

**35303
SEA**

SERVICE DATE – DECEMBER 3, 2004

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 250X)

**Norfolk Southern Railway Company – Abandonment Exemption –
in Champaign County, IL**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Champaign County, Illinois. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends 0.18-mile from milepost UM 28.50 to milepost UM 28.68 in Urbana. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, NS will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

NS states that no traffic has originated, terminated or moved overhead on the line for at least two years. According to NS, the line is a segment that is the dead-end of a line that was previously abandoned by Consolidated Rail Corporation up to this point, and the land use along the right-of-way is 20 percent residential, 10 percent unimproved, and 70 percent forest. NS states the portions of the right-of-way that it owns would be allowed to naturally revegetate.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

NS 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. NS served the environmental report 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.

NS states that it does not intend to appreciably remove or alter the contour of the roadbed underlying the rail line, and disturbed areas will be limited to the right-of-way wherever possible. NS has no plans to undertake in-stream work or dredge and/or fill any materials in connection with the proposed abandonment. The line passes through 100-year floodplains. We have included the appropriate offices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management

Agency on the service list for this proceeding to ensure that they receive a copy of this Environmental Assessment.

According to NS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and/or the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Natural Resources Review and Coordination Division have indicated that 26 threatened and endangered species occur in Illinois. NS states that the Federally-listed Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*) occurs in Champaign County. Accordingly, we will recommend a condition requiring NS to consult with the appropriate office of FWS prior to beginning salvage activities regarding impacts to Federally-listed threatened and endangered species that may occur in the vicinity of the line proposed for abandonment and to report the results of the consultation to the Section of Environmental Analysis.

HISTORIC REVIEW

NS submitted an historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. NS served the report on the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). In the report, NS states that there are no structures on the line that are 50 years old or older. The SHPO has submitted comments stating that no historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected by the proposed abandonment. We have reviewed the report and the information provided by the SHPO and concur with the SHPO'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 NS's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

CONDITIONS

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

Norfolk Southern Railway Company shall consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Rock Island Field Office (Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4469 48th Avenue Court, Rock Island, Illinois 61201) regarding impacts to Federally-listed threatened and endangered species that may occur in the vicinity of the line proposed for abandonment and report the results of the consultation to the Section of Environmental Analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is 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. NS states that it does not have fee title to the entire right-of-way of the line proposed for abandonment and would not have a contiguous corridor available for public use. NS states that it believes the right-of-way would not be suitable for other forms of mass transit, energy production, conservation or recreation corridors, or alternate public use.

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. 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 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.

COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Rini Ghosh, who prepared this environmental assessment. Environmental

comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, www.stb.dot.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 250X) in all correspondence, including e-filings addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Rini Ghosh, the environmental contact for this case by phone at (202) 565-1539, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at ghoshr@stb.dot.gov.

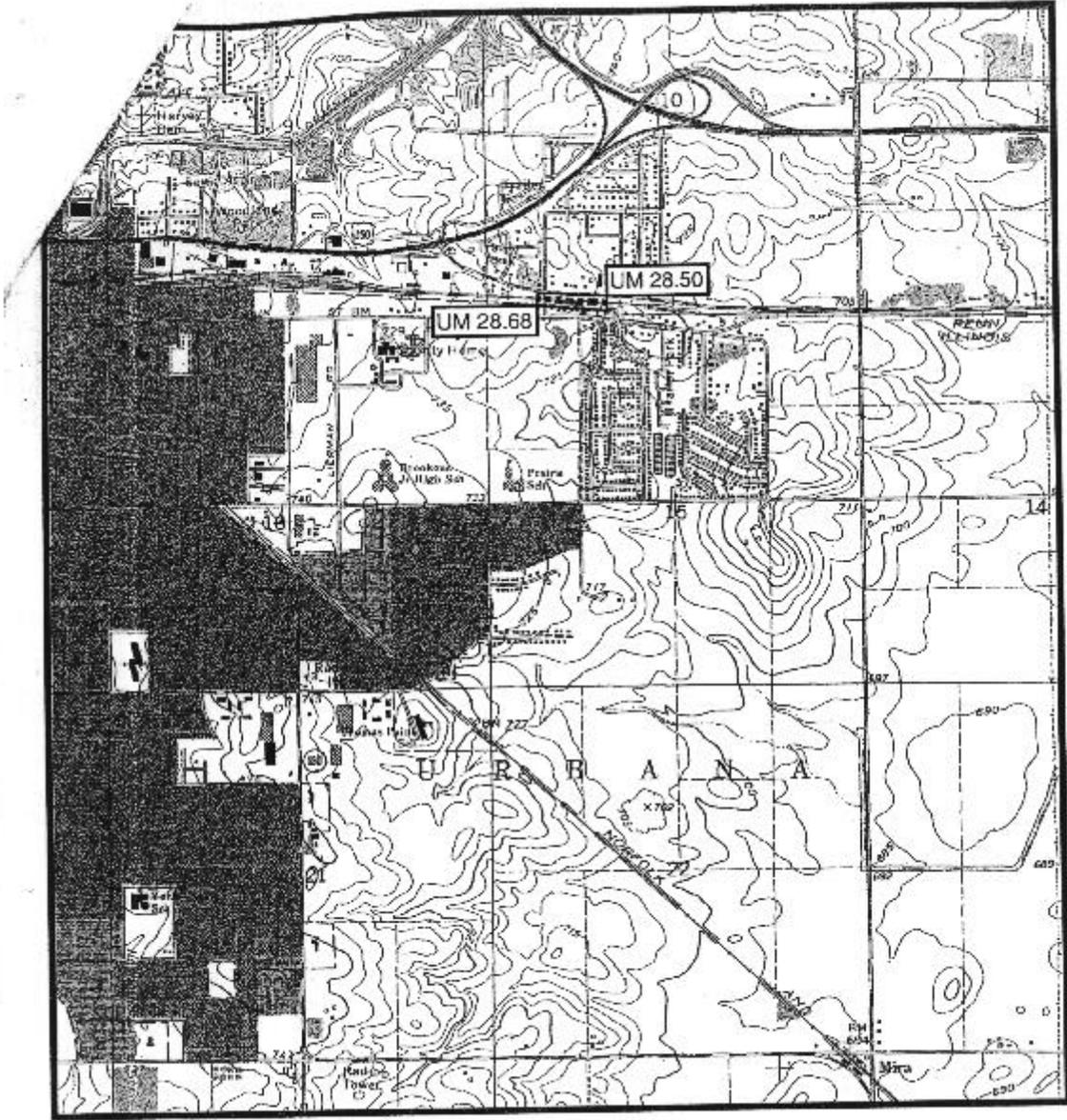
Date made available to the public: December 3, 2004

Comment due date: December 17, 2004.

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

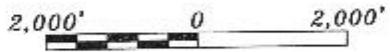
Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment



SECTION L.D. 100 - 33000
 AFD-290 (508 - No. 250X)

NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY - URBANA, ILLINOIS
 NORTH CENTRAL PORTION OF USGS 7.5' URBANA, IL. QUADRANGLE



Urbana, Illinois
 Proposed Abandonment NS District
 MP UM 28.50 to UM 28.68 25



ILLINOIS QUADRANGLE LOCATION