

regulatory regimes in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and to seek to make certain standards more compatible. The Transportation Consultative Group (TCG) was formed by the three countries' departments of transportation to address non-standards-related issues that affect cross-border movements among the countries, but that are not included in the NAFTA.

**MEETINGS AND DEADLINES:** The fourth joint annual LTSS/TCG plenary session will be held from July 8 to 11, 1997, at the Westin Regina Hotel, Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico. The following LTSS working groups will meet during the same week and at the same location: (1) Compliance and Driver and Vehicle Standards; (2) Vehicle Weights and Dimensions; and (3) Traffic Control Devices for Highways. Similarly, the following TCG working groups are expected to meet: (1) Cross-Border Operations and Facilitation; (2) Rail Safety and Economic Issues; (3) Automated Data Exchange; (4) and Maritime and Ports Policy.

Also at the same Puerto Vallarta site, on July 8, 1997, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., a listening session will be held for representatives of the truck, bus, rail, and chemical manufacturing industries, transportation labor unions, brokers and shippers, public safety advocates, and others who have notified us of their interest to attend and have submitted copies of their presentations, in English and Spanish, to the address below by June 20. This is an opportunity for presenters to voice their concerns, provide technical information, and offer suggestions relevant to achieving greater standards compatibility and improving cross-border trade. Hotel reservations may be arranged by calling 1-800-228-3000.

A briefing to report on the outcome of the Puerto Vallarta meetings will be conducted at DOT at the address below, in Room 9230-32, on July 24, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Interested parties may notify DOT of their interest to attend this briefing by calling (202) 366-2892 by July 21.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** LTSS-related documents, including working group reports and statements received by DOT from industry associations, transportation labor unions, public safety advocates, and others will be available for review in Docket no. OST-95-246, at the address below, Room PL-401, between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., e.s.t., Monday through Friday, except national holidays.

**ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS:**

Individuals and organizations interested in participating in the listening session

may send notice of their interest and copies of their presentations to Maria Lameiro, U.S. Department of Transportation, OST/X-20, Room 10300, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. Respondents may also send information by fax at (202) 366-7417. For additional information, call (202) 366-418-8269.

Dated: May 23, 1997.

**Bernard Gaillard,**

*Director, Office of International Transportation and Trade.*

[FR Doc. 97-14157 Filed 5-29-97; 8:45 am]

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**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Finance Docket No. 33388]

**CSX Corp. and CSX Transportation, Inc., Norfolk Southern Corp. and Norfolk Southern Railway Co.—Control and Operating Leases/Agreements—Conrail Inc. and Consolidated Rail Corp.**

**AGENCY:** Surface Transportation Board.

**ACTION:** Decision No. 6; Notice of Issuance of Procedural Schedule.

**SUMMARY:** Having received public comments on applicants' proposed procedural schedule and applicants' reply to those comments, the Board is issuing a final procedural schedule. This schedule provides for issuance of a final decision no later than 350 days after filing of the primary application. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** The effective date of this decision is May 30, 1997. Notices of intent to participate in this proceeding will be due 45 days after the primary application is filed. All descriptions of inconsistent and responsive applications, as well as any petitions for waiver or clarification with respect thereto, will be due 60 days after the primary application is filed. All comments, protests, requests for conditions, inconsistent and responsive applications, and any other opposition evidence and argument will be due 120 days after the primary application is filed. For further information, see the procedural schedule set forth below.

**ADDRESSES:** An original and 25 copies<sup>1</sup> of all documents, referring to STB

<sup>1</sup> In addition to submitting an original and 25 copies of all documents filed with the Board, parties are requested also to submit all pleadings and attachments as computer data contained on a 3.5-inch diskette formatted for WordPerfect 7.0 (or formatted so that it can be converted into WordPerfect 7.0) and clearly labeled with the identification acronym and number of the pleading

Finance Docket No. 33388, must be sent to the Office of the Secretary, Case Control Branch, ATTN: STB Finance Docket No. 33388, Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001.<sup>2</sup> In addition, one copy of all documents in this proceeding must be sent to Administrative Law Judge Jacob Leventhal, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE., Suite 11F, Washington, DC 20426 (202) 219-2538; FAX: (202) 219-3289 and to each of the applicants' representatives: (1) Dennis G. Lyons, Esq., Arnold & Porter, 555 12th Street, NW., Washington, DC 20004-1202; (2) Richard A. Allen, Esq., Zuckert Scoutt & Rasenberger, L.L.P., Suite 600, 888 Seventeenth Street, NW., Washington, DC 20006-3939; and (3) Paul A. Cunningham, Esq., Harkins Cunningham, Suite 600, 1300 Nineteenth Street, NW., Washington, DC 20036.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Julia M. Farr, (202) 565-1613. (TDD for the hearing impaired: (202) 565-1695.)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On April 10, 1997, CSX Corporation (CSXC), CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT), Norfolk Southern Corporation (NSC), Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR), Conrail Inc. (CRI), and Consolidated Rail Corporation (CRC)<sup>3</sup> filed a notice of intent (CSX/NS-1) that they intend to file an application under 49 U.S.C. 11323-25 (referred to as the "primary application") seeking Board authorization for, among other things, (a) the acquisition by CSX and NS of control of Conrail, and (b) the division of the assets of Conrail by and between

contained on the diskette. See 49 CFR 1180.4(a)(2). The computer data contained on the computer diskettes submitted to the Board will be subject to the protective order granted in Decision No. 1, served on April 16, 1997 (as modified in Decision No. 4, served May 2, 1997), and is for the exclusive use of Board employees reviewing substantive and/or procedural matters in this proceeding. The flexibility provided by such computer data will facilitate timely review by the Board and its staff.

<sup>2</sup> In order for a document to be considered a formal filing, the Board must receive an original and 25 copies of the document, which must show that it has been properly served. Documents transmitted by facsimile (FAX), as in the past, will not be considered formal filings and thus are not encouraged because they will result in unnecessarily burdensome, duplicative processing in what we expect to become a voluminous record. Applicants may file in bound volumes an original and 25 copies of related applications, petitions, and notices of exemption; however, to facilitate our processing of these related filings, we will require that applicants also file two unbound copies of each of these filings.

<sup>3</sup> CSXC and CSXT are referred to collectively as CSX. NSC and NSR are referred to collectively as NS. CRI and CRC are referred to collectively as Conrail. CSX, NS, and Conrail are referred to collectively as applicants.

CSX and NS.<sup>4</sup> Applicants expect to file their primary application, and any related applications, petitions, and notices, on or before July 10, 1997, but not before June 16, 1997.

In Decision No. 2, served April 21, 1997, and published that day in the **Federal Register** at 62 FR 19390, we determined that the transaction contemplated by applicants is a major transaction as defined at 49 CFR 1180.2(a), and we invited comments due May 1, 1997, on applicants' proposed procedural schedule. Comments were filed, and on May 8, 1997, applicants filed a consolidated reply to the comments (CSX/NS-11).

Over 25 comments were received in response to Decision No. 2. Comments were filed by shipper organizations, shippers (including electric utilities), ports, railroads, government parties, and rail labor unions. We have carefully reviewed all of the comments that we received on the proposed procedural schedule. Given the magnitude of applicants' proposed transaction concerning the restructuring of rail service within the entire Eastern United States, we have determined that a 350-day procedural schedule (which is more than applicants had proposed, but less than the statutory maximum) will ensure that all parties are accorded due process and allow us time to consider fully all of the issues in this proceeding, including environmental issues, and reach a timely resolution of this matter.

In particular, this schedule will permit us to take the hard look at environmental issues as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the related regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality. The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is warranted for this

proceeding. This determination is based on the nature and scope of environmental issues (e.g., intercity passenger service and commuter rail service) that are likely to arise in this proceeding as well as SEA's evaluation of the information available to date, including the Preliminary Environmental Report filed on May 16, 1997. We agree with SEA that an EIS is warranted in this proceeding. The procedural schedule that we are adopting will provide the necessary time to enable us to undertake an EIS.

Within this procedural schedule, we will be able to consider fully all issues affecting the public interest, and will also be able to address cumulative impacts and crossover effects of prior mergers as appropriate. Further, we will consider the transaction in light of any settlement agreements that the applicants may reach with any parties.

We are not unmindful of the concerns parties have raised regarding the amount of time necessary to prepare their cases or of the concerns applicants have raised regarding employment uncertainty among Conrail management and possible deterioration in Conrail service during the pendency of this proceeding, and have crafted the attached procedural schedule with fairness to all parties in mind. While we are sensitive to applicants' concerns and their desire to have an expedited schedule, we believe that the 350-day schedule that we are adopting is not unduly long and will not result in lasting adverse effects on the Conrail system or properties. We believe that the longer schedule is necessary and appropriate for this case to allow sufficient time for participation by the public and consideration by the Board, including the preparation of an EIS. Accordingly, we have adjusted the procedural schedule proposed by applicants to give more time for the submission and review of evidence and arguments, and to provide adequate time for preparing an EIS.

Environmental reporting for primary applicants. As indicated above, applicants filed their joint Preliminary Environmental Report (PER) on May 16, 1997. CSX and NS will provide detailed and updated information (with supporting documentation) and environmental impact analyses in the Environmental Report (ER) they will file with their primary application and related applications, petitions, and notices. CSX and NS will provide a copy of the ER to all parties of record in this proceeding; appropriate federal, state, and local agencies; and affected parties according to the Board's

environmental rules found in 49 CFR part 1105.

As discussed above, SEA has determined that the preparation of an EIS is warranted for this proceeding. A notice of intent to prepare an EIS will be published in the **Federal Register** shortly, which will explain in further detail the EIS process for this proceeding. SEA will initiate public scoping as soon as possible after the joint application and environmental report are filed to allow interested persons to participate in determining the scope of the EIS that will be prepared. SEA anticipates that the final scope of the EIS will be issued approximately 80 days after the filing of the joint application.

When, as here, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is contemplated for a railroad proceeding, the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.10(a)(1) normally require the prospective applicants to submit to SEA a 6-month prefiling notice in advance of the application. However, where appropriate, 49 CFR 1105.10(c) allows the waiver of this 6-month prefiling notice. Here, SEA for some time has been engaged in on-going consultations with both CSX and NS about the proposed merger and the potential associated environmental impacts. Moreover, the applicants' joint PER provided detailed descriptive information about the project. In these circumstances, SEA believes that there is no need for the 6-month waiting period. Therefore, as indicated in Decision No. 7 (served concurrently herewith, but not published in the **Federal Register**), the 6-month prefiling notice requirement will be waived in this case.

Environmental reporting for inconsistent and responsive applicants. In order for us to fulfill our responsibilities under NEPA and other environmental laws, inconsistent and responsive applicants must submit certain environmental information. To facilitate the environmental review process, inconsistent and responsive applicants will be required to file by Day F + 100 either (1) a verified statement that the inconsistent or responsive application will have no significant environmental impact or (2) a responsive environmental report (RER) that contains detailed environmental information regarding the inconsistent or responsive application.

The RER. The RER should comply with all requirements for environmental reports contained in our environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7. Also, the RER should address the environmental issues identified in the final scope of the

<sup>4</sup>By letter dated April 24, 1997, applicants submitted, pursuant to 49 CFR 1013.3(a), an Amended and Restated Voting Trust Agreement (hereinafter referred to as Joint-VTA-1) that NSC, CSXC, and Green Acquisition Corporation propose to enter into with an institutional trustee, Deposit Guaranty National Bank, and a limited liability company to be formed shortly. NSC and CSXC intend that the Trustee will hold, in the voting trust (hereinafter referred to as the Joint Voting Trust) to be established pursuant to Joint-VTA-1, all common shares of Conrail Inc. (CRI): (1) Acquired previously, and separately, by NSC and CSXC and currently held in separate voting trusts; or (2) hereafter acquired by NSC and CSXC pursuant to the Third Supplement (dated April 10, 1997) to the Second Offer to Purchase (the Second Offer, dated December 6, 1996). NSC and CSXC intend that the Joint Voting Trust to be established pursuant to Joint-VTA-1 will be a single consolidated voting trust ultimately superseding and replacing the previously established separate voting trusts. An informal staff opinion letter with respect to the voting trust was issued on May 8, 1997.

EIS for the entire merger, to the extent such issues are applicable to the particular inconsistent or responsive application. (For example, if, in the final scope of the EIS, SEA identified potential rail commuter service impacts as an issue to be addressed, we would expect the RER also to address that issue if commuter services were involved in the particular inconsistent or responsive application.)

The RER should be based on consultations with SEA and the various agencies set forth in 49 CFR 1105.7(b). In addition, the information in the RER should be organized as follows: Executive Summary; Purpose and Need for Agency Action; Description of the Inconsistent or Responsive Application and Related Operations; Description of the Affected Environment; Description of Alternatives; Analysis of the Potential Environmental Impacts; Proposed Mitigation; and Appropriate Appendices that include correspondence and consultation responses, bibliography, and a list of preparers.

The purpose of an RER is to provide us the information we need to assess the potential environmental impacts of all inconsistent and responsive applications in the context of the overall merger proposal. After an RER is received, SEA will verify the information contained in the document. If the RER is acceptable, SEA will include the RER with the Draft EIS for the entire merger that will be served and made available for public comment.

In order to ensure timely, consistent, and appropriate environmental documentation, inconsistent and responsive applicants must consult with SEA as early as possible. If an RER is insufficient, we may require additional environmental information or reject the inconsistent or responsive application.

A verified statement of no significant impact. If an action proposed under an inconsistent or responsive transaction would typically fall within 49 CFR 1105.6(c)(2), an RER would not be required because such an action is generally exempt from environmental review. In such a case, the inconsistent or responsive applicant would be required to file only a verified statement. The verified statement must demonstrate that the inconsistent or responsive application meets the exemption criteria of 49 CFR 1105.6(c)(2). Again, anyone desiring to file an inconsistent application or responsive application must consult with SEA as early as possible regarding the appropriate environmental documentation.

SEA will review the verified statements. If a verified statement is insufficient, we may require additional environmental information or reject the inconsistent or responsive application. The verified statements, like the RERs, will be included in the Draft EIS, which will be available for public review and comment.

Notice of intent to participate. All documents received by the Board concerning this proceeding will become part of the public record and will be placed in the public docket for inspection and copying. Only those documents considered formal filings (i.e., those meeting the filing specifications discussed above in the ADDRESSES section) will be downloaded to the so-called pleading list. Moreover, persons who submit documents that are not considered formal filings will not be placed on the service list in this proceeding.

We will compile and issue an official service list at an early stage in this proceeding to facilitate the participation of those persons who will be actively participating as "parties of record" (POR). We are requiring these persons to notify the Board, in writing, within 45 days after the primary application is filed, of their intent to participate actively in this proceeding. In order to be designated a POR, a person must submit an original plus 25 copies of the notice along with a certificate of service to the Secretary of the Board indicating that the notice has been properly served on applicants' representatives and Judge Leventhal.<sup>5</sup> Every future filing by a POR must have its own certificate of service indicating that all PORs on the service list and Judge Leventhal have been served with a copy of the filing. Members of the United States Congress will be designated as MOC and Governors will be designated as GOV on the service list. They are not parties of record and need not be served with copies of filings, unless designated as a POR.

We will continue to follow our practice regarding the service of Board actions established in Union Pacific Corporation, Union Pacific Railroad Company, and Missouri Pacific Railroad Company—Control and Merger—Southern Pacific Rail Corporation, Southern Pacific Transportation

<sup>5</sup>The Office of the Secretary will start compiling the official service list in this proceeding after service of this decision adopting a procedural schedule. Persons named on any earlier service list will not automatically be placed on the official service list for this proceeding. Therefore, any person who wishes to be a POR must file a notice of intent to participate after the date of service of the decision and on or before Day F + 45.

Company, St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company, SPCSL Corp., and The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company, Finance Docket No. 32760 (UP/SP). See UP/SP, Decision No. 15 (STB served Feb. 16, 1996), at 2–3. Copies of decisions, orders, and notices will be served only on those persons who are designated as POR, MOC, or GOV on the official service list. All other interested parties are encouraged to make advance arrangements with the Board's copy contractor, DC News & Data, Inc. (DC News), to receive copies of Board decisions, orders, and notices served in this proceeding. DC News will handle the collection of charges and the mailing and/or faxing of decisions to persons who request this service. The telephone number for DC News is: (202) 289-4357.

Comments, protests, requests for conditions, and any other opposition evidence and argument. Most commenters support Day F + 120 as the minimum time necessary to prepare comments, protests, requests for conditions, and any other opposition evidence and argument. Applicants support giving persons at least 120 days to make such submissions. We will keep Day F + 120 as the due date for the filing of comments, protests, requests for conditions, and any other opposition evidence and argument. All inconsistent and responsive applications, including comments from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) and the United States Department of Transportation (DOT), are also due on Day F + 120. Every party intending to file an inconsistent or responsive application must contact the Office of the Secretary at (202) 565-1681 to reserve an STB Finance Docket No. 33388 Sub-Number to use in filing the description of anticipated inconsistent or responsive application due on Day F + 60. Also, as set forth above in our discussion of environmental reporting, every party intending to file an inconsistent or responsive application must file a Responsive Environmental Report or Environmental Verified Statement on Day F + 100.

Responses and rebuttals. Numerous commenters (including DOT) have requested additional time (ranging from 40–70 days) to digest and respond to comments, protests, requested conditions, and inconsistent and responsive applications. Given the complexity and magnitude of issues that potentially may arise in this proceeding, we will extend the due date proposed by applicants in their schedule by 25 days, thus providing the parties with a total of 55 days to file these responses. Responses to inconsistent and

responsive applications, comments, protests, requested conditions, and opposition evidence and argument, as well as rebuttal in support of the primary application, will be due on Day F + 175.

We will not allow parties filing comments, protests, and requests for conditions to file rebuttal in support of those pleadings. Parties filing inconsistent and/or responsive applications have a right to file rebuttal evidence, while parties simply commenting, protesting, or requesting conditions do not. UP/SP, Decision No. 6 (ICC served Oct. 19, 1995, at 7-8, and published Oct. 23, 1995, at 60 FR 54384); Burlington Northern Inc. and Burlington Northern Railroad Company—Control and Merger—Santa Fe Pacific Corporation and The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company, Finance Docket No. 32549, Decision No. 16 (ICC served Apr. 20, 1995), at 11. Several commenters seek additional time for parties to prepare rebuttal filings. The National Industrial Transportation League (NITL) seeks 25 days for the preparation of rebuttal filings; Allied Rail Unions (ARU), the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and DOT seek 30 days; and three electric utilities seek 40 days. Rebuttal in support of inconsistent and responsive applications will be due on Day F + 205, which will allow inconsistent and responsive applicants 30 days instead of 15 days to prepare their rebuttals.

Briefs. Many commenters request more time to prepare their briefs. We will expand the schedule to allow parties 20 more days to prepare their briefs (not to exceed 50 pages), which will be due on Day F + 245. Applicants state that, while their proposed transaction involves a single, overall primary application and an agreed-upon division of Conrail, their proposed transaction also involves the extension of two separate and competing railroads into the territory now served by Conrail, and separate, competing operating and marketing plans for those two railroads. Applicants therefore request to file separate, 50-page briefs because, as applicants contend, there may be a considerable number of arguments made individually by CSX and NS, and many points of opposition to be responded to that are peculiar to one or the other. Some parties argue that applicants should file a single brief. Some parties argue that, if applicants are permitted to file separate briefs, then all other parties should be permitted to file longer briefs. We will allow CSX and NS to file separate, 50-page briefs. We are unpersuaded that other parties should

be permitted to file longer briefs. Applicants will have only 50 pages to address arguments of dozens of parties. Other parties should easily be able to respond to several parties in the same number of pages or less. We therefore will continue to restrict briefs to 50 pages, which we think will be more than adequate for the parties succinctly to present their arguments.

Other dates. A number of parties request additional time to prepare for oral argument (e.g., NITL requests to have 25 days to prepare for oral argument; and ARU requests to have 60 days to prepare for oral argument). Several parties urge that the Board should take more time (e.g., at least 45 days) to consider briefs before the voting conference and to take the time necessary to consider fully the overall record. We will extend the schedule to allow parties to have 45 days (Day F + 290), rather than 15 days, to prepare for oral argument (close of record). The voting conference (at the Board's discretion) is scheduled 5 days thereafter on Day F + 295, which will allow the Board 50 days, rather than 20 days, to consider the briefs. The date of service of the final decision is scheduled 55 days thereafter on Day F + 350.

Discovery. The Society of Plastics raises concern that applicants may burden parties with discovery requests before the filing of comments, and proposes revised language for the procedural schedule. We do not find it necessary to revise any language in the procedural schedule. We will clarify, however, that discovery on parties filing comments, protests, requests for conditions, and inconsistent and responsive applications may begin on Day F + 120, or earlier if parties mutually agree.

In accordance with our decision in STB Ex Parte No. 527 served on October 1, 1996, and published in the **Federal Register** on October 8, 1996 (61 FR 52710), parties should not file any discovery requests or materials with the Board unless they are attached as part of an evidentiary submission, motions to compel, or responses thereto. The Secretary's Office will otherwise reject them.

If the parties wish to engage in any discovery or establish any discovery guidelines, they are directed to consult with Administrative Law Judge Jacob Leventhal. Judge Leventhal is authorized to convene a discovery conference, if necessary and as appropriate, in Washington, DC, and to establish such discovery guidelines, if any, as he deems appropriate. However, Judge Leventhal is not authorized to

make adjustments to, or to modify, the dates in the procedural schedule. We believe the schedule as adopted allows sufficient time for meaningful discovery. Any interlocutory appeal to a decision issued by Judge Leventhal will be governed by the stringent standard of 49 CFR 1115.1(c): "Such appeals are not favored; they will be granted only in exceptional circumstances to correct a clear error of judgment or to prevent manifest injustice." See Union Pacific Corporation, Union Pacific Railroad Company and Missouri Pacific Railroad Company—Control—Chicago and North Western Transportation Company and Chicago and North Western Railway Company, Finance Docket No. 32133, Decision No. 17, at 9 (ICC served July 11, 1994) (applying the "stringent standard" of 49 CFR 1115.1(c) to an appeal of an interlocutory decision issued by former Chief Administrative Law Judge Paul S. Cross).

Deadlines applicable to appeals and replies. As in prior merger proceedings, we think it appropriate to tighten the deadlines provided by 49 CFR 1115.1(c). Accordingly, the provisions of the second sentence of 49 CFR 1115.1(c) to the contrary notwithstanding, an appeal to a decision issued by Judge Leventhal must be filed within 3 working days of the date of his decision, and any response to any such appeal must be filed within 3 working days thereafter. Likewise, any reply to any procedural motion filed with the Board itself in the first instance must also be filed within 3 working days of the date the motion is filed.

Errata filings. The procedural schedule that we are adopting should provide parties ample time to build a sufficient record for us to make a reasoned decision in this proceeding. We do not intend to permit this process to be marred by the filing of errata sheets significantly altering the evidence and conclusions contained in earlier submissions, as such filings may curtail the ability of parties to respond fully and adequately to the record within the time frames we have established.

Merger-related abandonments. As indicated in Decision No. 7, the procedural schedule applicable to merger-related abandonments will be as follows: (1) All merger-related abandonment proposals (which may be filed as applications, petitions, and/or notices) are to be filed, with any and all supporting documentation, simultaneously with the primary application; and (2) if the primary application is complete, we shall publish in the **Federal Register**, by Day F + 30, notice of the acceptance of the

primary application as well as notice of any merger-related abandonment proposals. Thereafter, with respect to each merger-related abandonment proposal: (3) interested parties must file notifications of intent to participate in the proceeding by Day F + 45; (4) interested parties must file opposition submissions, requests for public use conditions, and/or Trails Act requests by Day F + 120; (5) applicants may file rebuttal in support of their abandonment proposals, and/or responses to any requests for public use conditions and Trails Act requests, by Day F + 175; (6) as with the primary application and all related matters, briefs shall be due by Day F + 245, oral argument will be held on Day F + 290, and a voting conference will be held, at the Board's discretion, on Day F + 295; and (7) if, in the final decision served on Day F + 350, we approve the primary application, we shall also address, in that final decision, each of the abandonment proposals, and all matters (including requests for public use conditions and Trails Act requests) relative thereto; and if we either approve or exempt any of the abandonment proposals, we shall allow interested parties to file, no later than 10 days after the date of service of the final decision, offers of financial assistance with respect to any approved or exempted abandonments.

This action will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

Decided: May 22, 1997.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan and Vice Chairman Owen.

**Vernon A. Williams,**  
Secretary.

#### Final Procedural Schedule

- F - 30 Preliminary Environmental Report, including supporting documents due.
- F Primary application & related applications, petitions, and notices filed. (Environmental Report, including all supporting documents due.)
- F +30 **Federal Register** publication of: Notice of acceptance of primary application and related applications, petitions, and notices; and notice(s) of any merger-related abandonment applications, petitions, and notices of exemption.
- F +45 Notification of intent to participate in proceeding due.
- F +60 Description of anticipated inconsistent and responsive applications due; petitions for

waiver or clarification due with respect to such applications.

- F +100 Responsive Environmental Report and Environmental Verified Statements for inconsistent and responsive applicants due.
- F +120 Inconsistent and responsive applications due. All comments, protests, requests for conditions, and any other opposition evidence and argument due. Comments by U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Transportation due. With respect to all merger-related abandonments: opposition submission, requests for public use conditions, and Trails Act requests due.
- F +150 Notice of acceptance (if required) of inconsistent and responsive applications published in the **Federal Register**.
- F +175 Response to inconsistent and responsive applications due. Response to comments, protests, requested conditions, and other opposition arguments and evidence due. Rebuttal in support of primary application and related applications, petitions, and notices due. With respect to all merger-related abandonments: rebuttal due; and responses to requests for public use and Trails Act conditions due.
- F +205 Rebuttal in support of inconsistent and responsive applications due.
- F +245 Briefs due, all parties (not to exceed 50 pages).
- F +290 Oral argument (close of record).
- F +295 Voting conference (at Board's discretion).
- F +350 Date of service of final decision.

With respect to any approved or exempted abandonments: Offers of financial assistance may be filed no later than 10 days after the date of service of the final decision.

**Notes:** Immediately upon each evidentiary filing, the filing party will place all documents relevant to the filing (other than documents that are privileged or otherwise protected from discovery) in a depository open to all parties, and will make its witnesses available for discovery depositions. Access to documents, subject to protective order, will be appropriately restricted. Parties seeking discovery depositions may proceed by agreement. Discovery on responsive and inconsistent applications will begin immediately upon their filing. The Administrative Law Judge assigned to this proceeding will have the authority initially to resolve any discovery disputes.

[FR Doc. 97-14172 Filed 5-29-97; 8:45 am]  
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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 545X)]

#### CSX Transportation, Inc.— Abandonment Exemption—in Clarke County, GA

On May 12, 1997, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT), filed with the Surface Transportation Board a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a portion of its line of railroad known as the Abbeville Subdivision, extending from railroad milepost YYA-37.44 to railroad milepost YYA-37.00 at the end of track at East Athens, which traverses through U.S. Postal Service ZIP Code 30605, a distance of 0.44 miles, in Clarke County, GA. CSXT has indicated that there are no stations on the line.

The line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in CSXT's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it. The interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions set forth in Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by August 29, 1997.

Any offer of financial assistance under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 10 days after service of a decision granting the petition for exemption. Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by a \$900 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested persons should be aware that following abandonment of rail service and salvage of the line, the line may be suitable for other public use, including interim trail use. Any request for a public use condition under 49 CFR 1152.28 or for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be due no later than June 19, 1997. Each trail use request must be accompanied by a \$150 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(27).

All filings in response to this notice must refer to STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 545X) and must be sent to: (1) Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001; and (2) Charles M. Rosenberger, 500 Water Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment procedures