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SERVICE DATE - MARCH 7, 1997
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-55 (SUB-NO. 537X)

CSX Transportation, Inc.
- Abandonment Exemption -
In Alachua County, FL

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its railroad line located between MP 738.65 at 23rd Avenue, N.W., in Gainesville and MP 751.52 at the end of track, a distance of 2.87 miles in Alachua County, FL. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption 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

CSXT has served two shippers on the line. Gulfside Supply, Inc. received 55 carloads of roofing shingles in 1994, 27 carloads in 1995, and has utilized truck service exclusively since November, 1995. Florida Rock Industries operates a ready-mix concrete and concrete block plant in Gainesville and received six carloads of aggregates in 1994, 40 carloads in 1995, and 24 carloads through November, 1996. CSXT can serve Florida Rock at another location in Gainesville. Florida Rock does not object to the proposed abandonment. There are 22 grade crossings in downtown Gainesville. The City has expressed interest in using this corridor as a trail. There are no bridges or structures greater than 50 years old.

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 consulted with 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources and State Historic Preservation Officer, and Florida Rock Industries.

CONDITIONS

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

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

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 the petition for 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 Assistance (OPA) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPA directly at (202) 927-6184, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Room 4412, Washington, DC 20423.

COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 2215, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Mike Dalton, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub No. 537X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mr. Dalton at (202) 927-6197.

Date made available to the public: March 4, 1997.

Comment due date: April 3, 1997.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary