



Norfolk Southern Corporation
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April 24, 2013

Ms. Victoria Rutson
Director, Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

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Office of Proceedings
April 26, 2013
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Public Record

RE: Docket No AB-290 (Sub-No. 343X), Central of Georgia Railroad Company -
Abandonment – in Newton County, Georgia

Dear Ms. Rutson:

On April 23, 2013 Central of Georgia Railroad Company (“CGA”), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Norfolk Southern Railway Company, sent the attached Environmental and Historic Report (“E&HR”) to the relevant “consulting agencies” in anticipation of CGA’s filing of an Abandonment Notice of Exemption pursuant to 49 CFR Part 1152, Subpart F.¹ As indicated in the E&HR, CGA intends to abandon approximately 14.90 miles of rail line between railroad mileposts E 65.8 and E 80.7 in Newton County, Georgia. The Line traverses United States Postal Zip Codes territory 30014, 30055 and 30056.

Enclosed for your records is a copy of the E&HR describing the proposed action and its environmental and historic effects (if any), as well as a map of the affected area. The packet, also, includes responses from consulting agencies to our initial consultation inquiries.

We have requested that the consulting agencies respond to your office and to CGA if any information in the E&HR appears to be misleading or incorrect, if pertinent information appears to be missing, or if they have questions about the Board’s environmental review process.

If you have any questions concerning this proposed abandonment and/or the attached E&HR, please contact LaWada Poarch at (757) 629-2803.

Sincerely,

CY – Robert Wimbish
Maquiling Parkerson

Enclosures

¹ Enclosed is a list of the consulting agencies to which the E&HR has been sent.



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Strategic Planning Department
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April 23, 2013

RE: STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 343X), Central of Georgia Railroad Company -
Abandonment – in Newton County, Georgia

Dear Sir/Madam:

Central of Georgia Railroad Company (CGA) plans to request authority from the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to abandon a segment of rail line between E 65.80 and E 80.70 in Newton County, Georgia. CGA is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR).

Enclosed is a Combined Environmental and Historic Report (Report) which describes the proposed abandonment and other pertinent information. A map of the proposed track abandonment can be found in **Appendix A** of this report. **Appendix B** of this report lists the various agencies receiving it.

The railroad does not anticipate adverse environmental impacts; however, if you identify any adverse environmental effects please describe the actions that would assist in alleviating them. Please provide us with a written response indicating any concerns or lack thereof, which will be included in the Report and sent to the Surface Transportation Board (STB).

This Report is being provided so that you may submit information that will form the basis for the STB's independent environmental analysis of the proceeding. If you believe any of the information is incorrect, if you think pertinent information is missing, or if you have any questions about the Board's Environmental Review process, please contact the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) by telephone at (202) 245-0295 or by mail to:

Surface Transportation Board,
395 E Street, S.W., Room 1106
Washington DC 20423-0001

Please refer to the above Docket when contacting the STB. Applicable statutes and regulations impose stringent deadlines for processing this action. For this reason your written comments (with a copy to us) would be appreciated within three weeks.

Your comments will be considered by the Board in evaluating the environmental impacts of the contemplated action. In order for us to consider your input prior to filing with the STB, we must receive your comments within three weeks. Please provide information to LaWada Poarch by email at Lawada.Poarch@nscorp.com, or by mail to:

LaWada Poarch
Coordinator-Abandonments
Norfolk Southern Corporation
Strategic Planning Department
Three Commercial Place
Norfolk, VA 23510

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Kirchner", with a large, stylized initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Marcellus C. Kirchner
Director Strategic Planning
Central of Georgia Railroad Company

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

**STB DOCKET NO. AB-290 (Sub-No. 343X)
CENTRAL OF GEORGIA RAILROAD COMPANY**

PROPOSED RAIL LINE ABANDONMENT

**BETWEEN MILEPOST E 65.80 AND MILEPOST E 80.70
IN NEWTON COUNTY, GEORGIA**

Combined Environmental and Historic Report

April 23, 2013

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

**STB DOCKET NO. AB-290 (Sub-No. 343X)
CENTRAL OF GEORGIA RAILROAD COMPANY
PROPOSED RAIL LINE ABANDONMENT
BETWEEN MILEPOST E 65.80 AND MILEPOST E 80.70
IN NEWTON COUNTY, GEORGIA**

Combined Environmental and Historic Report

Central of Georgia Railroad Company (CGA), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR), submits this combined Environmental and Historic Report ("EHR") pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e) and 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(d), respectively, in connection with the proposed abandonment of 14.90 miles of rail line between Mileposts E 65.80 near Newborn and E 80.70 near Covington in Newton County, Georgia.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(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.

RESPONSE: CGA proposes to abandon 14.90 miles of rail line between Mileposts E 65.80 near Newborn and E 80.70 near Covington in Newton County, Georgia. Rail service over the subject line was legally discontinued in 2010, and the line has remained inactive since.

Following abandonment, the line's rail and related track material will be salvaged. Salvage will consist of removing the rail and track material from the existing roadbed. The contours of the existing roadbed will remain as is, and existing drainage systems will remain intact. When the rail and track material are removed, the contractor will smooth the roadbed to a level surface. No ballast will be removed, and no soil disturbance will occur (and, accordingly, no National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit will be required). No digging or burying of any kind will be permitted. All salvaged steel components will either be reused or sold as scrap. Crossties may be reused in other railroad operations or they will be disposed of in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. The railroad expects to arrange for the removal of the bridges on the line.

The alternative to abandonment is to not abandon the line and retain the track in place. This alternative is not satisfactory. The railroad would incur opportunity and

other holding costs that would need to be covered by non-existent on-line shippers were this line segment to be retained.

A map depicting the line proposed for abandonment is attached as **Appendix A**. The railroad's letter to federal, state and local government agencies along with a list of consulting agencies CGA has contacted, are attached as **Appendix B**. Comments received as a result of CGA's written requests for feedback can be found in **Appendix C**.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(2) Transportation system.

Describe the effects 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.

RESPONSE: Effects of the proposed action on regional or local transportation systems and patterns would be negligible. There is no rail freight or passenger traffic on the line proposed for abandonment, and rail service over the line was legally discontinued in 2010.¹

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(3) Land use.

(i) Based on consultation with local and/or regional planning agencies and/or a 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.

RESPONSE: An outline of future land use plans has been requested from the Cities of Newborn and Covington and Newton County. These agencies were also asked to comment on the consistency of the proposed abandonment with existing land

¹ Central of Georgia Railroad Company – Discontinuance of Service Exemption – Newton County, Ga., et al., STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 319X), et al., (STB served Jul. 15, 2010).

use plans, but they have not done so to date. CGA has no reason to believe, however, that the proposed abandonment would have any adverse impact on – or be inconsistent with – existing land use plans.

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

RESPONSE: Consultation was requested from The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, but CGA has not received a response to date.

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

RESPONSE: Consultation was requested from Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division (GDNR-CRD). In response, GDNR-CRD advised that the proposed abandonment will not have any reasonably foreseeable impact on coastal uses or resources. A copy of GDNR-CRD's response is attached as part of **Appendix C**.

(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. § 10906, and explain why.

RESPONSE: The railroad may not have fee title to the entire right-of-way underlying the line segment proposed for abandonment, and so CGA may not have a contiguous corridor available for re-deployment for possible alternative public use(s). CGA does not know if there are any state or local plans that may be facilitated by the proposed abandonment, and CGA has no opinion about whether the right-of-way would be suitable for alternative public purposes.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(4) Energy.

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

RESPONSE: Development and transportation of energy resources will not be affected by the abandonment. No freight or passenger traffic is moving over the line, and the line did not carry any energy resources when last operated.

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

RESPONSE: Movement or recovery of recyclable commodities will not be affected by the abandonment. No freight or passenger traffic is moving over the line, and the line did not carry recyclable commodities when last operated.

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

RESPONSE: The proposed action involves the abandonment and salvage of a rail line that has been inactive for over two years, and as such will not result in an increase or decrease in overall energy efficiency.

*(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 energy consumption and show the data and methodology used to arrive at the figure given.*

RESPONSE: No traffic will be diverted from rail to motor carriage as a result of the proposed action, so the above thresholds will not be exceeded.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(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 rail 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.

RESPONSE: The above thresholds will not be exceeded.

(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 the State Implementation Plan.

RESPONSE: The above thresholds will not be exceeded. For the record, however, Newton County Georgia is in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) pollutants according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with the exception of 1-hr. ozone, 8-hr. ozone and particulate matter.

(iii) If 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.

RESPONSE: Not applicable.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(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.

RESPONSE: The above thresholds will not be exceeded.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(7) Safety.

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

RESPONSE: Abandonment of the subject rail line segment will have no significant effect upon public health or safety.

(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.

RESPONSE: Not applicable.

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

RESPONSE: The railroad has no knowledge of hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been known hazardous material spills on the right-of-way or in adjacent areas.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(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.

RESPONSE: The railroad understands that no federally-listed endangered species or their habitats will be adversely affected. The railroad has requested input from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ascertain any impacts to

surrounding habitats and species. USFWS has advised that federally-listed species are not likely to occur on the project site. The response of USFWS is attached as part of

Appendix C.

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

RESPONSE: The line segment proposed for abandonment does not appear to pass through state parks or forests, national parks or forests, or wildlife sanctuaries. Therefore, no adverse effects on wildlife sanctuaries, national parks or forests, or state parks or forests are anticipated.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(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.

RESPONSE: The railroad does not intend to remove or alter the contour of the roadbed underlying the rail lines to be abandoned by way of excavation or other ground-disturbance activity. Accordingly, no soils will be disturbed as a result of the proposed abandonment, and no storm water mitigation or National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits will be required. As is discussed in the Historic Report that follows, the line proposed for abandonment crosses four watercourses, all of which are spanned by bridges (there are a total of four railroad bridges along the line). The watercourses are listed at **Appendix D**. There are no plans, however, to undertake in-stream work, or dredge and/or use any fill materials in connection with the proposed abandonment, so, for this reason also, the proposed abandonment will not result in water quality impacts.

Consultation has been requested from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). USEPA-Region 4, NEPA Program Office has responded to CGA's consultation letter by responding that it lacks sufficient information to provide guidance at this time (although the responding official did not indicate in response what additional information USEPA needed). USEPA's response is attached in **Appendix C**.

(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.

RESPONSE: The geometry of the roadbed will not be altered and no in-stream work is contemplated. No discernible effects on either 100-year flood plains or adjacent wetlands are expected in connection with the proposed abandonment. Consequently, the railroad does not believe a Section 404 permit will be required in connection with the proposed abandonment. Consultation was requested from the US Army Corps of Engineers by letter dated September 21, 2012. The response is attached in **Appendix C**.

(iii) State whether permits under section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1342) are required for the proposed action.

RESPONSE: The railroad does not plan to remove or alter the roadbed underlying the line to be abandoned, to undertake in-stream work, or to dredge or use any fill materials. There will be no excavation or other ground-disturbance activity, and, because no soils will be disturbed, no storm water mitigation or National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit will be required. The railroad anticipates that the abandonment will not affect water

quality or require the issuance of a Section 402 permit under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. Nevertheless, CGA has requested input from the US Environmental Protection Agency (as indicated in a preceding section) and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

49 CFR 1105.7(e)(10) Proposed Mitigation.

Describe any actions that are proposed to mitigate adverse environmental impacts, indicating why the proposed mitigation is appropriate.

RESPONSE: Abandonment of the involved rail lines is not expected to produce adverse environmental impacts for the reasons set forth above. Only minimal physical activity may occur as a result of the proposed abandonment, such as removal of rail, ties, and other railroad appurtenances. The railroad will undertake all reasonable mitigation associated with these activities as directed by the Board to assure the abandonment does not produce adverse environmental impacts.

HISTORIC REPORT

49 CFR 1105.8(d)

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

CGA proposes to abandon 14.90 miles of rail line between Mileposts E 65.80 near Newborn and E 80.70 near Covington in Newton County, Georgia. Rail service over the subject line was legally discontinued in 2010,² and the line has been inactive ever since.

Following abandonment, the line's rail and related track material will be salvaged. Salvage will consist of removing the rail and track material from the existing roadbed. The contours of the existing roadbed will remain as is, and existing drainage systems will remain intact. When the rail and track material are removed, the contractor will smooth the roadbed to a level surface. No ballast will be removed, and no soil disturbance will occur (and, accordingly, no National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit will be required). No digging or burying of any kind will be permitted. All salvaged steel components will either be reused or sold as scrap. Crossties may be reused in other railroad operations or they will be disposed of in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. The railroad expects to arrange for the removal of the bridges on the line. The alternative to abandonment is to not abandon the line and retain the track in place. This alternative is not satisfactory. The railroad would incur opportunity and other holding costs that would need to be covered

² Central of Georgia Railroad Company – Discontinuance of Service Exemption – Newton County, Ga., et al., STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 319X), et al., (STB served Jul. 15, 2010).

by non-existent on-line shippers were this line to be retained. A map depicting the line proposed for abandonment is attached as **Appendix A**.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

(1) **U.S.G.S. Topographic Map** - Maps were furnished to Georgia Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources.

(2) **Written Description of Right of Way** - The right-of-way width is primarily 50 feet along the main track centerline. The line passes through suburban residential areas. Pursuant to Surface Transportation Board (STB) policy, the railroad's right-of-way will constitute the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for this undertaking.

(3) **Photographs** – There are four structures along the line that warrant discussion in this Historic Report, each of them a bridge. Photographs of the four bridge structures were furnished to Georgia Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources.

(4) **Date of Construction of Structures** – There are, as mentioned immediately above, four structures along the line that are 50 years old or older. Each of these four structures is a bridge. The construction dates for the bridges on the line segment are as follows: (1) the bridge at Milepost E 68.90 was built in 1916, but received substantial repairs in 1970; (2) the bridge at Milepost E 70.70 was built in 1922; (3) the bridge at Milepost E 73.90 was built in 1925; and (4) the bridge at Milepost E 78.50 was built in 1921. Other than as noted, no changes have been made to the bridges other than periodic normal maintenance to replace worn components. See the bridge list at **Appendix D**.

(5) **History of Operations and Changes Contemplated** - The railroad property that is the subject of the proposed abandonment consists of approximately 14.90 miles of rail line extending between milepost E 65.80 near Newborn and E 80.70 near Covington in Newton County, Georgia.

The line was originally part of the Middle Georgia and Atlantic Railway Company (MG&AR), a 64-mile railroad formed to link Milledgeville and Covington, Georgia. MG&AR assembled its rail system between 1890 and 1894. The line between Eatonton and Machen, Georgia, opened in 1891, and the extension from Machen to Covington, Georgia was completed in 1893. In 1893, MG&AR leased the 22-mile line between Milledgeville and Eatonton, Georgia. MG&AR had plans to build a branch line from Mansfield (Carmel Junction) to connect with the Georgia Railroad, but this proposed branch was never constructed.

In December of 1896, the Central of Georgia Railway (CGA) bought the MG&AR in a foreclosure sale. The CGA abandoned the 18 miles of line from Eatonton to Machen in 1959, but the remainder of the former MG&AR remains in place for the time being.

Southern Railway Company (SR) acquired the CGA on June 17, 1963. In 1971, SR merged the CGA, the Savannah and Atlanta Railway, and the Wrightsville and Tennille Railroad to form the Central of Georgia Railroad Company.

Norfolk Southern Corporation acquired control of SR along with Norfolk and Western on June 1, 1982. In December 1990, SR changed its name to Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR), and Norfolk and Western Railway Company

became a wholly-owned subsidiary of NSR.

In 1989, SR leased the former MG&AR line between Machen and Covington, which includes the subject line segment, to a short line carrier known as the Great Walton Railroad (Great Walton). That lease was terminated in 2009 when the portion of the rail line from Machen to Newborn was leased to the Squaw Creek Southern Railroad. NSR and Great Walton each obtained regulatory authority to discontinue service over the Newborn-Covington line segment that is also the subject of this abandonment proceeding in 2010.³

(6) Summary of Documents In Carrier's Possession That Might Be Useful for Documenting a Structure That Is Found To Be Historic - Although CGA may have engineering plans for the bridges on this line, CGA anticipates that these plans will be standard (non-structure specific) plans, and thus would have been used in connection with the construction of many other bridges of similar vintage in the Southeast.

(7) Opinion Regarding Criteria For Listing In The National Register Of Historic Places – There are four structures within the project's APE. CGA believes that neither the structures on the line nor the line itself meet the criteria for listing in the *National Register of Historic Places*. The four structures that are 50 years old or older are bridges that are short in length and of ordinary design and construction. CGA believes that there is nothing distinguishing these bridges from others in the region or on the

³ Central of Georgia Railroad Company – Discontinuance of Service Exemption – Newton County, Ga., et al., STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 319X), et al., (STB served Jul. 15, 2010).

NSR system generally. In addition, the railroad has no reason to believe that there are archaeological resources or historic properties on or immediately adjacent to the line.

(8) Subsurface Ground Conditions That Might Affect Archaeological Recovery

The railroad is not aware of any prior subsurface ground disturbances or environmental conditions that would affect archaeological recovery. Moreover, abandonment of the line and salvage of material from its surface will not affect any potential archaeological resources. The subsurface of the right-of-way was initially disturbed in the construction of the railroad lines by grading and filling. Abandonment and salvage of the line will not result in activities below the surface, or below the level of initial disturbance.

(9) Follow-Up Information - Additional information will be provided as appropriate.

APPENDIX A
Site Map

Central Of Georgia Railroad Company
 Proposed Abandonment
 Milepost E 65.80 - Milepost E 80.70
 Newborn to Covington, Georgia
 Docket No. 290 Sub No. 343X

