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FR-4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 221X)]

Norfolk Southern Railway Company—Abandonment Exemption—in Wise County, VA

Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon a 0.9-mile line of railroad between milepost RC-0.0, at Russell Creek, and milepost RC-0.9, at Caledonia, in Wise County, VA (line).¹ The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 24293.

Applicant has certified that: (1) no local or overhead traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) any overhead traffic, if there is any, can be rerouted over other lines; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government agency acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

¹ NSR notes that authority to discontinue operations on the line was granted by the former Interstate Commerce Commission. See Norfolk and Western Railway Company—Discontinuance Exemption—in Wise County, VA, Docket No. AB 290 (Sub-No. 98X) (ICC served July 16, 1990).

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on January 23, 2002, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,² formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),³ and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by January 3, 2002. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by January 14, 2002, with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: James R. Paschall, Esq., Norfolk Southern Corporation, Three Commercial Place, Norfolk, VA 23510. If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

² The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

³ Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

Applicant has filed a separate environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by December 28, 2001. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423-0001) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565-1552. Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), NSR shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by NSR's filing of a notice of consummation by December 21, 2002, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: December 10, 2001.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary