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SERVICE DATE - SEPTEMBER 28, 2001

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AB-586 (SUB-NO. 1X)

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY ASSOCIATION, INC. ABANDONMENT AND
DISCONTINUANCE IN FRANKLIN, IOWA**

BACKGROUND

North Central Railway Association, Inc., an Iowa corporation (NCRA) filed a Notice of Exemption pursuant to the Board's regulations at 49 C.F.R. 1152.50. This Notice of Exemption filed by NCRA is for abandonment and discontinuance of service, respectively, of a line of railroad between Milepost 184.75 near Hampton, Iowa and Milepost 191 near Geneva, Iowa all within Franklin County, Iowa all within Franklin County, Iowa, a distance of 6.25 miles. 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has 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. The railroad has served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). We have investigated the record in this proceeding. Also, we have contacted appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included the Franklin County Board, National Geodetic Survey, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa State Historical Society, Iowa Department of Transportation, National Park Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Applicant states that no local traffic has moved over the line for at least two years. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment will have no adverse effect on existing regional or local transportation systems. The proposed abandonment will have no major effect on public health or safety. There are no known hazardous waste sites or spills on or along the line. Applicant's consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicates that endangered species or critical habitats will not be adversely affected. The State Historic Preservation Officer considers the

Board's responsibilities under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act to be fulfilled and no historic properties will be adversely affected.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment and discontinuance authority.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date and subject to the recommended condition, 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 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. 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 Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, 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, Room 711, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Phillis Johnson-Ball, who prepared this environmental assessment.

Please refer to Docket No. AB-586 (Sub-No.1X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Phillis Johnson-Ball at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: 9/28/01.

Comment due date: October 15, 2001.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.