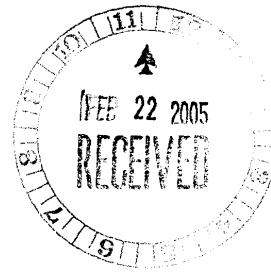




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February 11, 2005

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Honorable Vernon A. Williams, Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Support for National Coal Corporation Proposal to offer Financial assistance for Tennessee Railway—Nicks Creek, TN to Devonia, TN. STB Docket No. AB-290 (sub-No. 259X).

Dear Mr. Williams:

I am writing to express the support of the Friends of the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area for the proposal of National Coal Corporation to acquire the above rail line from Norfolk Southern Railroad. Our reasons for this are several fold.

First, in our area coal mining was and still is an important part of our local economy. As an organization dedicated to both responsible economic development and environmental conservation, we believe strongly that where coal is to be mined it must be extracted and transported as cleanly as possible. National Coal is an excellent partner in this regard, and the railroad is by far the cleanest way to remove coal from this isolated region. In an area where most of the roads are dusty, narrow and in many cases hazardous for large trucks, moving coal on the Railroad is vitally important to air and water quality as well as quality of life for residents in this region.

Second, we are strongly committed to education and responsible tourism development. These interests will be served by National Coal's proposal as well. The track in question passes through an extremely scenic and interesting area, and National Coal has expressed an enthusiastic willingness to allow us to use the track on a regular basis for scenic excursions and other functions. This will enhance the recreational mix of the area and make us more attractive to visitors and potential retirees. In addition, one of our other partners, an ATV touring company, has expressed an interest in using the line to access and develop some of the best All

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Terrain Vehicle Touring landscape in East Tennessee, again, enhancing our local economy.

Finally, it is also our intention to assemble educational and historical materials on this long standing fixture of local transportation, and use it to better tell the story of the important role that rail transportation has had in the settling, developing and supporting this mountainous area. All of these activities will be fully compatible with National Coal's use of this track. In fact, without National Coal's maintenance and upkeep of this aging line, none of these beneficial activities will be possible. Even taken all together, these recreational and educational uses alone would be insufficient to keep this line in good operational repair.

I hope you will consider favorably National Coal's request to acquire this line of the Tennessee Railroad. I trust that if I can provide further information you will not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Barbara Q. Shoemaker".

Barbara Q. Shoemaker

Executive Director

Friends of Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Inc.

423-663-4556