

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement will be prepared for a proposed second access to South Padre Island, in Cameron or Willacy Counties, Texas.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Mack, District Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, 300 East 8th Street, Austin, Texas, Telephone: (512) 536-5960.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) proposing to provide a second access to and from South Padre Island. Currently, the Queen Isabella Causeway is the only means of vehicular access to and from the island. The purpose of the proposed project is to provide an alternate route to and from South Padre. Residents and visitors need increased vehicular mobility to enhance their health, safety, and security. This need is heightened during constrained or interrupted traffic flow conditions on the Queen Isabella Causeway resulting from hurricane evacuations, incidents involving the bridge, lane closures associated with bridge repairs and during peak travel periods such as Spring Break and the summer vacation season.

The EIS will examine or evaluate viable alternatives for providing access between the mainland and the island. The project study area includes South Padre Island and the mainland in Cameron and Willacy Counties. Transportation alternatives include taking no action (the no-build alternative), Transportation System Management (TSM), ferrying systems and construction of a second causeway. The environmental study will also include discussions of the social, economic and environmental effects of the proposed project.

A public scoping meeting will be held on August 5, 2003 at 6 p.m. at the South Padre Island Convention Center. This will be the first in a series of meetings to solicit public comments on the proposed action. In addition, a public hearing will be held. Public notice will be given about the time and place of the meetings and hearing. The draft EIS will be available for the public and relevant agencies for comment before the public hearing.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. A series of public

scoping meetings will be held in the area. In addition, a public hearing will be held. Public notice will be given with the time and place of the meetings and hearing. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments, and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

Issued on: June 30, 2003.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

John R. Mack,

District Engineer, Austin, Texas.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 34361]

Metro Regional Transit Authority—Acquisition Exemption—Certain Assets of CSX Transportation, Inc.

Metro Regional Transit Authority (METRO) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.31, *et seq.* to acquire CSX Transportation, Inc.'s (CSXT) right, title and interest in a perpetual freight rail easement over a rail line owned by METRO between approximately milepost 40.42 (valuation station 1856+40) near Howard Street in Akron, OH and approximately milepost 33.70 (valuation station 2206+60) at Krumroy, OH, a distance of approximately 6.72 miles in Summit County, OH.¹

METRO indicates that it will not operate any freight rail service on the line. METRO further indicates that this transaction is related to STB Finance Docket No. 34362, *Akron Barberton Cluster Railway Company—Lease and Operation Exemption—Metro Regional Transit Authority*, wherein the Akron Barberton Cluster Railway Company has filed a notice of exemption under

¹ The freight easement was initially retained by CSXT when CSXT sold the assets comprising the subject line to METRO in *Metro Regional Transit Authority—Acquisition Exemption—CSX Transportation, Inc.*, STB Finance Docket No. 33838 (STB served June 23, 2000).

1150.41 to lease and operate over the rail line involved here.

Consummation of the transaction was expected to occur on or after June 19, 2003, the effective date of this exemption.

METRO certifies that the projected annual revenues as a result of the transaction will not exceed \$5 million, and thus the transaction will not result in the creation of a Class II or Class I rail carrier.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 34361, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Edward J. Fishman, Esq., Kirkpatrick & Lockhart LLP, 1800 Massachusetts Ave., Second Floor, Washington, DC 20036.

Board decisions and notices are available on our Web site at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>.

Decided: July 2, 2003.

By the Board, Joseph H. Dettmar, Acting Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 03-17345 Filed 7-10-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 34362]

Akron Barberton Cluster Railway Company—Lease and Operation Exemption—Metro Regional Transit Authority

Akron Barberton Cluster Railway Company (ABC), a Class III rail carrier, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.41 *et seq.* to lease, from Metro Regional Transit Authority (METRO), and operate a freight rail easement between approximately milepost 40.42 (valuation station 1856+40) near Howard Street in Akron, OH and approximately milepost 33.70 (valuation station 2206+60) at Krumroy, OH, a distance of approximately 6.72 miles in Summit County, OH.

This transaction is related to STB Finance Docket No. 34361, *Metro Regional Transit Authority—Acquisition Exemption—Certain Assets of CSX*