



State of Vermont
Division for Historic Preservation
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*Agency of Commerce and
Community Development*

June 21, 2021

Danielle Gosselin
Acting Director
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board

**Re: New England Central Railroad, Inc. Abandonment, Saint Albans City, Vermont.
Surface Transportation Board. STB Docket No. AB 1315X.**

Dear Ms. Gosselin,

Thank you for the opportunity to consult on the proposed rail line abandonment in Saint Albans City, Vermont, STB Docket No. AB 1315X, involving the New England Central Railroad, Inc. (NECR) and the Surface Transportation Board (STB). The Vermont State Historic Preservation Office (VTSHPO) is reviewing this proposed undertaking pursuant to 36 CFR 800.4, regulations established by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to implement Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Project review consists of identifying the project's potential impacts to historic buildings and structures, historic districts, historic landscapes and settings, and to known or potential archeological resources.

VTSHPO has been informed that the STB has delegated authority to initiate Section 106 consultation to the applicants, NECR. It is our understanding that NECR will be seeking exemption authority for the applicant to abandon the rail line between approximately Mile Post 0.436 (Railroad Station 23+03) at the south side of Lower Newton Road crossing and extending to Mile Post 0.60 (Railroad Station 31+68) (the "Subject Line") with the preferred intention to sell the property to Saint Albans City. The Subject Line is an approximate 865-foot portion of stub-ended rail line known as the Richford Branch. The Richford Branch, at one time extended 10 miles from Saint Albans, across the Missisquoi River via a 3-span bridge, to Sheldon Junction. The Richford Branch is historically part of the late 19th century Missisquoi Railroad that is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Much of the Richford Branch is now used as the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail.

NECR has not defined an area of potential effect (APE) for this undertaking. VTSHPO does not know the boundaries of NECR ownership but proposes an appropriate APE may be defined as the 865-foot Subject Line with a 5-meter buffer along each side. Within that APE, VTSHPO has identified the Missisquoi Railroad as the only historic resource eligible for listing in the NRHP. VTSHPO has requested consultation about how the rail corridor could possibly be affected by future development, specifically the obstruction of the historic route of the Richford Branch. VTSHPO would be supportive of development of the Subject Line for extension of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail.

If development plans are not available prior to the abandonment, VTSHPO recommends that the STB require a preservation condition be included in the property transfer to address the potential for adverse effects to



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historic properties eligible for the NRHP. VTSHPO also requests to be a consulting party for the drafting of such a condition. If the preservation condition is included in the property transfer, VTSHPO can concur with a finding of **No Adverse Effect** for the proposed abandonment.

Thank you for your cooperation in protecting Vermont's irreplaceable historic and archeological heritage. Elizabeth Peebles and R. Scott Dillon reviewed this project and prepared this letter. I concur with the findings and conclusions described above.

Sincerely:

VERMONT DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

E-SIGNED by Laura Trieschmann
on 2021-06-21 15:52:38 GMT

Laura V. Trieschmann
State Historic Preservation Officer

Cc:

Justin Marks, Clark Hill PLC for NECR

