

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

BNSF RAILWAY COMPANY)	
ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION)	DOCKET NO. AB 6
IN THURSTON COUNTY,)	(SUB-NO. 492X)
WASHINGTON		

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORIC REPORTS

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ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

(49 C.F.R. § 1105.7)

(1) Proposed Action and Alternatives. Describe the proposed action, including commodities transported, the planned disposition (if any) of any rail line and other structures that may be involved, and any possible changes in current operations or maintenance practices. Also describe any reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. Include a readable, detailed map and drawings clearly delineating the project.

BNSF Railway Company ("BNSF") proposes to abandon 1.43 miles of rail line located between Milepost 14.57 and Milepost 16.0 in Belmore, Thurston County, Washington (the "Line"). A map of the project area is attached as Exhibit A.

BNSF's salvage process as it relates to this project is as follows:

The proposed abandonment will include the removal of track materials such as rails, ties, and three bridges. The railroad right-of-way, ballast and culverts will remain in place. If the Line is railbanked the bridges will not be removed.

The salvage process begins with the unbolting of the track materials or rails. With the use of specialized machinery placed on the railroad right-of-way, the rails and related steel (angle bars, tie plates, spikes, switches and any other metal parts) are removed. Next the wooden ties are raised from the ballast with a tool designed for minimum disruption of ground material. The ties are separated into three groups as follows: (1) good quality ties that will be re-used in rail service, (2) landscape-quality ties that will be sold to lumber dealers for landscaping and (3) scrap ties. Scrap ties are loaded into railcars and shipped by BNSF to an EPA-approved disposal site.

The culverts, ballast and right-of-way will remain intact so as not to alter the prevailing

waterflows along the line. In addition, BNSF salvage contractors are required to limit their activities to the width of the right-of-way and not to place fills or other material in water bodies, including inland waterways. When the salvage process is complete, waterflows in the area should not be disrupted.

Finally, road crossings are removed and remediated, then repaved with gravel, asphalt or concrete, as required by governing authority. Any signals are also dismantled and removed.

BNSF salvage work for abandonments is always performed by experienced rail material salvagers and is generally bid on the open market. Each salvage contract includes detailed information on any environmental or historical conditions recommended by the Office of Environmental Analysis ("OEA") and imposed by the Surface Transportation Board ("STB") in the final decision. Completed work is independently inspected by a BNSF roadmaster (or equal representative) to ensure compliance with BNSF standards of quality and all contractual obligations, including STB-imposed conditions, if applicable.

No traffic has traveled over the Line since prior to 2005. There is no overhead traffic on the portion of the Line included in the proposed abandonment. Because of the lack of traffic on the Line, only very limited maintenance has been performed on the Line for some time. Therefore, the proposed abandonment will have no impact on rail freight operations and maintenance practices on the Line.

If as an alternative BNSF does not pursue this abandonment, it will forgo the opportunity costs from salvage of the Line.

(2) *Transportation System.* Describe the effect of the proposed action on regional or local transportation systems and patterns. Estimate the amount of traffic (passenger or freight) that will be diverted to other transportation systems or modes as a result of the proposed action.

No passenger or freight traffic will be diverted to other transportation systems as a result of the proposed abandonment. No local or overhead traffic has traveled on the Line since prior to 2005.

(3) *Land Use*

(i) *Based on consultation with local and/or regional planning agencies and/or review of the official planning documents prepared by such agencies, state whether the proposed action is consistent with existing land use plans. Describe any inconsistencies.*

The proposed action should be consistent with existing land use plans. BNSF contacted Keith Stahley, Director, City of Olympia – Department of Planning and Development and Thurston County Planning Department. As of the date of this Environmental Report, the City of Olympia – Department of Planning and Development and Thurston County Planning Department have not responded to our inquiry. A copy of the letters are attached as **Exhibit B**.

(ii) *Based on consultation with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, state the effect of the proposed action on any prime agriculture land.*

BNSF understands that the proposed abandonment will have no adverse effect on prime agriculture land. On July 29, 2015, BNSF sent a letter to the Washington NRCS State Office. As of the date of this Environmental Report, the agency has not replied to BNSF's inquiry. A copy of the letter is attached as **Exhibit C**.

(iii) *If any action affects land or water uses within a designated coastal zone, include the coastal zone information required by § 1105.9.*

BNSF understands that the proposed abandonment is not located within a

designated coastal zone. On July 29, 2015, BNSF sent a letter to the State of Washington, Department of Ecology, Northwest Regional Office. As of the date of this Environmental Report, the agency has not replied to BNSF's inquiry. A copy of the letter is attached as Exhibit D.

(iv) If the proposed action is an abandonment, state whether or not the right-of-way is suitable for alternative public use under 49 U.S.C. § 10905 and explain why.

The proposed abandonment may be suitable for alternative public use. On July 29, 2015, BNSF contacted the City of Olympia – Department of Planning and Development and Thurston County Planning Department.

(4) Energy

(i) Describe the effect of the proposed action on transportation of energy resources.

The proposed abandonment will have no effect on the transportation of energy resources.

(ii) Describe the effect of the proposed action on recyclable commodities.

The proposed abandonment will have no adverse effect on the movement or recovery of recyclable commodities.

(iii) State whether the proposed action will result in an increase or decrease in overall energy efficiency and explain why.

The proposed action will not result in an increase or decrease in overall energy efficiency because no traffic has traveled on the Line since prior to 2005.

(iv) If the proposed action will cause diversions from rail to motor carriage of more than:

(A) 1,000 rail carloads a year, or

(B) an average of 50 rail carloads per mile per year for any part of the affected line, quantify the resulting net change in the energy consumption and show the data and methodology used to arrive at the figure given.

The proposed abandonment will not result in a diversion of rail to motor carriage.

(5) Air

(i) If the proposed action will result in either:

(A) an increase in rail traffic of at least 100 percent (measured in gross ton miles annually) or an increase of at least eight trains a day on any segment of the line affected by the proposal, or

(B) an increase in rail yard activity of at least 100 percent (measured by carload activity), or

(C) an average increase in truck traffic of more than 10 percent of the average daily traffic or 50 vehicles a day on any affected road segment, quantify the anticipated effect on air emissions.

The proposed action will not result in meeting or exceeding the specified thresholds for increased rail or truck traffic as outlined in (i) (A), (B) or (C) above.

(ii) If the proposed action affects a class I or nonattainment area under the Clean Air Act, and will result in either:

(A) an increase in rail traffic of at least 50 percent (measured in gross ton miles annually) or an increase of at least three trains a day on any segment of rail line,

(B) an increase in rail yard activity of at least 20 percent (measured by carload activity), or

(C) an average increase in truck traffic of more than 10 percent of the average daily traffic or 50 vehicles a day on a given road segment, then state whether any expected increased emissions are within the parameters established by State Implementation Plan. However, for a rail construction under 49 U.S.C. § 10901 (or 49 U.S.C. § 10505) or a case involving the reinstatement of service over a previously abandoned line, only the three train a day threshold in this item shall apply.

The proposed action will not result in meeting or exceeding the specified thresholds

identified in (ii) (A), (B) or (C) above.

(iii) If the transportation of ozone depleting materials (such as nitrogen oxide and Freon) is contemplated, identify: the materials and quantity; the frequency of service; safety practices (including any speed restrictions); the applicant's safety record (to the extent available) on derailments, accidents and spills; contingency plans to deal with accidental spills; and the likelihood of an accidental release of ozone depleting materials in the event of a collision or derailment.

The proposed abandonment will not affect the transportation of ozone depleting materials.

(6) Noise. *If any of the thresholds identified in item (5) (i) of this section are surpassed, state whether the proposed action will cause:*

(i) an incremental increase in noise levels of three decibels Ldn or more; or

(ii) an increase to a noise level of 65 decibels Ldn or greater. If so, identify sensitive receptors (e.g. schools, libraries, hospitals, residences, retirement communities and nursing homes) in the project area and quantify the noise increase for these receptors if the thresholds are surpassed.

Not applicable.

(7) Safety

(i) Describe any effects of the proposed action on public health and safety (including vehicle delay time at railroad crossings).

BNSF expects that this abandonment will have no adverse effect on health or public safety. There is one asphalt two lane crossing (currently in exempt status) on the Line.

(ii) If hazardous materials are expected to be transported, identify: the materials and quantity; the frequency of service; whether chemicals are being transported that, if mixed, could react to form more hazardous compounds; safety practices (including any speed restrictions); the applicant's safety record (to the extent available) on derailments, accidents and hazardous spills; the contingency plans to deal with accidental spills, and the likelihood of an accidental release of hazardous materials.

The abandonment will not result in the transportation of hazardous materials.

(iii) If there are any known hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been known hazardous material spills on the right-of-way, identify the location of those sites and the types of hazardous materials involved.

There are no known hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been known hazardous material spills on the right-of-way.

(8) Biological Resources

(i) Based on consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state whether the proposed action is likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or areas designated as a critical habitat, and if so, describe the effects.

BNSF expects that the proposed abandonment will have no adverse effect on endangered or threatened species or areas designated as a critical habitat. BNSF contacted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Field Office (“USFWS”), in reference to this proposed abandonment.

Shirley Burgdorf, with USFWS, replied in an e-mail dated August 13, 2015, explaining the process for obtaining an official species list for a proposed project. BNSF generated and reviewed the list of Endangered Species Act Species List for the project area and determined that the abandonment project will have “no effect” on listed species, their habitats, or proposed or designated critical habitat as the project area is located in the city streets and salvage activities will be restricted to the railroad right-of-way. A copy of Ms. Burgdorf’s e-mail and the generated USFW Official Species List are attached as **Exhibit E**.

(ii) State whether wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests will be affected, and describe any effects.

BNSF expects that no wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or

forests will be adversely affected by the proposed abandonment. On July 29, 2015, BNSF contacted the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) and the National Park Service, Pacific West Region. As of the date of this Environmental Report, the BLM and the National Park Service have not replied to BNSF’s inquiry. Copies of the letters are attached as **Exhibits F and G** respectively.

(9) Water

(i) Based on consultation with State water quality officials, state whether the proposed action is consistent with applicable Federal, State or local water quality standards. Describe any inconsistencies.

On July 29, 2015, BNSF sent a letter to the State of Washington, Department of Ecology, Northwest Regional Office. As of the date of this Environmental Report, the agency has not replied to BNSF’s inquiry. A copy of the letter is attached as **Exhibit D**.

BNSF also contacted the U.S. EPA Region 10 regarding the proposed abandonment. Margaret McCauley, with U.S. EPA Region 10, Office of Water & Watersheds, replied in an email dated October 13, 2015, stating “[r]eviewing the information provided and assuming the area of disturbance including support areas remains below an acre, it does not appear that the work would need to get construction storm water permit coverage.” A copy of the email is attached as **Exhibit H**. Ms. McCauley also sent her reply email to Amy Moon, Construction Permit Storm Water Administrator for Washington State Department of Ecology. As of the date of this Environmental Report, Amy Moon has not replied to Ms. McCauley’s email.

(ii) Based on consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state whether permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1344) are required for the proposed action and whether any designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains will be affected. Describe the effects.

BNSF understands that no designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains will be adversely affected by the proposed abandonment. On July 29, 2015, BNSF contacted the U.S. Army Engineer District, Seattle in reference to the proposed abandonment. As of the date of this Environmental Report, the agency has not replied to BNSF's inquiry. A copy of the letter is attached as **Exhibit I**.

(iii) State whether permits under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1342) are required for the proposed action. (Applicants should contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or the state environmental protection or equivalent agency if they are unsure whether such permits are required).

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has not replied to Ms. McCauley's email.

(10) Proposed Mitigation. Describe any actions that are proposed to mitigate adverse environmental impacts, indicating why the proposed mitigation is appropriate.

BNSF expects that no adverse environmental impact will result from the proposed abandonment and, therefore, is aware of no need for any mitigating actions. BNSF will, of course, consult (as required) with any recipients of this Environmental Report regarding appropriate mitigation actions and will comply with those mitigation actions required by the Board.

HISTORIC REPORT

(49 C.F.R. § 1105.8)

(1) Proposed Action and Alternatives. Describe the proposed action, including commodities transported, the planned disposition (if any) of any rail line and other structures that may be involved, and any possible changes in current operations or maintenance practices. Also describe any reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. Include a readable, detailed map and drawings clearly delineating the project.

BNSF Railway Company ("BNSF") proposes to abandon 1.43 miles of rail line located between Milepost 14.57 and Milepost 16.0 in Belmore, Thurston County, Washington (the "Line"). A map of the project area is attached as Exhibit A.

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Finally, road crossings are removed and remediated, then repaved with gravel, asphalt or concrete, as required by governing authority. Any signals are also dismantled and removed.

BNSF salvage work for abandonments is always performed by experienced rail material salvagers and is generally bid on the open market. Each salvage contract includes detailed information on any environmental or historical conditions recommended by the Office of Environmental Analysis ("OEA") and imposed by the Surface Transportation Board ("STB") in the final decision. Completed work is independently inspected by a BNSF roadmaster (or equal representative) to ensure compliance with BNSF standards of quality and all contractual obligations, including STB-imposed conditions, if applicable.

The Line has had no traffic since prior to 2005. There is no overhead traffic on the proposed abandonment portion of the Line. Because of the lack of traffic on the Line, only very limited maintenance has been performed on the Line for some time. Therefore, the proposed abandonment will have no impact on rail freight operations and maintenance practices on the Line.

If as an alternative BNSF does not pursue this abandonment, it will forgo the opportunity costs from salvage of the Line.

HISTORIC REPORT

1. *A U.S.G.S. topographic map (or an alternate map drawn to scale and sufficiently detailed to show buildings and other structures in the vicinity of the proposed action) showing the location of the proposed action, and the locations and approximate dimensions of railroad structures that are 50 years old or older and are part of the proposed action.*

The required topographic map is attached to this Report as **Exhibit A**.

2. *A written description of the right-of-way (including approximate widths, to the extent known), and the topography and urban and/or rural characteristics of the surrounding area*

The subject Line extends approximately 1.43 miles between Milepost 14.57 and Milepost 16.0 in Belmore, Thurston County, Washington. The urban right-of-way is generally 100 feet wide, except for parcel 9 which has an additional 50 feet on the west side. There are no federally granted rights of way involved.

3. *Good quality photographs (actual photographic prints, not photocopies) of railroad structures on the property that are 50 years old or older and of the immediately surrounding area.*

There are three bridges on the Line. They are as follows:

- 1) Milepost 14.6 – 49' long, 14' high, built in 1920.
- 2) Milepost 15.25 – 48' long, 7' high, built in 1958.
- 3) Milepost 15.5 – 49' long, 7' high, built in 1956.

If the Line is railbanked, the bridges will not be removed. See **Exhibit J**, attached photographs.

4. *The date(s) of construction of the structure(s), and the date(s) and extent of any major alterations, to the extent such information is known.*

There are three bridges on the Line. They are as follows:

- 4) Milepost 14.6 – 49' long, 14' high, built in 1920.
- 5) Milepost 15.25 – 48' long, 7' high, built in 1958.
- 6) Milepost 15.5 – 49' long, 7' high, built in 1956.

If the Line is railbanked, the bridges will not be removed. See **Exhibit J**, attached

photographs.

5. *A brief narrative history of carrier operations in the area, and an explanation of what, if any, changes are contemplated as a result of the proposed action.*

The Northern Pacific Railway Company ("NP") acquired the right of way in 1890. The NP merged in 1970 with the Great Northern Railway Company and the Chicago Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company to become the Burlington Northern Railroad Company ("BN"). BN merged with The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company in 1996 to become The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, which name was changed to BNSF Railway Company in 2005.

6. *A brief summary of documents in the carrier's possession, such as engineering drawings, that might be useful in documenting a structure that is found to be historic.*

Documents in BNSF's possession concerning this abandonment may include alignment maps showing the right-of-way and/or station maps. These documents are too large for practical reproduction in this report, but can be furnished upon request, if they are available.

7. *An opinion (based on readily available information in the railroad's possession) as to whether the site and/or structures meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (36 CFR 60.4), and whether there is a likelihood of archeological resources or any other previously unknown historic properties in the project area, and the basis for these opinions (including any consultations with the State Historic Preservation Office, local historical societies or universities).*

BNSF contacted the Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation ("SHPO") in reference to the proposed abandonment. By letter dated November 17, 2015, Matthew Sterner, M.A., Transportation Archaeologist, stated, "we can consider STB and BNSF's obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act fulfilled."

A copy of the letter is attached as **Exhibit K**.

8. *A description (based on readily available information in the railroad's possession) of any known prior subsurface ground disturbance or fill, environmental conditions (naturally occurring or manmade) that might affect the archeological recovery of resources (such as swampy conditions or the presence of toxic wastes), and the surrounding terrain.*

The Line was disturbed during original construction by cuts and fill and any archaeological resources that may have been located in the proposed project area would have been affected at that time. Our records do not indicate any environmental conditions that might affect the archaeological recovery of resources.

9. *Within 30 days of receipt of the historic report, the State Historic Preservation Officer may request the following additional information regarding specific non railroad owned properties or groups of properties immediately adjacent to the railroad right-of-way: photographs of specified properties that can be readily seen from the railroad right-of-way (or other public rights-of-way adjacent to the property) and a written description of any previously discovered archeological sites, identifying the location and type of the site (i.e. prehistoric or native American).*

If any additional information is requested, BNSF will promptly supply the necessary information.