

29330
DO

SERVICE DATE - JUNE 17, 1998

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Docket No. AB-303 (Sub-No. 17X)

WISCONSIN CENTRAL LTD.--ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION--
IN MARQUETTE AND ALGER COUNTIES, MI

Decided: June 11, 1998

On December 19, 1997, a decision and notice of interim trail use or abandonment (NITU) was served, authorizing a 180-day period for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to negotiate an interim trail use/rail banking agreement with Wisconsin Central Ltd. (WCL) for an approximately 37.3-mile line of railroad on the Marquette-Munising Line, between milepost 154, at a point east of Marquette, and milepost 116.7 in Munising Junction, in Marquette and Alger Counties, MI.¹ The 180-day period under the NITU is scheduled to expire on June 19, 1998.

By letter dated June 3, 1998, MDNR filed a request to extend the negotiation period for an additional 180 days. MDNR states that it is continuing to negotiate with WCL for an interim trail use/rail banking agreement. By letter filed June 9, 1998, WCL states that it supports the extension request.²

Because WCL is willing to continue trail use negotiations with MDNR and an extension of the negotiation period will promote the establishment of trail use and rail banking consistent with the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247(d) (Trails Act), the requested extension of the negotiation period under the NITU will be granted. The purpose of the Trails Act is to preserve rail corridors for possible reactivation of rail service permitting and encouraging their interim use as recreational trails. See Policy Statement on Rails to Trails Conversions, Ex Parte No. 274 (Sub-No. 13B) (ICC served Feb. 5, 1990).

This decision will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

It is ordered:

¹ The notice of the exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F--Exempt Abandonments was served and published in the Federal Register on November 21, 1997 (62 FR 62401-02)

² The official filing date of the MDNR letter was June 10, 1998, but WCL was clearly aware of it earlier than that, as reflected by its response filed on June 9, 1998.

STB Docket No. AB-303 (Sub-No. 17X)

1. The negotiating period under the NITU is extended to December 16, 1998.
2. The decision is effective on its service date.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary