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OEA

SERVICE DATE – MARCH 14, 2025

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 580 (Sub-No. 1X)

**Knoxville & Holston River Railroad Co., Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary
of Gulf & Ohio Railways, Inc. – Abandonment Exemption –
In Knox County, Tenn.**

ABANDONMENT TYPE

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

() **NO NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED**

(X) **NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED**

In this proceeding, Knoxville & Holston River Railroad Co., Inc. (KXHR), a wholly owned subsidiary of Gulf & Ohio Railways, Inc. (G&O), filed a petition with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) under 49 U.S.C. § 10502 seeking exemption from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Knox County, Tennessee. The rail line proposed for abandonment, referred to as the K&A Belt Line, extends approximately 3.8 miles from milepost 0.1 at its point of connection with a Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) rail line near West Blount Road and St. Paul Street to its end point near Will Skelton Greenway and Island Home Avenue in the City of Knoxville (the Line). The Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served a Draft EA for this proceeding on February 7, 2025 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.

Comments on the Draft EA

OEA received one comment after issuance of the Draft EA. On March 10, 2025, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) submitted a letter with comments from various TDEC divisions. The Division of Air Pollution Control (DAPC) stated that abandonment-related salvage activities could result in short term air quality impacts from equipment, open burning associated with land clearing activities, and fugitive dust. DAPC requested that if fugitive dust were to be generated, wet suppression or other minimization measures be used. DAPC also stated that truck traffic associated with salvage activities could generate emissions of PM, CO, NO₂, SO₂, VOC, and CO₂, and recommended using trucks with up-to-date emission control technologies and proper maintenance to minimize emissions.

Finally, DAPC recommended the adoption of best practices to minimize the impact of mobile source emissions on ambient air quality.

The Division of Solid Waste Management (DSWM) recommended that any wastes associated with salvage activities be confined to the limits of the proposed abandonment and handled in accordance with the Solid and Hazardous Waste Rules and Regulations of Tennessee. DSWM also stated that any lead-based paint, asbestos containing material, and PCBs encountered during salvage should be disposed of in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations as well as DSWM's Solid Waste Management Program Policy & Guidance Manual. In addition, the Division of Underground Storage Tanks stated that there were no active facilities or ongoing petroleum underground storage tank cleanups in the area of the proposed abandonment, but that if any were to be encountered during salvage, that the TDEC Knoxville Field Office should be contacted.

Accordingly, OEA is recommending a condition requiring KXHR to consult with the TDEC's DAPC, DWSM, and Division of Underground Storage Tanks prior to the commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities and follow best practices during salvage to minimize any potential impacts.

Conclusions

The Draft EA comment period has ended. Accordingly, OEA recommends that the condition recommended in the Draft EA, as well as the additional condition recommended in this document, should be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority:¹

1. The Knoxville & Holston River Railroad Co., Inc. (KXHR) 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. KXHR shall report back to the Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) regarding any consultations with the Tennessee Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) and the public. KXHR 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.
2. Prior to the commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities, the Knoxville & Holston River Railroad Co., Inc. shall consult with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Divisions of Air Pollution Control,

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.

Solid Waste Management, and Underground Storage Tanks and follow best practices during salvage to minimize any potential impacts.

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.