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SERVICE DATE - JUNE 22, 1998

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-414(SUB-NO. 2X)

Iowa Interstate Railroad, Ltd.--Abandonment Exemption--
in Marion County, IA

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Iowa Interstate Railroad, Ltd. (IAIS) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon and discontinue operations of a 8.70-mile line of railroad between the end of the line at or near milepost 114.80 in Pella and milepost 123.5 near Otley, in Marion County, IA. 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

In its petition, IAIA states that there are four shippers on the line: Pella Corporation, Pella Field Service, The City of Pella and Farm Service Co-op. The line was formerly owned by the Trustee of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company and its successor Chicago Pacific Corporation (CPAC). The line was acquired on October 10, 1984 and commenced operations on or about October 20, 1984. The line was taken out of service and embargoed on October 6, 1996 due to deteriorated track conditions. In 1996, 330 cars were handled inbound or outbound, 308 cars in 1995 and no cars in 1997. Alternative transportation service is available through other rail carriers and truck companies.

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. IAIS 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)]. We reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS), U.S. Department of Commerce, has informed us that five geodetic station markers may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS

requests that it receive not less than 90 days' notification in advance of any salvage activities in order to plan for their relocation. NGS also sent a copy of the list and location of the markers to IAIS. We will recommend NGS's request as a condition to any abandonment.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers states that IAIS should contact Mr. Rick Nelson, Field Supervisor, Rock Island Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), 4469 - 48th Avenue Court, Rock Island, IL 61201, to determine if any federally listed endangered species are being impacted, and if so, how to avoid or minimize impacts. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources also states that if listed species or rare communities are found during the planning or construction phases, additional studies and/or mitigation may be required. We will recommend consultation conditions with these agencies.

The State Historical Society of Iowa (IA SHPO) states that if the abandonment and salvage uncovers an item or items which may have archeological, historical or architectural interest, or if important data come to light in the project are, IAIS should make reasonable efforts to avoid or minimize harm to the property until the significance of the discovery can be determined. We will recommend consultation with the IA SHPO.

CONDITIONS:

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

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS), has identified five geodetic station markers that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, IAIS shall notify NGS at least 90 days prior to salvage activities in order to plan their relocation.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers states that IAIS should contact Mr. Rick Nelson, Field Supervisor, Rock Island Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), to determine if any federally listed endangered species are being impacted, and if so, how to avoid or minimize impacts. Also the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) states that if listed species or rare communities are found during the planning or construction phases, additional studies and/or mitigation may be required. Therefore, IAIS prior to salvage activities shall consult with FWS and the IDNR to determine if permits are required. We will recommend consultation conditions with these agencies

The State Historical Society of Iowa (IA SHPO) states that if the abandonment uncovers an item or items which may have archeological, historical or architectural interest, or if important data come to light in the project area, IAIS should make reasonable efforts to avoid or minimize harm to the property until the significance of the

discovery can be determined. Therefore, during salvage operations, if archaeological or historical materials are discovered, IAIS shall discontinue the operations and notify the IA SHPO. We will recommend consultation with the IA SHPO.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended conditions, 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 discontinuance 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 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 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, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 2215, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-414 (Sub-No. 2X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1629.

Date made available to the public: June 22, 1998.

Comment due date: July 22, 1998.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

PLEASE SCAN MAP