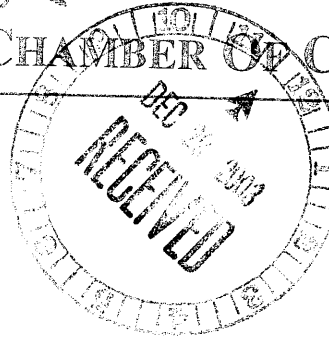


#61-440
RJ

LAMOILLE VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

P.O. Box 445
43 Portland Street
Morrisville, VT 05661
USA December 18, 2003

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Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Room 500
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

AB - 444 (SUB-NO. 1X)

Re: *Lamoille Valley R.R. Co. — Abandonment Exemption — In Caledonia, Washington, Orleans,
Lamoille, and Franklin Counties, Vermont*
Surface Transportation Board, Docket No. AB-44 (Sub-No. 1X)

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing on behalf of the Lamoille Valley Chamber of Commerce in support of a regulatory exemption allowing the Lamoille Valley Railroad Company (LVRC) to abandon its 95.26-mile-long railroad line between St. Johnsbury and Swanton, Vermont. After working on this project for over 5 years we have come to realize the logical next step is to abandon.

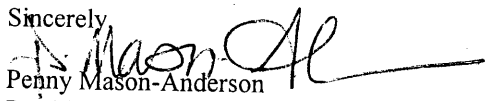
As you are aware in the early 1970s, this line was purchased by the State of Vermont and thereafter extensively rehabilitated with a heavy infusion of federal and state funds.

After that time from 1978 through 1990, LVRC was controlled by dedicated group of local investors who struggled heroically to operate a successful short-line railroad. In the end, the obstacles were too great: (1) the loss of overhead "bridge" traffic from the Maine Central's Mountain Division, (2) the closure of talc and asbestos mines, once the principal source of the line's originating traffic, and (3) the long-term decline of farming along the line, which eroded the market for the bulk shipments of animal feed that were once the mainstay of the line's terminating traffic.

In the mid-1990s, heavy flood damage to the line, which would cost millions of dollars to repair, ended any practical possibility of resuming railroad service. At several recent sessions, the Vermont legislature has made it very clear that it has no appetite for the heavy financial commitment that would be necessary to restore this line to railroad operation.

The time has come to recognize that the public interest would be best served by the Board's approving the requested regulatory exemption. This would allow the LVRC to surrender its leasehold, opening the way for the State of Vermont, as the line's owner, to make segments of the corridor available to municipalities, snowmobile clubs, and other responsible organizations for trail use.

Sincerely,


Penny Mason-Anderson
President

cc: Mr. James B. Fitzgerald
Lamoille Valley Railroad Company
c/o VTrans Rail Section
National Life Building
Drawer 33

LVCC File
LCPC File

the Chamber Works!