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OEA

SERVICE DATE – AUGUST 6, 2021

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 83 (Sub-No. 17X)

**Maine Central Railroad Company - Abandonment Exemption – in Kennebec and Somerset
Counties, Me.**

Docket No. AB 355 (Sub-No. 44X)

**Springfield Terminal
Railway Company - Discontinuance Exemption - in Kennebec and Somerset Counties, Me.**

ABANDONMENT TYPE

The time for comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) has expired in this:
(X) Notice of Exemption () Petition for Exemption () Regulated Abandonment

() NO NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED

(X) NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED

In this proceeding, the Maine Central Railroad Company (MEC) and Springfield Terminal Railway Company (ST) (collectively, Applicants) jointly filed a notice of exemption under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 seeking exemption from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 for MEC to abandon, and ST to discontinuance service over, a line of railroad in Kennebec and Somerset counties, Maine. The rail line, known as the Madison Branch, extends approximately 32.46 miles from milepost 0.00 to milepost 32.46 (the Line). The Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served a Draft EA for this proceeding on July 19, 2021 for public review and comment.

In the Draft EA, OEA recommended one environmental condition and concluded that the proposed action would not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. The recommended condition would require Applicants to retain their interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties including sites, buildings, structures, and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effects) that are eligible for listing or listed in the National Register of Historic Places until the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 U.S.C. § 306108, has been completed. The Applicants shall report back to OEA regarding any consultations with the State Historic Preservation Office and the public. The Applicants may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until the Section 106 process has been completed and the Board has removed this condition.

Comments on the Draft EA

OEA received one comment after issuance of the Draft EA. In an August 5, 2021 letter, the Maine State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) commented that they received additional photographs of the Madison Branch from the Applicants on July 2, 2021 and determined that only the truss bridges along the Madison Branch are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) under Criterion C, engineering. The SHPO further noted that neither the Madison Branch corridor (including rails and ties) nor the culverts are eligible. The SHPO concluded that the proposed undertaking (i.e., the abandonment) would have no adverse effect upon historic properties.

Pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 C.F.R. § 800.4(d)(1), and following consultation with the SHPO and the public, OEA determined that the proposed abandonment would not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 C.F.R. § 800.11(d), consists of the railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, the Draft EA, and this Final EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public through posting on the Board's website at www.stb.gov.

Based on this determination, the Section 106 condition recommended by OEA in the Draft EA is no longer needed.

As noted in the Draft EA, the Applicants intend to sell the Line to the State of Maine, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (MDACF). With respect to this potential sale, the SHPO requested that the MDACF consult with them on any future work on the eligible truss bridges. OEA is providing a copy of this Final EA to MDACF.

Conclusions

The Draft EA comment period has ended. Accordingly, OEA recommends no environmental conditions be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority. OEA believes that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

By the Board, Danielle Gosselin, Acting Director, Office of Environmental Analysis.