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Decided: January 5, 2006.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik,
Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 06-236 Filed 1-12-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 34766]

Watco Companies, Inc.—Continuance in Control Exemption—Vicksburg Southern Railroad, Inc.

Watco Companies, Inc. (Watco), has filed a verified notice of exemption to continue in control of Vicksburg Southern Railroad, Inc. (VSOR), upon VSOR's becoming a Class III rail carrier.¹

The transaction is expected to be consummated on or shortly after January 8, 2006.

This transaction is related to a concurrently filed verified notice of exemption in STB Finance Docket No. 34765, *Vicksburg Southern Railroad, Inc.—Lease and Operation Exemption—The Kansas City Southern Railway Company*. In that proceeding, VSOR seeks to acquire by lease from The Kansas City Southern Railway Company and operate approximately 21.5 miles of rail line consisting of the following lines located in Mississippi: (1) KCS's Redwood Branch, which is located between milepost 21.9, at the end of the line near Redwood, MS, and milepost 218.0, north of KCS's Vicksburg Yard, at Vicksburg, MS, and includes track numbers 418, 419, 429, 430, 431, 432, and 433, and the locomotive facility buildings within the Vicksburg Yard; and (2) the branch line located between milepost 223.0, south of the connection with the KCS main line, and milepost 229.85, near Cedars, MS.

Watco, a Kansas corporation, is a noncarrier that currently controls 16 Class III rail carriers: South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Company (SKO), Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, Inc. (PRCC), Timber Rock Railroad, Inc. (TIBR), Stillwater Central Railroad, Inc. (SLWC), Eastern Idaho Railroad, Inc. (EIRR), Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad, Inc. (K&O), Pennsylvania Southwestern

Railroad, Inc. (PSWR), Great Northwest Railroad, Inc. (GNR), Kaw River Railroad, Inc. (KRR), Mission Mountain Railroad, Inc. (MMT), Appalachian & Ohio Railroad, Inc. (AO), Mississippi Southern Railroad, Inc. (MSRR), Yellowstone Valley Railroad, Inc. (YVRR), Louisiana Southern Railroad, Inc. (LSRR), Arkansas Southern Railroad, Inc. (ARSR), and Alabama Southern Railroad, Inc. (ABS).²

Applicant states that: (1) The rail lines operated by SKO, PRCC, TIBR, SLWC, EIRR, K&O, PSWR, GNR, KRR, MMT, AO, MSRR, YVRR, LSRR, ARSR, and ABS do not connect with the rail lines being leased by VSOR; (2) the continuance in control is not part of a series of anticipated transactions that would connect the rail lines being leased by VSOR with any railroad in the Watco corporate family; and (3) neither VSOR nor any of the carriers controlled by Watco are Class I rail carriers. Therefore, the transaction is exempt from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 11323. See 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(2). The purpose of the transaction is to reduce overhead expenses, coordinate billing, maintenance, mechanical and personnel policies and practices of applicant's rail carrier subsidiaries, thereby improving the overall efficiency of rail service provided by the 17 railroads.

Under 49 U.S.C. 10502(g), the Board may not use its exemption authority to relieve a rail carrier of its statutory obligation to protect the interests of its employees. Section 11326(c), however, does not provide for labor protection for transactions under sections 11324 and 11325 that involve only Class III rail carriers. Accordingly, the Board may not impose labor protective conditions here, because all of the carriers involved are Class III carriers.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance

Docket No. 34766, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Karl Morell, Of Counsel, Ball Janik LLP, 1455 F Street, NW., Suite 225, Washington, DC 20005.

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[STB Docket No. AB-1067 (Sub-No. 1X)]

Iowa Northwestern Railroad—Abandonment Exemption—in Osceola and Dickinson Counties, IA

On December 27, 2005, General Railway Corporation, d/b/a Iowa Northwestern Railroad (IANW) filed with the Board a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a line of railroad known as the Iowa Northwestern Railroad, extending from milepost 235.25 near Lake Park, IA, to the end of the line at milepost 252.3 near Allendorf, IA, a distance of 17.05 miles in Osceola and Dickinson Counties, IA (the line). The stations of Harris (MP 240.5), Ocheyedan (MP 246.0) and Allendorf (MP 251.8) are located on the line. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Codes 51249, 51347, 51345, and 51354.

The line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in IANW's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

IANW states that no railroad employees will be affected by this action. Nevertheless, to ensure that is the case, the interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions set forth in *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by April 14, 2006.

Any offer of financial assistance (OFA) under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 10 days after

¹ Watco owns 100% of the issued and outstanding stock of VSOR.

² SKO's lines are located in Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma; PRCC's lines are located in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho; TIBR's lines are located in Texas and Louisiana; SLWC's lines are located in Oklahoma; EIRR's lines are located in Idaho; K&O's lines are located in Kansas and Colorado; PSWR's line is located in Pennsylvania; GNR's lines are located in Idaho and Washington; KRR's lines are located in Kansas and Missouri; MMT's lines are located in Montana; AO's lines are located in West Virginia; MSRR's line is located in Mississippi; YVRR's lines are located in Montana; LSRR's lines are located in Louisiana; ARSR's lines are located in Arkansas; and ABS's lines are located in Mississippi and Alabama.