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SERVICE DATE - APRIL 3, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-55 (SUB-NO.540X)

CSX TRANSPORTATION, INC.
ABANDONMENT IN LOGAN COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its railroad line located between Milepost CLF-51.76 at Sharples and Milepost CLF-62.59 at Kelly, a distance of approximately 10.83 miles, in Logan County, West Virginia. Coal was previously transported over this line but there have been no originating or terminating movements in the past seven to eight years. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. 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

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 the record in this proceeding. Also, we have contacted 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 the Department of the Army, Huntington District, Corps of Engineers, the West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection, and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

CONDITIONS

The West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer indicates that the entire line between Sharples and Kelly is of historic value. Therefore we recommend imposition of the following condition:

CSX Transportation, Inc. shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of the line in its entirety until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

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 any of these cases, 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 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. 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, Room 848, Washington, DC 20423.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and one copy** to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Scott Decker, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 540X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mr. Decker at (202) 565-1531.

Date made available to the public: March 28, 1997.

Comment due date: April 17, 1997.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary