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LANE COUNTY

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July 23, 2008

The Honorable Anne K. Quinlan
Acting Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
395 E St. SW
Washington, DC 20423

Re: Docket No. AB-515 (Sub-No 2X), *Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad, Inc. – Abandonment and Discontinuance – in Coos, Douglas, and Lane Counties, OR (Coquille to Vaughn)*

Dear Secretary Quinlan:

I'm the Administrator for Lane County, Oregon, writing you today requesting that the Surface Transportation Board hold a public hearing here in Oregon so that community leaders, employers, and all local citizens can voice their concerns about the proposed abandonment of the Coos Bay rail line of the Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad (CORP). Approximately half of that line is situated within Lane County and its terminus is here in Eugene. Given the topography of Western Oregon and the limited number of Oregon ports which are connected to the Willamette Valley, it is absolutely imperative that this rail line be maintained for future use. A meeting would provide the Surface Transportation Board with information regarding the broad impacts of the proposed abandonment.

For example, there appears to be a fairly wide discrepancy between what the owners of the railroad state is their preferred plan for the future of the line versus what the Port of Coos Bay envisions around its involvement with the railroad. And, there are many questions about the proposed abandonment, including specific questions about where the abandoned line begins and ends.

I can safely say that the local community is skeptical of the claims made to date by Rail America, owner of the CORP. Customers were provided with less than 24 hour notice that the line had problems and would shut down last fall in what amounted to an illegal abandonment. It proposed to fix problems on the line and reopen, but only if the state would step in as a partner. Now comes CORP's position that the line is worth more than \$20 million and it wishes to completely dismantle the infrastructure and sell the right of way, but that it will not sell the operation to the Port of Coos Bay. It also wishes to maintain ownership of the final stretch of track into Eugene, in any case.

Due to the far-reaching consequences of CORP's proposed abandonment, I'm hopeful you'll agree that a meeting is warranted. I'm happy to offer the use of Lane County's Harris Hall, a large public meeting room in downtown Eugene. There is widespread and significant community interest in the CORP proposal and the future of the rail line, and I envision a large turnout at any such meeting.

Sincerely,

Jeff Spartz
Administrator, Lane County