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SEA

SERVICE DATE – JULY 1, 2005

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB DOCKET NO. AB-979X**

**CONNECTICUT SOUTHERN RAILROAD, INC.—ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION—  
IN HARTFORD COUNTY, CT**

**BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, the Connecticut Southern Railroad, Inc. (CSO) has filed a notice of exemption pursuant to the class exemption at 49 C.F.R. 1152.50 for CSO to abandon 942 feet of track between milepost 9.4 (Station 5673+42 on the north side of Colonial Drive) and the end of the line at milepost 9.6 (Station 5664+00) in Hartford County, CT. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties, and other railroad appurtenances and dispose of the right-of-way.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The railroad submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment would 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 served the environmental and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. SEA has reviewed and investigated the environmental record in this proceeding.

CSO has not transported freight traffic over the line in over eight years. There are no shippers on the line and no overhead freight traffic moves on the line. Accordingly, no rail freight traffic would be diverted to motor carrier. No passenger traffic would be diverted to other modes as a result of the proposed abandonment. The proposed abandonment would have no adverse effect on regional or local transportation systems and patterns. The line traverses a predominately urban area that has an adequate road and highway network.

If abandonment authority is granted, CSO intends to reclassify about 200 feet of the western most track as a spur track that would serve a future industrial park, and sell the remaining portion of the right-of-way to the State of Connecticut for use as a trail extension to the Hop River State Park Trail. Based on the existing adjacent land use and the State's desire to acquire a portion of the line as a trail, the proposed abandonment appears to be consistent with existing land use plans. According to CSO, there are no restrictions on the title to the property, including any

reversionary interest, which would affect the transfer of title or use of the property for other than rail purposes.

Since the line proposed for abandonment is located within a developed urban area, it is unlikely that any prime agricultural land will be affected. The line does not pass through lands or waters protected under the state's coastal zone management program. The proposed abandonment would have no effect on the transportation of energy resources or the transportation of recyclable commodities. CSO is not aware of any hazardous material waste sites or sites where known hazardous material spills have occurred on or along the rail corridor of the line. At this time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has not responded to CSO's request for assistance in determining whether the proposed abandonment would adversely affect endangered or threatened species or areas designated as a critical habitat. Based on available information, including a review of the USFWS threatened and endangered species system listing for Connecticut, and the developed urban nature of the area through which the line passes, SEA does not anticipate that the proposed abandonment and salvage activities would adversely affect any endangered or threatened species. If abandonment authority is granted, the surrounding community would likely experience modest short-term increases in noise levels during salvage activities. Any impacts to local and regional water quality and air quality related to the proposed abandonment are expected to be negligible.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

The railroad submitted an historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)] and served the report on the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). At the time this environmental assessment was prepared, the SHPO had not completed its assessment of the proposed abandonment. Pending completion of the SHPO's review, we recommend a condition to ensure compliance with the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

## **CONDITION**

SEA recommends that the following environmental condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority:

- Pending completion of the SHPO's review, CSO shall 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, SEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is imposed, abandonment of the line would 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 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, Washington, DC 20423.

## 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 Phillis Johnson-Ball, who prepared this environmental assessment. 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-979X in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this environmental assessment, please contact Phillis Johnson-Ball, the environmental

contact for this case, by phone at (202) 565-1530, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail johnson-ballp@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: July 1, 2005

**Comment due date: July 18, 2005**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment