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SEA

SERVICE DATE – JUNE 1, 2007

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 678X)**

**CSX Transportation, Inc. – Abandonment Exemption –  
in Clay County, IL**

**BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) 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 a line of railroad in the City of Flora, Clay County, Illinois. The rail line proposed for abandonment, known as the Flora North Branch, extends 0.86 miles from milepost BXO 74.14 to milepost BXO 75.0. A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). 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.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE**

According to CSXT, the land for this line segment was acquired by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company (B&O) between 1869 and 1874. The B&O was incorporated on February 28, 1827. On February 26, 1973, the Chessie System Inc. was formed, and Chessie System Railroads was adopted as the new corporate identity for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company (C&O), B&O, and WM railroads. On November 1, 1980, Seaboard Coast Line Industries, Inc. and Chessie System Inc. merged and became CSX Corporation. On April 30, 1987, the B&O was merged into the C&O. The C&O was merged into CSXT on September 2, 1987.

Based on information in CSXT's possession, the line does not contain Federally granted rights-of-way. The right-of-way varies between 20 and 50 feet from the centerline of track. The line runs generally north and east through a semi-commercial and residential area in the City of Flora. CSXT indicates that the property may be suitable for other public purposes, but might be subject to reversionary interests that could affect the transfer of title for other than rail purposes. Abandonment would result in the removal of four at-grade public crossings.

CSXT states that there are no CSXT-owned structures that are 50 years old or older that may be eligible for listing in the National Register that are part of the proposed action. CSXT

does not know of any archeological resources or any other previously unknown historic properties in the project area.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

CSXT 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. CSXT 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)]. The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

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

According to CSXT, no local or overhead traffic has moved over the line for at least two years. 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. CSXT indicates that abandonment of the line would result in the removal of the rail, crossties, and possibly the upper layer of ballast. CSXT indicates that removal of material would be accomplished by use of the right-of-way for access, along with existing public and private crossings, and no new access roads are contemplated. CSXT does not intend to disturb any of the underlying roadbeds or perform any activities that would cause sedimentation or erosion of the soil, and does not anticipate any dredging or use of fill in the removal of the track material. Crossties and other debris would be transported away from the line and would not be discarded along the right-of-way or left in streams, wetlands, or along the banks of such waterways. During track removal, appropriate measures would be implemented to prevent or control spills from fuels, lubricants, and any other pollutant materials from entering any waterways. CSXT does not intend to disturb any sub grade or sub grade structures. CSXT's records indicate that there have not been any hazardous material spills or hazardous waste sites located on the line.

CSXT does not contemplate any action known to be inconsistent with Federal, state, or local water quality standards. Any necessary permits or applications would be obtained by CSXT prior to salvage. CXWT would comply with any conditions or procedures required by regulatory agencies.

The City of Flora Office of Economic Development has indicated that there will be no environmental impact as a result of the proposed abandonment. The Illinois Department of Transportation has completed its review and takes no exceptions to CSXT's proposed abandonment. The U.S. National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office in Omaha, Nebraska has no comment on the proposed action. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fort Snelling, Minnesota has determined that they do not own any lands or interests in land in the vicinity of the proposed line abandonment.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service in Louisville, Illinois (NRCS) has advised SEA that there is a small agricultural field that lies adjacent to the abandoned track just south of US 45/50 that is classified as prime farmland. All other land adjacent to the track has previously been developed and no longer fits the classification of prime farmland. Laurie King, NRCS District Conservationist, has indicated that there would be no environmental impact as a result of the proposed abandonment.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has advised SEA that three geodetic station markers have been identified that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, we will recommend a condition requiring that CSXT contact NGS at least 90 days prior to beginning salvage activities so that NGS may plan for the possible relocation of the geodetic station markers.

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.

Based on all information available to date, SEA does not believe that salvage activities would cause significant environmental impacts.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

CSXT submitted an historic report as required by the Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)] and served the report on the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). Based on available information, the SHPO has submitted comments stating that no historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected within the right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect, or APE) of the proposed abandonment.

Pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1), and following consultation with the SHPO and the public, we have determined that the proposed abandonment would not 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 through posting on the Board's web site at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>.

SEA conducted a search of the Native American Consultation Database at [www.cast.uark.edu/other/nps/nacd/](http://www.cast.uark.edu/other/nps/nacd/) to identify Federally recognized tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area. The database indicated that the Delaware Nation of Oklahoma, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, Sac & Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska, Sac & Fox Nation of Oklahoma, and the Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa may have an interest in the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, SEA is sending a copy of this EA to these tribes for their review and comment.

### **CONDITIONS**

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

CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) shall notify the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) at least 90 days prior to beginning salvage activities in order to plan for the possible relocation of geodetic station markers by NGS.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is imposed, 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 Kenneth Blodgett, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, <http://www.stb.dot.gov>, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 678X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Kenneth Blodgett, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0305, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at [blodgettk@stb.dot.gov](mailto:blodgettk@stb.dot.gov).

Date made available to the public: June 1, 2007.

**Comment due date: June 15, 2007.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment