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SERVICE DATE - JANUARY 16, 2004

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB DOCKET NO. AB-43 (Sub-No. 175X)

**Illinois Central Railroad Company – Abandonment Exemption –
in Mobile County, AL**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Illinois Central Railroad Company (IC), has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for IC to abandon approximately 1.03 miles of rail line extending from Milepost 3.67 to Milepost 4.7, in the City of Prichard, Mobile County, AL. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, IC will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

IC is a Class I carrier and a wholly-owned subsidiary of Canadian National Railway Company. According to IC, the line is part of the old Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad mainline. The line generally travels in a northwest to southeast direction through an already developed, urban area, and the right-of-way is 50 feet from the centerline of track. The line passes underneath a federal highway overpass (I-65), and abandonment of the line will allow for the elimination of three highway rail at-grade crossings.

According to IC, there has been no traffic on the line for at least two years, and Baird Steel, Inc., was the last customer located on the line.

IC states that there are no buildings, railroad bridges or other structures located within the abandonment area except for one 18-inch culvert. IC further states that it does not intend to remove the underlying roadbed or culvert.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

IC 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 applicant 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)]. We have reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Mobile County Public Works submitted a letter stating that the Mobile County Commission does not have jurisdiction over the environmental issues inside the corporate boundary of the City of Prichard.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, determined that the proposed abandonment is in a nonwetland/upland area. Therefore, a Department of the Army permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344) would not be required.

The State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), states that there are numerous sensitive species in Mobile County. However, DCNR states that, based on available information, the abandonment appears to present no threat to known sensitive species in the immediate vicinity. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also reviewed the proposed abandonment and indicates that there are no listed, proposed or candidate species present.

IC states that the line is not within any wildlife sanctuaries, National or State parks or forests. Additionally, IC states that the right-of-way may be suitable for use as a recreational trail or other similar public purpose.

HISTORIC REVIEW

IC submitted a historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. IC served the report on the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). AHC has submitted comments stating that no cultural resources would be affected by the proposed abandonment. We have reviewed the report and the information provided by AHC and concur with AHC'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 800.4(d)(1) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will not 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 applicant's/railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to AHC and made available to the public.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that no conditions be placed on this abandonment proceeding.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended conditions are imposed, 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 (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 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 Christa Dean, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-43 (Sub No. 175X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Christa Dean, the environmental contact for this case by phone at (202) 565-1606, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at deanc@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: January 16, 2004.

Comment due date: February 2, 2004.

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

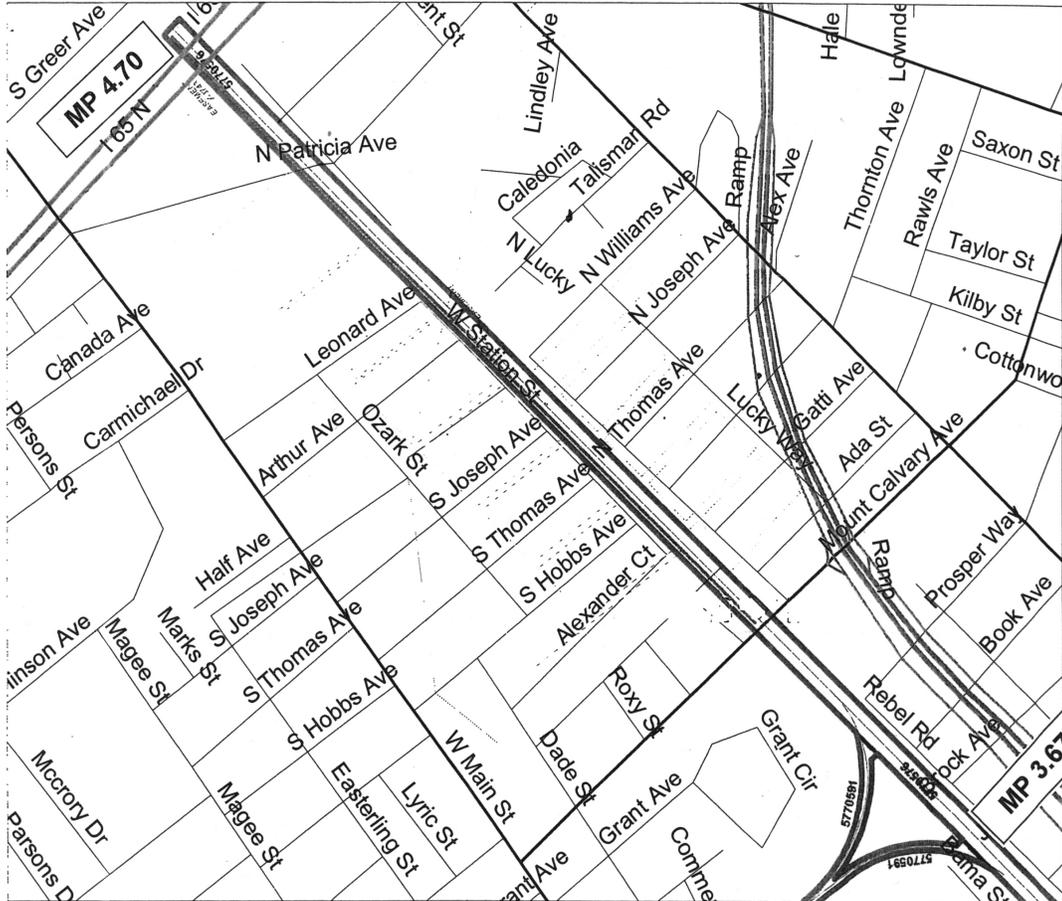
Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

AB-43 (Sub-No. 175X)

OEEAA 34346

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
PRICHARD, ALABAMA



SCALE 1 : 7,187

