



EI-7273

Engineering District 2-0  
1924 Daisy Street Extension  
P.O. Box 342  
Clearfield, PA 16830



Phone: (814) 765-0400  
May 13, 2008

Ms. Sandy Basehore, serving as Surface Transportation Board, Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration, Section of Environmental Analysis' independent third party consultant.

Re: Finance Docket No. 35116, R. J. Corman Railroad Co., Beech Creek Branch Line – Construction and Operation, between Wallaceton and Gorton, Pennsylvania; Preliminary Consultation.

MS SANDY BASEHORE  
SKELLY AND LOY INC  
2601 NORTH FRONT STREET  
HARRISBURG PA 17110

Dear Ms. Basehore:

This is in response to your letter dated April 14, 2008 concerning the R. J. Corman Railroad Company reactivation of the former Beech Creek Rail Line from Wallaceton to Gorton, PA. The enclosure of your letter appears you are interested in information regarding potential resources within the project area that may be of concern, as well as any permits and approvals that may be required.

In Pennsylvania, the Public Utility Commission takes authority in the locations of railroad/highway crossings, both at-grade and over/under. In discussions with the PUC Rail Safety Manager, it was mentioned that appropriate applications would be required to reactivate the highway/rail grade crossings. The reactivation of this line will establish a minimum of 16 public and private at-grade crossings and one crossing under Interstate 80 structures. Of these at-grade crossings, nine intersect the Pennsylvania State Highway System: one minor arterial, seven rural minor collectors and one local road. Diagnostic analysis for each public crossing will have to be conducted to evaluate field conditions and types of protections required, which can range from advance warning signs, pavement markings and crossbucks to each of the previous mentioned including flashing lights and gate systems. At-grade crossing surface types will also have to be designed and accounted for at each location.

Also brought to our attention are two locations between Wallaceton and Morrisdale areas where two structures over the former Beech Creek Rail Line have been removed and replaced with backfill material only.

The former Beech Creek Rail Line in Centre County has involvement with a rail/trail system identified as the Snow Shoe Trail, Headwaters Charitable Trust. The Pennsylvania Conservation and Natural Resources show that this trail is 20 miles in length from Philipsburg to Loch Lomond junction with eight miles under construction. The Snow Shoe Trail organization received and expended \$538,715.46 of Surface Transportation Program-Enhancement funding for a project on the 2003 Transportation Improvement Program. The work consisted of repair to an existing 1,300 foot long tunnel consisting of mortaring and repointing bricks and the pressure mortaring of the areas above the existing rock masonry wall and drilling deep holes prior to placement of an aggregate trail surface within the tunnel. Also, minor drainage improvements, approximately 1,587 linear feet of trail preparation and grading and miscellaneous construction activities within an overall construction length of approximately 0.323 mile, as indicated on the drawings approved July 15, 2004.

Environmentally there could be involvement in the following subject areas:

- . Public Involvement/Controversy – Opposition to the landfill development would likely include opposition to redevelopment of this rail line with discussion of the loss of the recreational facility following substantial investment by the Snow Shoe Trail.
- . Aquatic Resources – Numerous waterway crossings would be required to be rehabilitated or reconstructed. Chapter 105 and Section 404, permitting would be required through the PA DEP and the USACOE. Wetlands are likely present along portions of the embankment which could be involved in redevelopment of the line, further complicating permitting.
- . Earth Disturbance – NPDES and Erosion and Sedimentation Control approvals would likely be required.
- . Public Recreational Facilities – Although privately owned and operated, the Snow Shoe Rails to Trails Association operates and maintains a recreational trail along significant portions of the line, including over the Viaduct Trestle and through the Peale Tunnel.

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. Historic Resources -- Portions of the line could be determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, e.g., the Viaduct Trestle which was completed in 1884 is 720 feet long and 105 feet high or the Peale Tunnel which is a 1,300 foot long cut sandstone tunnel and any historic period sidings, tipples and other appurtenant features.

In completing an EA or an EIS, R. J. Corman would be required to address each of the environmental subject areas, including these mentioned and all others. Public involvement / controversy would likely be one of the larger hurdles to such a proposal.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Engineering District 2-0, appreciates the opportunity to respond to this subject and looks forward to participation in future planning efforts related to the potential reactivation of the former Beech Creek Rail Line.

Sincerely,



Kevin R. Kline, P.E.  
District Executive  
Engineering District 2-0