

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO AB-55 (SUB-NO-536 X)

**CSX TRANSPORTATION INC ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION IN VIGO COUNTY,
INDIANA****BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, the CSX Transportation, Inca (CSXT) 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 of its railroad line located between Milepost ZY-0.00 at Dewey (near Terre Haute) and Milepost ZY-2.6 at the end of the track, a distance of 2.6 miles in Vigo County, Indiana. 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

The last remaining patron on the branch, Alcan Rolled Products (Alcan Ingot Recycling), receives petroleum handled by CSXT for its own account and in reciprocal switch service for Conrail. In 1995, Alcan received 5 carloads of petroleum via rail, During the first nine months of 1996, Alcan received only 1 carload of petroleum via rail. Following abandonment of the line, Alcan could utilize bulk motor carriers exclusively to handle the small volume of petroleum now moving via rail. The right of way varies in width from 40 to 100 feet wide beginning at the rail siding in Dewey, IN, and ending at the center line of 13th Street. Abandonment of the line would also eliminate eight road crossings.

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 consulted with 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Indiana

Department of Natural Resources.

CONDITIONS

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology has indicated that if any archaeological artifacts or human remains are uncovered during construction, work must stop and discovery must be reported to the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology within two (2) business days. Accordingly, we recommend imposition of the following condition: If any archaeological artifacts or human remains are found during salvage activities, the CSX Transportation, Inc. shall cease work in the area and immediately contact the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology.

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

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 Assistance (OPA) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPA directly at (202) 9276184, or mail inquiries to surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Room 4412, 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, Room 2221, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Scott Decker, who prepared this environmental assessment, Please refer to Docket No* AB-55 (Sub No.536 X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Scott Decker at (202) 927-6396.

Date made available to the public: December 23, 1996

Comment due date: January 22, 1997

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

Environmental Analysis,

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary

