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SEA

SERVICE DATE – JANUARY 8, 2008

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 675X)

**CSX Transportation, Inc. – Abandonment Exemption –
in Ware County, GA**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Ware County, Georgia. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends a distance of 1.08 miles from milepost AP 588.84 to milepost AP 587.76, all in the City of Waycross. A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). If the notice becomes effective, CSXT will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

According to CSXT, the line proposed for abandonment was originally constructed between 1889 and 1892 by the Brunswick & Western Railroad Company (B&W). Although the B&W was purchased in 1888 by the Savannah, Florida and Western Railroad (SF&W), the integration was not complete until 1901. The SF&W was acquired shortly thereafter by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company (ACL). From 1902 through 1912, the ACL merged with a number of small railroads extending from Virginia to Florida. Four more mergers occurred during and immediately after World War II, and two in the 1950's. On July 1, 1967, the Seaboard Air Line (SAL) and ACL merged to form the Seaboard Coast Line (SCL). In 1972, Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company joined a partnership called The Family Lines System with a number of other railroads, including the Seaboard Coast Line (SCL). SCL and Chessie System Inc. merged and became CSX Corporation on November 1, 1980. On January 1, 1983, the merger of the Family Lines' affiliates formed the Seaboard System Railroad Inc., which changed names on July 1, 1986, to CSXT.

CSXT indicates that no local traffic has moved over the line during the past two years and any overhead traffic has been rerouted. No new rail oriented business is expected to develop. Abandonment of the line would result in the removal of the rail and crossties; subsequently, the operations and maintenance of the line will cease. The line segment is no longer necessary for rail operations as agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Waycross, Ware County and CSXT dated November 16, 2006. The terms of

the MOU include: 1) capacity improvement projects, including double-tracking the CSXT mainline around Waycross, 2) construction of a new connection track which will result in improved service to the customer, 3) elimination of nine road crossings and 4) the City of Waycross filing a notice of interim trail use (NITU) on the line segment and CSXT working with the City of Waycross to preserve the corridor as a trail.

Based on information in CSXT's possession, the line does not contain Federally granted rights-of-way. The right-of-way on this line segment is approximately 100 feet from the center line of track. The line traverses the urban community of the City of Waycross. CSXT records do not indicate that any swampy conditions exist, or that any hazardous material spills have occurred within the project area. A review of CSXT records indicates that there are no CSXT-owned structures that are over 50 years old on the line segment. CSXT is not aware of any archeological resources or any other previously unknown historic properties in the project area. The line was disturbed during construction by cuts and fill and any archeological resources that may have been located in the proposed project area would have been affected at that time.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

CSXT submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. CSXT served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Diversion of Traffic

CSXT states that no local or overhead rail traffic has moved over the line during the past two years. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact the development, use, and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; or result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network. Because CSXT has added infrastructure to the existing adjacent lines, it is anticipated that operational efficiency would increase and traffic patterns would be significantly improved throughout the congested City of Waycross area. In addition, the new routing would move any hazardous materials out of the City of Waycross.

Salvage Activities

Impacts from salvage and disposal of a rail line typically include removal of tracks and ties, removal of ballast, dismantling of any bridges or other structures that may be present on the rail right-of-way, and regrading of the right-of-way. Salvage may be performed within the right-of-way, or, if necessary, via the construction of new access points to the right-of-way. CSXT

indicates that abandonment of this line would result in the removal of the rail, crossties, and possibly the upper layer of ballast. CSXT does not intend to disturb any sub grade or sub grade structures. Upon receiving abandonment authority, CSXT indicates that removal of material would be accomplished by use of the right-of-way for access, along with existing public and private crossings. No new access roads are contemplated. CSXT does not intend to disturb any of the underlying roadbed or perform any activities that would cause sedimentation or erosion of the soil, and does not anticipate any dredging or use of fill in the removal of the track material. The crossties and/or other debris would be transported away from the rail line and would not be discarded along the right-of-way nor be placed or left in streams, wetlands, or along the banks of such waterways. Appropriate measures would be implemented during track removal to prevent or control spills from fuels, lubricants or any other pollutant materials from entering any waterways.

The proposed abandonment would result in the elimination of nine public at grade road crossings. CSXT is not aware of any designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains within the proposed project area. Based upon CSXT's review of the area the line does not appear to be near any parks, wildlife sanctuaries, refuges, or forests.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has advised SEA that five geodetic station markers have been identified that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, we will recommend a condition requiring that CSXT consult with the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) and notify NGS at least 90 days prior to beginning salvage activities that will disturb or destroy any geodetic station markers.

The City of Waycross has indicated that it supports the proposed action and intends to file a NITU on the line segment. The City of Waycross understands that CSXT will work with them to preserve the Corridor as a trail. The City Manager has indicated that no environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed rail line abandonment.

Dixie Redi-Mix and Dixie Roadbuilders have both indicated that they do not oppose the proposed abandonment. Because of the new rail infrastructure the abandonment will have no negative effect on their rail service.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has indicated that, based on the information provided to them, the proposed action is not expected to significantly impact fish and wildlife resources under their jurisdiction.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division has indicated that Ware County is outside the Georgia Coastal Management program boundary area and there are no reasonably foreseeable impacts to coastal uses or resources as a result of the proposed abandonment.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District (Corps) has determined that no jurisdictional waters of the United States are present on the proposed project site based on the

examination of all available information, including the National Wetland Inventory, USGS Quadrangle sheets, and infrared aerial photographs of the area. The proposed project does not require Corps authorization, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

SEA believes that any air emissions associated with salvage operations would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Noise associated with salvage activities would also be temporary and should not have a significant impact on the area surrounding the proposed abandonment.

Based on all information available to date, SEA does not believe that salvage activities would cause significant environmental impacts.

HISTORIC REVIEW

CSXT submitted an historic report as required by the Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)] and served the report on the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). Based on the information submitted, the SHPO has determined that no archaeological resources that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected by the undertaking within the right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect, or APE) of the proposed abandonment. The SHPO indicated that the CSXT rail line proposed for abandonment should be considered eligible for listing in the National Register, but believes that the proposed project would have no adverse effect on the eligible rail line provided that the rail bed is preserved, as proposed.

Pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1), and following consultation with the SHPO and the public, we have determined that the proposed abandonment would not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 CFR 800.11(d), consists of the railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public through posting on the Board's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>.

SEA conducted a search of the Native American Consultation Database at www.cast.uark.edu/other/nps/nacd/ to identify Federally recognized tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area. The database indicated that the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma may have an interest in the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, SEA is sending a copy of this EA to this tribe for their review and comment.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that the following environmental condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) shall consult with the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) and notify NGS at least 90 days prior to beginning salvage activities that will disturb or destroy any geodetic station markers.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

PUBLIC USE

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

TRAILS USE

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Board's Office of Public Services (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at (202) 245-0230, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this EA, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Kenneth Blodgett, who prepared this EA. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, www.stb.dot.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 675X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this EA, please contact Kenneth Blodgett, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0305, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at blodgettk@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: January 8, 2008.

Comment due date: January 23, 2008.

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment