

of effecting repairs on the railroad. The closure included the trackage near Willits over which the California Western Railroad operated.

Emergency Order No. 21 detailed requirements the NWP must meet in order to gain full relief from the order. The railroad must:

(1) Properly repair and inspect all grade crossing signals and certify to the Federal Railroad Administrator that all necessary repairs and inspections have been performed and that all required tests are up-to-date.

(2) Adopt a set of grade crossing signal standards and instructions acceptable by FRA.

(3) Update, correct and/or redraw circuit plans for each grade crossing signal system to meet compliance with 49 CFR 234.201 and 234.203. A list of locations of the updated, corrected or redrawn circuit plans should be submitted to FRA.

(4) Provide proper and adequate test equipment for signal maintainers.

(5) Repair all track not subject to Emergency Order No. 14 to class 1 track standards as detailed in 49 CFR part 213.

**Note:** Emergency Order No. 14 requires the Northwestern Pacific Railroad to repair certain segments of track to class 1 track standards for the hauling of passengers and all hazardous materials. Otherwise, the railroad may designate the track still subject to that order as excepted.

(6) Clear all vegetation from drainage facilities and away from signs and signals and track bed so that the track meets the requirements of 49 CFR 213.37;

(7) Furnish FRA with a 12-month track maintenance plan.

(8) Establish a program of employee training on the Federal Track Standards to ensure that employees performing inspection, maintenance, and restoration work are qualified in accordance with 49 CFR 213.7.

(9) Certify in writing that each individual conducting track inspections has sufficient knowledge, skills, and ability to successfully conduct the types of inspections which will be performed by that individual. Records of that certification are to be maintained by the railroad.

(10) Obtain approval from the Federal Railroad Administrator that all of the requirements of this Emergency Order have been met and properly performed.

The emergency order also allows for partial relief for designated portions of the NWP's line. The NWP is required to first meet all of the system-wide requirements, as listed in items 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9. The NWP may then obtain partial relief for any portion of its line

for which all of the requirements of the emergency order are met.

On May 20, 1999, in accordance with the terms of the emergency order, the NWP formally requested that FRA grant it partial relief from the emergency order for the 1.5 miles of track in Willits, California, over which the California Western Railroad needs to operate to Willits Depot and turn its train. At this time, the NWP has been found to meet all of the systemic requirements of Emergency Order No. 21, namely:

- The NWP adopted a set of grade crossing signal standards and instructions that is acceptable to FRA;

- The NWP has entered into a contract with MEC Rail Systems, a signal maintenance company, for the testing and maintenance of NWP signals. In response to the agreement, MEC Rail Systems purchased proper and adequate test equipment for signal maintainers for use on the NWP;

- The NWP has furnished to FRA a 12-month track maintenance plan that includes all of the necessary information required by Emergency Order No. 21;

- The NWP has established a program of employee training on the Federal Track Safety Standards. Railways, Inc. has adopted for use on the NWP the Railway Educational Bureau's *Track Foreman's Training Program*. Individual testing of roadmaster and office engineer candidates has begun;

- The NWP has certified that the sole employee responsible for track inspections, a chief engineer for Railways, Inc., has sufficient knowledge, skills and ability to successfully conduct track inspections. Any employees who become responsible for track inspections subsequent to the granting of this partial relief will be certified by the NWP as well.

NWP's compliance at this time with the systemic requirements of the emergency order makes the railroad eligible to request partial relief for the designated segment of track in Willits. However, FRA will monitor the railroad's continuing compliance with these systemic requirements.

On May 25, 1999, FRA inspected the track for which the NWP has requested relief from the emergency order. FRA found the track to meet Class 1 track standards in accordance with 49 CFR part 213. On May 27, 1999, FRA inspected the grade crossing signal systems on the track for which NWP has requested relief from the emergency order and found that all necessary repairs, inspections and tests had been performed.

## Relief

In light of the foregoing, I grant NWP partial relief from Emergency Order No. 21. NWP trackage between its junction with the California Western Railroad and the Willits Depot, as well as Tracks 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 709, and 711 in Willits Yard may open immediately to rail traffic. The issuance of this Notice does not preclude imposition of another emergency order governing the segment of track should conditions of the track or rail operations deteriorate to the extent that I believe they pose an imminent and unacceptable threat to public safety.

Issued in Washington on May 28, 1999.

**S. Mark Lindsey,**

*Acting Administrator.*

[FR Doc. 99-14454 Filed 6-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Transit Administration

#### Major Investment Study/Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Metro-North Hudson Line Extension Project, Dutchess County, NY

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration (FTA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare a major investment study/draft environmental impact statement (MIS/DEIS).

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**SUMMARY:** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company (Metro-North) intend to prepare a Major Investment Study/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (MIS/DEIS) for the Metro-North Hudson Line Extension Project in Dutchess County, New York. The MIS/DEIS is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 as amended, and as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and the Federal Transit Administration/Federal Highway Administration Environmental Impact regulations (23 CFR Parts 771), and the FTA/FHWA Statewide Planning/Metropolitan Planning regulations (23 CFR Part 450, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as amended (49 U.S.C. 303, 23 U.S.C. 138), the requirements of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, the Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, and other applicable rules, regulations,

Executive Orders and guidance documents.

Metro-North is preparing this MIS/DEIS to address the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of extending its Hudson Line from the existing northern terminus at Poughkeepsie to either Rhinecliff or Tivoli (approximately 15 and 25 miles respectively) and constructing three or four stations and parking facilities at Hyde Park, Staatsburg, Rhinecliff and Tivoli, as well as a rail yard and employee base facility. This project would expand regional mobility and accommodate the growing demand for commuter rail service to Northern Dutchess County.

The MIS/DEIS will evaluate the following transportation alternatives: No-Build, Transportation System Management (TSM) and several Build Alternatives. Scoping will be accomplished through correspondence with interested persons and organizations, as well as with federal, state and local agencies, and through a public meeting. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** below for details.

**DATES:** *Comment Due Date:* Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to Metro-North by Monday, July 12, 1999. See **ADDRESSES** below.

#### *Scoping Meeting*

The public scoping meetings will be held on Tuesday, June 29th at 7 p.m. and Wednesday, June 30th at 7 p.m. Registration to speak at these meetings will commence at 6:30 p.m. and close at 9 p.m. on the date of the meeting. See **ADDRESSES** below. People with special needs should contact Ms. Robyn Hollander at Metro-North at the address below or by calling (212) 672-1242. The building is accessible to people with disabilities. A sign language interpreter will be available upon request in advance of the meeting.

The scoping meeting will begin with an "open house" where attendees will be able to view graphics and discuss the project with project representatives. A presentation on the project will be given, followed by an opportunity for comments. Scoping material will be available at the meeting and in advance of the meeting by contacting Ms. Robyn Hollander at the address and phone number below. In addition to oral and written comments, which may be made at the meeting or as described below, a stenographer will be available at the meeting to record comments.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments on the project scope should be sent to Ms. Robyn M. Hollander, Project Manager,

Metro-North Railroad, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017, (212) 672-1242. The scoping meetings will be held on Tuesday June 29, 1999 at 7:00 p.m. at Roosevelt High School Auditorium, Hyde Park Central School District, South Cross Road, Hyde Park, New York and on Wednesday, June 30, 1999 at 7:00 p.m. at Rhinebeck Town Hall, 80 East Market Street, Rhinebeck, New York.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ms. Nancy Danzig, Community Planner, Federal Transit Administration, Region II, One Bowling Green, Room 429, New York, NY 10004-1415, (212) 668-2170. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive further information as the project develops, contact Ms. Hollander at the above address or phone number as described above.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **I. Scoping**

The FTA and Metro-North invite interested individuals, organizations, and federal, state and local agencies to participate in developing the alternatives to be evaluated in the MIS/DEIS, and identifying any potential significant social, economic, or environmental issues related to the alternatives. Scoping comments may be made at the public scoping meeting or in writing. See **DATES** and **ADDRESSES** sections above. During scoping, comments should focus on identifying specific social, economic, or environmental impacts to be evaluated and suggesting alternatives which are more cost effective or have less environmental impacts while achieving similar transit objectives. Scoping materials will be available at the meeting or in advance of the meeting by contacting Robyn Hollander at Metro-North as indicated above.

##### **II. Description of Study and Project Need**

The proposed project consists of an extension of the Metro-North Hudson Line from the existing northern terminus at Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, NY to a new station and terminus to be located at either Rhinecliff in the Town of Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, NY or Tivoli in the Village of Tivoli, Dutchess County, NY, a distance of 15 and 25 miles, respectively, using the existing double-track line (which is owned by CSX and is currently being used by Amtrak to provide inter-city rail service). The project includes the construction of three or four stations with parking facilities and a rail yard and employee base facility.

Historically, the Upper Hudson line segment, including stations at Cortlandt, Peekskill, Garrison, Cold Spring, Beacon, New Hamburg and Poughkeepsie, has been one of Metro-North's fastest growing line segments. From 1984-1997, ridership on this line segment increased from 1.4 million to 3.2 million annual trips, a growth rate of 131% (about 7% annually). This increase in ridership is the result of several factors, including vastly improved service, more trains, new coaches and locomotives, decreased travel times, improved stations and expanded parking. These improvements have attracted commuters to the system who live beyond the current terminus of Poughkeepsie and west of the Hudson River.

Extending the Hudson Line north from its current terminus in Poughkeepsie, and the construction of appropriate facilities, are intended to expand service to residents of northern Dutchess County, benefit those living in the Mid-Hudson Region, and improve regional air quality goals by providing an alternative to the single occupant vehicle.

##### **III. Alternatives**

The transportation alternatives proposed for consideration in this project area include: (1) A No-Build Alternative which involves the current infrastructure of highways, parking facilities, train and bus service, and maintenance facilities in addition to all ongoing, committed and funded roadway and transit projects outlined in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Transit projects include modifications of current train and bus service but propose a minimum level of service expansion. (2) Transportation System Management, which includes all elements of the No-Build Alternative in addition to roadway and traffic improvements and improved transit services reflecting a number of local route modifications in addition to new and express routes. The TSM Alternative provides the baseline against which the cost-effectiveness of major capital transit investments can be evaluated. (3) Build Alternatives which include an extension of the existing Metro-North line from Poughkeepsie northward to either Rhinecliff, in the Town of Rhinebeck or Tivoli, in the Village of Tivoli (including station locations and support facilities), following the existing rail line. The Build Alternatives may be comprised of more than one "Build Alternative" which would differ in the number of stations and terminus location.

#### IV. Probable Effects

The FTA and Metro-North will evaluate all potential significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the MIS/DEIS. Environmental and social impacts proposed for analysis include: land use, secondary development, community disruption, displacements and relocations, traffic and parking, visual, noise and vibration, safety, aesthetics, stormwater management, archaeological, historic, cultural and ecological resources and wildlife corridors. Impacts on natural areas, rare and endangered species, air and water quality, groundwater, and potentially contaminated sites will also be studied. The impacts will be evaluated both for the construction period and for the long-term period of operation of each alternative. Measures to mitigate adverse impacts will be identified.

#### V. FTA Procedures

The DEIS will be prepared in conjunction with a major transportation investment study and document the results of that study, including an evaluation of the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of the alternatives. Upon completion of the MIS/DEIS, and on the basis of the comments received, Metro-North, in concert with other affected agencies, will select a locally preferred alternative. The MIS/DEIS will be made available for public review and comment and a public hearing will be held during the MIS/DEIS comment period.

On the basis of the MIS/DEIS and comments received, Metro-North and FTA will continue with the preparation of the Final MIS/DEIS. Opportunity for additional public comment will be provided throughout all phases of project development.

Issued on: June 3, 1999.

**Letitia Thompson,**

*Regional Administrator, TRO-II, Federal Transit Administration.*

[FR Doc. 99-14483 Filed 6-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-81-P

#### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

##### Maritime Administration

[Docket No. MARAD-99-5792]

##### Information Collection Available for Public Comments and Recommendations

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Maritime Administration's (MARAD) intentions to request approval for three years of an existing information collection entitled, "46 CFR Part 298—Title XI Obligation Guarantees."

**DATES:** Comments should be submitted on or before August 9, 1999.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Daniel Ladd, Financial Analyst, Office of Ship Financing, Maritime Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Room 8122, Washington, D.C. 20590, telephone number—202-366-5744. Copies of this collection can also be obtained from that office.

##### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Title of Collection:* 46 CFR Part 298—Title XI Obligation Guarantees

*Type of Request:* Approval of an existing information collection

*OMB Control Number:* 2133-0018

*Form Number:* MA-163, MA-163A

*Expiration Date of Approval:* Three years from the date of approval

*Summary of Collection of Information:* In accordance with the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (Act), MARAD is authorized to execute a full faith and credit guarantee by the United States of debt obligations issued to finance or refinance the construction or reconstruction of vessels.

*Need and Use of the Information:* The information collected is necessary for MARAD officials to evaluate an applicant's project and capabilities, make the required determinations, and administer any agreements executed upon approval of loan guarantees.

*Description of Respondents:* Individuals/businesses interested in obtaining loan guarantees for construction or reconstruction of vessels satisfying criteria under the Act.

*Annual Responses:* 25 responses.

*Annual Burden:* 1750 hours.

*Comments:* Comments should refer to the docket number that appears at the top of this document. Written comments may be submitted to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20590. Comments may also be submitted by electronic means via the Internet at <http://dmses.dot.gov/submit>. Specifically, address whether this information collection is necessary for proper performance of the function of the agency and will have practical utility, accuracy of the burden estimates, ways to minimize this burden, and ways to enhance quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected. All comments received will be available for examination at the

above address between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., et. Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays. An electronic version of this document is available on the World Wide Web at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

By Order of the Maritime Administrator.

Dated: June 3, 1999.

**Joel C. Richard,**

*Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 99-14504 Filed 6-7-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-81-P

#### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

##### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-556 (Sub-No. 2X)]

**Railroad Ventures, Inc.—Abandonment Exemption—Between Youngstown, OH, and Darlington, PA, in Mahoning and Columbiana Counties, OH, and Beaver County, PA [STB Docket No. AB-555 (Sub-No. 2X)]; The Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad Company—Adverse Discontinuance of Service Exemption—Between Youngstown, OH, and Darlington, PA, in Mahoning and Columbiana Counties, OH, and Beaver County, PA**

On May 19, 1999, Railroad Ventures, Inc. (RVI), filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for an exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for RVI to abandon 35.7 miles of railroad line from milepost 0.0 at Youngstown, OH, to milepost 35.7 at Darlington, PA, and a connecting 1-mile spur near Negley, OH. RVI also petitioned for an exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502 from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for The Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad Company (OPRC) to receive discontinuance authorization for OPRC's service obligations over the line. OPRC has a lease with RVI to provide service over this line, but has not provided service since shortly after RVI purchased the line in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

RVI's acquisition of the subject line, formerly part of the Youngstown & Southern Railroad Company (Y&S), OPRC's lease to operate over the line, and their subsequent attempts to abandon the line and discontinue service have a long and tortuous history.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, on January 4,

<sup>1</sup> Although the proposed discontinuance is styled as an adverse discontinuance because it was filed by RVI, the owner of the line, instead of by OPRC, the carrier authorized to operate over the line, the interests of the parties are not adverse because OPRC agrees that its lease and service obligations should be discontinued and, in fact, had previously sought on its own behalf a discontinuance exemption, which was rejected.

<sup>2</sup> See *Railroad Ventures, Inc.—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Youngstown & Southern*