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SEA

SERVICE DATE JULY 27, 2007

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB Docket No. AB-43 (Sub-No. 179X)**

**Illinois Central Railroad Company –  
Abandonment Exemption –  
In Rankin County, MS**

**BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF RAIL LINE**

In this proceeding, the Illinois Central Railroad Company (IC) filed a notice under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Rankin County, Mississippi. The “Flowood Line” extends from Milepost 68.10 to Milepost 70.20, a distance of 2.10 miles. The line is part of the Old Pearl River Georgia Line of the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio that originally traveled a distance of approximately 90 miles from Jackson, eastward to Meridian. The line was partially constructed by the New Orleans Great Northern in the early twentieth century, but later sold to the Gulf, Mobile & Northern, who completed construction around 1925. In 1971, Gulf, Mobile & Northern merged with IC.

The Flowood Line is virtually all that remains of the original Pearl River Georgia Line. The line travels through semi-rural industrial sections of Flowood, a city east of Jackson. Light industries surround the line, but none utilize rail service. The portion of the line to be abandoned traverses Zip Code 39232. IC certifies that there are no customers on the line and no revenue cars have used the line for at least two years. Additionally, no overhead traffic would have to be rerouted over other lines as a result of the abandonment.

IC indicates that there are two grade crossings, one public and the other private, as well as a 26-foot high bridge with 144 feet of ballast decking within the area to be abandoned. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has determined that the bridge, which dates to 1957, is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. IC indicates that following abandonment, it intends to salvage all the structures. The railroad believes that the line would be suitable for a trail or as a levee, but may not be of interest as a highway or other mass transportation system because the infrastructure is already in place. A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA).

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

IC submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment would 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 report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)].<sup>1</sup> The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

### ***Diversion of Traffic***

IC states that no local traffic has moved over the line for at least two years and no overhead traffic would be rerouted. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; or result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network.

### ***Salvage Activities***

Impacts from salvage and disposal of a rail line typically include removal of tracks and ties, removal of ballast, dismantling of any bridges or other structures that may be present on the rail right-of-way, and regrading of the right-of-way. Salvage may be performed within the right-of-way, or, if necessary, via the construction of new access points to the right-of-way.

SEA believes that any air emissions associated with salvage operations would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Noise associated with salvage activities would also be temporary and should not have a significant impact on the area surrounding the proposed abandonment.

The National Geodetic Survey commented that it could find no record of any benchmarks or other survey controls along the area of railroad to be abandoned. Therefore, SEA has determined that no further consultation is necessary.

The Wetlands Permitting Section of the Mississippi Coastal Program (MCP) commented that it has no objections to the proposed abandonment, providing there are no direct or indirect impacts to coastal wetlands, or objections from other coastal zone agencies. MCP further stated that a permit would be required for any impacts to wetlands. SEA has included the MCP on the service list for this proceeding and will incorporate any comments that the agency may have on the EA.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service commented that the proposed abandonment would have no adverse impacts on endangered species. The Mississippi Museum of Natural History,

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<sup>1</sup> The railroad's environmental and historic reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov) by going to "E-Library," selecting "Filings," and then conducting a search for AB-43 (Sub-No. 179X).

Natural Heritage Program (NHP) commented that it conducted a search of its data base for occurrences of state and Federally listed species, as well as species of special concern, and did not identify any within the proposed abandonment. However, it did recommend that best management practices be used, particularly along waterways, during salvage operations. SEA has included the NHP on the service list for this proceeding and will incorporate any comments that the agency may have on the EA.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commented that a Section 404 permit of the Clean Water Act would not be required for the proposed abandonment. Therefore, SEA has determined that no further consultation is necessary.

Based on all information available to date, SEA does not believe that salvage activities would cause significant environmental impacts. In addition to the parties on the Board's service list for this proceeding, SEA is providing a copy of this EA to the following agencies for review and comment: the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce; the MCP; the National Parks Service; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the Mississippi Department of Transportation; the Natural Resources Conservation Service; the Mississippi Department of Natural Resources Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks; and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

IC served the historic report on the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). The SHPO has submitted comments stating that the proposed abandonment would not affect any known archaeological sites or historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). We have reviewed the report and the information provided by the SHPO and concur with the SHPO's comments.

Pursuant to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for implementing the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.5(c) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will not adversely affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 CFR 800.11(d), consists of the railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

SEA conducted a search of the National Park Service's Native American Consultation Database <http://home.nps.gov/nacd/> to identify Federally recognized tribes with interests and found that none exist within the project area.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes 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**

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, 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. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. 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) 245-0230, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

## **COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this Environmental Assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Diana Wood, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-43 (Sub-No. 179X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Diana Wood, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0302, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at [woodd@stb.dot.gov](mailto:woodd@stb.dot.gov).

Date made available to the public: July 27, 2007.

**Comment due date: August 13, 2007.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment