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SERVICE DATE – MAY 26, 2006

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 625X)

CSX TRANSPORTATION, INC.–ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION–
IN PRESTON COUNTY, WV

Decided: May 25, 2006

By decision and notice of interim trail use or abandonment (NITU) served on April 9, 2004 (April 2004 decision), the Board, under 49 U.S.C. 10502, exempted from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 the abandonment by CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) of a 14.3-mile line of railroad extending from milepost BAJ 0.0 at Rowlesburg to milepost BAJ 14.3 near Albright in Preston County, WV, subject to trail use, public use, environmental, and standard employee protective conditions.

The April 2004 decision authorized Friends of the Cheat (Friends) to negotiate with CSXT for interim trail use/rail banking until October 6, 2004, for the 14.3-mile line under the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247(d) (Trails Act). By decision served on October 13, 2004, the NITU negotiating period was extended until April 6, 2005, and the time for CSXT to file its notice of consummation was extended until June 6, 2005. After the extension of the NITU negotiating period, CSXT and Friends could not reach an agreement. CSXT subsequently submitted a notice of consummation to the Board on June 3, 2005.

By letter filed on October 12, 2005, CSXT stated that it had inadvertently sent the notice of consummation in this proceeding to the Board before complying with all of the conditions imposed in the April 2004 decision. In that filing, CSXT requested that the Board allow it to retract the consummation letter so that CSXT properly could comply with the historic preservation condition, which remained unsatisfied, and asked that the Board indicate that the abandonment had not been consummated. By decision served on October 28, 2005, CSXT's request to retract the consummation letter was granted, and it was ordered that the line remained subject to the Board's jurisdiction.¹

¹ By decision served on January 26, 2006, the proceeding was reopened at the request of the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis and the historic preservation condition that was imposed in the April 2004 decision was removed.

By decision served on December 8, 2005, the Board granted a request from Friends for a 180-day extension of the NITU negotiating period, until May 27, 2006, for a 9.78-mile portion of the line extending from milepost BAJ 0.0 at Rowlesburg to milepost BAJ 9.78 at Camp Dawson, in Preston County, WV. On May 24, 2006, CSXT filed a request for an additional 180-day extension of the NITU negotiating period until November 23, 2006. CSXT states that it has not consummated the abandonment, has been unable to finalize negotiations with Friends, and desires to continue to negotiate for interim trail use/rail banking with Friends. Additionally, CSXT requests an extension of the consummation notice filing deadline until January 22, 2007.

Where, as here, the carrier is willing to continue trail use negotiations, the negotiating period may be extended.² An extension of the negotiating period will promote the establishment of trails and rail banking consistent with the Trails Act. Accordingly, the NITU negotiating period will be extended for that portion of the line extending from milepost BAJ 0.0 at Rowlesburg to milepost BAJ 9.78 at Camp Dawson, in Preston County, WV, for a period of 180 days, from May 27, 2006, to November 23, 2006, and the consummation notice filing deadline will be extended until January 22, 2007.

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 CSXT for an additional 180-day NITU negotiating period and for an extension of time to exercise abandonment authority are granted.
2. The negotiating period under the NITU is extended to November 23, 2006.
3. The authority to abandon must be exercised on or before January 22, 2007.
4. This decision is effective on its date of service.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

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