Subj: Mountain Enterprises Property in Olive Hill, Ky.

To: Mr. Phil Annis

Mr. Annis, as you know, Link LeMaster and I have been discussing the possibility that the Mountain Enterprises Company might be willing to donate its portion of the Hayes (“Devil’s Backbone”) property to Carter County as a public recreation and trail area.

As I detailed in my prior message to Mr. LeMaster, the Hayes property is a key link in a walking/biking/equestrian trail across Eastern Kentucky. Carter County’s portion of this trail will encompass some 33 miles of former CSX Railroad right-of-way stretching from Soldier to Rush. The old CSX Depot in Olive Hill will be the primary trail- head / visitor centers for the trail.

In addition to the County-wide multi-use rail trail, there will be many miles of interconnected walking and biking trails which will give trail users access to adjacent areas of recreational opportunity. Your property would serve as one of those important public spaces. We envision a network of trails through-out the Hayes property area. Visitors would have access to nature education areas, picnic facilities and historic sites. The existing cemetery on the property would be securely fenced, restored and preserved for future generations.

A planned Cold Springs Trail will link the Hayes property trails with the eastern commercial district of Olive Hill. This would be a segment of a “Downtown Loop” trail on which visitors would be able to walk or ride from the Depot east along Tygart Creek, through the Hayes property area, and after passing through the existing short tunnel, continue north to the US Route 60 thoroughfare. They would then return to the Depot via a posted trial along Old Route 60 and Cross St. The entire trail circuit would be developed to the highest standards and would be a wonderful recreational resource not only for Olive Hill, but also visitors from the entire region.

In my previous message I mentioned our conversations with the Parker family, the current owners of the eastern portion of the Hayes property. In the next few weeks, we expect to conclude an agreement with the Parker family which would transfer ownership of their property to Carter County. They have already given us a firm verbal commitment to the donation of their property.

The combination of the Mountain Enterprises and the Parker properties would allow us to create a recreation – trail area of some 16 acres. Carter County is fully committed to the successful development of this new recreation opportunity. I have no doubt that the combination of Country government resources, City of Olive Hill resources, grant funding and volunteer contributions of time and money will assure the success of this project.

As I mentioned to Mr. LeMaster , we would like to express our appreciation to Mountain Enterprises and the Parker family by giving the new recreation area a name which would memorialize the generosity which these donations represent. Something like “Mountain Enterprises – Parker Recreation Area” comes to mind.

We recognize that there may be a concern that the development of the trails and recreation area may not be accomplished expeditiously. Mr. Annis, I am completely confident that there will be trails and essential recreational facilities on your property within a very short period after a formal agreement between Mountain Enterprises and Carter County. There is independent public access to both properties, so that if that if the Mountain Enterprises property is made available for development before the Parker property, work on trails and recreational facilities can still begin immediately.

Perhaps it would be helpful for me to detail some of our near-term plans. We would first identify the precise route of the main rail-trail along the northern boundary of your property. We would then clear a 10-14 foot wide trail area which would in turn be sub- divided into walking-biking and equestrian trailways. A main trail- bed of rock and stone dust, approximately six feet in width, would be applied. The remainder of the trail width would be surfaced in wood mulch or similar natural material. Trail signage would be erected to provide the user with information about the creation of the trail, as well as the natural and historic features of the area. These tasks would be accomplished within the three months after the property is made available to us.

During months four through nine, we would construct side trails throughout the property. For each side trail, the ground would be cleared to a width of approximately six feet and a trail surface of wood mulch or other natural material applied. We will commit to having a minimum of one thousand yards of side trail within six months of the start date. We would also install concrete picnic tables and observation points along the high point at the southern end of the property near Tygart Creek. We would also construct a trail connecting your property with Rt. 60 via Cold Springs Rd. (to complete our “Olive Hill Downtown Loop Trail”).

Mr. LeMaster and I discussed the possibility of the county leasing your property for a specified period of time, with title to the property being transferred to the county only after the trails and recreation area are in place. While a lease would be not be the preferred option for us, we do want to make clear that it would be an offer that we would very gratefully accept and for which we would be most sincerely appreciative.

We understand that the lease-donation option would be structured as a five year lease of your property by Carter County, at one dollar per annum, and that, if and when the county substantially completes the development of the property, Mountain Enterprises Company would then donate the property to Carter County.

From Carter County’s perspective, a lease-donation agreement would have at least two disadvantages:

First, the county would be investing time and resources into a property to which it did not yet have title. Although the lease period would probably be short, the somewhat ambiguous status of the property might raise some concerns in the minds of some county officials.

More importantly, during the effective period of the lease, we would not be able to apply for state or private grant funding for any development of the property. Grant funding is only available for use on property to which we hold fee simple title or easement in perpetuity. We have plans for obtaining grants to surface the main trail with asphalt from the Olive Hill Depot through to the east end of the Mountain Enterprises property. We are also considering developing greater access to the creek, a trail below the steep creek-side rock face on the south side of the property and enhanced exercise and sitting areas throughout the property.

Again, we would be very acceptable to us if that is the option that is chosen by your company.

In conclusion, we would like to again express our sincere appreciation for your very kind and generous offer to our community..

John W. Grace

Carter County Rails-to-Trails Coordinator