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OEA

SERVICE DATE — MAY 20, 2022

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 1315X

**New England Central Railroad, Inc. – Abandonment Exemption –
In Franklin County, Vt.**

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

(X) NO NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED

() NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED

In this proceeding, New England Central Railroad, Inc. (NECR) filed a notice with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad located in Franklin County, Vermont. The rail line proposed for abandonment is an approximately 865-foot stub-ended segment of the Richford Branch and extends from milepost 0.436 (Railroad Station 23+03) (Route 38) to milepost 0.60 (Railroad Station 31+68) near Lower Newton Street and North Main Street (Route 7) in St. Albans, Vermont. The Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served a Draft EA for this proceeding on April 29, 2022 for public review and comment. In the Draft EA, OEA recommended two environmental conditions and concluded that the proposed action would not significantly impact the quality of the human environment.

Modifications to the Draft EA

Upon further independent review, OEA notes that two words were inadvertently omitted from recommended condition 1 in the Draft EA. Specifically, OEA recommends that the words “abandonment-related” be inserted before the word “salvage,” as shown in modified condition 1 below.

Conclusions

The Draft EA comment period has ended. Accordingly, OEA recommends that the conditions recommended in the Draft EA, as modified by the recommendation in this document,

should be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority.¹ The conditions are:

1. Prior to commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities, New England Central Railroad, Inc. shall consult with the Vermont Natural Resources Department of Environmental Conservation (ANR DEC), Sites Management Section to ensure ANR DEC's concerns are addressed regarding the handling and disposal of any potentially hazardous waste.
2. New England Central Railroad, Inc (NECR) shall retain its 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 Effect) 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. NECR shall report back to the Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) regarding any consultations with the State of Vermont, Division for Historic Preservation (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) and the public. NECR 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.

If the above conditions are imposed, OEA believes that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

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

¹ If an interim trail use agreement under 16 U.S.C. § 1247(d) and 49 C.F.R. § 1152.29 were to be reached for the Line (or a portion thereof), compliance with these conditions would not be required with respect to any portion of the Line covered by the interim trail use agreement for the duration of the agreement.