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SERVICE DATE - NOVEMBER 28, 2003

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-55 (Sub-No. 642X)

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

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon an approximately 5.9-mile line of railroad, in CSXT's Western Region, Chicago Division, Woodland Subdivision, extending from milepost OZE 107.1 at Rossville Junction to milepost OZE 113.0 at Henning, in Vermillion County, IL. 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

In its petition, CSXT states that Fall Grain (FG) is only patron currently located on the line. FG purchased a grain elevator on the line in approximately September, 2002. FG has utilized rail transportation a modest amount during the past year. According to CSXT prior to purchase by FG, the elevator was owned by Consolidated Grain & Barge (CGB), a more significant user of rail. CSXT states that it is their understanding that CGB operated the elevator as a "public" elevator and permitted other companies to utilize the elevator. CSXT states that since the time the elevator was purchased by FG, however, rail shipments have dropped dramatically due, at least in part, to the fact the elevator is now solely utilized by FG. Since purchasing the elevator in 2002, FG shipped 30 carloads in 2002 and 57 carloads through June, 2003. CSXT states that the primary alternative transportation option that is available to FG is motor carrier transportation.

The right-of-way varies between 30 and 108 feet from the centerline of track. The line traverses a sparsely populated area.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

CSXT 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. CSXT served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). 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: Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; Illinois State Clearinghouse; National Geodetic Survey; National Park Service; National Resources Conservation Service; Regional Wetlands Coordinator; State Historic Preservation Officer; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers- Louisville District; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency- Region 5; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Vermillion County Planning Commission; and the Village of Henning.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 5 (EPA - Region 5) has expressed concerns about the removal and salvage methods to be used by CSXT during the proposed abandonment, the final disposition of crossties preserved with creosote, procedures for storing and fueling of construction equipment, procedures for the prevention and/or control of spills from construction equipment, and soil erosion and stormwater runoff mitigation practices and the revegetation of the right-of-way with native flora. Based on EPA's comment, we recommend the following condition: To address the concerns raised by EPA - Region 5, CSXT shall, prior to commencement of any salvage activities, contact EPA (Kenneth A. Westlake or Katherine Kowal, 312-353-5206), concerning final disposition of crossties preserved with creosote and the revegetation of the right-of-way with native flora.

Traffic

During the base year CSXT states that it transported 245 carloads over the line. Using the traffic data from the base year,¹ the proposed abandonment could result in the conversion of 245 rail carloads to truck traffic. Using a conversion factor of 4 trucks per railcar,² SEA calculated that, if all the rail traffic is diverted to truck traffic, about 980 loaded trucks per year or 1960 total trucks (assuming an empty backhaul) could be added to area roadways. On a per day basis about 8 trucks per day could be added to the area roadways during a 240 workday year.³

¹ The Base Year date includes the traffic from both CGB and FG. As stated above, FG is currently the sole patron on the line.

² The conversion factor is an estimate used to calculate the rail to truck conversion of varied commodities.

³ 240 workdays result when weekends and holidays are subtracted from a 365 day year.

CSXT states that the primary alternative transportation option available to FG is motor carrier transportation. CSXT states that it has offered to sell the line to FG for Net Liquidation Value as an industry track subsequent to the exercise of any abandonment authority granted kby CSXT. To date, FG has not definitively responded to CSXT's offer.

HISTORIC REVIEW

CSXT submitted a historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. CSXT served the report on the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). 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 by the proposed abandonment. We have reviewed the report and information provided by the SHPO and concur with SHPO's comments.

Pursuant to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for implementing the section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will 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 CSXT's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

CONDITIONS

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

Based on the comments of the EPA, we recommend that CSXT prior to commencing any salvage activities, contact EPA- Region 5 (Kenneth A. Westlake or Katherine Kowall, 312-353-5206), concerning final disposition of crossties preserved with creosote and the revegetation of the right-of-way with native flora.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude 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 this case, 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 not 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 the time specified in the Federal Register notice. 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 responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services 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 Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket**

No. **AB-55 (Sub-No. 642X)** in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1657, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at Newman@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: November 28, 2003.

Comment due date: December 29, 2003.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

