

28404

SERVICE DATE - NOVEMBER 28, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-493 (SUB-NO. 2X)

TRACK TECH, INC.  
ABANDONMENT AND DISCONTINUANCE BETWEEN  
DENROCK AND LYNDON, ILLINOIS  
IN WHITESIDE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

### BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Track Tech, Inc. 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 Bladen at milepost 96.30 and Hildreth at milepost 119.34, a distance of 23.04 in Franklin and Webster Counties, Nebraska. 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

This line was formerly owned by the Burlington Northern Railroad Company (BN). BN had limited operations over the line. Track Tech purchased the line from BN in November of 1996. Track Tech has not operated over the line since acquiring it from BN. There are six shippers located on the line: Continental Grain; Koch Agri Services; Four Seasons Farm Supply; Trico Farm Service; US Midwest; Farmers Coop Grain and Supply. Four Seasons, Trico Farm Service, US Midwest, and Farmers Coop have not shipped any carloads outbound for over three years. Continental Grain shipped 51 cars in 1994, 10 cars in 1994, and no cars in 1996. According to applicant, alternative transportation is available through other rail carriers and track companies operating in the area.

### 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. Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nebraska State Historical Society, the Webster County Board of Commissioners, and the Franklin County Board of Supervisors.

#### **CONDITIONS**

The Nebraska Historical Society has not completed its review of potentially historic sites and structures that may be effected by the abandonment. Therefore, **we recommend the following condition: Track Tech, Inc. shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the line proposed for abandonment until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.**

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended condition, 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, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Victoria Rutson, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-493 (Sub No. 2X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you

have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ms. Rutson at (202) 565-1545.

Date made available to the public: November 24, 1997.

**Comment due date: December 23, 1997.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

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