Appalachian Transportation Institute (ATI) Research Project Description

Project Number: ATI TRP TRP 99-02
Project Title: Preserving Branch-Line Railroad Capacity in Southern WV

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Project Objective: The objective is to identify branch rail lines in Southern WV that are most likely to be abandoned in response to diminished coal production, and to evaluate the alternatives available to maintaining the branch rail line capacity in this region.

Abstract: West Virginia's coal heritage once yielded an extensive network of railroad branch-line trackage. While a significant number of these branch-lines have been abandoned and the tracks removed, dozens more remain
in place. The current study is designed to produce a systematic method of evaluating the economic benefits of specific branch-line properties and assessing the cost of maintenance options. Specifically, the study considers the alternative costs of continued Class I ownership, private short-line ownership and operation, the State's Rail Bank program, and other maintenance options.

Task Descriptions: Candidate Branchline Identification, Preservation Cost Estimation, Benefit Estimates, Recommendations

Milestones, Dates, Schedule: Start Date June 1, 2000
End Date August 31, 2001

Budget: Total: $65,340.00

Student Involvement: The project will provide employment support for at least 1 undergraduate and 1 graduate student. The student workers will support the

Principal Investigator as project assistants. This project is not anticipated to lead to a student thesis directly.

Relationship to Other Research Projects: None at this time.

Technology Transfer Activities: Final reports will be available on the ATI website. All, ATI Principal Investigators will present findings through the ATI Transportation Seminar Series to invited guests from WVDOT, USDOT, other ATI Principal Investigators, students and other invited guests. Other opportunities to present the project results will be explored including conferences and peer reviewed journals, etc.

Potential Benefits of this Project: Branch-line railroad capacity preservation for economic development and economic diversification in order to help maintain and develop an intermodal and multimodal transportation system for Southern, West Virginia. Results will be applicable to other parts of Appalachia and rural America.

TRB Keywords: Railroad, Branch-line, Economic Benefits