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SERVICE DATE - APRIL 8, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-55 (SUB-NO. 535X)

CSX TRANSPORTATION, INC. -- ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION --
IN STARK COUNTY, OHIO

AND

NO. AB-227 (SUB-NO. 6X)

WHEELING & LAKE ERIE RAILWAY COMPANY -- DISCONTINUANCE
OF SERVICE EXEMPTION -- IN STARK COUNTY, OHIO

BACKGROUND

In the AB-55 (Sub-No. 535X) proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) 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 Milepost 16.0 and Milepost 15.3, a distance of 0.7 miles in the City of Canton, Stark County, Ohio. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, CSXT will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

In the AB-227 (Sub-No. 6X) proceeding, Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway Company (WLE) seeks a similar exemption in connection with discontinuance of service over the same line, which WLE leases from CSXT. WLE alone provides service on the line.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

WLE has used the line solely to reach another WLE line extending from Canton to Aultman, Ohio. There has been no local

traffic on the line for at least two years. The overhead traffic handled on the line by WLE has been rerouted over a Consolidated Rail Corporation line in Canton under WLE trackage rights which became effective March 3, 1997.

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 verified the record in this proceeding. Responses to the railroads' request for comments thus far have not indicated a need for mitigation conditions.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

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 and discontinuance of service 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 appropriate 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. 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) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, Washington, DC 20423.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and one copy** to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Harold McNulty, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket Nos. AB-55 (Sub-No. 535X) and AB-227 (Sub-No. 6X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Mr. McNulty at (202) 565-1539.

Date made available to the public: April 4, 1997.

Comment due date: April 21, 1997.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary