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SERVICE DATE – DECEMBER 31, 2025

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

Docket No. AB 312 (Sub-No. 6X)

SOUTH CAROLINA CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY—
ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION—IN MUSCOGEE COUNTY, GA.

Decided: December 31, 2025

South Carolina Central Railroad Company, LLC (SCRF), filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR part 1152 subpart F—Exempt Abandonments and Discontinuances of Service for SCRF to abandon approximately 2.17 miles of rail line, which includes the Dummy Line, extending from Milepost 0.60/Value Station 91+21 to the end of the line at Value Station 41+60, and the Georgia Power Lead Track, extending from Value Station 0+00/59+79 to the end of the line at Value Station 41+61 in Muscogee County, Ga. Notice of the exemption was served and published in the Federal Register on December 3, 2025 (90 Fed. Reg. 55,773). The exemption is scheduled to become effective on January 2, 2026.

The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served a Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) on December 8, 2025, recommending that two conditions be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

First, OEA stated that SCRF requested assistance from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA EPD) in identifying any potential effects on water quality standards. GA EPD responded via email on June 26, 2025, stating that if the proposed abandonment disturbs one acre or more, it will require coverage under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity. Accordingly, OEA recommended that any Board decision granting abandonment authority include a condition requiring SCRF to consult with GA EPD prior to the commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities.

Second, OEA stated that SCRF submitted a combined environmental and historic report and served it on the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (SHPO) pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c). Based on the available information, the SHPO submitted comments stating that the Line is part of the Georgia & Alabama Railroad and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The SHPO also stated that the Line contributes to the NRHP-listed Columbus Historic District. Accordingly, OEA recommended imposing, on any Board decision granting abandonment authority, a condition requiring SCRF to retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties, including sites, buildings, structures, and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) eligible for listing or listed in the NRHP until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic

Preservation Act (NHPA), 54 U.S.C. § 306108, and prohibiting SCRF from filing its consummation notice or initiating any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until the Section 106 process has been completed and the Board has removed this condition.

Comments on the Draft EA were due by December 23, 2025. OEA issued its Final Environmental Assessment (Final EA) on December 29, 2025, indicating that no new comments were received. Accordingly, OEA recommends that the two conditions previously recommended in the Draft EA be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority. Based on OEA's analysis, the conditions recommended in the Final EA will be imposed.

This decision, and the proposed abandonment if implemented as conditioned, will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

It is ordered:

1. This proceeding is reopened.
2. The notice served and published in the Federal Register on December 3, 2025, exempting the abandonment of the Line described above is subject to the following conditions:¹

(a) Prior to commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities, SCRF shall consult with the GA EPD to ensure appropriate consideration of NPDES permits and comply with any reasonable requirements.

(b) SCRF shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties, including sites, buildings, structures, and objects within the Area of Potential Effect that are eligible for listing or listed in the NRHP until the Section 106 process of NHPA has been completed. SCRF shall report back to OEA regarding any consultations with the SHPO and any other Section 106 consulting parties and the public. SCRF may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until the Section 106 process has been completed and the Board has removed this condition.

3. This decision and notice is effective on its service date.

By the Board, Anika S. Cooper, Chief Counsel, Office of Chief Counsel.

¹ If an interim trail use agreement under 16 U.S.C. § 1247(d) and 49 C.F.R. § 1152.29 is reached for the Line (or a portion thereof), compliance with these conditions is not required with respect to any portion of the Line covered by the interim trail use agreement for the duration of the agreement.