



## KNOBSTONE HIKING TRAIL ASSOCIATION

### KHTA Board of Directors

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May 26, 2021

Mr. Peter Ray  
The Indiana Railroad Company  
1500 South Seante Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46225

KHTA Board of Directors  
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Mr. Ray,

Recent closing of the rail crossing at Indian Hill Road (IHR) in Brown County bisects the Tecumseh Hiking Trail (part of the longest continuous forest hiking trail in Indiana), creating insuperable difficulties for the Indiana hiking public. Regrettably, closing was enacted absent prior consultation with the full range of stakeholders – regional and recreation – directly impacted by, or looking for benefit from, this resource.

Construction of the Tecumseh Trail, which extends 42 miles from Morgan-Monroe State Forest (MM SF) headquarters to just north of Elkinsville, took place from 1997 to 2001. The IHR crossing has relatively straight railbeds extending to the east and west, enabling excellent visibility of rail traffic. During the 20 years following completion, Tecumseh hikers have crossed at IHR without incident.

Presently, the Tecumseh Trail adjoins the Knobstone Hiking Trail in the Hoosier National Forest for a combined forested length totaling 75 miles. These existing trails will connect with the Pioneer Trail (in Jackson County) and the original Knobstone Trail (in Washington, Scott, and Clark counties) to form a trail system extending 160 miles and impacting eight counties,<sup>1</sup> from Martinsville to just north of Louisville, KY. Continuity of safe passage at IHR is essential for realizing the full regional and recreational benefits of this 160 mile trail system.

Promoting hiker safety is an essential element of the Knobstone Hiking Trail Association (KHTA) Mission, and we recognize the importance of attending to improved safety precautions. However, hiking pedestrians pose little risk, and it is not uncommon for long-distance trails (such as the Appalachian Trail (AT)) to have pedestrian rail crossings where hikers can safely pass.

The hiking public would be well served with an easement allowing for resumption of safe crossing of the railtrack at IHR, and KHTA welcomes the opportunity to work with The Indiana Railroad Company – promoting focusing of hiking traffic to a single point of passage along with posting signs instructing people to follow appropriate safety precautions. The KHTA looks forward to meeting with you and other IHR stakeholders, to find a consensus among IHR stakeholders on how to realize full and lasting benefit from the crossing.

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<sup>1</sup>Through (from north to south) Morgan, Brown, Monroe, Lawrence, Jackson, Washington, Scott, and Clark counties.