

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 613X)

CSX TRANSPORTATION, INC.—ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION—
IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL

Decided: September 28, 2009

CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon a 16.47-mile rail line extending from milepost ONC 384.00 at Black Creek to milepost ONJ 400.47 at West Jefferson, in Jefferson County, AL. Notice of the exemption was served and published in the Federal Register on September 22, 2003 (68 FR 55085).

By decision and notice of interim trail use or abandonment (NITU) served October 21, 2003, the proceeding was reopened and a 180-day period was authorized for the Jefferson County Commission (County) to negotiate an interim trail use/rail banking agreement with CSXT for the right-of-way involved in this proceeding pursuant to the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247(d) (Trails Act).¹ The trail use negotiation period under the NITU was extended several times, with the decision served April 5, 2007, extending the negotiation period until October 3, 2007.

By decision served on October 2, 2007, the Board vacated the NITU served on October 21, 2003, and issued a replacement NITU substituting the City of Fultondale, AL (the City), as the interim trail use proponent in lieu of the County with respect to the 16.47-mile line. The Board also authorized a new, 180-day negotiation period for the City and CSXT, extending from October 2, 2007, until March 30, 2008.

By decisions served on April 3, 2008, October 2, 2008, and April 6, 2009, the trail use negotiation period under the NITU was extended to September 21, 2009. These decisions also extended the consummation notice filing deadline until November 20, 2009. In this decision, the Board is granting the requests by the City to extend the NITU negotiating period and by CSXT to extend the time for it to exercise the abandonment authority.

On September 21, 2009, the City submitted a request for an additional 180-day extension of the negotiating period. The City states that CSXT has provided it with a Purchase Sale

¹ That decision also imposed an environmental condition that remains in effect.

Agreement, that it has responded on March 17, 2009, with its counter offer, and that they are still negotiating. While the parties continue to work diligently to reach an agreement, the City did not complete negotiations by the September 21, 2009 deadline, and it wants to continue trail use negotiations.

By letter dated September 24, 2009, CSXT has concurred in the request to extend the negotiating period. Additionally, CSXT has requested an extension of the consummation notice filing deadline until May 19, 2010.

Where, as here, the carrier has not consummated the abandonment at the end of the previously imposed negotiating period and is willing to continue trail use negotiations, the Board retains jurisdiction and the NITU negotiating period may be extended.² Under the circumstances, further extension of the negotiating period is warranted. See Birt v. STB, 90 F.3d 580, 588-90 (D.C. Cir. 1996); Grantwood Village v. Missouri Pac. R.R. Co., 95 F.3d 654, 659 (8th Cir. 1996). Accordingly, the NITU negotiating period will be extended from September 21, 2009, to March 20, 2009, and the consummation notice filing deadline will be extended from November 20, 2009, until May 19, 2010.

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

It is ordered:

1. The requests by the City for an additional 180-day NITU negotiating period and by CSXT to extend the time to exercise its abandonment authority are granted.
2. The negotiating period under the NITU is extended to March 20, 2010.
3. The authority to abandon must be exercised on or before May 19, 2010.
4. This decision is effective on its date of service.

By the Board, Rachel D. Campbell, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Anne K. Quinlan
Acting Secretary

² See Rail Abandonments—Supplemental Trails Act Procedures, 4 I.C.C.2d 152, 157-58 (1987).