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SERVICE DATE - AUGUST 31, 2001

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-55 (Sub-No. 596X)

CSX Transportation, Inc. - Abandonment Exemption - In Lorain County, Ohio

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) has 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 the line extending between Milepost BJ-161.00 and Milepost BJ-162.17, a distance of approximately 1.17 miles in Lorain, Lorain County, Ohio. 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 CSXT, this line was formerly used to transport coal and iron ore. There has been no local traffic on the line for two years and no future traffic is anticipated. The line does not contain Federally granted rights-of-way. CSXT intends to sell the track material to the Lorain Port Authority for development of an industrial museum and recreational area.

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 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.

According to Natalie Rosenberg, Counsel for CSXT, a portion of the rail line which has been proposed for abandonment extends into Lake Erie approximately 450 feet. Adequate information has not been provided with the Environmental Report submitted by CSXT describing the 450 foot structure for SEA to make a reasonable assessment of it's historical significance or the environmental impact of it's abandonment. Because SEA suspects that the removal of any structure which extends into Lake Erie could have potential historic or Coastal Zone Management ramifications, SEA has contacted the Ohio Department of Natural Resources,

Coastal Zone Management Division and the Ohio Historical Society, Historic Preservation Division for comments.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Zone Management Division has not yet completed the assessment of how the proposed project would affect land or water uses within the State's coastal zone.

The Ohio Historical Society, Historic Preservation Division has not yet completed the assessment of the potential impact of this project on historic resources, and we, therefore, recommend a condition to address this concern.

CONDITIONS

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

CSXT shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way that are 50 years old or older until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude 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

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-55 (Sub No. 596X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to Kenneth Blodgett at (202) 565-1554.**

Date made available to the public: August 31, 2001.

Comment due date: **September 14, 2001 (15 days).**

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.