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SERVICE DATE - DECEMBER 31, 2001

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-290 (Sub-No. 225X)

**Norfolk Southern Railway Company—Abandonment Exemption—
in Pike County, KY**

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled proceeding, Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a 5.6-mile line of railroad between milepost HL-15.0 at Bane and milepost HL-20.6 at Levisa Spur, in Pike County, KY. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The right-of-way widths varies, but is generally 30 feet on each side of the main track centerline and passes through an undeveloped area. In its application NSR states that there has been no traffic on the line during the past two years.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

NSR submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. NSR served the environmental and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. Also we have consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included the US Fish and Wildlife Service; US Environmental Protection Agency; National Park Service; National Geodetic Survey; Kentucky Department of Environmental Protection; Kentucky Transportation Cabinet; USDA National Resources Conservation Service; US Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District; Kentucky Historical Society; Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife; Pike County, KY; Kentucky Railroad Commission, Railroads for National Defense; US Department of Agriculture; National

Park Service, Recreation Resources Assistance Division; and National Park Service Land Resources Division-MS800.

CONDITIONS

We recommend the following environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

The National Geodetic Survey has identified three geodetic station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS requests that it be notified 90 days in advance of any activities that may disturb or destroy these markers in order to plan for their relocation. Therefore, we recommend that NSR consult with the NGS and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to disturbing or destroying any of these geodetic station markers in order to plan for their relocation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed discontinuance would include denial (and, therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In this case, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

PUBLIC USE

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does not take place, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

TRAILS USE

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. However, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Board's Office of Public Services responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K St., N.W., Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, 1925 K. St., N.W., Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 225X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1629, fax at (202) 565-9002, or e-mail at Ann Newman@STB.dot.gov.

Recent events involving a principal postal facility within Washington, DC., may affect for a period of time the receipt of materials mailed to the Board, as well as customer receipt of reply mail sent from the Board. Until the timely delivery of mail has been reestablished, the Sectional of Environmental Analysis (SEA) requests that individuals filing comments regarding this or other environmental assessments take the following additional steps to ensure receipt of their correspondence during the comment period:

1. Telephone or e-mail the environmental contact indicated above prior to the close of the comment period and inform them that you have mailed a comment.
2. If the comment has not been received, the environmental contact will discuss alternative modes of delivery.
3. Retain a copy of your comment for your records should alternative modes of delivery need be necessary.

SEA is committed to carrying out its duties to the public and regrets any inconvenience these new procedures may cause.

Date made available to the public: December 31, 2001.

Comment due date: January 15, 2002.

By the Surface Transportation Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP TO BE SCANNED