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SERVICE DATE – MARCH 5, 2008

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB DOCKET NO. AB-183 (Sub-No. 4X)**

**Union Railroad Company - Abandonment Exemption - in Allegheny County, PA**

**STB DOCKET NO. AB-290 (Sub-No. 301X)**

**Norfolk Southern Railway Company – Discontinuance of Trackage Rights Exemption – in Allegheny County, PA**

**BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, Union Railroad Company (URR) and Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) (collectively, railroads) jointly filed a petition under 49 CFR 1152.20 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for URR to discontinue service and abandon and for NSR to discontinue trackage rights over a 1.34-mile line of railroad between South Duquesne and McKeesport, in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (PA). The rail line proposed for abandonment extends from McKeesport Branch Station 0+00 to McKeesport Branch Station 70+78, and includes the Riverton Railroad Bridge (Riverton Bridge) that crosses the Monongahela River (the Line). A map depicting the Line in relationship to the area served is appended to this environmental assessment (EA). If the petition becomes effective, URR would be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and dispose of the right-of-way.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE**

The Line is located in the Monongahela River valley southeast of Pittsburgh. At one time, the area was one of the largest steel-making regions of the country. Steel manufacturing activities still occur in the valley, but sections are being redeveloped for commercial and residential purposes. According to railroads, the Riverton Bridge is the only structure on the line that is 50 years of age or older. It was originally constructed in 1891 and is currently subject to operating and weight restrictions. The railroads are not aware of any known hazardous waste sites on the Line. The right-of-way is approximately 50 feet wide.

URR is a wholly owned indirect subsidiary of United States Steel Corporation (USS). The Line was constructed by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to connect its Monongahela Line to USS's former National Works at McKeesport and to interchange with the McKeesport Connecting Railroad (MKC), which also served the USS plant complex. Operations at National Works were terminated over 25 years ago. One rail customer, Camp-Hill Corporation, is currently served by the Line. Camp-Hill operates a mill that is part of USS's former National

Works and processes USS-manufactured steel coils into pipes. URR uses the Line to move the steel coils from USS's Irwin Works north of Clairton to Camp-Hill's mill for processing. Outbound rail shipments of manufactured pipe from Camp-Hill are currently sporadic and infrequent. NSR and its predecessor, Conrail, have not used their trackage rights for at least 15 years. If the petition is granted, rail service would remain available to Camp-Hill via MKC and CSX Transportation. There has been no overhead traffic on the Line for the past two years. Neither Camp Hill nor USS objects to the proposed abandonment.

According to railroads, the proposed abandonment is being sought to permit development of the Riverton Bridge and adjacent rights-of-way for recreational trail purposes. The Line is a proposed segment of a regional recreational trail being developed along the Monongahela River valley.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The railroads submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities. The railroads served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)].<sup>1</sup> The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

### ***Diversion of Traffic***

During 2005 and 2006, the average number of inbound carloads of steel coils to Camp-Hill was two per day. If Camp-Hill elects not to ship using its available alternative rail routing, then trucking would remain an option. Using the maximum number of railcars moved annually for Camp-Hill (i.e., approximately 730 railcars assuming 2 railcars per day and operations 365 days per year), and a railcar to truck ratio of 1:4, shipping this material by truck rather than railcar would generate approximately 5840 truck trips per year (i.e., 2920 roundtrips), or approximately 16 truck trips per day. This limited increase in truck traffic would result in negligible impacts to air quality or the local or regional transportation networks. The proposed abandonment would also not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; or transportation of ozone-depleting materials.

### ***Salvage Activities***

The railroads intend to remove the rails and other track material from the Line, but the Riverton Bridge and all its appurtenant structures would be left intact.

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<sup>1</sup> The railroads' environmental and historic reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov) by going to "E-Library," selecting "Filings," and then conducting a search for AB-183 (Sub-No. 4X).

The railroads note that the proposed abandonment should not be inconsistent with local or regional land use plans. Allegheny County expressed support for the conversion of the Line to recreational trails use.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reviewed the railroads' environmental report and concluded that the proposed abandonment would not impact Federally designated farm lands. Therefore, SEA concludes that the proposed abandonment does not involve the Federal Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 U.S.C. 4201).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) reviewed the railroads' environmental report. USFWS replied that no Federally listed or proposed threatened or endangered species are known to occur in the project area, and that no biological assessment or further consultations under the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1535) are required (USFWS Project #2008-0391).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) had not responded to the railroads' environmental report regarding impacts to waters of the United States at the time this EA was prepared. However, because salvage activities would not include removal of the Riverton Bridge, SEA would not expect the proposed abandonment to result in the discharge of dredge or fill material to waters of the United States including wetlands, or require permitting under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344). Nevertheless, a copy of this EA has been provided to the Corps for review and comment.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

The railroads submitted an historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)] and served the report on the Pennsylvania Bureau of Historic Preservation (the State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO), pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). In a February 5, 2008 reply, the SHPO concluded that there are no National Register eligible or listed historic or archaeological properties in the area of the Line (SHPO File No. ER 08-0514-003-B).

Pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1), and following consultation with the SHPO and the public, we have determined that the proposed abandonment would not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 CFR 800.11(d), consists of the railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public through posting on the Board's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>.

SEA also conducted a search of the Native American Consultation Database at [www.cast.uark.edu/other/nps/nacd/](http://www.cast.uark.edu/other/nps/nacd/) to identify Federally recognized tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area. The database identified no tribes within Allegheny County.

## **CONDITIONS**

We recommend no environmental condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the Line would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and therefore no change in operations and no salvage activities), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

## **PUBLIC USE**

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

## **TRAILS USE**

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within the time specified in the Federal Register notice. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

## **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

The Board's Office of Public Services (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at 202-245-0230, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

## **COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, please send an **original and one copy** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Dave Navecky, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to STB Docket No. AB-**

**183 (Sub-No. 4X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Dave Navecky, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at 202-245-0294, fax at 202-245-0454, or e-mail at naveckyd@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: March 5, 2008.

**Comment due date: April 4, 2008.**

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Anne K. Quinlan  
Acting Secretary

Attachment