

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 452X)**

**BNSF Railway Company –  
Abandonment Exemption –  
In Clinton and Marion Counties, IL**

**BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF RAIL LINE**

In this proceeding, the BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) filed a notice under 49 CFR 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of the Sparta-Centralia line in Clinton and Marion Counties, in southern Illinois. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends from Milepost 13.97 to Milepost 15.02, a distance of 1.05 miles. BNSF states that at one time the line served two Union Pacific railroad Company (UP) customers, Valley Steel and Mill Lumber. BNSF indicates that some time around 1989, one of its predecessors, Burlington Northern, acquired the 1.05 miles of trackage and began serving the two customers. However, in 1991, Valley Steel went out of business and in 1995, Miller Lumber burned down. According to BNSF, it removed portions of the rail line in 2000, including trackage and switches, due to high maintenance costs. The Sparta-Centralia line is located in an urban area, serving both residential and light industrial land uses, and traverses United States Postal Zip Code 62801. A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA).

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

BNSF submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. BNSF served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)].<sup>1</sup> The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

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<sup>1</sup> The railroad's environmental and historic reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov) by going to "E-Library," selecting "Filings," and then conducting a search for AB-6 (Sub-No. 452X).

### *Diversion of Traffic*

BNSF states that no local traffic has moved over the line for at least two years and no overhead traffic would be rerouted. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; or result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network.

### *Salvage Activities*

Impacts from salvage and disposal of a rail line typically include removal of tracks and ties, removal of ballast, dismantling of any bridges or other structures that may be present on the rail right-of-way, and regrading of the right-of-way. Salvage may be performed within the right-of-way, or, if necessary, via the construction of new access points to the right-of-way. As stated previously, BNSF indicates that it removed portions of the line in 2000, including trackage and switches, due to high maintenance costs. Should the Board grant BNSF authority to abandon the rail line, BNSF's common carrier obligation on the rail line will be extinguished and BNSF would then be able to salvage the remainder of this line without violating its common carrier obligation.

SEA believes that any air emissions associated with salvage operations would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Noise associated with salvage activities would also be temporary and should not have a significant impact on the area surrounding the proposed abandonment.

BNSF states that it has no knowledge of hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been known hazardous materials spills on the right-of-way or in adjacent areas. Additionally, BNSF states that the abandonment would have no adverse effect on health or public safety because there are no public or private crossings on the line.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service commented that the proposed abandonment would have no effect on prime farmland, therefore no further action is required.

BNSF contacted the U.S Department of Interior (USDO I), the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wild Service (USFWS) to determine if the proposed abandonment would pass through any state parks or forests, national parks or forests, or wildlife sanctuaries. The USDO I commented that it does not own any lands or have interests in any lands within the vicinity of the proposed abandonment. The NPS commented that the proposed abandonment would not impact any land within the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Urban Park and Recreation Recovery programs. The BLM commented that the proposed abandonment would not impact any of its Federal land programs. The USFWS commented that it does not own land or have any interests in land within the

vicinity of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, SEA has determined that the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact any national parks or forests, or wildlife sanctuaries.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency commented that appropriate measures should be taken prior to the salvage process to ensure adequate spill protection and proper handling and disposal of debris. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency commented that a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Permit is not required under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act, therefore no further action is required.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) commented that there are no wetlands or Waters of the United States within the area of the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act is not required.

The City of Centralia commented that the proposed abandonment would not impact any 100-year floodplain within the corporate city limits, east of Cherry Street. However, it states that the area west of Cherry Street is outside its jurisdiction and would need to be evaluated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). SEA has added FEMA to the service list to ensure it receives a copy of the EA for review and comment.

The City of Centralia commented that the proposed abandonment is consistent with local land use plans, noting that the abandoned right-of-way would be suitable for expansion of industrial uses, as a recreational trail, or as a roadway to improve traffic circulation.

Based on all information available to date, SEA does not believe that salvage activities would cause significant environmental impacts. In addition to the parties on the Board's service list for this proceeding, SEA is providing a copy of this EA to the following agencies for review and comment: Illinois Department of Natural Resources, FEMA, the Clinton County Board of Commissioners, the City of Centralia, the Marion County Board, the National Geodetic Survey, and the State of Illinois.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

BNSF served the historic report on the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). The SHPO has submitted comments stating that the proposed abandonment would not affect any known archaeological sites or historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). 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 800.5(c) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will not adversely 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 railroad's

historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

SEA conducted a search of the National Park Service's Native American Consultation Database <http://home.nps.gov/nacd/> to identify Federally recognized tribes that may have an interest in the project. The data base indicated that the Delaware Nation, the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri, the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma, and the Sac and Fox Tribe of Mississippi in Iowa may have an interest in the proposed abandonment. Consequently, SEA will ensure that the tribes receive a copy of this EA for their review and comment.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes 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.

## **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 (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at (202) 245-0230, 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, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Diana Wood, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's web site, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 452X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Diana Wood, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0302, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at [woodd@stb.dot.gov](mailto:woodd@stb.dot.gov).

Date made available to the public: April 27, 2007.

**Comment due date: May 14, 2007.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachments