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SEA

SERVICE DATE – AUGUST 19, 2008

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 687X)

**CSX Transportation, Inc. – Abandonment Exemption –
in Fulton and Clayton Counties, GA**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) 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 discontinuance of service and abandonment of a line of railroad in Fulton and Clayton Counties, Georgia. The rail line proposed for abandonment, known as the AG Lead, extends 1.67 miles from Valuation Station 0+00 to Valuation Station 88+00 (near Milepost XXB 10) in College Park. A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). If the notice 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

According to CSXT, the line proposed for abandonment was originally acquired and constructed between 1962 and 1970 by the Atlanta and West Point Railroad (AWP). AWP was chartered in 1847 as the Atlanta and LaGrange Railroad. Through a series of mergers and acquisitions, AWP became part of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad. Chessie, Seaboard and all of their affiliates (including Seaboard Coast Line) merged to form CSX Transportation in 1986.

CSXT states that the right-of-way width along this line is estimated at 25 feet from the center-line of track. Based on information in CSXT's possession, the line does not contain Federally granted rights-of-way. The rail line traverses light industrial and business areas of College Park. CSXT indicates that no CSXT-owned structures that are 50 years old or older are part of the proposed action.

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 report 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) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Diversion of Traffic

According to CSXT, no local traffic has moved over the line during the past two years and any overhead traffic on the line has been rerouted. CSXT indicates that no new rail oriented business is expected to develop on the line segment. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; 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.

Salvage Activities

Impacts from salvage and disposal of a rail line typically include removal of tracks and ties, removal of ballast, dismantling of any bridges or other structures that may be present on the rail right-of-way, and regrading of the right-of-way. Salvage may be performed within the right-of-way, or, if necessary, via the construction of new access points to the right-of-way. CSXT indicates that abandonment of this line would result in the removal of the rail, crossties and three at-grade crossings. Upon receiving abandonment authority, CSXT states that removal of material would be accomplished by use of the right-of-way for access, along with existing public and private crossings, and no new access roads are contemplated. CSXT does not intend to disturb any of the underlying road-bed or perform any activities that would cause sedimentation or erosion of the soil, and does not anticipate any dredging or use of fill in the removal of the track material. The crossties and/or other debris would be transported away from the rail line and would not be discarded along the right-of-way nor be placed or left in streams or wetlands, or along the banks of such waterways. Also, during track removal, appropriate measures would be implemented to prevent or control spills from fuels, lubricants or any other pollutant materials from entering any waterways.

CSXT believes that the abandonment would result in improvement to public safety by the elimination of three public, at-grade crossings. CSXT records do not indicate any known hazardous material spills or hazardous waste sites.

Based upon CSXT's review of the area, the line is not within any wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests. CSXT is not aware of any designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains within the proposed project area.

The Clayton County Department of Transportation and Development (CCDTD) has indicated that CCDTD does not foresee any land use or environmental issues with the proposed abandonment. CCDTD recommends that either the City of College Park or Clayton County receive ownership of the corridor for inclusion into a future trail system with Clayton County.

The City of College Park has indicated that the proposed action would be consistent with College Park's existing land use plans. CSXT is working with the City of College Park for their potential acquisition of the corridor through a Notice of Interim Trail Use during the abandonment process.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division has indicated that Fulton and Clayton Counties are not within Georgia's Coastal Zone Management Area and a Federal Consistency Determination is not required for the proposed abandonment.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division, Hazardous Waste Management Branch has indicated that the proposed abandonment would have no environmental impact.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Athens, Georgia has determined that there are soils of "Prime and Statewide Important Farmland" contiguous to the CSXT line that is being considered for abandonment. However, because the CSXT line is included in an area designated Urban/built-up in the 2000 Census Report, the area is exempt from the Farmland Protection Policy Act.

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Athens, Georgia has determined, based on the information provided, that the proposed abandonment would not be expected to significantly impact fish and wildlife resources under USFWS jurisdiction.

SEA believes that any air emissions associated with salvage operations would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Noise associated with salvage activities would also be temporary and should not have a significant impact on the area surrounding the proposed abandonment.

Based on all information available to date, SEA does not believe that salvage activities would cause significant environmental impacts.

HISTORIC REVIEW

CSXT submitted an historic report as required by the Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)] and served the report on the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). Based on available information, the SHPO has submitted comments stating that no historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected within the right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect, or APE) of the proposed abandonment.

Pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1), and following consultation with the SHPO and the public, we have

determined that the proposed abandonment would not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 CFR 800.11(d), consists of the railroad's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public through posting on the Board's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2, SEA conducted a search of the Native American Consultation Database at <http://home.nps.gov/nacd/> to identify Federally-recognized tribes which may have ancestral connections to the project area. The database indicated that the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina, Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Dania, Big Cypress, Brighton, Hollywood and Tampa Reservations may have knowledge regarding properties of traditional religious and cultural significance within the right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) of the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, SEA is sending a copy of this EA to these tribes for review and comment.

CONDITIONS

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

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes 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 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, 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 Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact this office directly at (202) 245-0238, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance, Washington, DC 20423.

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 Kenneth Blodgett, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's website, www.stb.dot.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 687X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Kenneth Blodgett, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0305, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at blodgettk@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: August 19, 2008.

Comment due date: September 3, 2008.

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

Anne K. Quinlan
Acting Secretary

Attachment