

51060

SERVICE DATE – DECEMBER 20, 2021

DO

FR-4915-01-P

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. AB 1073 (Sub-No. 1X)]

Alabama & Florida Railway Co., Inc.—Abandonment Exemption—in Geneva, Coffee, and Covington Counties, Ala.

Alabama & Florida Railway Co., Inc. (A&F), has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 C.F.R. part 1152 subpart F—Exemption Abandonments to abandon approximately 42.9 miles of rail line between milepost 581.3 at Andalusia, Ala., and milepost 624.2 at Geneva, Ala. (the Line). The Line traverses U.S. Postal Service Zip Codes 36340, 36420, 36421, 36453, 36467, and 36477.

A&F certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the Line for at least two years; (2) there is no overhead traffic that has been, or would need to be, rerouted as a result of the proposed abandonment; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the Line (or by state or local government on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the Line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or has been decided in favor of a complainant within the two-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 C.F.R. §§ 1105.7(b) and 1105.8(c) (notice of environmental and historic reports), 49 C.F.R. § 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to government agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under Oregon Short Line Railroad—Abandonment

Portion Goshen Branch Between Firth & Ammon, in Bingham & Bonneville Counties, Idaho, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. § 10502(d) must be filed.

Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received,¹ this exemption will be effective on January 19, 2022, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,² formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.27(c)(2), and interim trail use/rail banking requests under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.29 must be filed by December 30, 2021.³ Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.28 must be filed by January 10, 2022.

All pleadings, referring to Docket No. AB 1073 (Sub-No. 1X), should be filed with the Surface Transportation Board via e-filing on the Board's website. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on A&F's representative, Crystal M. Zorbaugh, Baker & Miller PLLC, 2401 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20037.

¹ Persons interested in submitting an OFA must first file a formal expression of intent to file an offer, indicating the type of financial assistance they wish to provide (i.e., subsidy or purchase) and demonstrating that they are preliminarily financially responsible. See 49 C.F.R. § 1152.27(c)(2)(i).

² The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See Exemption of Out-of-Serv. Rail Lines, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

³ Filing fees for OFAs and trail use requests can be found at 49 C.F.R. § 1002.2(f)(25) and (27), respectively.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

A&F has filed a combined environmental and historic report that addresses the potential effects, if any, of the abandonment on the environment and historic resources. OEA will issue a Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) by December 23, 2021. The Draft EA will be available to interested persons on the Board's website, by writing to OEA, or by calling OEA at (202) 245-0294. Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Comments on environmental or historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the Draft EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 C.F.R. § 1152.29(e)(2), A&F shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the Line. If consummation has not been effected by A&F's filing of a notice of consummation by December 20, 2022, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available at www.stb.gov.

Decided: December 14, 2021.

By the Board, Scott M. Zimmerman, Acting Director, Office of Proceedings.