

large and small. If we were to rule against UP and find that carriers are not prohibited from unilaterally imposing interchange charges, the result could be a variety of charges, imposed pursuant to the actions of one carrier and the responses of another, that would not be conducive to the cooperation necessary for a seamless, efficient national rail network. The U.S. Department of Transportation filed comments suggesting that we urge the rail industry to meet and attempt to negotiate an effective and equitable resolution of these issues. We agree that broader industry discussion of those issues would be preferable. Therefore, in the spirit of cooperation, before we undertake to resolve this matter, we will first give those directly affected by the issues UP has raised, both in the Chicago area and elsewhere, an opportunity to establish workable solutions.

The Board has successfully encouraged private-sector negotiation to resolve other difficult issues. For example, during implementation of the merger between UP and Southern Pacific Transportation Company and its affiliates,² UP was directed to convene meetings with shippers, involved railroads, and other interested parties to address concerns pertaining to the Houston Terminal, leading to a coordinated plan for improving the utilization of Houston area infrastructure.³ Then, during our review of the division of Conrail's assets, we directed CSX and Norfolk Southern to convene meetings with shippers, involved railroads, and other interested parties to discuss opportunities to improve the Buffalo, NY area rail infrastructure, which resulted in service improvements and better communication.⁴ Also, in an effort to address congestion in the Chicago, IL area, the individual railroads and AAR, at the urging of the Board and other interested parties, have been working together to improve rail operations in Chicago through the development of the Chicago Service Plan and the establishment of the Chicago Planning Group and the Chicago Transportation

Coordination Office. Most recently, we directed railroads to negotiate, in accordance with a 1986 agreement, concerning disputes with private tank car owners about certain charges being levied by The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company and UP.⁵

As signatories to the CS/CH Agreement, operating railroads, including Class I, short line, regional and terminal railroads, have agreed to use the CS/CH Rules as a means both to coordinate their operations and to resolve areas of dispute that arise. Accordingly, we are requesting AAR to convene a meeting with shippers, railroads, and other involved parties to discuss more fully the available means of improving coordination of interchange of traffic in Chicago and elsewhere, and file a report with the Board. The report should describe the results of the meeting and should present suggestions for the best ways to address issues concerning delays in interchange, including the appropriate use of the CS/CH Rules.⁶ AAR should explain if changes are needed to the terms and application of the CS/CH Rules, why they may be needed, how these changes may most effectively be implemented, and the possible timetable for implementing such changes. Once the report is filed, we will determine what further action is appropriate.

We encourage AAR to reach out to all involved parties⁷ and to work with them to achieve the common goal of improving interchange of cars in general and reducing the opportunity for delay of rail traffic in interchange, not only in the Chicago area, but across the Nation as well.

This action will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

It is ordered:

1. Indiana Harbor Belt's motion to strike is denied. The surreplies of Indiana Harbor Belt and UP are accepted.

2. AAR is requested to convene a meeting with railroads, shippers, and other involved parties to discuss issues concerning delays in the interchange of railroad cars, consistent with this decision, by February 8, 2002.

⁵ *North America Freight Car Association—Protest and Petition for Investigation—Tariff Publications of The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, et al.*, STB Docket No. 42060, *et al.* (STB served Oct. 18, 2001).

⁶ The CS/CH Rules include arbitration as a means of resolving disputes between participating carriers.

⁷ Participation in the meetings should be open to large and small railroads, shippers and other involved parties.

3. AAR should provide a report to the Board by March 11, 2001. AAR should also make a copy of its initial report available to all meeting participants, and any other involved parties upon request.

4. This decision is effective on December 10, 2001.

Decided: December 3, 2001.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan, Vice Chairman Clyburn, and Commissioner Burkes.

Vernon A. Williams,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 01-30467 Filed 12-7-01; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 601X)]

CSX Transportation, Inc.— Abandonment Exemption—in Lenoir County, NC

On November 20, 2001, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) filed with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a portion of its line of railroad in the Southern Region, known as the Florence Division, Parmele Subdivision, extending from railroad milepost AA-173.09 to railroad milepost AA-173.70 a distance of 0.61 miles, in Elmer, Lenoir County, NC. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 28501 and includes no stations.

The line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in CSXT's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

The interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions set forth in *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by March 8, 2002.

Any offer of financial assistance (OFA) under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 10 days after service of a decision granting the petition for exemption. Each offer must be accompanied by a \$1,000 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested persons should be aware that, following abandonment of rail service and salvage of the line, the line may be suitable for other public

² The merger was approved by the Board in *Union Pacific/Southern Pacific Merger*, 1 S.T.B. 233 (1996), *aff'd*, *Western Coal Traffic League v. STB*, 169 F.3d 775 (D.C. Cir. 1999).

³ *Joint Petition for Service Order*, STB Service Order No. 1518 *et al.*, (STB served Feb. 25, 1998), slip op. at 5.

⁴ *CSX Corporation and CSX Transportation, Inc., Norfolk Southern Corporation and Norfolk Southern Railway Company—Control and Operating Leases/Agreements—Conrail Inc. and Consolidated Rail Corporation (Buffalo Area Infrastructure)*, STB Finance Docket No. 33388 (Sub-No. 93) (STB served June 9, 2000).

use, including interim trail use. Any request for a public use condition under 49 CFR 1152.28 or for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be due no later than December 31, 2001. Each trail use request must be accompanied by a \$150 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(27).

All filings in response to this notice must refer to STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 601X) and must be sent to: (1) Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001, and (2) Paul R. Hitchcock, 500 Water Street-150, Jacksonville, FL 32202. Replies to the CSXT petition are due on or before December 31, 2001.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment procedures may contact the Board's Office of Public Services at (202) 565-1592 or refer to the full abandonment or discontinuance regulations at 49 CFR part 1152. Questions concerning environmental issues may be directed to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) at (202) 565-1552. [TDD for the hearing impaired is available at 1-800-877-8339.]

An environmental assessment (EA) (or environmental impact statement (EIS), if necessary) prepared by SEA will be served upon all parties of record and upon any agencies or other persons who commented during its preparation. Other interested persons may contact SEA to obtain a copy of the EA (or EIS). EAs in these abandonment proceedings normally will be made available within 60 days of the filing of the petition. The deadline for submission of comments on the EA will generally be within 30 days of its service.

Board decisions and notices are available on our Web site at "www.stb.dot.gov."

Decided: November 30, 2001.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 01-30372 Filed 12-7-01; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 217X)]

Norfolk Southern Railway Company— Abandonment Exemption—in Buchanan County, VA

Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart

F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon a 0.4-mile line of railroad between mileposts LS-0.0 and LS-0.4, at Long Spur Jct. to end of track in Buchanan County, VA (line).¹ The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 24614.

Applicant has certified that: (1) No local or overhead traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) any overhead traffic, if there is any, can be rerouted over other lines; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government agency acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line is either pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.*—

Abandonment—Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on January 9, 2002, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,² formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),³ and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by December 20, 2001. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR

1152.28 must be filed by December 31, 2001, with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-00001.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: James R. Paschall, Esq., Norfolk Southern Corporation, Three Commercial Place, Norfolk, VA 23510. If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*.

Applicant has filed a separate environmental report which address the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by December 17, 2001. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423-0001) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565-1552. Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed with 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1151.29(e)(2), NSR shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by NSR's filing of a notice of consummation by December 10, 2002, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: November 30, 2001.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 01-30446 Filed 12-7-01; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 235X)]

Norfolk Southern Railway Company— Abandonment Exemption—in McDowell County, WV

Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon a 4.58-mile

¹ NSR notes that authority to discontinue operations on the line was granted by the former Interstate Commerce Commission. See *Norfolk and Western Railway Company—Discontinuance Exemption—in Buchanan County, VA*, Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 102X) (ICC served Sept. 25, 1990—)

² The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See *Exemption of out-of-Service Rail Lines*, 5 I.C.C. 2d 377 (1980). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

³ Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).