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SERVICE DATE – DECEMBER 20, 2007

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Docket No. AB-565 (Sub-No. 1X)

NEW YORK CENTRAL LINES, LLC—ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION—IN
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MA

Decided: December 19, 2007

By decision and notice of interim trail use or abandonment (NITU) served on October 12, 2001 (October 2001 decision), the Board, under 49 U.S.C. 10502, exempted from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903, the abandonment by New York Central Lines, LLC (NYC) of 4.80 miles of railroad known as the Albany Division, Fitchburg Subdivision, extending from milepost QBS 0.00 at Framingham to milepost QBS 4.80 at South Sudbury, in Middlesex County, MA, subject to trail use, public use, and standard employee protective conditions.¹ The October 2001 decision authorized the Town of Sudbury (Sudbury) to negotiate with the carrier for interim trail use/rail banking for the 1.4-mile portion of the line that extends north from the Framingham town line to the intersection of the former Penn Central Transportation Company line. The NITU negotiating period was extended through November 20, 2007, by decisions served on April 10, 2002, October 7, 2002, May 15, 2003, October 6, 2003, May 4, 2004, October 28, 2004, April 18, 2005, November 8, 2005, May 26, 2006, December 12, 2006, and July 23, 2007. The decision served on December 12, 2006, also authorized the Town of Framingham to negotiate with the carrier for interim trail use/rail banking for the 3.4-mile portion of the right-of-way that extends from milepost QBS 0.00 at Framingham to milepost QBS 3.40 at the Framingham town line (Framingham line). The October 2001 decision stated that, if consummation had not been effected by the filing of a notice of consummation by October 12, 2002, and there were no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon would automatically expire. By decisions served on November 8, 2005, May 26,

¹ Certain of the prior decisions or notices in this proceeding have embraced the related STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 593X), CSX Transportation, Inc.—Discontinuance of Service Exemption—In Middlesex County, MA. CSX Corporation, CSX Transportation, Inc.'s (CSXT) parent company, and Norfolk Southern Corporation jointly acquired control of Conrail Inc. and its wholly owned subsidiary, Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail). As a result of that acquisition, certain assets of Conrail were assigned to NYC, which at the time was a wholly owned subsidiary of Conrail, to be exclusively operated by CSXT pursuant to an operating agreement. The line authorized for abandonment in this proceeding is included among the property operated by CSXT pursuant to the NYC operating agreement. CSXT is the successor to NYC. See CSX Corp. et al.—Control—Conrail Inc. et al., STB Finance Docket No. 33388 (Sub-No. 94) (Supplemental Transaction) (STB served Nov. 7, 2003).

2006, and December 12, 2006, the consummation date for the entire 4.80-mile line was extended until July 23, 2007.²

By letter filed on October 19, 2007, Sudbury requests a 180-day extension of the NITU negotiating period until May 18, 2008.³ Sudbury states that the parties are continuing to negotiate for interim trail use/rail banking, and that its appraisal of the relevant line segment has been sent to CSXT for review. By letter filed on November 23, 2007, CSXT concurs in the extension request.

Additionally, in the November 23, 2007 letter, CSXT states that it has not consummated the abandonment of the Framingham line and requests a 180-day extension of the NITU negotiating period until May 18, 2008, for that 3.4-mile portion of the line. CSXT states that it has not reached an agreement with Framingham but desires to continue to negotiate. CSXT also seeks an extension of the consummation deadline for the entire line until July 17, 2008.⁴

Where, as here, the carrier has not consummated the abandonment at the end of the previously imposed negotiating period and has indicated its willingness to continue negotiations, the Board retains jurisdiction and the NITU negotiating period may be extended.⁵ Under the circumstances, further extension of the negotiating period is warranted. See Birt v. STB, 90 F.3d 580, 588-90 (D.C. Cir. 1996); Grantwood Village v. Missouri Pac. R.R. Co., 95 F.3d 654, 659 (8th Cir. 1996). Accordingly, the NITU negotiating period will be extended for an additional 180 days, until May 18, 2008, and the consummation notice filing deadline for the Framingham line will be extended until July 17, 2008. Given the length of time the parties have had to negotiate a trail use agreement, however, the negotiation parties are urged to conclude their negotiations so that further extensions are not necessary.

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

It is ordered:

1. The requests to extend the NITU negotiating period are granted.

² The pendency of conditions, including trail use conditions, serves to extend the deadline for consummation of the abandonment until 60 days after the expiration, satisfaction, or removal of the legal or regulatory barrier to consummation.

³ Sudbury states in its extension request that the 1.4-mile portion of the line extends from milepost QBS 3.40 to milepost QBS 4.90. The correct mileposts are from milepost QBS 3.40 to milepost QBS 4.80, which makes the length of the line portion approximately 1.4 miles.

⁴ Under 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), a railroad may, for good cause shown, file a request for an extension of time to file a notice of consummation in abandonment proceedings.

⁵ See Rail Abandonments—Supplemental Trails Act Procedures, 4 I.C.C. 2d 152, 157-58 (1987).

2. The NITU negotiating period is extended until May 18, 2008, for CSXT to negotiate (a) with Sudbury as to the 1.4-mile portion of the line between milepost QBS 3.40 and milepost QBS 4.80; and (b) with Framingham as to the 3.4-mile portion of the line between milepost QBS 0.00 and milepost QBS 3.40.

3. The authority to abandon must be exercised on or before July 17, 2008.

4. This decision is effective on the date of service.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary