

Decision No. 28331

Service Date: **October 7, 1997**  
Comment Due Date: **October 27, 1997**

# **Environmental Assessment**

**Finance Docket No. 33388 (Sub No. 3)**

**CSX Corporation and CSX Transportation, Inc.,  
Norfolk Southern Corporation and Norfolk Southern Railway Company**

—Control and Operating Leases/Agreements—

**Conrail Inc. and Consolidated Rail Corporation**

## **Greenwich**

**CSX/Conrail Rail Line Connections –  
Village of Greenwich, Huron County, Ohio**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CSX Corporation and CSX Transportation Inc. (CSX), Norfolk Southern Corporation and Norfolk Southern Railway Corporation (NS), and Conrail Inc. and Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) have filed a joint Application with the Surface Transportation Board (the Board) seeking authorization for the acquisition of Conrail by CSX and NS.

As a part of their joint Application, CSX proposes to construct two rail line connections in Greenwich, Huron County, Ohio to permit traffic movements between the CSX and Conrail systems. The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine whether construction of these connections would have any significant effects on the environment.

The proposed connections are located in the Village of Greenwich in Huron County, Ohio. Greenwich is located in north-central Ohio, approximately 50 miles southwest of Cleveland and 75 miles north of Columbus. The new connections would be built in the northwest and southeast quadrants of the intersecting CSX and Conrail lines, which together would form the proposed Northeastern Gateway Service Route, a major route for time-sensitive traffic moving between the northeastern United States and Chicago. At this location, an existing Conrail line runs southwest to northeast between Indianapolis and Cleveland and the existing CSX line runs west to east from Chicago to Akron, Ohio.

The proposed connection in the northwest quadrant would provide a 4,600-foot, 45-mph connection, which would enable eastbound CSX trains from Chicago to utilize the Conrail line to proceed northeast toward Cleveland. The proposed connection in the southeast quadrant would provide a 1,044-foot, 30-mph per hour connection between the existing CSX and Conrail rail lines. The connection would enable northeast bound trains from Indianapolis to access the eastbound CSX line toward Akron and would allow freight transportation from Indianapolis to Greenwich along the Conrail line, and from Greenwich to Baltimore, Maryland along the CSX line.

CSX estimates that an average of 31.7 trains per day (primarily automotive, merchandise, intermodal, and unit trains with an average length of 6,200 feet) would operate over the new connection in the northwest quadrant, with an average of 9.4 trains per day using the new connection in the southeast quadrant. The potential environmental effects of constructing the proposed connections are summarized in the table on the following page.

Based on its independent analysis of all the information available at this time, SEA concludes that construction of the proposed rail line connections would not significantly affect the quality of the environment with the implementation of the mitigation measures set forth in this EA. Accordingly, SEA recommends that the Surface Transportation Board impose the mitigation measures set forth in Chapter 5.3 as conditions in any final decision approving construction of the proposed rail line connections in the Village of Greenwich, Huron County, Ohio.

**SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS  
–CSX/CONRAIL RAIL LINE CONNECTIONS–  
GREENWICH, OHIO**

<b>Effect Type</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Effects</b>
Land Use	New Right-of-Way Required Prime Farmland Affected Within Coastal Zone Management Area	0.5 acre 0.5 acre No
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	Disproportionate Effect on Minority and Low Income Groups	None
Transportation and Safety	Train Movements Over Connections: —Northwest Quadrant Connection —Southeast Quadrant Connection New Grade Crossings Grade Crossing Safety/Delay Effects Effect on Transportation of Hazardous Materials Hazardous Waste Sites Affected	31.7 trains per day 9.4 trains per day Three* None None None
Water Resources	Effect on Surface Water Wetlands Affected	None 0.099 acre
Biological Resources	Loss of Critical Habitats Effect on Threatened and Endangered Species Effect on Parks, Forest Preserves, Refuges and Sanctuaries	None None None
Air Quality	Emissions from Construction + Idling Vehicles Effect on Air Quality Due to Construction (Fugitive Dust)	Negligible None
Noise	Additional Receptors within the $L_{dn}$ 65 dBA Contour	Two
Historic and Cultural Resources	NRHP-Eligible or Listed Historic Sites Affected NRHP-Eligible or Listed Archeological Sites Affected	None None
Energy	Changes in Fuel Consumption due to Construction Effect on Transportation of Energy Resources and Recyclable Commodities Overall Energy Efficiency Rail to Motor Carrier Diversions	Negligible None Improved None

\* Additional at-grade crossings would be constructed adjacent to existing crossings; existing protection systems would be modified to control the wider crossings at these locations

SEA specifically invites comments on all aspects of this EA, including the scope and adequacy of the recommended mitigation. SEA will consider all comments received in response to the EA in making its final recommendations to the Board. Comments (an original and 10 copies) should be sent to: Vernon A. Williams, Secretary, Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20423. The lower left-hand corner of the envelope should be marked: Attention: Dana White, Environmental Comments, Finance Docket No. 33388 (Sub Nos. 1-7). Questions may also be directed to Ms. White at this address or by telephoning (888) 869-1997.

Date EA Made Available to the Public: **October 7, 1997**

Comment Due Date: **October 27, 1997**



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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Description of the Proposed Action**

CSX Corporation and CSX Transportation Inc. (collectively CSX), Norfolk Southern Corporation and Norfolk Southern Railway Corporation (collectively NS), and Conrail Inc. and Consolidated Rail Corporation (collectively Conrail) have filed a joint Application with the Surface Transportation Board (the Board) seeking authorization for the acquisition of Conrail by CSX and NS. The fundamental objective of the proposed acquisition is to divide existing Conrail assets and operations between CSX and NS. As a result, certain Conrail facilities and operations would be assigned individually to either CSX or NS through operating agreements or other mechanisms, and certain other existing Conrail facilities would be shared or operated by both CSX and NS.

As a part of their joint Application, CSX proposes to construct two rail line connections in Greenwich, Huron County, Ohio to permit traffic movements between the CSX and Conrail systems. The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine whether construction of these connections would have any significant effects on the environment.

### **1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED RAIL LINE CONNECTIONS**

#### **1.1.1 Location and Description**

The proposed connections are located in the Village of Greenwich in Huron County, Ohio. Greenwich is located in north-central Ohio, approximately 50 miles southwest of Cleveland and 75 miles north of Columbus. The new connections would be built in the northwest and southeast quadrants of the intersecting CSX and Conrail rail lines, which together form the proposed CSX Northeastern Gateway Service Route, a major route for time-sensitive traffic moving between the northeastern United States and Chicago (see Figure 1). At this location, an existing Conrail line runs southwest to northeast between Indianapolis and Cleveland and the existing CSX line runs west to east from Chicago to Akron, Ohio.

The proposed connection in the northwest quadrant (see Figure 2a) would provide a 4,600-foot, 45-mph connection, adjacent to the existing Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) railroad tracks. This connection would enable eastbound CSX trains from Chicago to utilize the Conrail line to proceed northeast toward Cleveland. The proposed connection would require the acquisition of 0.4 acre of agricultural land. The remainder of the connection would be constructed within existing CSX, Conrail and W&LE rights-of-way. The connection would begin at Milepost 193 on the CSX line (located west of Townsend Street) and terminate at the Conrail line. This connection would allow CSX to more efficiently schedule time-sensitive intermodal trains which

Figure 1. Project Location

Figure 2a. Proposed Connection--Northwest Quadrant

transport goods from New England to Chicago along the proposed CSX Northeastern Gateway Service Route.

The proposed construction in the southeast quadrant (see Figure 2b) would provide a 1,044-foot, 30-mph connection between the existing CSX and Conrail rail lines. The connection would enable northeast bound trains from Indianapolis to access the eastbound CSX line toward Akron and would allow freight transportation from Indianapolis to Greenwich along the Conrail line, and from Greenwich to Baltimore, Maryland along the CSX line. The proposed connection would require the acquisition of approximately 0.1 acre of right-of-way currently owned by Versitech Corporation. The remainder of the connection would be constructed within existing CSX and Conrail rights-of-way.

### **1.1.2 Construction Requirements**

CSX estimates that the construction of the new rail line connections would require a labor force of about 60 people over a period of two months. The constructions would require existing clearing of existing vegetation and grading; approximately 21,500 cubic yards of earthwork (cut/fill) would be required. Use of borrow material could also be required; borrow material would be obtained from local sources and hauled to the construction site by rail or truck. Various types of heavy equipment (such as bulldozers, roller/compactors, tie loaders, and rail installers) would be used during construction.

### **1.1.3 Changes in Rail Traffic**

The proposed connections would facilitate rail operations and traffic movements on the CSX and Conrail rail lines. CSX estimates that an average of 31.7 trains per day (primarily automotive, merchandise, intermodal, and unit trains with an average length of 6,200 feet) would operate over the new connection in the northwest quadrant; an average of 9.4 trains per day would operate over the new connection in the southeast quadrant.

Rail traffic on the existing rail lines served by the connections would change as follows:

- Traffic on the CSX line would increase, on average, from 34.5 trains per day to 34.9 trains per day southeast of the proposed connection (Sterling to Greenwich, Ohio segment) and from 34.5 trains per day to 57.2 trains per day northwest of the connection (Greenwich to Willard, Ohio segment).
- Traffic on the Conrail line would increase, on average, from 14.5 trains per day to 54.2 trains per day northeast of the connection (Berea to Greenwich, Ohio segment). Traffic on the Conrail line southwest of the connection (Greenwich to Crestline, Ohio segment) would increase from 14.5 trains per day to 31.3 trains per day.

Figure 2b. Proposed Connection--Southeast Quadrant

## **1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED CONNECTIONS**

The purpose of the environmental review documented in this EA was to identify, analyze, and disclose the environmental issues and potential effects associated with the construction of the rail line connection in Greenwich, Ohio. Based on the joint Application filed by CSX and NS, this connection would improve the service capabilities and operating efficiencies of each railroad. These efficiencies include enhanced single-line service, reduced travel times, and increased utilization of equipment.

This EA was prepared to determine whether the Board should approve construction of the connection before it decides on the merits of the entire acquisition transaction. If approved by the Board, this connection would be constructed before the Board's final decision on the CSX and NS Application to acquire Conrail. If the entire transaction is subsequently approved by the Board, CSX intends to begin operations on this connection immediately. If the Board does not approve the transaction, or approves it with conditions which preclude its use, operation of this connection would not be allowed.

## **1.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROPOSED ACTION AND THE CONRAIL ACQUISITION TRANSACTION**

On April 10, 1997 CSX, NS, and Conrail filed their notice of intent to file an application seeking the Board's authorization for: (1) the acquisition by CSX and NS of control of Conrail, and (2) the division of Conrail's assets. On May 2, 1997 CSX and NS filed petitions seeking a waiver of the Board's regulations at 49 CFR 1180.4(c)(2)(vi) that provide that all "directly related applications, e.g., those seeking authority to construct or abandon rail lines,..." be filed at the same time. The waiver would allow CSX and NS to seek the Board's authority to construct and operate seven rail line connections (four for CSX and three for NS) prior to the Board's decision on the acquisition and division of Conrail.

The seven constructions are each relatively short connections between two rail carriers and have a total length under 4 miles. Most of the construction on these short segments would take place within existing rights-of-way. CSX and NS stated that these seven connections must be in place before the Board's decision on the primary application in order for them to provide efficient service in competition with each other. Without early authorization to construct these connections, CSX and NS contended, each railroad would be severely limited in its ability to serve important customers.

In Decision No. 9 (see Appendix A) served June 12, 1997, the Board granted CSX's and NS's petitions. The Board stated that it understood the railroads' desire to "be prepared to engage in effective, vigorous competition immediately following consummation of the [acquisition]." In granting the waiver, the Board noted that the railroads were proceeding at their own risk. If the Board were to deny the primary application, any resources expended by CSX and NS in building the connections would be of little benefit to them. Both the railroads and the Board recognized that no construction could occur until the Board completed its environmental review of each of the construction projects. Thus, the Board stated that it would consider the environmental aspects of

these proposed constructions and the railroads' proposed operations over these lines together in deciding whether to approve the physical construction of each of these lines.

The operational implications of the Conrail acquisition as a whole, including operations over the roughly 4 miles of line included in the seven connection projects, will be examined in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared to assess the impacts of the entire acquisition transaction. The EIS will be available for a 45-day public review and comment period in late November 1997.

#### **1.4 SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS**

SEA prepared this EA to ensure that the proposed action complies with the statutory requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Board's environmental regulations, and other applicable rules and/or regulations. SEA is responsible for conducting the Board's NEPA environmental review.

The Board has adopted the former Interstate Commerce Commission's environmental regulations (49 CFR Part 1105), which govern the environmental review process and outline procedures for preparing environmental documents. Section 1105.6(b) of these regulations established the criteria that identify the types of actions for which an EA would be required. The construction of a rail line connection, like the ones proposed in Greenwich, is classified under the Board's regulations as normally requiring preparation of an EA. SEA reviewed the proposed rail line construction and determined that because the connection is not expected to result in significant environmental impacts, an EA should be prepared.

In preparing the EA, SEA identified issues and areas of potential environmental effect, analyzed the potential environmental effects of the proposed rail line construction projects, reviewed agency comments, and developed mitigation measures to avoid or reduce anticipated effects on the environment. To assist it in conducting the NEPA environmental analysis and in preparing the EA, SEA selected and approved De Leuw, Cather & Company to act as the Board's independent third party consultant, in accordance with 49 CFR Part 1105.10(d). The independent third party consultant worked solely under the direction and supervision of SEA in conducting the environmental analyses related to the proposed construction. The Applicants provided funding for these activities.

SEA analyzed the Environmental Report and Operating Plan that accompanied the transaction Application, technical studies conducted by CSX's environmental consultants, and the Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment for the Greenwich connections. In addition, SEA conducted its own independent analysis of the proposed constructions, which included verifying the projected rail operations; verifying and estimating future noise levels; estimating air emission increases; performing land use, habitat, surface water, and wetland surveys; assessing effects to biological resources; and performing archeological and historic resource surveys. In addition, SEA and/or its independent third party consultant consulted with CSX and its environmental consultants and visited the proposed rail line construction site to assess the potential effects on the environment.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Alternative Actions Considered**

This chapter outlines the alternatives considered for the proposed connections.

#### **2.1 NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

In its environmental review, SEA considered a “no-action” alternative. Under this alternative, current operations would continue over existing CSX and Conrail rail lines. However, as outlined below, access between the two lines would be limited to existing connections, interchanges, or terminals. This would preclude the railroads from attracting substantial volumes of freight now carried by truck and the associated environmental benefits.

According to CSX, if the northwest connection is not built in Greenwich, trains would lose the operational flexibility provided by the connection and the travel time savings resulting from shorter routes. CSX would have to route trains in a manner that would add approximately 100 miles to each train trip, resulting in more fuel usage and additional air emissions. That alternative routing would require eastbound trains to transit through Cleveland, where a new connection would need to be built. In addition, to accommodate the added traffic on the alternative route, CSX would need to double track its line between Cleveland to Sterling, Ohio. Local shippers on that line would suffer as a result of increased congestion. In the absence of the southeast quadrant connection in Greenwich, traffic would need to be routed from Cleveland south to Sterling, Ohio and then westbound to Greenwich. This would add approximately 80 miles to each train trip, resulting in more fuel usage and additional air emissions. Further, a connection would need to be built at Cleveland to facilitate this routing.

#### **2.2 BUILD ALTERNATIVES**

SEA considered alternative locations for the proposed connections, but after an initial review, these alternatives were determined to be more harmful to the environment than the proposed connection locations. The proposed rail lines would be the most direct connection between the existing rail lines and would minimize the use of new land outside the CSX and Conrail rights-of-way.

The alternative considered in the northwest quadrant would be a much smaller and tighter connection, constructed closer to the intersection of the existing CSX and Conrail lines, than the proposed connection. It would require acquiring more property than the proposed connection location (1.2 acres vs. 0.4 acre) and several residences on Union Avenue near the construction site would be affected. It would also require the construction of a roadbed and right-of-way in an area not previously used for railroad operations, as well as the extension of a concrete culvert. For these reasons, this alternative location was rejected.

The alternative considered in the southeast quadrant alternative was farther south than the selected alternative. It would require the acquisition of additional property (1.2 acres vs. 0.1 acre) and the relocation of an Ohio Power Substation, and would result in adverse effects to residents and local businesses. The alternative also would result in the construction of a new (or at a minimum, wider) at-grade crossing of Kniffin Street. For these reasons, the alternative location in the southeast quadrant was not considered a suitable option.

### **2.3 SELECTION OF PROPOSED CONNECTION LOCATIONS**

A 4,600-foot single-track connection in the northwest quadrant of the CSX and Conrail mainline intersection (north of the existing W&LE railroad tracks) in Greenwich, Ohio provides the optimal location and most direct routing for a new connection. This connection would allow for the optimal transport of freight along the proposed CSX Northeastern Gateway Service Route linking the northeastern United States and Chicago.

The proposed connection location in the southeast quadrant was chosen because it would transport freight from Indianapolis to Greenwich along the Conrail line, and from Greenwich, to Baltimore, along the CSX line. This configuration would provide greater train routing flexibility and allow slower trains to avoid using the higher speed routes. Operation of the proposed connection would enhance the efficiency of transporting intermodal freight.

SEA concluded that there were no construction, operational, or environmental features that would render other alignments of the proposed rail line connections more reasonable than the proposed locations.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Existing Environment**

This chapter provides an overview of the existing environment in the vicinity of the proposed construction projects.

#### **3.1 LAND USE**

##### **3.1.1 Current Land Use**

To identify current land uses and protected lands in the vicinity of the proposed construction sites, SEA reviewed local plans and maps, consulted with the appropriate federal, state and local agencies, and conducted field reviews at the proposed connection sites. Land uses of concern include those sensitive to environmental changes, such as residential properties, commercial buildings, educational and medical facilities, and institutions. SEA also contacted the Bureau of Indian Affairs to obtain information on any federally recognized American Indian tribes or reservations within the project area.

The current CSX/Conrail track intersection is located in the Village of Greenwich in an area of mixed land uses (see Figure 3). The existing rail lines cross each other at equal grade approximately 125 feet west of Kniffen Road, where there is an existing at-grade crossing for each line. The topography of the site is relatively flat with low rolling hills and deep drainage ditches in the surrounding area. North of the CSX tracks (northwest of the Conrail line), the area includes agricultural fields, scattered farms, residential dwellings, and wooded, undeveloped land. South of the existing CSX tracks (southeast of the Conrail line) are residential and industrial land uses. Two manufacturing companies (Versitech Corporation and Central Plastics Company) and a church (Greenwich Church of Christ), and approximately 65 residences are located within 500 feet of the proposed connections. In addition, an elementary school—South Central Primary School—is located about 750 feet south of the proposed connection in the northwest quadrant. Utility lines are located in the vicinity of the at-grade crossings at Kniffen and Townsend Streets.

None of the land for the proposed constructions is located within an American Indian reservation. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, there are no federally recognized American Indian tribes or reservations in Ohio.

Figure 3. Land Use

### **3.1.2 Consistency with Local Plans**

SEA contacted the Village of Greenwich Administrator to obtain information on local planning and zoning requirements. Although Greenwich has no land use plan, the zoning map indicates that most of the land adjacent to railroad tracks is zoned for industrial uses. A small area at the eastern end of the northwest connection is zoned for residential uses. These areas are currently undeveloped or used for agriculture.

### **3.1.3 Prime Farmlands and Coastal Zones**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) maintains a national database of prime farmlands. SEA contacted the local NRCS office to determine whether prime farmland soils were located in the vicinity of the proposed connections. According to the NRCS and the Huron County, Ohio Soil Survey, prime farmland soils, including Bennington silt loam (0-2 percent slopes and 2-6 percent slopes), Cardington silt loam (2-6 percent slopes) and Condit silt loam, are located within or adjacent to the construction sites.

Any proposed project which may affect land or water uses within a coastal zone designated pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 USC 1451 *et seq.*), must be consistent with the state's Coastal Zone Management Plan. Ohio does not have a federally recognized Coastal Zone Management program.

## **3.2 SOCIOECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Based on the 1990 census, the population of Huron County is 56,240, and the population of the Village of Greenwich is 1,442. Since the areas of the proposed constructions encompass a large portion of the village and more detailed census data are not available, statistics for the village were used for the areas of proposed construction.

Only 0.1 percent of the residents in the vicinity of the proposed connections are minorities, compared to 3.3 percent of residents in Huron County. The racial composition of these areas is summarized in Table 1.

Census data indicate that the 1989 median family income for Huron County was \$32,133 and \$28,871 in the Village of Greenwich. In the vicinity of the proposed connections, approximately 10.3 percent of the residents are low-income (below the federal poverty level), compared to 9.5 percent of residents in Huron County.

**Table 1  
RACIAL COMPOSITION OF POPULATION**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Huron County</b>	<b>Village of Greenwich</b>	<b>Area of Proposed Connection</b>
White	96.7 %	99.9 %	99.9 %
Black	1.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Asian	0.3 %	0.1 %	0.1 %
Hispanic (Any Race)	1.8 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
American Indian	0.1 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Other	0.1 %	0.0 %	0.0 %

### **3.3 TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY**

#### **3.3.1 Transportation Systems**

SEA gathered information relating to the existing transportation system in the vicinity of the proposed constructions during consultations with federal, state, and local agencies and field visits to the proposed connection sites.

The existing rail transportation network consists of CSX and Conrail rail lines that intersect just west of Kniffen Street. The CSX line is used for east-west rail traffic; the Conrail line is used for northeast-southwest traffic. A W&LE line is located in the northwest quadrant of the CSX/Conrail intersection. All lines are currently used for rail operations. The existing roadway network in the vicinity of the proposed connections includes Kniffen and Townsend Street, both north-south roadways. Access to the rail construction areas would be from these roadways, Maple Street, Pierce Street, and the CSX and Conrail rail lines.

Kniffen Street is a two-lane, asphalt paved road which crosses the CSX and Conrail tracks at grade. The at-grade crossings of these rail lines are currently protected by a cross buck and lights. South of East Union Street, this road has an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 200 vehicles; north of the East Union Street, the ADT is 100 vehicles. The at-grade crossing of the W&LE tracks is currently protected by a cross buck and a yield sign. According to CSX, one accident was reported at the Kniffen Street crossing in 1996.

### **3.3.2 Transport of Hazardous Materials**

SEA reviewed CSX and Conrail operational data to determine whether the trains that would operate on the proposed connection are used to transport hazardous materials. Both the CSX and Conrail lines in Greenwich are designated as Key Routes for the shipment of hazardous materials. A Key Route, as defined by the Inter-Industry Task Force, is a route where more than 10,000 carloads of hazardous materials are transported per year.

### **3.3.3 Hazardous Waste Sites**

SEA examined railroad records and government databases to determine whether there are known hazardous waste sites or reports of hazardous materials spills within 500 feet of the proposed construction sites. The databases reviewed include: the National Priority List; the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System; Resource Conservation and Recovery Information System—Treatment, Storage or Disposal sites; Emergency Response Notification System spill sites; the State Priority List; State Licensed Solid Waste Facilities; the State Inventory of Leaking Underground Storage Tanks; the State Inventory of Reported Spills; and the orphan, or unmappable, sites list.

No hazardous waste sites or other sites of environmental concern were identified as being located within 500 feet of the proposed rail line connections. The database search did reveal three orphan sites within the Village of Greenwich. Based on the limited address information available, none of these sites appear to be located in the immediate vicinity of the proposed construction sites.

## **3.4 WATER RESOURCES**

SEA identified water resources that could be adversely affected by the construction of the new rail connection. SEA also ascertained whether there were any designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains in the vicinity of the proposed construction sites.

SEA consulted several data sources, including United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic maps, National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps produced by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood insurance maps, and NRCS soil survey maps, to identify existing water resources. Each site was also visited by SEA's third-party consultant for field reviews and data verification. Water resources within 500 feet of the centerline of the proposed construction sites, as described below, were identified primarily from site inspections and the interpretation of hydrologic features delineated on USGS topographic maps. The other information sources were used to confirm and/or refine the locations and extent of these features.

### 3.4.1 Wetlands

NWI mapping indicates that three wetlands are located within 500 feet of one of the proposed connections (see Figure 4). These wetlands are at the eastern terminus of the proposed northwest quadrant connection, adjacent (just north and south) to the existing Conrail tracks. Two of the wetlands are classified as palustrine forested broad-leaved deciduous saturated/semipermanent/seasonal (PFO1Y); the third is a palustrine open water intermittently exposed/permanent (POWZ). During site visits in August 1997 by SEA's third-party consultant, 13 additional wetlands (designated as W<sub>A/1</sub> through W<sub>F/2</sub> in Figure 4) were identified within 500 feet of the proposed connections. They have been classified as follows:

- *Wetland A/1*, located west of Townsend Street and south of the W&LE line, is classified as riverine intermittent stream bed seasonal (R4SBC).
- *Wetland A/2*, located south of the CSX line and east of the Conrail line, is classified as palustrine emergent temporarily flooded (PEMA).
- *Wetland B/1*, located near the western terminus of the proposed northwest quadrant connection and south of the W&LE tracks (Milepost 113.1) is classified as a palustrine emergent temporary wetland (PEMA).
- *Wetland B/2*, located on the south side of the W&LE line and west of Kniffin Street (Milepost 112.4), is classified as palustrine emergent seasonally flooded (PEMC).
- *Wetland C/2*, located south of the W&LE line (near Milepost 102), is classified as a palustrine emergent seasonally flooded excavated (PEMCx).
- Wetland D is comprised of three sub-wetlands (Wetlands D-1/2, D-2/2, and D-3/2). *Wetland D-1/2* is located on the north side of the W&LE line, and is classified as palustrine emergent seasonally flooded (PEMC). *Wetland D-2/2*, located between the intersection of the W&LE and Conrail rail lines, is classified as palustrine scrub/shrub broad-leaved deciduous saturated/semipermanent/seasonal (PSS1Y). *Wetland D-3/2*, also located on the east side of the W&LE line, near the Conrail intersection (at Milepost 112.2), is classified as palustrine scrub/shrub broad-leaved deciduous seasonally flooded (PSS1C).
- Wetlands E-1/2 through E-4/2 are located near the northeast terminus of the proposed northwest quadrant connection, between the W&LE and Conrail rail lines. *Wetland E-1/2* is classified as palustrine emergent seasonally flooded (PEMC). *Wetland E-2/2* is classified as palustrine scrub/shrub broad-leaved deciduous seasonally flooded (PSS1C). *Wetland E-3/2* is classified as palustrine emergent seasonally flooded (PEMC). *Wetland E-4/2* is classified as palustrine scrub/shrub broad-leaved deciduous temporarily flooded (PSS1A).

Figure 4. Water Resources

- *Wetland F/2*, located adjacent and southeast of the Conrail line and north of the CSX line, is classified as palustrine emergent seasonally flooded (PEMC) .

### **3.4.2 Surface Waters**

SEA identified five water bodies within 500 feet of the proposed connections. Four are unnamed tributaries of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River. The first tributary is located at Townsend Street near the W&LE and CSX lines. The second tributary is located near the intersection of the CSX and Conrail rail lines, south and west of the Versitech facility. The third tributary is located east of Kniffin Street near the eastern terminus of the proposed northwest quadrant connection. The fourth tributary is located northeast of the proposed northwest quadrant connection. All of the tributaries flow, via culverts, under the existing CSX, Conrail, and W&LE rail lines in a northwesterly direction toward the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River, located approximately 1 mile northwest of the site. The fifth water body, an unnamed pond, is located approximately 200 feet north of the western terminus of the proposed northwest quadrant connection.

The proposed northwest quadrant construction site is located within the 100-year flood plain of three unnamed tributaries of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River. The proposed southeast quadrant connection is within the 100-year flood plain of an unnamed tributary of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River.

## **3.5 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

SEA identified biological resources that could be adversely affected by the construction of the proposed rail connection. SEA also investigated whether there were any parklands, forest preserves, refuges, or wildlife sanctuaries in the vicinity of the proposed connections.

SEA consulted several data sources to identify existing biological resources, including USGS 7.5-minute topographic maps, NRCS soil surveys, and USFWS lists of sensitive or threatened and endangered species. Each site also was visited by SEA's third-party consultant to evaluate habitats, identify the presence or potential occurrence of sensitive species, and to verify published data. Federal and state resource management agencies were consulted concerning the potential occurrence of sensitive plants and animals.

### **3.5.1 Vegetation**

The proposed connection in the northwest quadrant would be constructed in an area with agricultural fields and wooded, undeveloped land. Existing vegetation along the Conrail and W&LE rail lines consists of a variety of woody and non-woody plants. East of Kniffin Street, these plants include: catnip, thistle, pigweed, Queen Anne's lace, poison ivy, ox-eyed daisies, strawberry, as well as small elms (less than 6 inches in diameter), red haws, and box elder trees.

West of Kniffin Street, existing vegetation includes, in addition to those plants listed above, mustard, mint, common tansy, common mullein, sedge, and day lilies. Farther west along the tracks, the density of trees (including elm, walnut, cherry, cottonwood, quaking aspen, and mulberry) increases. West of Townsend Street, the area along the stream is heavily wooded until it reaches the westernmost tributary of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River. Beyond this stream, the density of the trees decreases and prairie vegetation predominates.

The connection in the southeast quadrant would be constructed primarily in a developed area along the southeastern side of the Conrail line and the southern side of the CSX line among existing industrial land uses. South of the CSX tracks and west of Kniffin Street, a few small trees (elms, apple, box elder, and maple), as well as Queen Anne's lace, chicory, and thistle, among other non-woody plants are present. This area also includes grasses adjacent to the Conrail right-of-way that are mowed periodically. Dense, non-woody vegetation, including butterfly weed, honeysuckle, ox-eyed daisies, ragweed, and common mullein, is present.

### **3.5.2 Wildlife**

Wildlife habitat in the vicinity of the proposed construction sites consists of the forest, forest-edge, prairie, agricultural, and developed lands described above.

For the northwest quadrant connection, the eastern portion of the connection (east of Townsend Street) provides habitat more attractive to wildlife than the western portion of the connection. This eastern portion contains wooded areas, areas of dense vegetation, wetland areas and an unnamed tributary of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River that would attract animals. Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates would be expected throughout the area, though none were observed during field visits to the site.

In contrast, the area of proposed construction in the southeast quadrant offers poor wildlife habitat. Small mammals and birds acclimated to urbanized or developed environments would be expected in this area. Some fish were observed in the small riparian habitat associated with the unnamed tributary of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River (west of Kniffin Street) and, although none were observed during field visits to the site, amphibians, reptiles, and a wide variety of invertebrate species also would be expected. West of Townsend Street, the W&LE and the CSX rail lines are separated only by a narrow strip of land (about 60 feet wide) that contains another unnamed tributary of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River. Fish and frogs were observed in the stream. It is likely that small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates would be attracted to the stream and that some of these species would use the corridor between the tracks as habitat.

### **3.5.3 Threatened and Endangered Species**

There are no records of the presence of rare or endangered species in the vicinity of the proposed constructions. Of the federally listed threatened or endangered species known to occur in Ohio, only the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) is reported as potentially located in Huron County based on its historic range. Typically, this species winters in caves or abandoned mines; during the rest of the year its habitat includes wooded areas along or near small or medium-sized streams, where the species roosts in hollow trees, under the bark of trees with exfoliating bark, or in man-made structures. The environment at the construction site for the proposed northwest quadrant connection provides habitat that may be attractive to the Indiana bat. However, the presence of this species in the area of the construction site has not been documented. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has no record of the Indiana bat in Huron County. Further, the ODNR–Division of Nature Areas and Preserves reported that it has no records of rare or endangered species in the proposed project area.

### **3.5.4 Parks, Forest Preserves, Refuges and Sanctuaries**

A village park—Reservoir Park—is located approximately one-half mile south of the proposed connections. No other parks, forest preserves, wildlife sanctuaries or refuges are located in the vicinity of the proposed connections.

## **3.6 AIR QUALITY**

Huron County, Ohio is currently categorized as being in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Current sources of emissions in the project area include locomotives, vehicles, and industries.

During construction, ambient air quality in the vicinity of the proposed connections, could be affected by fugitive dust. The State of Ohio regulates fugitive dust emissions under Rule 3745-17-08 of the Ohio Administrative Code. This rule requires the application of control measures, such as the use of water or dust suppression chemicals, to prevent fugitive dust from becoming airborne during construction.

## **3.7 NOISE**

SEA identified noise-sensitive land uses in the vicinity of the proposed construction sites and measured existing noise levels resulting from operation of the existing Conrail and CSX rail lines.

The proposed connections are located in an area of the Village of Greenwich that contains residential, industrial, and agricultural land uses. The Board's regulations require the use of day-night sound level ( $L_{dn}$ ) measurements to characterize community noise; a standard of 65 decibels ( $L_{dn}$  65 dBA) is used to determine the extent of affected sensitive receptors. Operation of rail traffic

on the existing rail lines in the vicinity of the proposed connections results in a  $L_{dn}$  65 dBA noise contour which affects approximately 150 sensitive receptors, including residences, a church, and a school (see Figure 5). Portions of neighborhoods to the south and southeast of the existing railroad tracks already experience noise levels in excess of 65 dBA from rail operations. Approximately 65 receptors are within 500 feet of an existing line. Much of the existing noise in the vicinity of the proposed connection is horn noise from trains as they approach the Kniffen Street and Townsend Street grade crossings, as well as noise from vehicle traffic on local streets.

### **3.8 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

To identify cultural (archeological or historic) resources in the area of the proposed construction, SEA reviewed CSX and Conrail records and historic valuation maps, examined soil surveys and topographic maps, reviewed the State's archives, conducted site visits, and consulted with the Ohio State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

#### **3.8.1 Archeological Resources**

Although no archeological resources had been identified previously within the area of the proposed constructions in Greenwich, Ohio, the potential for archeological sites in the land to be acquired for the northwest quadrant connection warranted an archeological field study (the area of the proposed southeast quadrant connection has been previously disturbed). A field investigation was conducted by CSX within the proposed new right-of-way north of the existing W&LE tracks. One transect of shovel test pits was excavated at a 15-meter intervals from just east of Townsend Street to the end of the proposed northwest quadrant connection. Units were not excavated in disturbed or wetland areas; a total of 49 shovel test pits were excavated. Artifacts recovered included bits of barbed wire and isolated lithic flakes found in some shovel test pits. No significant resources were recovered. Based on archival and field investigations, SEA concluded that there are no known archeological sites in the project area; no archeological sites in the vicinity of the proposed connections have been recorded in the Ohio State Site Files or the National Register of Historic Places.

#### **3.8.2 Historic Resources**

No significant historic structures in the vicinity of the proposed construction have been recorded in the Ohio State Site Files or the National Register of Historic Places. However, two older structures—a cut sandstone culvert and a single-span trestle bridge—are located near the proposed northwest quadrant connection. Both appear to have been constructed between 1920 and 1940. Based on consultations with the Ohio SHPO, neither structure appears to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Figure 5. Noise Contours

### **3.9 ENERGY**

Current sources of energy consumption in the project area include locomotives, railroad maintenance equipment, and motor vehicles. The existing CSX and Conrail lines may be used to transport energy-producing commodities and recyclables.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Potential Environmental Effects**

This chapter provides an overview of the potential environmental effects from the proposed rail line connections between the CSX and Conrail tracks in Greenwich, Ohio. These connections would involve the construction of new rail line segments, mostly within existing right-of-way, to connect an existing CSX line to an existing Conrail line. As with any construction of new railroad tracks, the steps required to build a new connection include site preparation and grading, rail bed preparation, ballast application, track installation, and systems (e.g., signals, communications) installation. Although the construction zone required would vary depending on site conditions, most work would be completed within 250 feet of the new connections.

In conducting its analysis, SEA considered potential effects in the following environmental areas in accordance with the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR Part 1105.7(e) and other applicable regulations:

- Land Use
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
- Transportation and Safety
- Water Resources
- Biological Resources
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Cumulative Effects

#### **4.1 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS FROM THE PROPOSED ACTION**

##### **4.1.1 Land Use**

###### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

To assess land use effects, SEA consulted with local planning officials to establish whether the construction and operation of the proposed rail line connections were consistent with existing land uses and future land use plans. Determination as to whether the proposed rail line constructions would affect any prime agricultural land was based on SEA's consultations with the NRCS. SEA conducted similar consultations with State Coastal Zone Management agency to assess whether the proposed construction would not harm protected coastal areas. SEA also contacted the Bureau of Indian Affairs to obtain information on any federally recognized American Indian tribes or reservations within the project area.

SEA considered land use effects to be adverse if any construction activities or subsequent operations cause long-term changes which:

- Conflict with existing land uses in the area or future land use plans.
- Displace prime farmland from use for agricultural production.
- Conflict with an existing Coastal Zone Management Plan.
- Affect any Indian reservation or tribal lands.

### **Potential Effects**

No adverse land use effects are expected from the construction of the proposed connections. They are compatible with surrounding land uses, comply with applicable zoning ordinances, and are consistent with community plans for the area. A small amount (0.5 acre) of property adjacent to the existing rail lines would be acquired for new right-of-way. Most of this land (0.4 acre) is located north of the existing W&LE tracks and is currently used for agriculture (row crops and pasture) or is undeveloped, wooded land. The remainder of the land to be acquired (0.1 acre) is industrial property south of the CSX tracks. These lands, currently undeveloped, are zoned for industrial uses. No buildings or residents would be displaced. Approximately 0.5 acre of prime farmland soils would be converted to railroad use as a result of the proposed constructions. The project is not located within a designated coastal zone management area, nor would any known American Indian reservations or tribal lands be affected.

### **4.1.2 Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice**

#### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

SEA analyzed the effects of the proposed connections on low-income and minority populations in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Executive Order 12898: “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” SEA reviewed demographic and income data from the 1990 Census to compare the population in the area of the proposed construction (Village of Greenwich) with that of Huron County.

An adverse environmental justice effect would occur if any significant adverse effects of the proposed construction fall disproportionately on low-income or minority populations.

#### **Potential Effects**

SEA concluded that no environmental justice effects would result from the construction or operation of the proposed connections. Only 0.1 percent of the population in the area surrounding the proposed connections are minorities, a proportion less than the percentage of minority residents in Huron County as a whole (3.3 percent). Although, the median family income in the Village of Greenwich is lower than the county-wide median (\$28,871 vs. \$32,133), the share of the population living below the federal poverty level is the same, approximately 10 percent. Therefore, the area of the proposed constructions do not contain minority or low-income communities which could be

disproportionately affected by the proposed action. Moreover, the proposed connections are not expected to result in any significant adverse effects to any residents, regardless of race or income.

### **4.1.3 Transportation and Safety**

#### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

SEA examined the existing local and regional rail systems which could be affected by the proposed construction of the new rail line connections. Potential effects on the local and regional roadways were also evaluated. In evaluating potential safety effects, SEA assessed: (1) the need for new grade crossings; (2) modifications at existing grade crossings; (3) the effect of the proposed connection on the transportation of hazardous materials; (4) the likelihood of encountering hazardous waste sites during construction; and (5) the likelihood of a hazardous material release during construction.

Effects are considered adverse if the construction or operation of the proposed connection would cause long-term disruptions to vehicular traffic, increase the potential for delays or accidents at grade crossings, increase the risk of transporting hazardous materials, or cause spills or release of hazardous materials during construction.

#### **Potential Effects**

**Transportation Systems.** The proposed connections would improve rail access to and through Greenwich and enhance the efficiency of CSX and Conrail operations. The connections would increase the number of trains crossing Kniffen and Townsend Streets and increase the potential for vehicle delays.

The proposed northwest quadrant connection would add an extra track to the existing at-grade crossings at Kniffen and Townsend Streets. The existing crossing protection systems would be modified to accommodate the additional tracks. Although the current ADT at the Kniffen Street crossing is low (100 vehicles per day), the wider at-grade crossing could result in additional delays because vehicles currently stop only for W&LE traffic. The addition of the connection crossing at Townsend Street also could result in additional delays because vehicles currently stop only for W&LE traffic. The potential for increased delay at Townsend Street is greater due to the higher traffic volumes (an ADT of 1,480 vehicles). An average of 31.7 trains per day, traveling at a maximum train speed of 45 mph, are expected to use the new northwest quadrant connection. Based on a train length of 6,200 feet, the average delay time for vehicles at the Kniffen and Townsend Street crossings due to the proposed connection would be approximately 1.4 minutes. New rail traffic on the proposed connection is not expected to result in a significant increase in the accident rate because of the low traffic volumes at these locations. The potential increase in at-grade crossing delays and accident rates at these locations due to increased rail line segment activity are discussed in the EIS on the effects of the entire acquisition transaction.

The proposed southeast quadrant connection would add an extra track to the existing CSX double-track at-grade crossing of the CSX line at Kniffen Street. The new crossing would be located just

south of the existing tracks and at-grade crossing. The existing crossing protection systems would be modified to accommodate the additional tracks. Although the current ADT at the Kniffen Street crossing is low (200 vehicles per day), the wider at-grade crossing could result in additional delays because vehicles currently stop only for CSX traffic. An average of 9.4 trains per day, traveling at a maximum train speed of 30 mph, are expected to use the new southeast quadrant connection. Based on a train length of 6,200 feet, the average delay time for vehicles at the Kniffen Street crossing due to the proposed connection would be approximately 1.7 minutes. The new rail traffic on the proposed connection is not expected to result in a significant increase in the accident rate because of the low traffic volume at this location. The potential increase in grade crossing delays and accident rates at this location due to increased rail line segment activity are discussed in the EIS on the effects of the entire acquisition transaction.

Construction at the Kniffen Street and Townsend Street crossings could temporarily disrupt vehicular traffic at those crossings. To minimize disruptions to the flow of north-south traffic in Greenwich, work on these crossings would not be done simultaneously. Other transportation effects would be limited to the increased use of public roads due to the transport of construction equipment. SEA expects this effect to be of short duration and unlikely to affect the long-term viability or life span of the roads. Short-term disruptions of local vehicular traffic could occur during the construction period. Some roads, including Kniffen, Union, and Townsend Streets, also could be temporarily closed or traffic rerouted during construction.

**Transport of Hazardous Materials.** The transportation of hazardous materials is not expected to be affected by the proposed connections. The CSX and Conrail rail lines would remain Key Routes for the shipment of hazardous materials. The manner of transporting hazardous materials would not change, and no increased risk of derailments or chemical releases is expected because of the new connection. The proposed alignment and associated switches would provide adequate safety margins for the proposed 30- to 45-mph train speeds through the connections. CSX has policies to promote safe transportation of hazardous materials and procedures to deal with clean up and remediation, if an accident or spill occurs.

**Hazardous Waste Sites.** No known hazardous waste sites were identified as being located in the vicinity of the proposed construction sites. The probability of a spill of hazardous or toxic materials during construction is low. In the unlikely event that a spill or contamination occurs, CSX has policies and procedures to deal with clean up and remediation. Appropriate emergency response procedures would be used to promptly address any releases to the environment. Overall, the proposed constructions are not expected to increase the probability or consequences of hazardous waste contamination in the project area.

#### **4.1.4 Water Resources**

##### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

SEA assessed whether the following potential effects to water resources could result from construction and operation of the proposed connection:

- Alteration of creek embankments with rip rap, concrete, and other bank stabilization measures;
- Temporary or permanent loss of surface water area associated with the incidental deposition of fill;
- Downstream sediment deposition or water turbidity due to fill activities, dredging, and/or soil erosion from upland construction site areas;
- Direct or indirect destruction and/or degradation of aquatic, wetland, and riparian vegetation/habitat;
- Degradation of water quality through sediment loading or chemical/petroleum spills; and
- Alteration of water flow which could increase bank erosion or flooding, uproot or destroy vegetation, or affect fish and wildlife habitats.

Effects to water resources are considered adverse if there is substantial interference with drainage, adverse discharges (such as sediment or pollutants) or loss of wetlands or flood plains resulting from the construction or operation of the new rail line connections.

### **Potential Effects**

Several of the small wetland areas identified in the project area, totaling 0.099 acre, would be affected by the construction of the northwest quadrant connection. The proposed construction may involve excavation from or the placement of dredged or fill material into the “waters of the United States,” including designated wetlands. Therefore, authorization (a permit) from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act would be required before construction could begin. On August 29, 1997 CSX received this authorization from the Corps under Nationwide Permit Nos. 3, 14, and 26. Any necessary state and/or local permits would also be obtained by the Applicant prior to starting construction. Construction specifications for the new connections would incorporate provisions for environmental protection (including appropriate measures for sediment and erosion control) as required by jurisdictional agencies and federal, state, and local permitting authorities.

Construction of the proposed connections would not have adverse effects on surface water resources; the existing flow of the tributaries of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River would be maintained through the use of culverts. Other surface or open bodies of water located in the vicinity of the proposed connections would not be affected.

Three tributaries of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River and one unnamed pond would potentially be subject to increased sediment loading as a result of construction activities. These effects would be temporary.

### **4.1.5 Biological Resources**

#### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

SEA assessed whether the following potential effects to biological resources could result from construction and operation of the proposed connections:

- Loss or degradation of unique or important vegetative communities;
- Harm to or loss of rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal species;
- Loss or degradation of areas designated as critical habitat;
- Loss or degradation of parks, forest preserves, wildlife sanctuaries or refuges;
- Alteration of movement or migration corridors for animals; and
- Loss of large numbers of local wildlife or their habitats.

Effects to biological resources are considered adverse if the proposed construction would result in the loss of important and/or critical vegetation or wildlife habitats, cause harm to threatened or endangered species, or the degradation of parklands, forest preserves, refuges or wildlife sanctuaries.

### **Potential Effects**

**Vegetation.** Construction of the northwest quadrant connection would result in the permanent loss of numerous trees and non-woody vegetation within the existing railroad right-of-way and along the north side of the W&LE line. The area of the proposed southeast quadrant connection is developed and most of the plants in the area are opportunistic species; the viability of plant communities present in the area would not be adversely affected. However, vegetation within construction staging areas along the right-of-way would be temporarily affected by the operation of heavy equipment operation and storage of building materials. It is anticipated that opportunistic species would reclaim these areas after construction activities are completed.

**Wildlife.** The area cleared for construction of the connection (0.5 acre) would be permanently lost as wildlife habitat. However, a sufficient amount of similar habitat is available in the area; the loss of this small amount of habitat would not affect the viability of any species. Some aquatic species, such as fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates, could be affected by construction activities in and around the various tributaries of the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River. Installation of new culverts in the streams would remove existing benthic habitats and temporarily increase the stream sediment loads. It is possible that wildlife would temporarily avoid habitat near the connection sites during the construction period, though SEA anticipates that any temporarily displaced wildlife would subsequently return to the area.

**Threatened and Endangered Species.** The federally-listed Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) could potentially inhabit the area and feed along the tributaries to the Southwest Branch of the Vermilion River. However, the Ohio DNR–Division of Wildlife has no records of sightings in Huron County; the USFWS lists the species for the entire State of Ohio because that is its potential range. The loss of vegetation associated with the proposed connections could include trees where bats roost and the construction activities, in general, may disturb these animals should they be present.

**Parks, Forests Preserves, Refuges, and Sanctuaries.** Reservoir Park would not be affected by the construction of the proposed connections. Its distance from the construction sites (about ½ mile) effectively shields the park from any adverse construction-related visual or noise effects.

#### **4.1.6 Air Quality**

##### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

Potential air quality effects associated with construction of the proposed connections are primarily related to (1) effects associated with the operation of construction equipment and related vehicles, and (2) effects associated with fugitive dust generation.

SEA assessed whether construction of the proposed connections would result in increased levels of pollutant emissions from the operation of construction equipment and vehicles. Air quality effects related to train operations over the CSX and Conrail line segments adjoining the connections, to the extent they meet the Board's thresholds for analysis, will be analyzed in the EIS being prepared for the entire acquisition transaction. SEA also evaluated the potential for air quality effects from fugitive dust emissions. In general, the amount of fugitive dust generated by construction activities depends on the topography of the site, soil conditions, wind speeds, precipitation, and the types of roadways used to access the site.

Air quality effects are considered to be adverse if the proposed connection would lead to long-term increases in pollutant emissions or excessive fugitive dust emissions.

##### **Potential Effects**

During construction of the Greenwich connections, the air quality in the vicinity could be affected by temporary increases in vehicle and fugitive dust emissions. Pollutant emissions from a small number of heavy equipment and construction vehicles would occur. Particulate matter, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), carbon monoxide (CO) and nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) result from combustion of diesel fuel. The emissions of these pollutants from construction operations generally would be minor and of short duration and would have insignificant effects on air quality. Emissions from the proposed constructions would not be sufficient to change Huron County's attainment with the NAAQS. Increases in fugitive dust could occur due to grading and other earthwork necessary for railbed preparation. Appropriate control measures, such as the use of water or dust suppression chemicals, would be implemented to minimize fugitive dust effects during construction.

#### **4.1.7 Noise**

##### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

SEA evaluated the proposed rail line connections for effects from both short-term construction activities and long-term operations of trains over the connections. SEA's approach for analyzing operational noise effects was to identify noise-sensitive land uses where changes in operation could result in noise exposure increases. Existing noise levels were measured and noise models were used to develop the current L<sub>dn</sub> 65 dBA noise contours. The future L<sub>dn</sub> 65 dBA noise contours resulting from operation of the connections were determined using the post-connection volumes on the mainline and connection tracks. SEA then identified the number of noise-sensitive receptors

(residences, schools, hospitals, libraries) within these contours. Noise levels from rail traffic on the main line tracks is generally greater than noise from operations over connections. Noise effects from the operation of the mainline tracks will be analyzed in the EIS which addresses rail line segment effects for the entire acquisition transaction.

Noise effects were considered adverse if the connections would expand the  $L_{dn}$  65 dBA contours and affect a substantial number of new noise sensitive receptors.

### **Potential Effects**

Although most construction activities have the potential of causing intrusive noise at nearby noise-sensitive land uses, any noise effects during construction of the Greenwich connections would be for a limited duration and would not cause any permanent noise effects. Construction activities would last for only a few months; the noise generated during that period would be similar to that caused by normal track maintenance.

An average of 31.7 trains per day would use the proposed northwest quadrant connection. The construction of the new connection and the operation of trains over the connection would extend the existing  $L_{dn}$  65 dBA contour to the north, since the proposed connection is just north of the existing W&LE tracks. After the connection is constructed, two additional sensitive receptors (residences) would be within the  $L_{dn}$  65 dBA contour (see Figure 5). An average of 9.4 trains per day would use the proposed southeast quadrant connection. No additional sensitive receptors would be affected by the connection in the southeast quadrant, because its operation would not produce a  $L_{dn}$  65 dBA contour noise contour exceeding that produced by existing main line operations (see Figure 5).

In general, the noise from train operations on the main lines far exceeds the noise expected from train operations over the proposed connections. Train noise at this track junction for both the pre- and post-construction conditions is dominated by horn noise. The train noise projection model assumes that the engineer begins blowing the horn one quarter mile before the grade crossing, and stops blowing the horn at the grade crossing. Wheel squeal can occur on any curve with a radius less than about 1,000 feet, or when the curvature is greater than approximately 5 degrees. The curvature on the northwest quadrant connection is less than 5 degrees; no adverse noise effects from wheel squeal are expected. The curvature on the southeast quadrant connection is approximately 7 degrees. Although wheel squeal is likely to occur on the southeast connection, this noise would be insignificant compared to the horn noise which dominates noise levels near this connection. To ensure that wheel squeal noise is minimized, CSX regularly lubricates short radius or tightly curved connections. With the use of lubrication, noise levels from wheel squeal on the proposed connections would be minimized to the maximum extent possible.

### **4.1.8 Cultural Resources**

#### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

SEA consulted with the Ohio SHPO to identify potentially affected archeological and historic resources in the vicinity of the proposed construction. If National Register of Historic Places-

eligible or listed resources or properties were present within the project area, SEA consulted with the SHPO to determine what effect, if any, the proposed construction would have on these resources.

Effects to archeological and historic resources are considered adverse if any National Register-eligible or listed resource would experience an Adverse Effect as defined in 36 CFR Part 800.9 as a result of the proposed rail line construction or subsequent rail operations.

### **Potential Effects**

There are no National Register-eligible or listed historic resources in the immediate vicinity of the proposed construction site. Two older structures (a cut sandstone culvert and a single-span trestle bridge) are located near the proposed northwest quadrant connection, but would not be affected by the construction or operation of the proposed connection. There are no known archeological sites in the project area and no significant resources were recovered during a field investigation at the proposed construction sites.

#### **4.1.9 Energy Resources**

##### **Assessment Methods and Evaluation Criteria**

SEA assessed the effect of the proposed connections on energy consumption, the transportation of energy resources and recyclable commodities, and diversions of shipments from rail to trucks.

Energy effects are considered significant if the proposed action would result in a substantial increase in energy consumption, would adversely affect the transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities, or would cause diversions from rail to motor carriers.

##### **Potential Effects**

The operation of construction equipment would require the consumption of a small amount of energy (primarily diesel fuel) to operate motor or rail vehicles required to deliver construction materials to the sites, prepare the sites, and construct the connections. SEA considers this minimal consumption of energy resources insignificant.

The amount of energy resources and recyclable commodities that would be transported over the proposed connections is not known. However, the construction and operation of the proposed connections and the resulting improvement in operating efficiencies is expected to benefit the transportation of energy resources and recyclable commodities. The connections also would reduce the length of the route for trains traveling between the northeastern United States, Cleveland, and points west, thereby increasing overall energy efficiency. Construction and operation of the proposed connections are not expected to result in diversions from rail to motor carrier.

#### **4.1.10 Cumulative Effects**

Based on a review of the transaction Application and the proposed Operating Plan supplied by CSX, no other rail construction projects are underway or planned in the vicinity of the proposed connections. Consultations with federal, state, and local agencies identified no other planned or on-going construction projects in the vicinity of the proposed connections. Therefore, the effects outlined above represent the cumulative effects of the proposed construction projects. The cumulative effects of the entire acquisition transaction, which could result from increased rail line segment, rail yard and intermodal facility activity, abandonments, and other construction projects, will be addressed in the EIS.

## **4.2 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS**

### **4.2.1 No-Action Alternative**

If the “no-action” alternative were implemented, the proposed rail line connection would not be constructed or operated. Therefore, the current land use and other existing environmental conditions would remain unchanged. However, if the related transaction is approved, the absence of this rail line connection could result in less efficient rail service. The capacity constraints, more circuitous routing of rail service, delays, and slower operating speeds that could result without the new connection may cause additional fuel consumption and increase pollutant emissions from locomotives.

### **4.2.2 Build Alternatives**

As discussed in Section 2.2, SEA identified no feasible “build” alternatives to the proposed rail line construction project. Therefore, the potential environmental effects of alternatives considered, but later rejected, were not evaluated.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Agency Comments and Mitigation**

This chapter summarizes comments received from federal, state and local agencies or officials about the proposed constructions, and outlines SEA's recommended mitigation measures.

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF AGENCY COMMENTS**

A list of federal, state and local agencies consulted in considering the potential environmental effects of the proposed connections is provided in Appendix B. These agencies also were contacted by the Applicant while preparing the Environmental Report which accompanied the transaction Application. Any agency responses received during the consultation process are included in Appendix B.

Agency comments regarding the proposed construction projects are summarized below:

- The Ohio DNR, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves indicated that it has no records of rare, threatened or endangered species located in the area of the proposed connections in Greenwich, Ohio. It also indicated that there are no parks, forest preserves, state nature area, or wildlife refuges in the vicinity of the proposed project.
- The Ohio SHPO indicated that the proposed projects would not affect any historic properties listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

#### **5.2 AGENCY SUGGESTED MITIGATION**

No mitigation measures were suggested for the proposed construction projects by the various parties consulted in the process of preparing the EA.

#### **5.3 SEA RECOMMENDED MITIGATION**

SEA recommends that the Board impose the following mitigation measures in any decision approving the construction of the proposed rail line connections in Greenwich, Ohio.

### **5.3.1 General Mitigation Measures**

#### **Land Use**

- CSX shall restore any adjacent properties that are disturbed during construction activities to their pre-construction conditions.

#### **Transportation and Safety**

- CSX shall use appropriate signs and barricades to control traffic disruptions during construction.
- CSX shall restore roads disturbed during construction to conditions as required by state or local jurisdictions.
- CSX shall observe all applicable federal, state, and local regulations regarding handling and disposal of any waste materials, including hazardous waste, encountered or generated during construction of the proposed rail line connections.
- CSX shall dispose of all materials that cannot be reused in accordance with state and local solid waste management regulations.
- CSX shall consult with the appropriate federal, state and local agencies if hazardous waste and/or materials are discovered at the sites.
- CSX shall transport all hazardous materials in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Regulations (49 CFR Parts 171 to 180). CSX shall provide, upon request, local emergency management organizations with copies of all applicable Emergency Response Plans and participate in the training of local emergency staff (upon request) for coordinated responses to incidents. In the case of a hazardous material incident, CSX shall follow appropriate emergency response procedures contained in their Emergency Response Plans.

#### **Water Resources**

- CSX shall obtain all necessary federal, state, and local permits if construction activities require the alteration of wetlands, ponds, lakes, streams, or rivers, or if these activities would cause soil or other materials to wash into these water resources. CSX shall use appropriate techniques to minimize effects to water bodies and wetlands.

## **Biological Resources**

- CSX shall use Best Management Practices to control erosion, runoff, and surface instability during construction, including seeding, fiber mats, straw mulch, plastic liners, slope drains, and other erosion control devices. Once the tracks are constructed, CSX shall establish vegetation on the embankment slopes to provide permanent cover and prevent potential erosion. If erosion develops, CSX shall take steps to develop other appropriate erosion control procedures.
- CSX shall use only EPA-approved herbicides and qualified contractors for application of right-of-way maintenance herbicides, and shall limit such application to the extent necessary for rail operations.

## **Air Quality**

- CSX shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations regarding the control of fugitive dust. Fugitive dust emissions created during construction shall be minimized by using such control methods as water spraying, installation of wind barriers, and chemical treatment.

## **Noise**

- CSX shall control temporary noise from construction equipment through the use of work hour controls and maintenance of muffler systems on machinery.

## **Cultural Resources**

- If previously undiscovered archeological remains are found during construction, CSX shall cease work and immediately contact the SHPO to initiate the appropriate Section 106 process.

### **5.3.2 Specific Mitigation Measures**

In addition to the general mitigation measures identified above, SEA recommends that the Board impose the following specific mitigation measure in any decision approving the construction of the proposed rail line connections in Greenwich, Ohio:

#### **Transportation and Safety**

- To minimize disruption to the flow of north-south traffic in the Village of Greenwich, CSX shall not have construction activities occurring at the Kniffen and Townsend Street at-grade crossings simultaneously.

#### **Noise**

- If wheel squeal occurs during operation of the connection, CSX shall use rail lubrication to minimize noise levels.

#### **5.4 REQUEST FOR COMMENTS**

SEA specifically invites comments on all aspects of this EA, including the scope and adequacy of the recommended mitigation. SEA will consider all comments received in response to the EA in making its final recommendations to the Board. Comments (an original and 10 copies) should be sent to: Vernon A. Williams, Secretary, Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20423. The lower left-hand corner of the envelope should be marked: Attention: Dana White, Environmental Comments, Finance Docket No. 33388 (Sub Nos. 1-7). Questions may also be directed to Ms. White at this address or by telephoning (888) 869-1997.

Date EA Made Available to the Public: **October 7, 1997**

Comment Due Date: **October 27, 1997**

**APPENDIX A  
CSX/NS CONSTRUCTION WAIVER APPLICATION  
PRESS RELEASE FOR STB DECISION 9  
STB DECISION 9**



APPENDIX B  
**AGENCIES AND OTHER PARTIES CONSULTED**  
**AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE**

**Federal Agencies Consulted:**

Bureau of Indian Affairs—Eastern Area Office, Fairfax, Virginia  
Council on Environmental Quality, Washington, D.C.  
Federal Highway Administration, Washington, D.C.  
Federal Railroad Administration, Washington, D.C.  
National Forest Service—Eastern Region, Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
National Geodetic Survey, Silver Spring, Maryland  
National Park Service, Washington, D.C.  
National Park Service—Great Plains Office, Omaha, Nebraska  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—Buffalo District, Buffalo, New York  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service—Ohio State  
Conservationist, Columbus, Ohio  
U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—Office of Federal Activities, Washington, D.C.  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—Region 5, Chicago, Illinois  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Region 3, Fort Snelling, Minnesota  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Ecological Services Field Office, Reynoldsburg, Ohio

**State Agencies Consulted:**

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Columbus, Ohio  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Columbus, Ohio  
Ohio Department of Transportation, Columbus, Ohio  
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Columbus, Ohio  
Ohio Historical Society (State Historic Preservation Officer), Columbus, Ohio  
Ohio Office of Budget and Management—Ohio State Clearinghouse, Columbus, Ohio  
Ohio Rail Development Commission, Columbus, Ohio

**Local Agencies Consulted:**

Huron County Commissioners, Norwalk, Ohio  
Huron County Planning Commission, Norwalk, Ohio  
Village of Greenwich, Greenwich, Ohio



## APPENDIX C REFERENCES

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- CSX Transportation Inc. and Norfolk Southern Railway Company. *Railroad Control Application: Finance Docket No. 33388. Volume 3—Operating Plan.* June 1997.
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### **Land Use:**

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- Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Management Program. Personal communication with Don Povolny. March 3, 1997.
- Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Personal communication with Judy Bore. May 21, 1997.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ohio Field Office. Personal communication with Barb Clayton, May 21, 1997.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Soil Survey of Huron County, Ohio. June 1994.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs—Great Lakes Area Office. Personal communication with Diane Rosen. May 27, 1997.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey. Topographical Map—Greenwich, Ohio. 1960 (Photorevised 1972; Photoinspected 1977).
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Personal communication with Mike MacMullen. May 22, 1997.
- Village of Greenwich, Utilities Department. Personal communication with Mike King, May 21, 1997.

**Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice:**

- Executive Order 12898. *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations*. Washington, D.C., 1994.
- Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. Personal communications with Lauren Rhein. July 3, 1997.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape Files 1A and 3A*. Washington, D.C., May 1992.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *City & Data Book—Statistical Abstract Supplement*. 12th Edition. Washington, D.C., 1994.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Statistical Abstract of United States*. Washington, D.C., 1995.

**Transportation and Safety:**

- E Data Resources, Inc. *EDR-Radius Map with GeoCheck—Greenwich, Ohio*. May 20, 1997.
- Ohio Public Utilities Commission. Personal communication with Joe Reinhardt. July 24
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- U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration and Federal Highway Administration. *Guidebook for Planning to Alleviate Urban Railroad Problems, Volume 3, Appendix C*. Report RP-31. Washington, D.C., August 1974.
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration and Federal Highway Administration. *Summary of the DOT Rail-Highway Crossing Resource Allocation Procedure*. Revised Edition. Washington, D.C., June 1987.
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration. Personal communication with Rob Martin. July 21, 1997.

**Water Resources:**

- Arnold and Porter. Correspondence from Mary Gay Sprague. September 26, 1997.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Flood Insurance Program. Flood Insurance Rate Map. Village of Greenwich, Ohio. Community Panel Nos. 390282 0001A, 390282 0002A, and 390770 0009A. July 1978.
- Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (Ohio State Clearinghouse). Correspondence from Vora Lake. January 31, 1997.
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Management Program. Personal communication with Don Povolny. March 3, 1997.
- Planning Resources Inc. Personal communications with Juli Crane. May 27 and August 11, 1997.
- Planning Resources Inc. *Wetland Report for CSX Railroad Activities at Greenwich, Ohio*. September 1997.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District. Personal communication with Steve Metivier. May 23, 1997.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District. Correspondence from Mark Lesinski. August 29, 1997.
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- U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Personal communication with James Grasso. May 21, 1997.
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- U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. Volume 40, Part 1105.7. *Surface Transportation Board, Procedures for Implementation of Environmental Laws*.
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- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. MOBILE 5b Emission Factor Model. 1997.

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- U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. Volume 40, Part 1105.7. *Surface Transportation Board, Procedures for Implementation of Environmental Laws*.
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