

28763

SERVICE DATE - JANUARY 12, 1998

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-55 (Sub. No. 557X)

CSX Transportation, Inc.-
Notice of Exemption
Abandonment in Atkinson County, Georgia

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled 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 CSXT's line of railroad between Milepost AP-617.94 and Milepost AP-618.45 at the end of the track, a distance of approximately 0.51 miles in Pearson, Atkinson County, Georgia. 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

In its application, CSXT indicates that the line to be abandoned lies within the city limits of Pearson and may be suitable for alternative public uses. Formerly used to ship forest products, the line has not been used in over two years and CSXT states that it is no longer needed to serve any shippers.

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. UP 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)]. A number of agencies responded by letter and these letters were included in Applicants' application. We have investigated the record in this proceeding.

CONDITIONS

In a letter to CSXT dated December 10, 1997, the Georgia

State Historic Preservation Officer stated that in his opinion the segment of rail line proposed for abandonment should be considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and that the abandonment may result in an adverse effect.

Therefore, we recommend that CSXT consult with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer to aid the Surface Transportation Board in meeting its responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act. The purpose of the consultation is to (1) determine whether the rail line segment is potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, and (2) determine ways to avoid or reduce any adverse impacts associated with abandonment if the line is eligible for inclusion. Pending resolution of this issue, CSXT shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of the line segment 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 Dana White, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55(Sub No. 557X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to Dana White at (202) 565-1552.**

Date made available to the public: January 12, 1998.

Comment due date: **January 26, 1998 (15 days).**

By the Surface Transportation Board, Elaine K. Kaiser,
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP HAS TO BE SCANNED.

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