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SERVICE DATE - MARCH 15, 2002

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-43 (Sub-No. 171X)

Illinois Central Railroad Company - Abandonment Exemption - In McLean County, IL

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Illinois Central Railroad Company (IC) has filed a petition for exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of approximately 3.08 miles of a line of railroad extending from milepost 783.42 to the end of the line at milepost 786.5 in Heyworth, referred to as the "Heyworth Spur." The line is located in McLean County, Illinois. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, the railroad 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 IC, no rail service or operations have been conducted on the Heyworth Spur since April, 2001, when the sole former shipper on the line, Carter Lumber, ceased operations. The Carter Lumber facility is not expected to reopen, and prior to its closure only a single carload of traffic had moved over the Heyworth Spur during 2001. No rail service is currently provided on the line. Thus, no traffic will be diverted to other transportation systems or modes as a result of the proposed abandonment. IC service to an existing A.E. Staley facility in Heyworth will not be affected by the proposed abandonment.

The Heyworth Spur is a single-track, stub ended line that extends from the south side of the Village of Heyworth through the village to the existing end of line at milepost 786.5 north of the village. The area has a generally flat or slightly rolling topography and is rural in character. There is a closed commercial business adjacent to the north end of the line; further south the area becomes single-family residential (with some storefront businesses) as the line enters the rural community of Heyworth. The line includes no stations. The line varies in width between 74 feet and 200 feet, and does not contain any federally granted rights-of-way. After abandonment, IC intends to salvage rail and track materials from the portion of the line north of approximately

milepost 784.23. The short, remaining segment of the line (from milepost 783.42 to approximately milepost 784.23) will be reclassified as side track and used to support service at the adjacent A.E. Staley grain facility. The railbed, subgrade and single bridge on the Heyworth Spur will remain in place and not be disturbed. Abandonment of the line will allow permanent closure of a total of eight highway grade crossings.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

IC 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. IC served the environmental and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. We have reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IL SHPO) has advised us that, based upon the information provided, no historic properties will be affected by the proposed abandonment. The IL SHPO has no objection to the abandonment proceeding as planned. There is a bridge over Kickapoo Creek and two concrete box culverts over intermittent streams located on the line which are more than 50 years old. IC has no current plans to remove, disturb or alter these structures in connection with the proposed abandonment.

The Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District has determined that the abandonment, as proposed, does not require a Section 404 permit. Upon review of the information provided them, no indication of discharge of dredged or fill material was found to occur in waters of the United States.

The National Geodetic Survey has advised us that six geodetic station markers have been identified that may be affected by the proposed abandonment.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that the following environmental condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority:

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified six geodetic station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, IC shall notify NGS 90 days prior to salvage activities in order to plan their relocation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed and subject to the recommended mitigation measures, 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

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does take place, 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 Surface Transportation 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 Surface Transportation Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of exemption in the Federal Register. However, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so. 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) 565-1592 or mail inquiries to the Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Kenneth Blodgett, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-43 (Sub No. 171X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to Kenneth Blodgett at (202) 565-1554 (blodgettk@stb.dot.gov).**

Recent events involving a principal postal facility within Washington, D.C. may affect for a period of time the receipt of materials mailed to the Board, as well as customer receipt of reply mail sent from the Board. Until the timely delivery of mail has been reestablished, the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) requests that individuals filing comments regarding this or other environmental assessments take the following additional steps to ensure receipt of their correspondence during the comment period:

1. Telephone or e-mail the environmental contact indicated above prior to the close of the comment period and inform them that you have mailed a comment.
2. If the comment has not been received, the environmental contact will discuss alternative modes of delivery.
3. Retain a copy of your comment for your records should alternative modes of delivery be necessary.

SEA is committed to carrying out its duties to the public and regrets any inconvenience these new procedures may cause.

Date made available to the public: March 15, 2002.

Comment due date: **April 15, 2001 (30 days)**.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP TO BE SCANNED