

SERVICE DATE – JANUARY 30, 2026

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 511 (Sub-No. 8X)

**Central Railroad Company of Indianapolis – Abandonment
Exemption – In Howard County, Ind.**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Central Railroad Company of Indianapolis (CERA) filed a notice of exemption with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 seeking exemption from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment of two lines of railroad extending over 1.77-miles in the City of Kokomo (the City), Howard County, Indiana (the Line). The Line includes the Tipton Industrial Lead extending from milepost 54.28 to milepost 55.66; and a segment of the Marion Subdivision extending from milepost 180.87 to milepost 181.26 (the Line).¹ A map depicting the Line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft 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

The Line is located in Howard County, Indiana, in an urban area surrounded by mixed use developments, both commercial and residential. CERA, a Class III railroad, acquired the Line in 2002. Genesee & Wyoming Inc. acquired control of CERA in 2012. According to CERA, the right-of-way varies along the track centerline and is crossed by fifteen public roadways. The Line includes the Lake Erie and Western Depot Historic District, NR-1960, listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) on September 17, 2008. The Tipton Industrial Lead connects to a segment of rail line that is currently under a trail use agreement between the City and CERA. CERA indicates that the City is interested in acquiring the Line and converting it into a trail.

¹ In its notice of exemption filed on January 5, 2026, CERA stated that its initial consultation letters to the required federal, state and local agencies under 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(b) identified the endpoint of the Marion Subdivision segment to be milepost 180.82. However, upon further review, CERA decided to abandon a smaller portion of this segment and shortened it by 0.05 miles from milepost 180.82 to 180.87.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

CERA submitted a combined environmental and historic report (E&H Report) that concludes that the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the proposed abandonment of the Line, including salvage. CERA served the E&H Report on appropriate federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules [49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(b)]² implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Diversion of Traffic

According to CERA, no local traffic has moved over the Line since 2015, and the Line is stub ended at both endpoints so no overhead traffic exists. Therefore, the proposed abandonment would not result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network. Nor would the proposed abandonment adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities or the transportation of ozone-depleting materials.

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. As noted above, the City is negotiating with CERA for trails use and is asking CERA to leave the tracks in place that are part of the Lake Erie and Western Depot Historic District (West Jefferson Street to West Jackson Street) as part of that negotiation. By email on January 29, 2026, CERA stated that it agreed with this request and therefore does not intend to undertake any salvage activities within the historic district. However, CERA has indicated that the rest of the track may be salvaged.

CERA requested comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding the potential impact of the proposed abandonment to protected wildlife, including federally listed threatened and endangered species. To date, USFWS has not provided comments.

² The E&H Report is available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.gov by clicking "Search STB Records;" selecting "Filings" in the "Search for" dropdown menu; entering "AB" "511" "8" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then selecting "Search." The E&H Report was filed on November 14, 2025 and revised on January 5, 2026.

To identify protected species in the project area, OEA conducted a search of the USFWS' Information for Planning and Construction (IPaC) system.³ Species identified in the area include: the Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*, Experimental Population, Non-Essential), the Salamander Mussel (*Simpsonaias ambigua*, Proposed Endangered), and the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*, Proposed Threatened). No critical habitat or wildlife refuges were identified within the area of the proposed abandonment. OEA concludes that the proposed abandonment would have no effect on these species because salvage activities would not include any subsurface ground disturbance, or any removal of trees, grassland, shrublands, or forested habitat, and no critical habitat is present. OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to the USFWS, Indiana Ecological Services Field Office, for its review.

CERA notified the National Park Service (NPS), Midwest Region of the proposed abandonment and requested assistance in identifying any potential effects on wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests. To date, NPS has not provided comments. OEA believes that no such area would be affected by the proposed abandonment because the Line does not cross any wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests. OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to NPS, Midwest Region for its review.

OEA has determined that the Line is not located within a coastal zone. Accordingly, no further consultation is necessary.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has indicated that no geodetic survey markers are present in the area of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, no further consultation with NGS is recommended.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has indicated that abandonment of the Line would not impact prime farmland. Therefore, no further consultation with NRCS is recommended.

CERA requested assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Chicago District in identifying whether permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) would be required for the proposed abandonment. To date CERA has not received a response from USACE. CERA has no plans to undertake in-stream work or dredge and/or fill any materials in connection with the proposed abandonment. Therefore, OEA believes a Corps permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1344) would not be required. OEA is providing USACE, Chicago District, a copy of this Draft EA for its review.

CERA requested assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Region 5 in identifying whether permits under Section 402 of the CWA would be required for the proposed abandonment. To date, USEPA has not provided any comments. OEA is providing USEPA, Region 5 with a copy of this Draft EA for its review.

³ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Information for Planning and Consultation Tool (IPaC), <https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov> (OEA accessed on January 12, 2026).

OEA believes that any air emissions associated with abandonment-related salvage activities would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Similarly, any noise related to abandonment-related 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, OEA does not believe that the proposed abandonment would cause significant environmental impacts. In addition to the parties on the Board's service list for this proceeding, OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to the following agencies for review and comment: USFWS, Indianapolis Ecological Field Office; NPS Midwest Region; USACE, Chicago District; and USEPA, Region 5.

HISTORIC REVIEW

CERA served the E&H Report on the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO), pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c).⁴ In a letter dated November 25, 2025, the SHPO noted that the Line crossed the National Register-listed Lake Erie and Western Depot Historic District and that salvage activities within the historic district would require further consultation. In addition, SHPO noted that any sections of the Line that would be removed would have to be recorded as an archaeological site. In a letter dated November 25, 2025, the Howard County Historical Society and Kokomo Review Board expressed concerns about potential impacts to a historic building adjacent to the Line, 904 N Buckeye Street, and requested that this building be assessed for potential National Register eligibility and possible effects from the proposed abandonment. On December 8, 2025, Indiana Landmarks also submitted comments about the status of 904 N Buckeye Street and potential effects resulting from the proposed abandonment.

OEA has not completed the section 106 process and thus is recommending a condition requiring CERA to retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties including sites, buildings, structures and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) eligible for listing or listed in the National Register until completion of the Section 106 process. Guidance regarding the Board's historic preservation review process is available on the Board's website at <https://www.stb.gov/resources/environmental/historic-preservation-overview>.

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.2, OEA conducted a search of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Tribal Directory Assessment Tool (TDAT) to identify

⁴ Applicants seeking authority from the Board to abandon railroad lines may act on behalf of the Board when complying with the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act. Applicants are authorized to initiate the Section 106 review process and carry out some of its steps, but the Board retains overall responsibility for the Section 106 review. See 36 C.F.R. § 800.2(c)(4); 49 C.F.R. Part 1105; Delegation Letter (Dec. 9, 2009). The Delegation Letter can be found at a link on the bottom of the Board's website overseeing historic preservation at <https://www.stb.gov/resources/environmental/historic-preservation-overview>.

federally recognized Tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area.⁵ The database indicated that the following federally recognized tribes may have knowledge regarding properties of traditional religious and cultural significance within the right-of-way (the APE) of the proposed abandonment: Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma; Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Michigan; and Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. Accordingly, OEA is sending a copy of this Draft EA to these Tribes for review and comment.

CONDITIONS

OEA recommends that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority:⁶

Central Railroad Company of Indianapolis (CERA) shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties including sites, buildings, structures, and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) that are eligible for listing or listed in the National Register of Historic Places until the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 U.S.C. § 306108, has been completed. CERA shall report back to the Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) regarding any consultations with the State Historic Preservation Office, Tribes, and the public. CERA may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until the Section 106 process has been completed and the Board has removed this condition.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided by all sources to date, OEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is 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 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

⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Tribal Directory Assessment Tool, <https://egis.hud.gov/tdat> (last accessed January 12, 2026).

⁶ If an interim trail use agreement under 16 U.S.C. § 1247(d) and 49 C.F.R. § 1152.29 is reached for the Line (or a portion thereof), compliance with this condition is not required with respect to any portion of the Line covered by the interim trail use agreement for the duration of the agreement.

use condition (49 C.F.R. § 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Board's Federal Register notice of the proposed abandonment. The Federal Register notice is also issued as a Board decision and is available on the Board's website.⁷

TRAIL 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 C.F.R. § 1152.29). The Federal Register notice is also issued as a Board decision and is available on the Board's website.⁸

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

OEA encourages interested parties to submit their comments on the Draft EA electronically through the Board's website at <https://www.stb.gov/>. From the Board's homepage, scroll down to the blue "How to File" box. Select the "E-Filing (recommended)" button. From the E-Filing page, select "Environmental Comments" under "Select your E-Filing Type. Log-in accounts are not needed to file environmental comments electronically. Brief comments can be typed in the comment field, and lengthier comments can be attached as Word, Adobe Acrobat, or other file formats.

Alternatively, comments submitted by mail should be addressed to: Andrea Poole, Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001, Attention: Environmental Filing, Docket No. AB 511 (Sub-No. 8X). If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Poole by email at andrea.poole@stb.gov or by phone at 202-245-0305.

Date made available to the public: January 30, 2026.

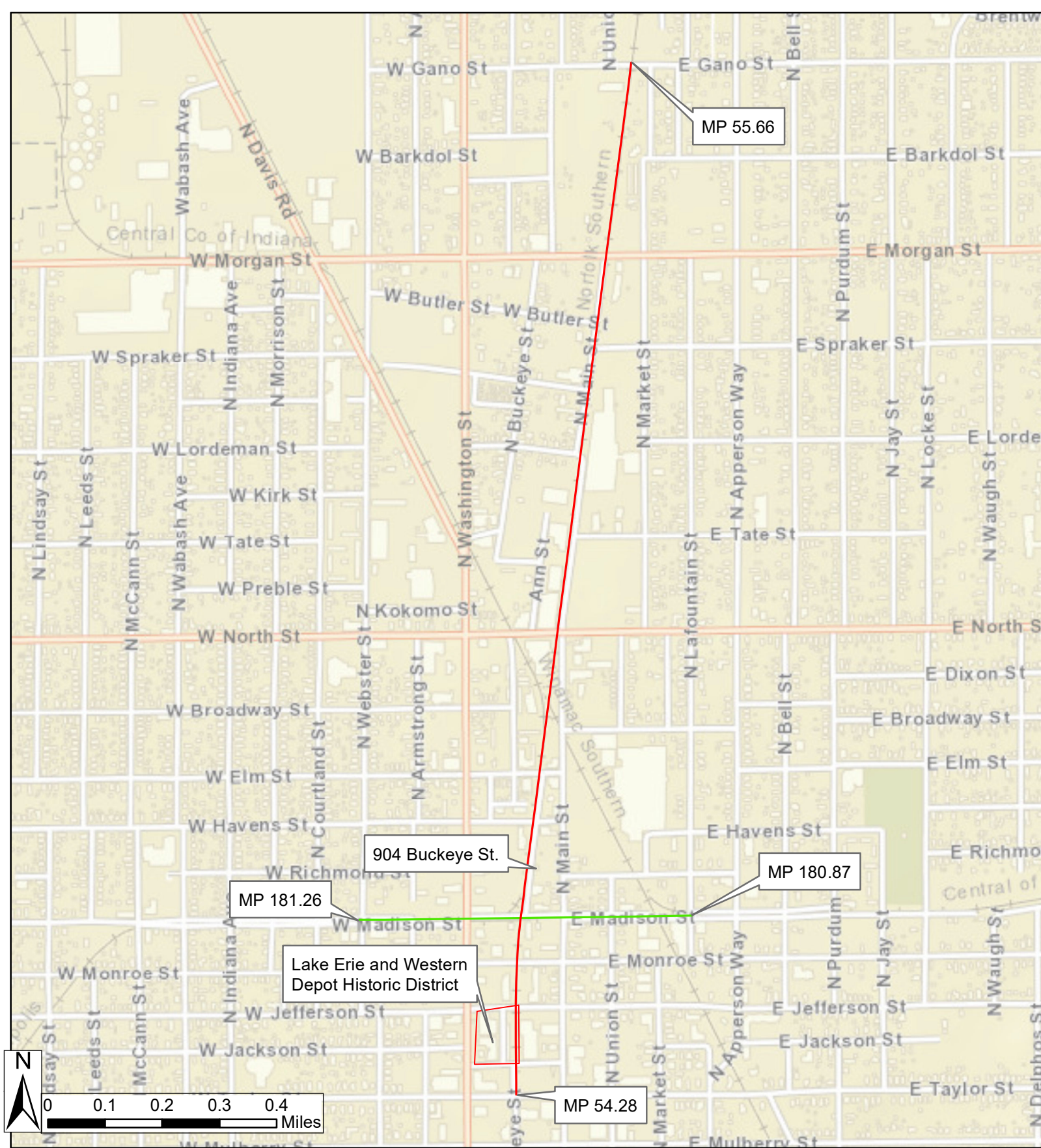
⁷ Board decisions are available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.gov by clicking "Search STB Records;" selecting "Decisions" in the "Search for" dropdown menu; entering "AB" "511" "8" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then selecting "Search."

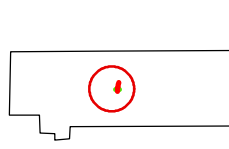
⁸ Id.

Comment due date: February 16, 2026.

By the Board, Danielle Gosselin, Director, Office of Environmental Analysis.

Attachment



 STB Docket No. AB 511 (Sub-No. 8X) Central Railroad Company of Indianapolis Abandonment Exemption In Howard County, Ind.	Legend - Tipton Industrial Lead - Marion Subdivision Note: Maps produced by the STB's Office of Environmental Analysis are based on information provided by the applicant and are for reference purposes only.	 Howard County	 Indiana
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