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SERVICE DATE - SEPTEMBER 24, 2004

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 607X)

CSX Transportation, Inc.–Abandonment Exemption–
in Logan County, WV

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled 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 a 10.02-mile rail line of railroad in its Southern Region, Huntington Division, Buffalo Subdivision, extending from milepost CLU 6.3 at Franco to the end of the line at milepost CLU 16.32 near Saunders, in Logan County, WV. 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.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The right-of-way widths along this line vary between 30 and 80 feet from the center-line of track. The rail line traverses many small communities, rivers and streams. It closely parallels the Buffalo Creek and is located in a mountainous, forested area that contained several strip mines and mine dumps.

CSXT states that the proposed abandonment would result in the removal of the rail, crossties, and possibly the upper layer of ballast. Operations and maintenance of this line would then cease. CSXT further states that this line has the potential to generate future coal traffic, and that it is negotiating a post-abandonment lease with a coal company. The proposed lease would allow the infrastructure to remain in place while the lessee assumed responsibility for capital and maintenance cost. CSXT states that there is no CSXT passenger or freight traffic on the line.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

CSXT 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. CSXT served the environmental and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. Also consultations have been made 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: the County Planning

Commission, Mr. Fred Cutlip, Director Community Development Division; Military Traffic Management Command; National Geodetic Survey; National Park Service, Northeast Region; Public Service Commission; the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer for Resource Protection; U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Chief of Forest Service; U. S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service; U. S. Department of the Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service; U.S. Department of the Interior, Land Resources Division; U.S. Department of Interior - National Park Service, Recreation Resources Assistance Division; West Virginia Division of Culture and History; WV Division of EPA; West Virginia Railroad Maintenance Authority; and West Virginia State Rail Authority.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has submitted comments stating that 13 geodetic station markers have been identified that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS states that if there are any planned activities which will disturb or destroy these markers, NGS requires not less than 90 days notification in advance of such activities in order to plan for their relocation.

HISTORIC REVIEW

CSXT submitted a historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. CSXT served the report on Jennifer W. Murdock, West Virginia Division of Culture and History (SHPO), pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). The SHPO has submitted comments stating that maps and surveys in its files indicate that there are several properties located along the rail line proposed for abandonment connected with coal mining industry that could be considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. SHPO further states that if CSXT leases this rail line for continued rail use, then there will be no adverse effect to historic sites and structures. At this time, however, it remains unclear what the outcome of CSXT's negotiations will be, therefore, SEA is recommending imposition of the standard section 106 condition of the National Historic Preservation Act (requiring that CSXT shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way until completion of the section 106 process of the National Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f). Should CSXT lease the rail line at issue, it may then inform SEA of the lease and SEA will recommend to the Board that the section 106 condition be removed at that time.

According to CSXT, there is one CSXT-owned structure, Bridge No. 122, located at milepost CLU 12.2 which is a 90-foot deck plate girder bridge built in 1920.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that the following environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

1. CSXT shall consult with the NGS and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to

disturbing or destroying any geodetic station markers.

2. CSXT shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all sites and structures on the right-of-way until completion of the section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended conditions are 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 this case, 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, 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 responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K St., N.W., 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, 1925 K. St., N.W., Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, 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. 607X) in all correspondence, including e-filings addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1657, fax at (202) 565-9002, or e-mail at Ann.Newman@STB.dot.gov.

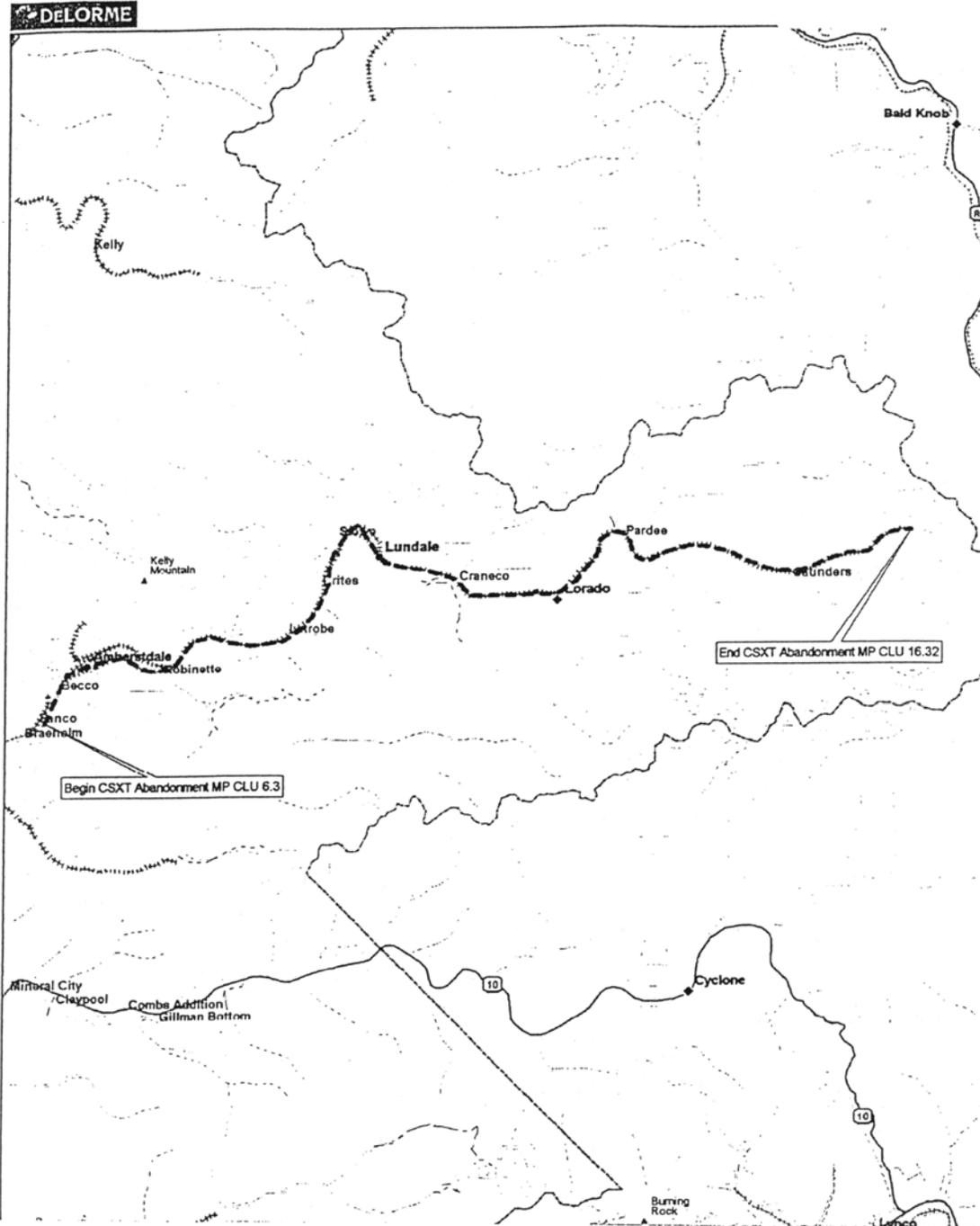
Date made available to the public: September 24, 2004.

Comment due date: October 12, 2004.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment



CSX Transportation, Inc

Fanco to end of track near Saunders, Logan County, West Virginia

 10.02 Miles of line to be abandoned

