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SERVICE DATE - SEPTEMBER 21, 1999

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AB-6 (SUB-NO.385X)

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company --
ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION -- IN GREENE COUNTY, MO.

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment and discontinuance of service of 5.82 miles of railroad line between railroad milepost 189.22, near Springfield, and railroad milepost 183.40, near Willard, which traverses through United States Postal Codes 65781 and 65803 in Greene County, Missouri. 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 line extends through a rural area in Green County, MO. There has been no freight service provided on the line for over two years. The line is currently being used for storage of surplus rail cars. There is one bridge on the line, built in 1934.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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 Greene County Commission, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Missouri Department of Environmental Quality, U.S. Department of Interior, Missouri Department of Conservation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Missouri Department of Transportation, Missouri State Clearinghouse, the National Geodetic Survey and the Greene County - Planning and Zone Department.

CONDITIONS

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

1. The Missouri Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has identified the Springfield (Milepost 189.22) to Willard (Milepost 183.40) railroad corridor as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, Engineering, Area of Significance, Transportation, because of its association with the development of the railroad system in Missouri. Thus, we recommend, that a condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority, requiring the railroad to take no steps to alter the historic integrity of the railroad corridor until completion of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.
2. The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified 4 station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. The NGS has requested that it receive not less than 90 days' notification in advance of any salvage activities in order to plan for their relocation. Therefore, we recommend, that BNSF consult with NGS at least 90 days prior to salvage activities in order to plan for their relocation.
3. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Water Pollution Program, has expressed concern regarding stormwater discharge due to salvage activity. Therefore, we recommend, that BNSF further consult with Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Water Pollution Program, to determine if a permit for stormwater discharge is required prior to salvage activity.

4. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (USFWS) determined that the Missouri bladderpod may be present in the project area. Therefore, we recommend, that BNSF consult further with USFWS to determine if any actions are necessary to protect the Missouri bladderpod.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended condition(s), 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 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 Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 711, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Bernard L. Brown, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-6 (Sub No. 385x) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Bernard L. Brown at (202) 565-1554 or Phillis Johnson-Ball at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: September 21, 1999.
Comment due date: October 21, 1999.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.