

Tuesday, December 09, 2003

#E1-434  
RR

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
SECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS  
ROOM 500  
1925 K. STREET N.W.  
WASHINGTON, DC. 20423-0001

AB-444 (SUB-NO. 1X)

**Re: Lamoille Valley R.R. Co.-Abandonment Exemption- In Caledonia, Washington, Orleans,  
Lamoille and Franklin Counties, Vermont  
Surface Transportation Board, Docket No. AB-44 (Sub-No. 1X)**

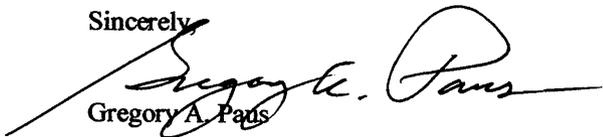
Dear Board,

As Chairman of the Town of Hyde Park Planning Commission and Executive Board member of the Lamoille County Planning Commission, I have personally followed the debate concerning the possible abandonment of rail use over the Lamoille Valley Railroad Company (LVRC) trackage. I support the regulatory exemption allowing the LVRC to abandon its 95.26-mile long railroad line between St. Johnsbury and Swanton, Vermont.

In the early 1970's this line was purchased by the State of Vermont and thereafter extensively rehabilitated with a heavy infusion of federal and state funds. From 1978 through 1990, LVRC was controlled by a dedicated group of local investors who struggled heroically to operate a successful shortline railroad. In the end, the obstacles were too great: (1) the loss of overhead "bridge" traffic from the Maine Central's Mountain Division, (2) the closure of talc and asbestos mines, (once the principal source of the line's originating traffic), and (3) the long-term decline of farming along the line, which eroded the market for the bulk shipments of animal feed that were once the mainstay of the line's terminating traffic. In the mid-1990's heavy flood damage to the line, (which would cost millions of dollars to repair), ended any practical possibility of resuming railroad service. At several recent sessions, The Vermont legislature has made it very clear that it has no appetite for the heavy financial commitment that would be necessary to restore this line to railroad operation.

The time has come to recognize that the public interest would best be served by the Board's approving the requested regulatory exemption. This would allow the LVRC to surrender its leasehold, opening the way for the State of Vermont, as the line's owner, to make segments of the corridor available to municipalities, snowmobile clubs, and other responsible organizations for trail use.

Sincerely,

  
Gregory A. Paus

Cc:

Mr. James B. Fitzgerald  
Lamoille Valley Railroad Company  
c/o Vtrans Rail Section  
National Life Building-Draw 33  
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-5001

GP/ck