in Dutchess and Putnam Counties, New York. Within that application, it was clear the plans were to convert the 41.1 miles into a segment of New York's Empire State Trail. At that time and for years following, SWM began meeting with landowners who adjoined the railroad corridor along the 41.1 miles to discuss the rail-trail plans and their property rights.

As the years went on, it was apparent that the trail plans were going to be delayed due to Metro-North and Housatonic Railroad Company's issue involving trackage rights on a portion of the 41.1 miles. After years of disagreement between Metro-North and Housatonic about trackage rights, their issues came to an end in early 2023. On the heels of their resolution, a request for trail use was filed in February 2023.

Through those years, SWM spent time continuously educating and meeting with hundreds of adjoining landowners about their property rights along the railroad right-of-way easement, explaining the [National Trails System Act \(Trails Act\)](#), and what a request for trail use would mean for those landowners. The Trails Act permits the conversion of abandoned railroad corridors into nature and hiking trails, which simultaneously preserves the rights of way for future use. The practice is known as railbanking and prevents the land within the abandoned railroad from reverting to the adjoining landowners. It grants the trail sponsor a new easement, thereby blocking the rights of the landowner to reclaim the property within the corridor.

Within this recent Trail Use Request, Metro-North has requested the Surface Transportation Board to grant them a Notice of Interim Trail Use for a stretch of 41.1 miles of the rail line, ranging from milepost 0.0 up to milepost 71.2.

Stewart, Wald & McCulley hopes to have the opportunity to continue to educate landowners about their property rights. All around the country, unused railroad corridors are converted to rail-trails. When this occurs, the firm reaches out to landowners to educate them on their rights. Often, landowners are unaware of their rights and recourse during a rail-trail conversion. Stewart, Wald & McCulley will be holding additional informational meetings for interested landowners on April 5, 2023 at 5:30 p.m., April 6, 2023 at 9:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 5:00 p.m., and on April 7, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. at the Hyatt House in Fishkill, NY located at 100 Westage Business Center Drive.

Steven Wald
Stewart, Wald & McCulley
+1 314-720-0220
info@swm.legal

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