DO

FR-4915-01-P

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. FD 36950]

The Great Walton Railroad Company, Inc.—Continuance in Control Exemption—The Athens Line, LLC

The Great Walton Railroad Company, Inc. (GWRC), a Class III rail carrier, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(2) to obtain after-the-fact authority to continue in control of The Athens Line, LLC (The Athens Line).[1] GWRC controls two rail carriers: The Athens Line and the Hartwell Railroad Company (Hartwell). GWRC states that it obtained authority to control Hartwell,[2] but mistakenly did not obtain authority for its continuance in control of The Athens Line.

GWRC represents that its after-the-fact continuance in control of The Athens Line: (1) is not a transaction where The Athens Line would connect with any other GWRC railroads; (2) is not part of a series of anticipated transactions that would result in any such connection; and (3) does not involve a Class I carrier.

[1] The Athens Line is a wholly owned subsidiary of GWRC. The Athens Line became a rail carrier when it originally leased, and eventually acquired, a line of railroad from Central of Georgia Railroad Company. See Athens Line, LLC—Lease & Operation Exemption—Norfolk S. Ry., FD 34118 (STB served Dec. 27, 2001); Athens Line, LLC—Acquis. & Operation Exemption—Rail Line of Norfolk S. Ry., FD 36122 (STB served June 16, 2017).

[2] See Great Walton R.R.—Acquis. Exemption—Hartwell R.R., FD 36599 (STB served May 23, 2022).

Therefore, the transaction is exempt from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 11323. See 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(2).

Under 49 U.S.C. 10502(g), the Board may not use its exemption authority to relieve a rail carrier of its statutory obligation to protect the interests of its employees. However, 49 U.S.C. 11326(c) does not provide for labor protection for transactions under 49 U.S.C. 11324 and 11325 that involve only Class III rail carriers. Accordingly, because this transaction involves Class III rail carriers only, the Board may not impose labor protective conditions here.

The earliest this transaction may be consummated is October 4, 2026, the effective date of the exemption. If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the effectiveness of the exemption. Petitions for stay must be filed by September 25, 2026 (at least seven days before the exemption becomes effective).

All pleadings, referring to Docket No. FD 36950, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board either via e-filing on the Board's website or in writing addressed to 395 E Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on GWRC's representative, Richard H. Streeter, Law Office of Richard H. Streeter, 5255 Partridge Lane, N.W., Washington, DC 20016.

According to GWRC, this action is excluded from environmental review under 49 CFR 1105.6(c) and from historic preservation reporting requirements under 49 CFR 1105.8(b).

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

Decided: September 15, 2026.

By the Board, Anika S. Cooper, Chief Counsel, Office of Chief Counsel.