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SERVICE DATE - JULY 22, 1998
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-31 (SUB-NO. 35X)

Grand Trunk Western Railroad, Inc.
-- Abandonment Exemption --
In Macomb County, MI

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Grand Trunk Western Railroad, Inc. (GTW) has 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 located between milepost 0.42 and milepost 19.50, a distance of 19.08 miles in Macomb County, MI. 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.

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 contacted 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 Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Geodetic Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Macomb County Planning and Economic Development Department, Oakland County Department of Community and Economic Development, City of Richmond, Richmond Township, Bruce Township, Community

Planning and Management, P.C.

CONDITIONS

The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office may need additional information to complete its evaluation of the potential impact of this project on historic resources. Accordingly, we recommend imposition of the following condition: **Grand Trunk Western Railroad, Inc. shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way that are 50 years old or older until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.**

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) identified numerous geodetic station markers along the rail line that may be affected by the proposed abandonment and requests 90 days notice to plan relocation of any markers which may be disturbed or destroyed. Therefore, we recommend that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority: **Grand Trunk Western Railroad, Inc. shall consult with the National Geodetic Survey and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to disturbing or destroying any geodetic markers.**

CONCLUSIONS

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

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does take place, 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. 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) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to 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, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Mike Dalton, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-31 (Sub-No. 35X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mike Dalton at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: July 20, 1998.

Comment due date: August 4, 1998.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

PLEASE SCAN MAP