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THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD
TECHNICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
A PENNSYLVANIA NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

REPLY TO:

Alan B. Buchan
785 Cornwallis Drive
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054-3209

July 5, 2006

W. Douglas Buttrey, Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, NW
Room 700
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Consolidated Rail Corporation - Proposed Abandonment in Mercer County, New Jersey -
Robbinsville Industrial Track STB Docket No. AB 167 (Sub-No. 1185X)

Dear Chairman Buttrey:

As President of the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society (PRRT&HS) I am writing to register our concern regarding the proposed abandonment of the 5.7 miles of the Robbinsville Industrial Track between milepost 32.20 +/- and 37.90 +/- in Hamilton and Washington Townships, Mercer County, New Jersey, by the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail). The purpose of our organization is to recognize, honor and preserve the image of the former Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR). We are an officially approved entity by the Pennsylvania Railroad's successor company. The Society has been in existence since 1968, with currently over 3,000 active members worldwide.

The Camden and Amboy Railroad (C&A) was chartered in 1830 and the alignment of track proposed to be abandoned was completed in 1832 when the line was built between Bordentown and South Amboy, New Jersey. This particular line, between Bordentown and South Amboy, was the first railroad to be built in the state of New Jersey and was eclipsed only by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which began construction in July 1828. Testimony to its historic importance is substantiated by the findings of the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office, which has determined that the entire line is eligible to be listed in both the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. The C&A was leased by the Pennsylvania Railroad for 999 years in June 1871 and was consolidated with two other companies to form the United New Jersey Railroad Company (also a PRR lessee) in May 1872. It subsequently became part of the Penn Central system in 1968 and was conveyed to Conrail by the United States Railway Association in 1976.

The PRRT&HS does not take exception to Conrail's proposed abandonment of the line as part of its line rationalization process. However, it does take exception to the potential obliteration of the remaining right-of-way through development for three reasons - historic preservation, the possible need for freight rail service from future development adjacent to the right-of-way and its potential as a possible future Light Rail corridor.

Given the remarkable historic significance of this line if the STB approves the abandonment of the line and sale of the property for development, it is requested that specific mitigation measures be incorporated into any approval to protect the integrity of the extant horizontal and vertical alignment of the railroad right-of-way grading, as the corridor itself is a character-defining historic feature.

STB should also consider the potential for the proposed abandoned corridor to accommodate the handling of future rail freight traffic that might be generated by possible industrial or commercial development along the hundreds of acres of open space immediately adjacent to the right-of-way.

Additionally, STB should consider the potential for the proposed abandonment to become a New Jersey Transit Light Rail branch connecting the rapidly developing communities in that region with Bordentown and NJ Transit's Light Rail *River Line*, operating between Camden and Trenton, New Jersey, also on former C&A right-of-way.

I was fortunate during my career to have been appointed by two Governors to serve for many years on the New Jersey State Historic Sites Council, at least five or six of which were as its chairman. Had this been an eligible project to appear before the council during my tenure we would have found and made recommendations to the Commissioner of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection that the extant right-of-way grading be preserved during any development process as a pedestrian walk way or Rails-to-Trails project and that sufficient signage be placed in appropriate places as approved by the Historic Preservation Office, to recognize the importance of the C&A in the history of New Jersey and railway transportation in general.

Moreover, as a former Pennsylvania Railroad operations planning official and retired career rail transportation consultant I am of the opinion that serious consideration should be given to the preservation of this corridor for potential use in future freight and or light rail operations.

I trust that in its deliberations the STB will not take the significance of the preservation of railroad history and the potential future use of this line as a rail corridor too lightly. If I may be of further service pleased contact me.

Sincerely,



Alan B. Buchan
President

cc: The Honorable Christopher Smith, United States Congress, New Jersey 4th District
Dorothy Guzzo, Administrator, NJ DEP – SHPO

→ Leland L. Gardner, STB – Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration
David M Konschnik, STB – Office of Proceedings
Ronald L. Batory, President and Chief Operating Officer, Conrail
Adrian Fine, NE Regional Office, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Brian M. Hughes, County Executive, Mercer County
Glenn D. Gilmore, Mayor, Hamilton Township
Hamilton Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
John Kilbride, President, Camden & Amboy Chapter PRRT&HS