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SERVICE DATE - SEPTEMBER 26, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-477 (SUB-NO.2X)

OWENSVILLE TERMINAL COMPANY, INC.
-ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION-
IN GIBSON AND POSEY COUNTIES, IN

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Owensville Terminal Company, Inc. (OTC) 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 Milepost No. 277.0 north of Cynthiana and Milepost No. 271.0 north of Owensville, a distance of 6 miles in Gibson and Posey Counties, IN (Cynthiana-Owensville segment). 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

The proposed abandonment encompasses the northern six miles of an 11.239-mile line between Poseyville and Owensville, IN. The Poseyville-Owensville rail line has been embargoed since May 3, 1996. The Cynthiana-Owensville line is a part of that line. OTC is retaining the segment between Cynthiana and Poseyville in order to continue to provide rail service to Continental Grain Company (CGC) at Cynthiana. During the 12-month period ended March 31, 1997, the Gibson County Co-op has accounted for only 26 carloads of traffic over the Cynthiana-Owensville segment. The right-of-way extends generally northeasterly from Cynthiana, Indiana to Owensville, Indiana. There is a .86 percent grade northbound just south of Owensville. The surrounding terrain is generally undulating. The right-of-way traverses some small urban areas in the town of Owensville, Indiana. However, most of the surrounding area is rural.

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.

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 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.

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 711, Washington, DC 20423-0001, to the attention of Scott Decker, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-477 (Sub No.2X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Scott Decker at (202) 565-1531.

Date made available to the public: **September 22, 1997.**

Comment due date: October 24, 1997.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary