

properties contaminated by hazardous materials, neighborhood effects, and utility relocations. These and other issues (e.g., noise, air quality, drainage, visual effects) will be evaluated by the EIS for both the long-term and construction period. Measures to mitigate significant adverse impacts will be developed as part of the EIS.

V. Public Involvement

A comprehensive public involvement program (PIP) has been developed and will be implemented as part of the Draft EIS. The PIP will include: Agency and public scoping meetings; community-wide public information meetings; public hearings; informational briefings to stakeholder groups, elected officials, and other local and regional officials; and information dissemination via a project website and newsletters. The PIP will also involve a citizens advisory committee and other stakeholder groups to obtain input on issues, concerns, and advise on neighborhood and transit oriented development issues.

VI. FTA Procedures

The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the regulations implementing NEPA set forth in 23 CFR part 771 and 40 CFR parts 1500–1508. Consistent with FTA policy, the NEPA process will also be used to comply with other federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders, such as section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and Executive Orders 11988, 11990 and 12898 on Floodplain Management, Protection of Wetlands, and Environmental Justice, respectively.

In addition, the City of Albuquerque intends to seek Section 5309 New Starts funding for this project and will therefore follow the requirements of 49 CFR part 611 as well as the requirements of NEPA and all other applicable federal and FTA program requirements. The New Starts regulation requires a planning Alternatives Analysis, which will be completed in conjunction with the Draft EIS. The Alternatives Analysis/Draft EIS will lead to a locally-preferred alternative which must be adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization into its financially constrained metropolitan transportation plan before preliminary engineering will be authorized by FTA. If authorized, preliminary engineering for the Central Avenue Corridor Rapid Transit Project

will be conducted in conjunction with the preparation of the final EIS.

Issued on: October 21, 2003.

Robert Patrick,

Regional Administrator, FTA Region 6.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB–290 (Sub-No. 241X)]

Norfolk Southern Railway Company— Abandonment Exemption—in Aiken County, SC

Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F-*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon a 2-mile line of railroad between milepost SA–49.0 at Oakwood, SC, and milepost SA–51.0 at Montmorenci, SC, in Aiken County, SC. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 29839.

NSR has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) no overhead traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years and overhead traffic, if there were any, could be rerouted over other lines; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Board or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on November 26, 2003, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,¹ formal

¹ The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of

expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),² and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by November 6, 2003. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by November 17, 2003, with: Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423–0001.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to NSR's representative: James R. Paschall, General Attorney, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Three Commercial Place, Norfolk, VA 23510.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*.

NSR has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by October 31, 2003. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423–0001) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565–1539. [Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339.] Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), NSR shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by NSR's filing of a notice of consummation by October 27, 2004, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on the Board's Web site at www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: October 20, 2003.

Environmental Analysis (SEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See *Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines*, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

² Each OFA must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1,100. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).