

38380
SEA

SERVICE DATE – SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-43 (Sub-No. 180X)

**Illinois Central Railroad Company –
Abandonment Exemption –
In Adams County, MS**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Illinois Central Railroad Company (IC) filed a notice under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in the City of Natchez, in Adams County, Mississippi. The line extends from Milepost 148.21 to Milepost 148.67, a distance of 0.46 miles. According to IC, the line has not served any customers in many years, but previously provided service to a paper mill, a tire plant, and manufacturing companies. IC certifies that there are no customers on the line and no revenue cars have used the line for at least two years. Additionally, no overhead traffic would have to be rerouted over other lines as a result of the abandonment. The portion of line to be abandoned travels through industrial sections of Natchez on the east side of U.S. Highway 84, and traverses Zip Code 39120. A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

IC submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. IC served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)].¹ The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Diversion of Traffic

¹ The railroad's environmental and historic reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.dot.gov by going to "E-Library," selecting "Filings," and then conducting a search for AB-43 (Sub-No. 180X).

IC states that no local traffic has moved over the line for at least two years and no overhead traffic would be rerouted. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; or result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network.

Salvage Activities

Impacts from salvage and disposal of a rail line typically include removal of tracks and ties, removal of ballast, dismantling of any bridges or other structures that may be present on the rail right-of-way, and regrading of the right-of-way. Salvage may be performed within the right-of-way, or, if necessary, via the construction of new access points to the right-of-way. Following abandonment, IC intends to salvage the rail, ties and track material.

SEA believes that any air emissions associated with salvage operations would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Noise associated with salvage activities would also be temporary and should not have a significant impact on the area surrounding the proposed abandonment.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources commented that the proposed abandonment would have no direct or indirect impacts on coastal wetlands. Therefore, SEA has determined that no further consultation is necessary.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) commented that due to an unexpectedly heavy workload, it would have to defer comments indefinitely. Therefore, SEA has included the USACE on the service list for this proceeding and will incorporate any comments that the agency may have on the EA.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service commented that the proposed abandonment would have no adverse effects on prime agricultural soils. Therefore, SEA has determined that no further consultation is necessary.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service commented that the proposed abandonment would have no significant adverse impacts on wetlands or rare, threatened or endangered species. Therefore, SEA has determined that no further consultation is necessary.

Based on all information available to date, SEA does not believe that salvage activities would cause significant environmental impacts. In addition to the parties on the Board's service list for this proceeding, SEA is providing a copy of this EA to the following agencies for review and comment: the Mississippi Department of Transportation; the National Parks Service; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the County Board of Supervisors; the USACE; the Mississippi Department of Natural Resources Wildlife, Fisheries, and the National Geodetic Survey.

HISTORIC REVIEW

IC served the historic report on the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). The SHPO has submitted comments stating that the proposed abandonment would not affect any known archaeological sites or historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). We have reviewed the report and the information provided by the SHPO and concur with the 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 800.5(c) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will not adversely 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 railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

SEA conducted a search of the National Park Service's Native American Consultation Database <http://home.nps.gov/nacd/> to identify Federally recognized tribes with interests and found that none exist within the project area.

CONDITIONS

SEA recommends that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes 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

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, 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. 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 (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at (202) 245-0230, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

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 Diana Wood, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, www.stb.dot.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-43 (Sub-No. 180X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Diana Wood, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0302, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at woodd@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: September 28, 2007.

Comment due date: October 15, 2007.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment