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SERVICE DATE - AUGUST 17, 2001

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-565 (Sub-No. 3X)

New York Central Lines, LLC—Abandonment Exemption—
in Berkshire County, MA

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, New York Central Lines, LLC (NYC) and CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT)(collectively, applicants) jointly filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for NYC to abandon and CSXT to discontinue service over approximately 1.91 miles of railroad between milepost QBH-0.59 and milepost QBY-2.50 in Pittsfield in Berkshire County, MA.¹ 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

The rail line travels in a northerly direction within the corporate limits of the city of Pittsfield. The right-of-way width varies between 30 and 60 feet from centerline of the track. NYC and CSXT state that there has been no traffic on the line during the past two years.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

NYC and 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. NYC and 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 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: Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission; City Planning Department, City of Pittsfield; Coastal Zone Management; District Conservationist, Natural Resource Conservation Service; Massachusetts

¹ This case embraces STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 595X) - CSX Transportation, Inc.—Discontinuance of Service Exemption—in Berkshire County, MA.

Department Of Environmental Protection; National Geodetic Survey; National Park Service; the State Historic Preservation Office, Massachusetts Historical Commission; State Single Point of Contact Economic Development Department; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1; and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service indicates that there is a portion of Winooski soil at the southern portion of the right-of-way in proximity to the east of side of the rail line. NYC and CSXT state that simple removal of track should not have an adverse impact on any prime farmland.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified three geodetic station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS requests that it receive not less than 90 days' notification in advance of any salvage activities in order to plan for their relocation. NGS also sent a copy of the list and location of the markers to CSXT.

CONDITIONS

The NGS has identified three geodetic station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend that NYC consult with the NGS and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to disturbing or destroying any geodetic station markers in order to plan for their relocation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended condition, 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 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 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 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, 1925 K St., N.W., 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, 1925 K St., N.W., Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-565 (Sub-No. 3X)** in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1629.

Date made available to the public: August 17, 2001.

Comment due date: September 4, 2001.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.