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SERVICE DATE - SEPTEMBER 14, 1998

DO

FR-4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-317 (Sub-No. 5X)]

Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad Company--Abandonment and Discontinuance of Trackage Rights Exemption--in Cook County, IL and Lake County, IN

On August 25, 1998, Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad Company (IHB) filed with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a line of railroad known as the East Chicago Belt Branch, extending from railroad Valuation Station (-0+17) beginning at a point 168 feet west of the Illinois/Indiana State line in Burnham, IL, near Brainard Avenue, extending generally eastward through Hammond, IN, to and including a point 100 feet east of the east edge of Indianapolis Boulevard in East Chicago, IN, at railroad Valuation Station (140 + 00), a distance of 2.3 miles in Cook County, IL, and Lake County, IN. The line includes approximately 0.4 mile of track in Hammond, in the vicinity of Sohl Avenue and Hohman Avenue, owned by the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway Company, over which IHB seeks to discontinue trackage rights. The line traverses U.S. Postal Service Zip Codes 60603, 46320, and 46312. There are no stations on the line.

The line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in the railroad's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it. The interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions set forth in Oregon Short Line R. Co.-Abandonment--Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

STB Docket No. Ab-317 (Sub-No. 5X)

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by December 11, 1998.

Any offer of financial assistance (OFA) under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 10 days after service of a decision granting the petition for exemption. Each OFA must be accompanied by a \$1,000 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested persons should be aware that, following abandonment of rail service and salvage of the line, the line may be suitable for other public use, including interim trail use. Any request for a public use condition under 49 CFR 1152.28 or for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be due no later than October 5, 1998. Each trail use request must be accompanied by a \$150 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(27).

All filings in response to this notice must refer to STB Docket No. AB-317 (Sub-No. 5X) and must be sent to: (1) Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001, and (2) Roger A. Serpe, 175 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1460, Chicago, IL 60604-2704. Replies to the IHB petition are due on or before October 5, 1998.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment procedures may contact the Board's Office of Public Services at (202) 565-1592 or refer to the full abandonment or discontinuance regulations at 49 CFR part 1152. Questions concerning environmental issues may be directed to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) at (202) 565-1545. [TDD for the hearing impaired is available at (202) 565-1695.]

An environmental assessment (EA) (or environmental impact statement (EIS), if necessary) prepared by SEA will be served upon all parties of record and upon any agencies

or other persons who commented during its preparation. Other interested persons may contact SEA to obtain a copy of the EA (or EIS). EAs in these abandonment proceedings normally will be available within 60 days of the filing of the petition. The deadline for submission of comments on the EA will generally be within 30 days of its service.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at
“WWW.STB.DOT.GOV.”

Decided: September 8, 1998.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary