

PARTIES IN MAINE RAIL ABANDONMENT AGREE TO MEDIATION; PUBLIC HEARING IN PRESQUE ISLE POSTPONED

The Federal Surface Transportation Board agreed to postpone action on the proposed abandonment of rail lines in Northern Maine in order to give the parties time to arrive at a mediated solution.

The state of Maine and the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway Ltd. have agreed to confidential mediation conducted by the Board. The Board will suspend any formal action on the matter for three weeks and will postpone a public hearing scheduled for May 10 in Presque Isle, Maine. The hearing is postponed until further notice of the Board.

"We are pleased that the parties in the case have decided to take advantage of the Board's mediation services," said STB Chairman Daniel R. Elliott III. "Agreements resulting from folks sitting down and negotiating are almost always better than decisions imposed from Washington."

The railroad has asked the Board for permission to abandon 233 miles of rail line in Aroostook and Penobscot counties. Maine officials fear the abandonment would hurt the economy of Northern Maine and cost jobs.

Earlier this month, the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis released a draft environmental assessment that found that the abandonment of the lines could divert onto Maine's highways as many as an additional 73,344 truck trips per year, consuming an additional 3.3 million gallons of fuel per year.

The full record in the case, [Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway, Ltd – Discontinuance of Service and Abandonment – In Aroostook and Penobscot Counties, Maine, STB Docket No. AB-1043 \(Sub No. 1\)](#), can be found on the Board's website at www.stb.dot.gov.

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