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SERVICE DATE - JULY 16, 2004

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AB-355 (Sub-No. 30X)

**Springfield Terminal Railway Company – Abandonment and Discontinuance Exemption
In Hampden County, MA**

BACKGROUND

The Springfield Terminal Railway Company (ST) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 to abandon and discontinue service over a line of railroad known as the Westover Industrial Track in Chicopee, Hampden County, Massachusetts extending from railroad milepost 0.0 milepost to milepost 4.8, a distance of 4.8 miles. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

CONTACTS AND PROCEDURES

The railroad has 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 railroad has 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 investigated the record in this proceeding. Also, we have consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Historic Preservation Officer, National Park Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and National Geodetic Survey.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

ST has certified that no local traffic has moved over the line for a least two years and there is no overhead traffic to be rerouted. The proposed abandonment should have no effect on regional or local transportation systems and patterns. No land use conflicts are anticipated. All activities associated with the proposed abandonment would be confined to the rail line right-of-way (ROW) and would not affect adjacent land use or any important farmland along the line.

The ROW is not located within a designated coastal zone. Based on information available to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it has determined that no federally-listed or proposed, threatened or endangered species or critical habitat under its jurisdiction are known to occur in the project area. The proposed abandonment and discontinuance should not result in any local or regional adverse impacts on air quality or noise levels. ST states in its notice of exemption that no known hazardous waste sites or spills exist on the ROW. Applicant does not contemplate any actions that are inconsistent with federal, state, and/or local water quality standards. Further, ST does not believe that the proposed action would require any permits under section 404 or 402 of the Clean Water Act.

Cultural and Historic Resources

The railroad submitted a historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. The applicant/railroad served the report on the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8 c). The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) reviewed its files and the information submitted by the railroad. MHC has determined that the proposed project is unlikely to any affect significant historic or archaeological resources. No further MHC review is required for this project in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR 800) and Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 9, Sections 26-27C (950 CMR 71).

CONDITIONS

No conditions are recommended.

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 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 any 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 the petition for 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) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, 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 Phillis Johnson-Ball, 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 355 (Sub No. 30X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Phillis Johnson-Ball at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: 7/16/04.

Comment due date: 8/2/04.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

WESTOVER INDUSTRIAL TRACK ABANDONMENT

Beginning of Abandonment
M.P. 0.0 = Sta. 0+00
Sta. 338+90 on
Connecticut River Main Line

End of Abandonment
M.P. 2.58 = Sta. 136+22

Operating Rights Only
M.P. 2.58 to M.P. 4.80

Springfield Terminal Railway Co.
Office of the Vice President-Engineering
Proposed Abandonment of Track
Between

M.P. 0.0 and M.P. 2.58
Proposed Abandonment of Operating Rights
M.P. 2.58 to M.P. 4.8
Westover Industrial Track
April 15, 2004

