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SEA

SERVICE DATE – JUNE 11, 2007

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB Docket No. AB-1011X**

**Northern Lines Railway, LLC – Discontinuance of Service Exemption –  
in Stearns County, MN**

**BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, Northern Lines Railway, LLC (NLR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking to discontinue service over 0.77 miles of rail line located between milepost 16.21 and milepost 16.98, near Cold Springs in Stearns County, Minnesota. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). If the notice becomes effective, NLR will be able to discontinue service over the above mentioned 0.77 miles of rail line.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The Surface Transportation Board (Board) has previously authorized abandonment of this line in a decision dated June 5, 2007, in BNSF Railway Company – Abandonment Exemption – in Stearns County, MN, STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 455X). As stated in that decision, the environmental impacts of BNSF's proposed abandonment were examined by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA), which prepared an EA and determined that the abandonment would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. SEA believes that there will be no new environmental impacts as a result of NLR's proposed discontinuance beyond those which were previously addressed during the environmental review of BNSF's abandonment.

In this discontinuance proceeding, NLR submitted the same Environmental Report originally submitted by BNSF in its abandonment proceeding (dated March 21, 2007). NLR served the Environmental Report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies. No comments have been received by NLR or SEA at this time concerning the proposed discontinuance.

NLR does not own the underlying real estate or the line itself. In these circumstances, SEA cannot recommend that conditions be imposed requiring NLR's compliance with specific requirements pertaining to salvage activities for the proposed discontinuance because NLR does not have any ownership interest in the rail line and therefore cannot conduct salvage activities on the rail line. The proposed discontinuance would not include salvage operations separate from those connected with BNSF's prior abandonment of the line.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

In this discontinuance proceeding, NLR submitted the same Historic Report originally submitted by BNSF in the above mentioned abandonment proceeding (dated March 21, 2007). NLR served the report on the Minnesota Historical Society (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). Although the SHPO has not submitted comments on NLR's proposed discontinuance, the SHPO had submitted comments to BNSF when BNSF filed for the line's abandonment stating that BNSF's abandonment would have no adverse effect on historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). We reviewed the report and the information provided by the SHPO and concurred with the SHPO's comments. We have similarly determined that NLR's proposed discontinuance will not adversely affect historic properties.

Pursuant to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for implementing the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.5(c) and 36 CFR 800.8, we determine that NLR's discontinuance would not adversely 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(e), consists of the railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which will be provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

## **CONDITIONS**

The proposed discontinuance would not include salvage operations separate from those connected with BNSF's prior abandonment of the line. Accordingly, SEA recommends that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting discontinuance authority.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

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

Alternatives to the proposed discontinuance would include denial (and therefore no change in operations) and continued operation by another operator. In either of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

## **COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Danielle Gosselin, the environmental contact for this case. 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 Docket No. AB-1011X in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this environmental assessment, please contact Danielle Gosselin by phone at (202) 245-0300, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at [danielle.gosselin@stb.dot.gov](mailto:danielle.gosselin@stb.dot.gov).

Date made available to the public: June 11, 2007.

**Comment due date: June 22, 2007.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment