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SERVICE DATE - LATE RELEASE MARCH 24, 2004

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Docket No. AB-565 (Sub-No. 10X)

NEW YORK CENTRAL LINES, LLC-ABANDONMENT
EXEMPTION-IN WORCESTER COUNTY, MA

Decided: March 24, 2004

New York Central Lines, LLC (NYC) and CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) (collectively, applicants), filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F-Exempt Abandonments and Discontinuances of Service for NYC to abandon and CSXT to discontinue service over approximately 4.2 miles of railroad from milepost QBU-00 and milepost QBU-4.2 from Fitchburg to Leominster, in Worcester County, MA. Notice of the exemption was served and published in the Federal Register on May 30, 2002 (67 FR 37911).¹ On June 28, 2002, a decision and notice of interim trail use or abandonment (NITU) was served, reopening the proceeding and authorizing a 180-day period for the Cities of Leominster and Fitchburg (Cities) to negotiate an interim trail use/rail banking agreement with applicants for the entire line. At the request of CSXT, the negotiating period was extended by decisions served December 24, 2002, and June 19, 2003. The latest extension was scheduled to expire on January 23, 2004. The June 19, 2003 decision also extended the deadline for CSXT to file its notice of consummation until March 23, 2004.

On December 10, 2003, CSXT filed a request for an extension of the NITU negotiating period until July 23, 2004. CSXT states that they have been unable to finalize negotiations with the Cities. Additionally, CSXT requests an extension of the consummation notice filing deadline until September 23, 2004.

Even if a negotiating period expires, when a carrier consents to continuing negotiations and has not consummated abandonment of the line, the Board continues to have jurisdiction to grant an extension. Under the circumstances, an 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) cert. denied, 519 U.S. 1149 (1997). Accordingly, the NITU negotiation

¹ The notice issued May 30, 2002, embraced STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 616X), CSX Transportation, Inc.-Discontinuance of Service Exemption-in Worcester County, MA.

period will be extended to July 23, 2004, and the consummation notice filing deadline will be extended to September 23, 2004.

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

It is ordered:

1. CSXT's request for an extension of the negotiating period and its request for an extension of time to exercise the abandonment authority is granted.
2. The negotiating period under the NITU is extended to July 23, 2004.
3. The authority to abandon must be exercised on or before September 23, 2004.
4. This decision is effective on its date of service.

By the Board, Joseph H. Dettmar, Acting, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary