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SERVICE DATE - OCTOBER 30, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-491X

R.J. CORMAN RAILROAD COMPANY/  
PENNSYLVANIA LINES INC.  
- ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION -  
IN CAMBRIA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

### BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the R.J. Corman Railroad/Pennsylvania Lines, Inc. (RJCP) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its railroad line (the Blacklick Secondary Line) located between milepost 6.4 at Ebensburg Junction to the end of track at milepost 16, east of Nanty Glo, a distance of 9.6 miles in Cambria County, Pennsylvania. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

According to applicant RJCP, the Blacklick Secondary was part of a secondary Pennsylvania Railroad Company (PRR) route between Cresson and Black Lick, Pennsylvania and one of several PRR lines serving the coalfields of south-central Pennsylvania. The Blacklick Secondary was eventually transferred to Conrail, which ceased operations over the line. RJCP acquired the dormant line from Conrail in December 1995. No freight traffic has moved over the Blacklick Secondary for at least the last 20 months.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. The railroad has served the environmental

report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). We have investigated the record in this proceeding. Also, we have consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Region 3 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Geodetic Survey, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and the Cambria County Planning Commission.

### **CONDITIONS**

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified one geodetic station marker that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, **we recommend that R.J. Corman Railroad Company provides NGS at least 90 days notification before engaging in activities that would disturb or destroy the marker identified in NGS's correspondence of June 4, 1997.**

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has not made a final determination of the proposed abandonment's effect on historic and archaeological resources. Therefore, **we recommend that R.J. Corman Railroad Company retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way that are 50 years old or older until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended conditions, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the line will 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), 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 10 days of publication of the notice of the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. 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) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, Washington, DC 20423.

#### **COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Victoria Rutson, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-491X in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ms. Rutson at (202) 565-1545.

Date made available to the public: October 27, 1997.

**Comment due date: November 26, 1997.**

By the Board, Elaine K. Kaiser, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary