

28621

SERVICE DATE - DECEMBER 2, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-55 (Sub. No. 554X)

CSX Transportation, Inc.  
Abandonment Exemption in  
Jasper County, SC and Chatham County, GA

**BACKGROUND**

In the above entitled proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) 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 rail line from Milepost SHC-497.59 near South Hardeeville, South Carolina to Milepost SHC-505.05, and from Milepost SH-505.05 to Milepost SH-510.06 at North Savannah, Georgia and the Hutchinson Island Spur from Milepost SHB-509.93 to Milepost SHB-511.66, a total distance of approximately 14.20 miles, in Jasper County, South Carolina and Chatham County, Georgia. 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.

**Description of the Line**

In its application, CSXT states that the principal commodities transported over the line during previous years consisted of cement and slag. During the past two years the line has not carried any rail traffic. Beginning near South Hardeeville, SC, the line traverses in a southerly direction, through pine forests, marshlands, the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, ending in an industrial district on Hutchinson Island, GA.

**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 and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local

agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. A number of agencies responded by letter and these letters were included in Applicants' application. We have investigated the record in this proceeding.

The Savannah District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has informed us that authorization from both the Savannah District and the Charleston District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would be required for the abandonment and/or removal of CSXT's rail line bridge across the Broad River. Accordingly, we will recommend the imposition of a condition requiring CSXT to consult with both the Savannah District and the Charleston District offices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before commencing any salvage activities involving the Broad River bridge.

The Georgia Historic Preservation Division has informed us that it has been unable to complete its review pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because CSXT did not provide sufficient information. Therefore, we will recommend the imposition of a Section 106 condition prohibiting CSXT from commencing salvage activities for the portion of the line within Georgia until the Section 106 process has been completed.

#### **CONDITIONS**

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

The Savannah District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has informed us that authorization from both the Savannah District and the Charleston District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would be required for the abandonment and/or removal of CSXT's rail line bridge across the Broad River. Accordingly, we will recommend the imposition of a condition requiring CSXT to consult with both the Savannah District and the Charleston District offices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before commencing any salvage activities involving the Broad River bridge.

The Georgia Historic Preservation Division has not completed its assessment of the potential impact of this project on historic resources. Accordingly, a condition is recommended requiring that CSXT shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way in Georgia 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.

### **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 Surface Transportation 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 Surface Transportation 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 the Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, 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, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Dana White, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub No. 554X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to Harold McNulty at (202) 565-1539.**

Date made available to the public: November 28, 1997.

Comment due date: **December 12, 1997 (15 days).**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment

MAP HAS AS TO BE SCANNED.

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