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City of Gastonia

Office of The Mayor

"A Commitment to Excellence"



April 17, 2006

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Honorable Vernon A. Williams
Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423

Re: STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub. No. 240X), Norfolk Southern Railway Co. –
Abandonment Exemption in Gaston County, North Carolina

Dear Mr. Williams:

I am writing to advise you that on Tuesday, March 21, 2006, the Gastonia City Council voted to support finalizing the abandonment of the Norfolk Southern railroad right-of-way north of Rankin Lake Road in Gastonia to Dallas as expeditiously as possible.

The City Council's vote on this matter was in response to the request of Mr. Thomas McKittrick of Forsite Development Partners, which plans to construct a commercial development on the eastern side of US 321 between Rankin Lake Road and Bulb Avenue. A conceptual plan of Mr. McKittrick's proposed development is enclosed for your information. The development as proposed will require that portion of the Norfolk/Southern Right-of-Way corridor paralleling the eastern side of US 321 between Rankin Lake Road and Bulb Avenue.

Previously, the City of Gastonia had participated in discussions with Norfolk Southern Corporation, the North Carolina Railroad Company, the Town of Dallas and Gaston County with regard to the possible rail banking of this corridor from Gastonia to milepost HG-52.0 at Dallas (Gebo). Both Gaston County and the Town of Dallas have since indicated that they do not desire to participate in rail banking this portion of the corridor.

With regard to that portion of Norfolk Southern's railroad corridor south of Rankin Lake Road to Long Avenue within the city limits of the City of Gastonia, the City Council is still in negotiations with Norfolk Southern with regard to rail banking that segment of right-of-way. I stress that this portion of Norfolk Southern's rail corridor south of Rankin Lake Road includes that the interchange intersection of Interstate 85 and U.S. Highway 321. The Norfolk-Southern right-of-way under Interstate 85 represents the only feasible route to connect Gastonia's Highland

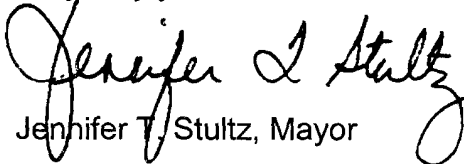
The Honorable Vernon A. Williams
April 18, 2006

neighborhood and planned Greenway system with the existing municipal Rankin Lake Park. We are confident that the needed improvements at this interchange can be constructed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation without the loss of this vital link between our City's downtown core and a historically African-American neighborhood on the one hand and the beauty of Rankin Lake Park's natural resources on the other hand.

We are writing Norfolk Southern Railroad Corporation under separate cover to ask that it expedite the actual removal of the steel rails and railroad ties north of Rankin Lake Road as soon as possible.

If you have further questions in regard to this matter, please contact our City Attorney, Ash Smith, at (704) 866-6787. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Jennifer T. Stultz, Mayor

Enclosure

C: Gastonia City Council
Hon. William Current, N.C. House of Representatives
Sarah Corey, Norfolk-Southern Corporation
James R. Paschall, Norfolk-Southern Corporation
Thomas McKittrick, Forsite Development Partners
Mike Holder, NC-DOT
Gary Spangler, NC-DOT
Scott Saylor, NC-DOT
Jan Winters, Gaston County Manager
Chuck Moore, Gaston County Attorney
Steve Miller, Town of Dallas

Forsite Development Partners

