

Public Information Meetings

FRA will conduct a public information meeting with each of the seven participants during August 2000. The public information meetings will include information on the Maglev Deployment Program, the DPEIS, and on the local action-alternative. The location and time of the first two meetings have been set and are provided below. The location and time of other meetings will be announced by the participant and advertised locally. FRA will post the time and location of all of the meetings on FRA's web site at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/s/env/MagPEIS.htm>. The public information meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Maryland, August 1, 2000, from 4:30 PM to 7:00 PM, Baltimore City Hall, Curran Room, 100 North Holliday Street, Baltimore, MD 21202.
- Georgia, August 8, 2000, from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, Loudermilk Center, 40 Courtland Street, Atlanta, GA 30303.
- Louisiana, August 9, 2000.
- Florida, August 10, 2000.
- Pennsylvania, August 16, 2000.
- California, August 21, 2000.
- Nevada, August 22, 2000.

Public Hearing

The FRA will hold a public hearing on the DPEIS on August 24, 2000, at 9:00 AM in the FRA's offices: 1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Seventh Floor, Washington, D.C. The public hearing will include a presentation on the program and the DPEIS, and an opportunity for public comment.

The FRA invites interested individuals, organizations, and federal, state and local agencies to comment on the evaluated alternatives and associated social, economic, and environmental impacts related to the alternatives.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on: July 17, 2000.

Mark E. Yachmetz,

Associate Administrator for Railroad Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33898]

Watco Company, Inc., South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Company, Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, Inc., Southeast Kansas Railroad Company, and Blue Mountain Railroad, Inc.—Corporate Family Transaction Exemption

Watco Company, Inc. (Watco), South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Company (SKO), Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, Inc. (PRCC), Southeast Kansas Railroad Company (SEK), and Blue Mountain Railroad, Inc. (BMR) have filed a verified notice of exemption.¹ The exempt transaction involves the merger of SEK into SKO, with SKO as the surviving corporation, and the merger of BMR into PRCC, with PRCC as the surviving corporation.

The transaction was expected to be consummated on or shortly after July 7, 2000.

The transaction is intended to simplify Watco's corporate structure and eliminate costs associated with separate accounting, tax, bookkeeping and reporting functions. In addition, the transaction will enhance the operating economies of, and improve service on, the two surviving carriers.

This is a transaction within a corporate family of the type specifically

¹ Watco, a noncarrier, directly controls SKO and PRCC. SKO, in turn, owns all of the outstanding stock of SEK, and PRCC, in turn, owns all of the outstanding stock of BMR.

exempted from prior review and approval under 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(3). The parties state that the transaction will not result in adverse changes in service levels, significant operational changes, or a change in the competitive balance with carriers outside the corporate family.

Under 49 U.S.C. 10502(g), the Board may not use its exemption authority to relieve a rail carrier of its statutory obligation to protect the interests of its employees. Section 11326(c), however, does not provide for labor protection for transactions under sections 11324 and 11325 that involve only Class III rail carriers. Because this transaction involves Class III rail carriers only, the Board, under the statute, may not impose labor protective conditions for this transaction.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to reopen the proceeding to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to reopen will not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 33898, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Karl Morell, Esq., Ball Janik LLP, 1455 F Street, N.W., Suite 225, Washington, DC 20005.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

Decided: July 13, 2000.

By the Board, Joseph H. Dettmar, Acting Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

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