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SERVICE DATE – JUNE 15, 2007

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Docket No. AB-303 (Sub-No. 26X)

WISCONSIN CENTRAL LTD.–ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION–
IN ASHLAND COUNTY, WI

Decided: June 14, 2007

Wisconsin Central Ltd. (WCL) filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F–Exempt Abandonments to abandon a 0.48-mile line of railroad from milepost 435.35 on Ashland's lakefront and traveling 2,255 feet to a point where it connects to a private spur that used to serve C. Reiss Coal Company in Ashland, Ashland County, WI. Notice of the exemption was served and published in the Federal Register on June 3, 2004 (69 FR 31453-54). By decision and notice of interim trail use or abandonment (NITU) served on July 1, 2004, the proceeding was reopened and a 180-day period was authorized for the City of Ashland, WI (the City), to negotiate with WCL pursuant to section 8(d) of the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247(d) (Trails Act), for the right-of-way involved in this proceeding.¹ The negotiating period under the NITU was extended by decisions served on December 17, 2004, June 28, 2005, December 20, 2005, June 9, 2006, and December 15, 2006, with the latest extension scheduled to expire on June 18, 2007.

On May 24, 2007, the City filed a motion to extend the negotiating period for an additional 180 days. The City states that negotiations are currently continuing in good faith between it and WCL, but that more time is needed to finalize negotiations. WCL filed a letter stating that it agrees to the requested extension of time to continue negotiations.

Where, as here, the carrier is willing to continue trail use negotiations, the negotiating period may be extended.² The parties have shown that the additional time is necessary to complete negotiations. An extension of time will promote the establishment of trails and rail banking consistent with the Trails Act. Accordingly, the NITU negotiating period will be extended for 180 days, from June 18, 2007, until December 15, 2007. Given the time that has elapsed since abandonment authority was granted, the negotiation parties are urged to conclude their negotiations so that further extensions are not necessary.

¹ Six environmental conditions were also imposed in that decision.

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

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

It is ordered:

1. The City's request to extend the NITU negotiating period is granted.
2. The NITU negotiating period is extended until December 15, 2007.
3. This decision is effective on the date of service.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary