

SERVICE DATE - MAY 22, 1998

29164

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-32 (SUB-NO. 86X)

BOSTON AND MAINE CORPORATION
-- ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION -- IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MA

AND

NO. AB-355 (SUB-NO. 24X)

SPRINGFIELD TERMINAL RAILWAY COMPANY
-- DISCONTINUANCE OF SERVICE -- IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MA

BACKGROUND

In AB-32 (Sub-No. 86X) proceeding, the Boston and Maine Corporation (B&M) 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 Engineering Stations 87 + 90 and 184 + 25, a distance of 1.82 miles in Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, B&M will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

In AB-355 (Sub-No. 24X), the Springfield Terminal Railway Company (STR) seeks authority to discontinue service over the same B&M line described above.

No rail traffic has moved over the line for over two years.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroads have 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 railroads have 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 verified the record in these proceedings. Responses to the railroads' requests for comments thus far have not indicated a need for mitigation conditions.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment and/or discontinuance authority.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, 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 proposing abandonment 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 proposing abandonment, 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, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Harold McNulty, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket Nos. AB-32 (Sub-No.86X) and AB-355 (Sub-No. 24X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mr. McNulty at (202) 565-1539.

Date made available to the public: May 19, 1998.

Comment due date: June 2, 1998.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

PLEASE SCAN MAP.