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SERVICE DATE - FEBRUARY 15, 2002

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-55 (Sub-No. 603X)

CSX Transportation, Inc. - Abandonment Exemption - in Webster County, WV

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 BUG 0.0 at Cowen and Milepost BUG 10.5 at Bolair, Webster County, West Virginia, a distance of approximately 10.5 miles. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to this report. If the notice becomes effective, the railroad would 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 was formerly used to ship coal. No traffic has originated, terminated or moved overhead on this line segment for at least two years. No future traffic is anticipated. The right-of-way width varies from 33 to 150 feet along the length of the line, and portions of the right-of-way may be subject to reversionary interests that would affect transfer of title for other than rail uses. CSXT is unaware of any potential public purposes to which the ROW may be suited.

The rail line is located in a mountainous area of Webster County. A portion of the line traverses through the Monongahela National Forest, and the eastern portion of the line is located in the Gauley River valley. Designated wetlands or 100-year floodplains are not known to be present within the proposed project.

The removal of material would be accomplished by use of the right-of-way and existing public and private crossings. No new access roads are contemplated. Disturbance of the underlying roadbed or other activities that could cause erosion and sedimentation are not proposed. The crossties and other debris would be transported away from the rail line. Appropriate measures would also be implemented to prevent or control spills from fuels, lubricants or other materials.

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.

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, West Virginia Field Office, stated that no Federally-listed endangered or threatened species or species of concern are expected to be impacted by the proposed abandonment.

A portion of the rail line is located in the Monongahela National Forest. A copy of this EA is being served to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service at the Monongahela National Forest for review and comment.

The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Geodetic Survey has advised the Board that five geodetic station markers have been identified that could be affected by the proposed abandonment.

The West Virginia Department of Culture and History (WV SHPO) has not completed its assessment of the potential impact of this project on historic resources, and we, therefore, recommend a condition to address this concern. According to CSXT, there is one CSXT-owned structure, Bridge No. 1, that is 50 years old or older that is part of the proposed abandonment. The bridge is located near Donaldson, WV. It was constructed in 1944 with concrete, steel and timber and is approximately 304 feet in length.

CONDITIONS

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

1. CSXT shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites or structures on the right-of-way until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.
2. The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified five geodetic station markers that could be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, CSXT shall notify NGS 90 days prior to salvage activities in order to plan for their relocation.

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. 603X) 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: February 15, 2001.

Comment due date: **March 4, 2002**

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.