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OEA

SERVICE DATE – NOVEMBER 10, 2022

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 312 (Sub-No. 5X)

**South Carolina Central Railroad Company, LLC – Abandonment Exemption –
in Darlington County, S.C.**

ABANDONMENT TYPE

The time for comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) has expired in this:

☐ Notice of Exemption ☒ Petition for Exemption ☐ Regulated Abandonment

☐ **NO NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED**

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In this proceeding, South Carolina Central Railroad Company, LLC (SCRF) filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. § 10502 with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) seeking exemption from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Darlington County, South Carolina. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends approximately two miles over six railroad tracks that most recently served the Sonoco Products Company (Sonoco) in Hartsville, Darlington County, S.C. (the Line). The Line consists of (a) Track 1 at milepost Sonoco Lead MP 312.7 to MP 313.24 and its associated leads, Track 1a and 1b; (b) Track 2 and 2a that do not have mileposts, and (c) Track 3 at Hartsville MP 312.85 to MP 313.56. The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served a Draft EA for this proceeding on October 6, 2022 for public review and comment. In the Draft EA, OEA recommended four environmental conditions and concluded that the proposed action would not significantly impact the quality of the human environment.

Comments on the Draft EA

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) submitted comments stating that no survey markers would be impacted in the area of the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, OEA is no longer recommending that a condition requiring SCRF to consult with NGS be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority.

After issuance of the Draft EA, SCRF continued to consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The Corps submitted additional comments stating that jurisdictional Waters of the United States (including wetlands, streams, or other waters) subject to its regulatory authority under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act may be present in the area of the proposed

abandonment. The Corps recommended that SCRF perform a detailed delineation of the streams and/or wetlands present within the project corridor to assist with determining permitting requirements. Therefore, OEA continues to recommend that a condition requiring SCRF to consult with the Corps be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority.

SCRF continued consultation with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (“SCDNR”) after issuance of the Draft EA. SCDNR submitted additional comments clarifying its prior request for SCRF to restore the rail lines to pre-construction contours applied primarily to the more naturalized/grassed segment of Track 3 that lies to the west of N. 3rd Street and south of Sonoco Rd (from 34.383582, -80.070996 to approximately 34.383917, -80.076098). Accordingly, OEA continues to recommend that a condition requiring SCRF to consult with SCDNR be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority.

On November 1, 2022, SCRF submitted correspondence from the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) stating that, based on available project information, including the description of the undertaking’s Area of Potential Effect (APE) and the identification of historical properties within the APE, SHPO believes that no properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected by the proposed abandonment. Based on the SHPO’s correspondence, as well as previous consultations with the SHPO and SCRF, OEA has determined that the proposed abandonment would not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. Accordingly, OEA is no longer recommending that a Section 106 condition be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority.

Conclusions

The Draft EA comment period has ended. Accordingly, OEA recommends that the following two conditions previously recommended in the Draft EA should be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority:¹

1. Prior to commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities, South Carolina Central Railroad Company, LLC shall consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and comply with its reasonable requirements.
2. Prior to commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities, South Carolina Central Railroad Company, LLC shall consult with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and comply with its reasonable requirements.

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 is reached for the Line (or a portion thereof), compliance with these conditions is not required with respect to any portion of the Line covered by the interim trail use agreement for the duration of the agreement.