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SERVICE DATE - APRIL 4, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AB-303 (SUB NO. 16X)

WISCONSIN CENTRAL LTD. - ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION
IN CLARK COUNTY, WISCONSIN

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled proceeding, Wisconsin Central Ltd. (WCL) 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 its railroad line. The line is located in Abbotsford, Clark County, Wisconsin, between Milepost 303.37 and Milepost 304.01, a distance of .64 miles. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. 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

The rail line to be abandoned is located in the City of Abbotsford, in Clark County, Wisconsin. The property width is generally 100 feet as centered on the main track, with varying widths in the city. The line extends through both residential and light commercial neighborhoods. There are no active rail users on the line segment and a number of grade crossings have had the rails removed and the crossings paved over.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

WCL 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. WCL 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)]. A number of agencies responded by letter and these letters were included in Applicants' application.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS), U.S. Department of Commerce, has notified us that two geodetic station markers may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS provided WCL with data sheets for these markers. If WCL plans salvage activities that will disturb or destroy these markers, NGS requires not less than 90 days' notification in advance of such activities in order to plan for their relocation.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has requested that during salvage WCL clean-up and dispose of hazardous materials in accordance with state regulations and that WCL stabilize with vegetative cover any disturbed portions of the right of way in order to minimize soil erosion.

CONDITIONS

We recommend the following two conditions:

- (1) If Wisconsin Central Ltd. plans salvage activities that will disturb or destroy two national Geodetic Survey (NGS) markers located on the line, NGS requires not less than 90 days' notification in advance of such activities in order to plan for their relocation.
- (2) At the request of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, during salvage Wisconsin Central Ltd. shall clean-up and dispose of hazardous materials in accordance with state regulations and stabilize with vegetation disturbed portions of the right-of-way to control soil erosion.

CONCLUSIONS

We have analyzed and verified the information provided. Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended conditions, 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, 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) 565-1588, or mail inquiries to the Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, 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, Room 711, Surface Transportation Board, Section of Environmental Analysis, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Dana White, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No AB 303 (16X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to Ms. White at (202) 565-1552.

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

Comment due date: April 19, 1997 (15 days).

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment (Map not attached. Available from STB docket.)