

PRELIMINARY STUDY ON MAINE RAIL ABANDONMENT RELEASED PUBLIC INPUT SOUGHT ON PROJECTED HIGHWAY TRAFFIC INCREASE

The Section of Environmental Analysis at the Surface Transportation Board today issued a draft environmental assessment on the proposed abandonment of 233 miles of rail line in the northern Maine counties of Aroostook and Penobscot. The draft review found that the abandonment of this line 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.

However, the draft review, which estimated it would take four trucks to replace every rail car, found that the diversion of rail traffic onto trucks would appear to be "within the level of traffic allowed by area roads." The draft also recommended steps to reduce the impact of the rail salvage operation that would follow any abandonment.

The Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway has asked the Surface Transportation Board to approve the abandonment of the lines because they do not generate enough revenue. The Maine Department of Transportation and congressional representatives have asked the STB to study the impacts of any abandonment and to hear from local shippers and residents.

The conclusions and recommendations in the study are preliminary. The Section of Environmental Analysis welcomes and encourages public comments on all aspects of its draft environmental assessment. Write to: Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, attention Diana Wood. Comments can also be submitted through the Board's Web site at www.stb.dot.gov by clicking on "E-Filing" In all communications, please reference Docket No. AB 1043 (Sub-No. 1).

To further reach out to those who would be affected by this matter, the full Surface Transportation Board has scheduled a public hearing at the District Courthouse in Presque Isle, Maine, on May 10 at 9 a.m. The Board specifically wants to hear public feedback on the effects the abandonment and additional truck traffic would have on local and state roads. The Board will take public comments and the full environmental record into consideration when making a final decision.

The Draft environmental assessment was issued today in the proceeding titled [Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway, Ltd – Discontinuance of Service and Abandonment – In Aroostook and Penobscot Counties, Maine, STB Docket No. AB-1043 \(Sub No. 1\)](#). The draft environmental assessment can be found at www.stb.dot.gov, under "Environmental Matters" then under "Key Cases."