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SERVICE DATE - NOVEMBER 21, 1997

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-493 (SUB-NO.5X)

**Track Tech, Inc. -
Abandonment and Discontinuance Between
Amarillo and Bushland,, Potter County, TX**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Track Tech, Inc.(Track Tech)has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment and discontinuance of operations of a rail line located generally between Amarillo and Bushland in Potter County, Texas, a distance of approximately 13.90 miles. 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

In its application, Track Tech states that the line has been out of service since April, 1996 because of safety defects which would require substantial repairs to rectify. Given the minimal traffic volume on the line (one car forwarded in 1996 and only nine cars received), Track Tech has concluded that the line is no longer economically viable.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has 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 railroad has 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 investigated and reviewed the record in this proceeding.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has informed us that there are eight historic geodetic station markers along the line that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Track Tech has been provided with information regarding the location and description of these markers (copy of letter from NGS dated July 11, 1997 to Elaine K. Kaiser, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis sent to T. Scott Bannister, attorney for Track Tech). NGS requests that it be given notification not less than 90 days in advance of any salvage activities that may disturb or destroy these markers so that plans can be made for their relocation. We will recommend the imposition of such a condition.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that the following condition be placed on any Board decision granting abandonment and discontinuance authority:

Track Tech, Inc. will notify the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) not less than 90 days in advance of any salvage activities that may disturb or destroy the eight (8) historic geodetic station markers that NGS has identified along the line so that plans can be made for their relocation.

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

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 the petition for 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 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, Washington, DC 20423.

COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should 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- 4930 (Sub No. 5X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Dana White at (202) 565-1552.

Date made available to the public: 11/21/97.

Comment due date: 12/19/97. (30 Days)

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP HAS TO BE SCANNED