

basic BRT alignment. A two-way transitway either in the median of Van Ness Avenue or along the outside curbs (one northbound BRT lane along the east curb/parking lane; one southbound BRT lane along the west curb/parking lane) and, correspondingly, stations in the median or as extensions of the sidewalk were considered in the Van Ness Avenue BRT Feasibility Study and warrant further evaluation as part of the EIS/EIR and alternatives analysis.

The SFCTA in association with Muni will evaluate the procurement of modern low-floor high-capacity vehicles that would be assigned to the BRT service and have added features, such as two-sided multidoor access, passenger station docking assist, and other amenities. Streetscape improvements, such as enhanced landscaping and pedestrian access along Van Ness Avenue, are also included in the proposed BRT project.

IV. Probable Effects

FTA and SFCTA will evaluate the transportation, environmental, social, and economic impact of each alternative. Effects of the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project will be compared to the No Project/Baseline. The overall benefits of the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project, including on transit speeds and reliability, new riders, and transportation system user benefits, will be relative to the No Project/Baseline Alternative. The Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Alternative is expected to improve transit speeds and increase transit reliability; increase bus transit ridership; improve access and mobility for San Francisco residents, many of whom are highly dependent on transit; and provide competitive transit access to major employment and activity centers relative to the No Project/Baseline Alternative.

Increased congestion and worsening conditions for transit service along Van Ness Avenue are expected without a significant improvement. The No Project/Baseline Alternatives would not eliminate the main impediments to efficient and effective service in the corridor—auto/transit conflicts in mixed-flow lanes. The Van Ness Avenue BRT Project may affect the following areas: Traffic operations; parking; local access and circulation; visual and aesthetic effects; historic and cultural resources; disturbance of pre-existing hazardous wastes; and temporary

construction-phase impacts. Impacts of the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project will be evaluated for both the construction period and for the long-term period of operation. Mitigation measures will be identified and evaluated for avoiding and reducing adverse effects.

To ensure all significant issues related to the proposed project are identified and addressed in the ESI/EIR and alternatives analysis, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments, suggestions, and questions concerning the proposed action should be directed to the contacts listed above.

V. FTA Procedures

In accordance with the FTA policy, all Federal laws, regulations and executive orders affecting project development, including but not limited to the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality and FTA implementing NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508 and 23 CFR part 771); the conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act; section 4040 of the Clean Water Act; Executive Order 12898 regarding environmental justice; the National Historic Preservation Act; the Endangered Species Act; and section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, will be addressed to the maximum extent practicable during the NEPA process. Prior transportation planning studies may be pertinent to establishing the purpose and need for the proposed action and the range of alternatives to be evaluated in detail in the EIS/EIR. The Draft EIS/EIR will be prepared simultaneously with conceptual engineering for the alternatives, including bus stop and alignment options. The Draft EIS/EIR process will address the potential use of Federal funds for the proposed action, as well as assessing social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed Van Ness Avenue BRT Project. The Project will be refined to minimize and mitigate any adverse impacts.

After publication, the Draft EIS/EIR will be available for public and agency review and comment, and a public hearing will be held. Based on the Draft EIS/EIR and comments received, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority Board will select a locally preferred alternative (LPA) for further assessment in the Final EIS/EIR, which will be based on further engineering of the LPA and other remaining

alternatives. SFCTA intends to request FTA approval to enter Project Development and secure funding under the Small Starts program prior to initiating further engineering (e.g., preliminary engineering) and preparing the Final EIS/EIR.

Issued on September 19, 2007.

Leslie T. Rogers,

Regional Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB–43 (Sub-No. 180X)]

Illinois Central Railroad Company— Abandonment Exemption—in Adams County, MS

Illinois Central Railroad Company (ICR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR Part 1152 Subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon approximately 0.46 miles of rail line, between milepost 148.67 and milepost 148.21, in Natchez, Adams County, MS. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 39120.

ICR has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic on the line to be rerouted; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board or with 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 report), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic report), 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.

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 October 24, 2007, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,¹ formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),² and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by October 4, 2007. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by October 15, 2007, with the Surface Transportation

¹ 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.

² Each OFA must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1,300. *See* 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

Board, 395 E Street, SW., Washington, DC 20423-0001.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to ICR's representative: Thomas J. Healey, 17641 S. Ashland Avenue, Homewood, IL 60430-1345.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*.

ICR has filed both an environmental report and a historic report that address the effects, if any, of the abandonment on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by September 28, 2007. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 1100, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423-0001) or by calling SEA, at (202) 245-0305. [Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339.] 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), ICR 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 ICR's filing of a notice of consummation by September 24, 2008, 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 Web site at www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: September 14, 2007.

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

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

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