

traffic control system on the main and siding tracks, between Fetner, North Carolina, milepost S-164.8, Aberdeen Subdivision, and N. Hamlet Yard, North Carolina, milepost S-247.1, Hamlet Terminal Subdivision, on the Florence Service Lane. The proposed changes include the installation of a Direct Traffic Control System along with Communications Based Train Management (CBTM) under the direction of the CSXT train dispatcher located in Jacksonville, Florida. In addition, CSXT will promptly provide a Product Safety Plan (PSP) and risk assessment for implementation of CBTM.

The reason given for the proposed changes is to eliminate facilities no longer needed in present day operation.

Any interested party desiring to protest the granting of an application shall set forth specifically the grounds upon which the protest is made, and include a concise statement of the interest of the party in the proceeding. Additionally, one copy of the protest shall be furnished to the applicant at the address listed above.

All communications concerning this proceeding should be identified by the docket number and must be submitted to the Docket Clerk, DOT Central Docket Management Facility, Room PL-401 (Plaza Level), 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001. Communications received within 45 days of the date of this notice will be considered by the FRA before final action is taken. Comments received after that date will be considered as far as practicable. All written communications concerning these proceedings are available for examination during regular business hours (9 a.m.—5 p.m.) at the above facility. All documents in the public docket are also available for inspection and copying on the Internet at the docket facility's Web site at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FRA wishes to inform all potential commenters that anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume 65, Number 70; Pages 19477-78) or you may visit <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FRA expects to be able to determine these matters without an oral hearing. However, if a specific request for an oral hearing is accompanied by a showing that the party is unable to adequately present his or her position by written

statements, an application may be set for public hearing.

Issued in Washington, DC on October 22, 2003.

Grady C. Cothen,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

[FR Doc. 03-27058 Filed 10-24-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Notice of Application for Approval of Discontinuance or Modification of a Railroad Signal System or Relief From the Requirements of Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Part 236

Pursuant to Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 235 and 49 U.S.C. 20502(a), the following railroad has petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeking approval for the discontinuance or modification of the signal system or relief from the requirements of 49 CFR part 236 as detailed below.

Docket No. FRA-2003-16096

Applicant: CSX Transportation, Incorporated, Mr. Eric G. Peterson, Assistant Chief Engineer, Signal Design and Construction, 4901 Belfort Road, Suite 130 (S/C J-370), Jacksonville, Florida 32256.

CSX Transportation, Incorporated seeks approval of the proposed modification of the signal systems on the two main tracks and yard tracks, at West Keyser, West Virginia, milepost BA-203.1, on the C&O Division, Mountain Subdivision. The proposed changes are as follows:

1. Removal of the manually controlled "West Keyser" interlocker and switch No. 28;
2. Conversion of all other switches (No.'s 22, 24, 25, and 29) to hand operation;
3. The installation of intermediate signals at milepost BA-203.1;
4. Conversion of Rules 255-259(93) to Rules D251(93) between milepost BA-203 and milepost BA-203.2, with the No. 1 main track as westbound and the No. 2 main track as eastbound; and
5. Conversion of Rules 265-271(93) to Rules D251(93) between milepost BA-203.2 and milepost BA-206.4, with the No. 1 main track as westbound.

The reason given for the proposed changes is to eliminate facilities no longer needed in present day operation.

Any interested party desiring to protest the granting of an application shall set forth specifically the grounds

upon which the protest is made, and include a concise statement of the interest of the party in the proceeding. Additionally, one copy of the protest shall be furnished to the applicant at the address listed above.

All communications concerning this proceeding should be identified by the docket number and must be submitted to the Docket Clerk, DOT Central Docket Management Facility, Room PL-401 (Plaza Level), 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001.

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FRA wishes to inform all potential commenters that anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume 65, Number 70; Pages 19477-78) or you may visit <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FRA expects to be able to determine these matters without an oral hearing. However, if a specific request for an oral hearing is accompanied by a showing that the party is unable to adequately present his or her position by written statements, an application may be set for public hearing.

Issued in Washington, DC on October 22, 2003.

Grady C. Cothen,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

[FR Doc. 03-27059 Filed 10-24-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Central Avenue Corridor Rapid Transit Project

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the City of Albuquerque Transit Department intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central Avenue Corridor Rapid Transit Project. The proposed project is located within the jurisdictional boundaries of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County, New Mexico. The EIS will evaluate: (1) The no-build alternative; (2) two alignment alternatives; (3) two technology alternatives including light rail transit and bus rapid transit; (4) station and park and ride locations, a maintenance facility, and electrical substations; and (5) a supporting bus system. Other reasonable alternatives that emerge from the scoping process will also be evaluated. Scoping will occur through correspondence and meetings with the general public, other public stakeholders, and federal, state, and local agencies having an interest in the proposed project. The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the applicable regulations implementing NEPA as set forth in 23 CFR part 771 and 40 CFR parts 1500–1508.

DATES: One agency and five public scoping meetings will be held for the Central Avenue Corridor Rapid Transit Project. These meetings will be held at various locations within the City of Albuquerque and are scheduled for November 10–13, 2003 and November 17–20, 2003. Details specific to the dates, times, and locations of the scoping meetings will be published in local newspapers and other local media and will be posted on the project Web site at <http://www.ABQRTP.com>. The deadline for submitting scoping comments is December 5, 2003 (see addresses below). All scoping meetings will be held at locations accessible by persons with disabilities. Please notify the RTP Project Manager at (505) 724–3100 at least one week in advance of the meeting date if language translation or hearing-impaired signing is needed.

ADDRESSES: Written comments will be accepted at the meetings or may be sent to the following address until December 5, 2003: Albuquerque Transit Department, 100 First Street SW., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102, Attn: Rapid Transit Project. A scoping document may be requested by writing to the above address or by calling (505) 881–5357. Persons or agencies desiring to be placed on the mailing list for the EIS should send their name, mailing

address, and e-mail address to the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Pearlie Tiggs, Community Planner, Office of Planning and Program Development, Federal Transit Administration, Region 6, 819 Taylor Street, Room 8A36, Fort Worth, Texas 76102, (817) 978–0567.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Scoping

Scoping comments should focus on identifying specific environmental, cultural, economic, or social impacts to be evaluated by the EIS and project alternatives that better achieve project objectives and/or that have less adverse impact. Comments should be specific with regard to the issues and alternatives to be evaluated and not on the preference for a particular alternative. An opportunity to state a preference for a specific alternative will be provided during the comment period for the draft EIS.

II. Project Need

The need for the proposed project was identified as part of an Alternatives Analysis prepared by the City of Albuquerque in cooperation with FTA. As determined by that effort, the need for the proposed project is to: (1) Provide additional transit capacity within the Central Avenue Corridor; (2) improve mobility to regional employment and activity centers; and (3) facilitate the implementation of adopted growth and development plans and policies for the Albuquerque region. Transit service within the Central Avenue Corridor currently accounts for over 30% of the total transit ridership for the entire Albuquerque Transit System. Traffic congestion in this corridor hinders efficient bus service. According to traffic projections prepared by the Mid-Region Council of Governments, traffic congestion is expected to worsen.

The study corridor encompasses several regional employment centers and activity centers that would be connected by the proposed project. These include the Atrisco Business Park, the Albuquerque Botanical Gardens and Aquarium, Old Town, Downtown, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute, and the Albuquerque Uptown District. The proposed project would also provide service to several smaller employment and activity centers including the three regional medical hospital complexes, the Nob Hill and Hiland Districts, and the International Market Center. Collectively, these

locations represent the vast majority of major employment and activity centers within the Albuquerque metropolitan area.

The City of Albuquerque has adopted specific land use and development goals and policies that include the proposed project area. The adopted policies include the *Centers and Corridor Plan* and the *Planned Growth Strategy*. The Central Avenue corridor is identified as a high transit corridor in both of these plans. In addition, Central Avenue is targeted for development and redevelopment with transit-oriented development. Plans to implement the adopted policies are underway by the City of Albuquerque.

III. Alternatives

The proposed project to be evaluated by the EIS includes the (1) no-build alternative which will assume that no transportation improvements will occur within the corridor beyond those already committed to in the adopted transportation programs; and (2) two alignment alternatives within the Central Avenue Corridor. The approximate length of each build alternative is approximately 11 miles. The first alignment starts in the vicinity of Central Avenue and Unser Boulevard in Albuquerque and proceeds east on Central Avenue to Louisiana Boulevard. At Louisiana Boulevard, the route proceeds northerly to its terminus near Menaul Boulevard in the Albuquerque Uptown District. The second alignment starts in the vicinity of Central Avenue and Unser Boulevard in Albuquerque and proceeds east on Central Avenue to Lomas Boulevard. The route follows Lomas Boulevard east to Louisiana Boulevard. At Louisiana Boulevard, the route proceeds northerly to its terminus near Menaul Boulevard in the Albuquerque Uptown District. The centerline alignment for both routes will fall within or immediately adjacent to the existing street sections. Both light rail transit and bus rapid transit will be evaluated in each alignment alternative. Ten to eleven stations will be evaluated, each spaced at intervals of approximately one mile.

IV. Probable Effects

The EIS will identify and evaluate all probable environmental, economic, social, and cultural effects for each of the project alternatives. Based on the Alternatives Analysis previously prepared for the proposed project, primary issues are likely to include loss of on-street parking and access to businesses, changes to traffic circulation and diversion, changes to land use, proximity effects on historic properties,

properties contaminated by hazardous materials, neighborhood effects, and utility relocations. These and other issues (e.g., noise, air quality, drainage, visual effects) will be evaluated by the EIS for both the long-term and construction period. Measures to mitigate significant adverse impacts will be developed as part of the EIS.

V. Public Involvement

A comprehensive public involvement program (PIP) has been developed and will be implemented as part of the Draft EIS. The PIP will include: Agency and public scoping meetings; community-wide public information meetings; public hearings; informational briefings to stakeholder groups, elected officials, and other local and regional officials; and information dissemination via a project website and newsletters. The PIP will also involve a citizens advisory committee and other stakeholder groups to obtain input on issues, concerns, and advise on neighborhood and transit oriented development issues.

VI. FTA Procedures

The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the regulations implementing NEPA set forth in 23 CFR part 771 and 40 CFR parts 1500–1508. Consistent with FTA policy, the NEPA process will also be used to comply with other federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders, such as section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and Executive Orders 11988, 11990 and 12898 on Floodplain Management, Protection of Wetlands, and Environmental Justice, respectively.

In addition, the City of Albuquerque intends to seek Section 5309 New Starts funding for this project and will therefore follow the requirements of 49 CFR part 611 as well as the requirements of NEPA and all other applicable federal and FTA program requirements. The New Starts regulation requires a planning Alternatives Analysis, which will be completed in conjunction with the Draft EIS. The Alternatives Analysis/Draft EIS will lead to a locally-preferred alternative which must be adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization into its financially constrained metropolitan transportation plan before preliminary engineering will be authorized by FTA. If authorized, preliminary engineering for the Central Avenue Corridor Rapid Transit Project

will be conducted in conjunction with the preparation of the final EIS.

Issued on: October 21, 2003.

Robert Patrick,

Regional Administrator, FTA Region 6.

[FR Doc. 03–27060 Filed 10–24–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–57–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB–290 (Sub-No. 241X)]

Norfolk Southern Railway Company— Abandonment Exemption—in Aiken County, SC

Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F-*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon a 2-mile line of railroad between milepost SA–49.0 at Oakwood, SC, and milepost SA–51.0 at Montmorenci, SC, in Aiken County, SC. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 29839.

NSR has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) no overhead traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years and overhead traffic, if there were any, could 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 entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the 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 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.

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 November 26, 2003, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,¹ formal

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

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 November 6, 2003. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by November 17, 2003, with: Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423–0001.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to NSR's representative: James R. Paschall, General Attorney, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Three Commercial Place, Norfolk, VA 23510.

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

NSR has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by October 31, 2003. 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) 565–1539. [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), 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 October 27, 2004, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on the Board's Web site at www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: October 20, 2003.

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 \$1,100. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).