



City of Chelsea

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
Ned Keefe, Executive Director
City Hall, Room 101, 500 Broadway
Chelsea, Massachusetts 02150



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April 18, 2002

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Office of the Secretary

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Public Record



Vernon A. Williams
Office of the Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
Washington, DC 20423
Attn: Rini Gosh

Re: New York Central Lines LLC Proposed Abandonment Docket # AB-565 (Sub #7X)
CSX Transportation, Inc., Proposed Discontinuance of Service ~~Docket # AB-55 (Sub #605X)~~

Dear Mr. Williams,

This letter is in response to the proposed abandonment and discontinuance of service over the New York Central Lines and CSX Transportation, Inc., lines in Chelsea referenced above. The City is very much interested and concerned about the proposed abandonment and would like to submit the following comments for consideration in the review process. The comments are keyed to the draft environmental review document (attached) provided to us by the project proponent.

Item (3) Land Use

- (i) Local plans for the rail corridor include the development of a park on the portion of the corridor lying between the Chelsea River and Eastern Avenue. This park would provide Chelsea residents with access to the waterfront, an amenity that is sorely lacking. The City has been in contact with CSX officials, but has not been successful in obtaining permission for use of the site as of yet. In addition, the rail corridor was identified in the 1994 Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan as a potential site for the development of a bikeway or pedestrian path.

The portion of the corridor between Eastern Avenue and the Everett/Chelsea municipal line has been identified in the Major Investment Study (MIS) Final Report from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Federal Transit Authority as the preferred route for the proposed Circumferential Transportation Improvements, known locally as the Urban Ring. The Urban Ring project calls for the construction of a transit route through Boston's inner suburbs to connect the radial arms of the region's mass transit system. The project will not only improve transit service in the City and the region, but will also provide economic development opportunities in each of the six communities to be served by the new transit route. The project plays an important role in the City's transportation and economic development plans. The Final MIS was approved in July 2001 and the project is now in the environmental permitting/review and preliminary design stage.

The Urban Ring project is also seen as an important project by the State environmental permitting agencies. In his approval of the preliminary environmental notification forms, the

Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs has required any project affecting the preferred route to determine the extent of the impact on the corridor.

- (iv) As indicated above, there have been expressions of interest in the rail corridor for other public uses. The City has attempted to obtain permission to use a portion of the site for a waterfront park, and the regional transit authority has identified the corridor in a MIS as the preferred route for a proposed circumferential transit route.

Item (9) Water

- (ii) There are State designated wetlands within the corridor. Specifically, there are coastal banks and coastal beaches where the corridor crosses the Chelsea River, and the corridor is within the State designated 100' wide buffer zone and the 25' wide Riverfront Zone. Work within 100 feet of the River may require a permit under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

In addition, according to the Flood Insurance Rate Map Community Panel #250287001B, a portion of the corridor is within the 100-year floodplain at the Chelsea River.

Beyond responding to the draft environmental assessment, the City has concerns about the abandonment of the line as it relates to potential reuse of the corridor for public purposes. As indicated above, the City has an interest in reuse of the entire right-of-way for future transportation and open space uses. It is important that the corridor be preserved as a single unit for these purposes. As part of its filing of a Request for Public Use Condition and a Request for Interim Trail Use (previously submitted under separate cover, copy attached), the City has indicated a willingness to immediately enter into discussions with the carrier regarding disposition of the right-of-way. The City again requests that, should the abandonment be approved, a condition be placed on the approval to provide for public use of the entire right-of-way.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the proposed abandonment and discontinuance of service of the rail line through Chelsea. If you have any questions about these comments or require further information regarding the City's position, please feel free to contact me by telephone at (617) 889-8237 or by e-mail at jdepriest@ci.chelsea.ma.us.

Sincerely,



John DePriest, AICP
Director of Planning

Cc: Ned Keefe, Executive Director, Department of Planning & Development
Dave Geraci, Project Manager, CSX Transportation