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OEA

SERVICE DATE – APRIL 17, 2015

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 43 (Sub-No. 189X)

**Illinois Central Railroad Company – Abandonment Exemption –
in Champaign County, Illinois**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Illinois Central Railroad Company (IC) filed a notice of exemption under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Champaign County, Illinois. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends 3.2 miles from milepost 7.8 in Bondville to milepost 11 in Seymour, Illinois (the Line). A map depicting the Line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

IC submitted an Environmental Report that concludes that 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. 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 C.F.R. § 1105.7(b)].¹ The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

¹ The 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. 189X).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	
Transportation System	No significant impact.
Land Use	No significant impact.
Energy	No significant impact.
Air	No significant impact.
Noise	No significant impact.
Safety	No significant impact.
Biological Resources	No significant impact.
Water	No significant impact.
Historic Report	No significant impact.

**NO CONDITIONS
RECOMMENDED**

Diversion of Traffic

According to IC, no local traffic has moved over the line for at least two years and all overhead traffic was rerouted several years ago. 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

If the Board should grant IC authority to abandon the Line, IC intends to salvage the rails, ties, and track material. According to IC, the railbed and subgrade would remain in place. IC states that the Line crosses a waterway at a trestle bridge near milepost 8.2; though it intends to salvage track and ties, IC would leave the bridge and other materials in place. IC plans to conduct salvage activities using the existing right-of-way and public road crossings for access without constructing any new access roads. According to IC, salvage activities would not cause sedimentation or erosion of the soil, and IC does not anticipate any dredging or use of fill when removing the track material. IC states that it would not discard debris along the right-of-way and that it would take appropriate measures to prevent or control spills from fuels, lubricants or any other pollutant materials while conducting any work along the right-of-way.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) concluded that the proposed abandonment would not involve the discharge of fill material in waters of the United States. Therefore, a Corps permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1344) would not be required. The Line does not pass through any 100-year flood zones.

According to IC, the Line runs through a flat, rural section of Champaign County, with a right-of-way approximately 100 feet wide throughout all but the half-mile section that runs

through the town of Seymour. In Seymour, the width of the Line varies, but is generally about 60 feet wide. IC states that the Line connects to another former Illinois Central Gulf Railroad (predecessor to IC) right-of-way that was previously abandoned under the two year out of service exemption in AB 43 (Sub-No. 112X), served April 25, 1984.

IC received several responses from contacted agencies. The Illinois Coastal Management Program (ICMP) stated that the proposed work falls outside the boundaries of the ICMP and therefore, would not require a Federal Consistency Determination. The National Geodetic Survey determined that there are no geodetic station markers in the project area. The Natural Resource Conservation Service determined that this project would have no impact on prime or important farmlands.

OEA 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.

Based on all information available to date, OEA does not believe that salvage activities would cause significant environmental impacts.

HISTORIC REVIEW

IC served the Historic Report on the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 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). OEA has reviewed the report and the information provided by the SHPO, and we concur with the SHPO's comments.

Pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 C.F.R. § 800.4(d)(1), and following consultation with the SHPO and the public, we have determined that no known historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register would be affected within the right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect, or APE) of the proposed abandonment. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 C.F.R. § 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 through posting on the Board's website at www.stb.dot.gov.

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.2, OEA conducted a search of the Native American Consultation Database to identify federally-recognized tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area.² The database indicated that the following federally-recognized

² Native American Consultation Database, <http://grants.cr.nps.gov/nacd/index.cfm> (last visited April 7, 2015).

tribes may have knowledge regarding properties of traditional religious and cultural significance within the right-of-way (the APE) of the proposed abandonment: Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Oklahoma; Forest County Potawatomi Community, Wisconsin; Hannahville Indian Community, Michigan; Kickapoo Tribe of Indians of the Kickapoo Reservation in Kansas; and the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma. Accordingly, OEA is sending a copy of this EA to those tribes for review and comment.

CONDITIONS

OEA recommends that no conditions should be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, OEA 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 C.F.R. § 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 C.F.R. § 1152.29).

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Board's Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact this office directly at (202) 245-0238, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance, 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 Adam Assenza, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's website, www.stb.dot.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB 43 (Sub-No. 189X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Adam Assenza, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0301, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at adam.assenza@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: April 17, 2015.

Comment due date: May 4, 2015.

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Director, Office of Environmental Analysis.

Attachment