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SERVICE DATE - DECEMBER 1, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AB-535X, West Central Ohio Port Authority - Abandonment Exemption  
- between Glen Echo and Springfield,  
in Clark County, OH

AB-536X, The Indiana and Ohio Central Railroad Company, Inc. -  
Discontinuance of Service Exemption - between Gen Echo and  
Springfield, in Clark County, OH

### BACKGROUND

In the 535X proceeding, the West Central Ohio Port Authority (Westco) 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 Glen Echo and Springfield, a distance of 5.6 miles in Clark County, Ohio. In the 536X proceeding, the Indiana and Ohio Central Railroad (I&O) seeks to discontinue service over the same rail line. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, Westco will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way and I&O will be able to discontinue service over the line.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroads have 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 railroads have 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 railroads' report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Geodetic Survey, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, and the Clark County Planning Commission.

### CONDITIONS

The National Geodetic Survey has identified four geodetic station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend that the following condition be imposed: **West Central Ohio Port Authority shall provide the National Geodetic Survey at least 90 days' notice before engaging in activities that would disturb or destroy the previously identified four station markers.**

The Ohio Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) notes that the northern portion of the line proposed for abandonment traverses part of the Mad River valley, an area considered archaeologically sensitive. The SHPO requests additional information from West Central Ohio Port Authority. Therefore, we recommend imposition of the following condition: **West Central Ohio Port Authority shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the line proposed for abandonment 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 conditions, 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. Applicants state that if abandonment is approved, the City of Springfield intends to acquire the right-of-way for sanitary and storm water sewers, and possibly transportation. 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) 565-1594, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Room 4412, Washington, DC 20423.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Victoria Rutson, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-535X and AB 536X in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ms. Rutson at (202) 565-1545.

Date made available to the public: November 25.

**Comment due date: December 8, 1997.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

MAP TO BE SCANNED