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SERVICE DATE - APRIL 30, 2004

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB DOCKET NO. AB-55 (Sub-No. 646X)

CSX Transportation, Inc. - Abandonment Exemption - in Pinellas County, FL

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSX or railroad) filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a line of railroad in Pinellas County, Florida (FL). The rail line proposed for abandonment is located between Milepost SY 893.80 and Milepost SY 895.65. The total distance is approximately 1.85 miles. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to this report.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The width of the right-of-way (ROW) varies from 15 to 50 feet from the centerline of the track. A bridge located at Milepost SY 895.30 is the only structure on the line that is 50 years of age or older. The 130-foot timber pile trestle bridge was built in 1931. CSX is not aware of any archeological resources along the ROW. Land use in the vicinity of the ROW is generally industrial. CSX is not aware of any hazardous material spill sites along the ROW.

Labar, Inc. (Labar) in Sarasota, FL and Cox Lumber Co. (Cox) in Lakeland, FL are the only shippers currently being served by the rail line. CSX states that it has reached agreements with both shippers to provide rail transportation service at alternative locations. Labar's principal commodity is bagged and palletized concrete. CSX moved 31, 21 and 15 railcars on Labar's behalf in the years 2003, 2002, and 2001, respectively. If abandonment authority is granted by the Board, Labar intends to utilize an alternative rail head, and move materials between the alternative rail head and its Sarasota facility by truck. Cox's principal commodity is lumber. CSX moved 47, 78 and 140 railcars on Cox's behalf in the years 2003, 2002, and 2001, respectively. If abandonment authority is granted by the Board, Cox intends to implement new rail service at its Tampa, FL facility.

According to CSX, portions of the subject rail line originated from the Orange Belt Railway Company, Sanford and St. Petersburg Railway Company, and Tampa & Gulf Coast Railroad Company. The Orange Belt Railway Company was conveyed by foreclosure to John P. Ilsley and

Joseph Clark, and subsequently conveyed to the Sanford and St. Petersburg Railway Company in 1894. The Sanford and St. Petersburg Railway Company was conveyed to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company in 1903. In July 1967, Seaboard Air Line and Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company merged to form the Seaboard Coast Line (SCL). In 1972, the Family Lines was adopted to identify the Louisville and Nashville Railroad and the SCL. In 1976, SCL acquired all the interests in the Tampa & Gulf Coast Railroad. On November 1, 1980, Seaboard Coast Line Industries, Inc. and Chessie System, Inc. merged and became CSX Corporation.

CSX plans on removing the rails, ties and possibly the upper layer of ballast along the subject ROW. All materials would be removed by using the existing ROW and existing public and private crossings for access. No new access roads are contemplated by CSX. CSX has stated that it does not intend to disturb any underlying road bed, perform activities that would result in erosion or sedimentation, or conduct any dredge or fill activities. The ties and other material and debris would be transported away from the ROW and would not be placed or left in any wetlands or streams, or along the banks of any waterways. CSX has also stated that it would implement appropriate measures to prevent or control spills of fuels, lubricants or other materials. There are twelve grade crossings along the rail line that would also be removed if abandonment authority is granted. Operation and maintenance of the line would cease.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad submitted environmental and historical reports that indicate that the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities. The railroad served these reports 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)]. The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service - Plant City Field Office (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) reviewed the railroad's environmental report and stated that prime agricultural land is not present along the ROW.

The proposed abandonment would not be expected to have adverse land use impacts. However, the City of St. Petersburg, FL expressed concern about potential negative impacts to Cox if abandonment authority is granted.

Because only limited rail traffic has moved on the subject rail line during the past two years (e.g., only 78 total railcars were moved on the subject line in 2003), the proposed abandonment would not be expected to adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities, 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.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Jacksonville District - Tampa Regulatory Office reviewed the railroad's environmental report and concluded that the proposed abandonment would not require Department of the Army permits under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 or Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had not responded at the time this environmental assessment (EA) was prepared. However, adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species and their habitat would not be expected because of the industrial nature of the surrounding land uses.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 4 stated that any permitting requirements under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program of the Clean Water Act would be determined by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). At the time this EA was prepared, FDEP's NPDES Section had not yet responded with a determination on the need for a stormwater permit under the NPDES program. Regarding other permitting requirements, FDEP referred the railroad to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). In its response, SWFWMD stated that an Environmental Resource Permit would not be required for rail and tie removal.

The FL Department of State, Division of Historical Resources (the State Historic Preservation Offices or SHPO) concluded that the proposed abandonment would have no effect on historic properties. SEA concurs with the SHPO's findings.

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 would 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 ROW 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 Surface Transportation Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 20 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 ROWs 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 the 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 Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of David Navecky, 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 STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 646X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to David Navecky at 202-565-1593 (naveckyd@stb.dot.gov).**

Date made available to the public: April 30, 2004.

Comment due date: **May 31, 2004.**

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

**ST. PETERSBURG
PINELLAS COUNTY**



CSX TRANSPORTATION

Proposed Abandonment
of 1.85 Miles

Line Name: Clearwater	VAL: SAL V12FL/L1/S-13,
Subdivision	S13A,S13B
County: Pinellas	GIS: 03766,03766,03767
State: Florida	Scale: 1" = 1000'
Fips: 12103	Date: 09/22/03
Site ID: FL-103-0987393	Drawn By: J.H.Sullivan

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Abandonment Exemption

In Pinellas County, Florida

Decision ID No. 34519