

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**STB Docket No. AB-589X¹**Monon Rail Preservation Corporation—Abandonment
Exemption-in Monroe County, IN****BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, Monon Rail Preservation Corporation (Monon) and the Indiana Rail Road Company (INRD) (collectively, petitioners) jointly filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for Monon to abandon and for INRD to discontinue service over a 1,500-foot segment of Monon's Ellettsville Line,² extending from the end of the line at milepost Q213.41 (Valuation Station 11265+83) to milepost Q213.69 (Valuation Station 11280+83), in Monroe County, IN. 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

Petitioners state the only shipper on the line is Wickes Lumber and arrangements has been made to provide alternate service by a transload from Indianapolis, IN, and later from Bloomington, IN, when a lumber transload facility is built there. Petitioners state that traffic has steadily declined from 19 cars in 1999, 10 cars in 2000, and 3 cars in the first five months of 2001, and that they do not foresee any significant increase in traffic. According to petitioners,

¹ The notice served September 10, 2001, embraced STB Docket No. AB-295 (Sub-No. 4X), The Indiana Rail Road Company—Discontinuance of Service Exemption—in Monroe County, IN. The docket number of the parties were transposed in the petition for exemption.

² INRD was granted local trackage rights over the entire Ellettsville Lin in The Indiana Rail Road Company—Trackage Rights Exemption—Monon Rail Preservation Corporation, STB Finance Docket No. 33669 (STB served Oct. 16, 1998). Subsequently, IND was authorized to operate the Ellettsville Line in The Indiana Rail Road Company—Operation Exemption—Monon Rail Preservation Corporation, STB Finance Docket No. 33670 (STB served Feb. 21, 2001). Although petitioners characterize INRD's transaction as a discontinuance of trackage rights, they are technically seeking with respect to the 1,500-foot segment, discontinuance of INRD's service under the operating agreement, which superseded the trackage rights.

the proposed line is located on the approach of a semi-commercial area of a small town that is generally rural. The right-of-way is approximately 25 feet wide.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Petitioners 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. Monon and INRD 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 at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). 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: Frank Sullivan, Budget Director, State Budget Agency; Department of Environmental Management; Monroe County Commissioners; Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; National Park Service; Natural Resources Conservation Service; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Geodetic Survey; and the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology.

In a letter to petitioners dated August 28, 2001, The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) states that the information submitted is incomplete and requested additional information about resources on the line.

CONDITIONS

We recommend the following environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority:

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, State Historic Preservation Officer has not yet completed its determination of historic significance of the right-of-way and requested additional information from petitioners. Therefore, we recommend that a condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority, requiring Monon to 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. 470(f).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, 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 this case, 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 not 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 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 responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, 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, Room 711, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-589X** in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1629.

Date made available to the public: October 19, 2000.

Comment due date: November 19, 2000.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.