

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 55 (Sub-No. 786X)

CSX Transportation, Inc. - Abandonment Exemption - in Alachua County, Fla.

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) filed a notice with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.20 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 for the abandonment of an approximately 0.23-mile rail line. The segment of rail line CSXT seeks to abandon extends from Milepost ARB 738.42 to the end of track at Milepost ARB 738.65, in Alachua County, Florida (the Line). Maps depicting the Line in relationship to the area served are appended to this environmental assessment (EA). If this notice becomes effective, the railroad would be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenance and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The Line is in north-central Florida and the width of the Line's right-of-way is approximately 124 feet. The southern limit of the Line is at NW 23rd Avenue, and it extends approximately 0.23-mile or 1,200 feet to the north. The areas adjacent to the Line are primarily urban in nature. The City of Gainesville (City) stated that the land east and west of the Line is zoned industrial. CSXT stated that there are no known hazardous waste sites or sites where known hazardous material spills have occurred on the Line.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly because of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities. The railroad served the environmental report on several appropriate federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules [49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(b)].¹ The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

¹ The railroad's environmental and historic reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.gov by going to "E-Library," selecting "Filings," and then conducting a search for AB 55 (Sub-No. 786X).

Diversion of Traffic

CSXT stated that no local traffic has moved over the Line for at least two years, and there is no overhead traffic to be rerouted. 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

CSXT stated that any bridges, trestles and culverts would remain in place under the proposed abandonment. In addition, a review of aerial photography by OEA did not suggest the presence of any bridges or trestles on the Line. The railroad would remove the steel rails, crossties and possibly the upper layer of ballast. CSXT does not intend to disturb the subgrade or any subgrade structures (e.g., culverts). CSXT stated that salvage activities would be conducted using existing right-of-way access points, and no new access roads are contemplated. CSXT does not intend to perform any salvage activities that could result in erosion and sedimentation or would require dredging or the placement of fill in waters of the United States. Crossties and other debris would be transported away from the right-of-way.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had not responded to the railroad's environmental report at the time this EA was prepared. OEA's review of the Soil Survey for Alachua County, Florida (NRCS [formerly the Soil Conservation Service], 1985) indicates that the soils along the Line consist of Millhopper-Urban Land Complex and Wauchula-Urban Land Complex. Based on the characteristics of these soils and the existing urban land uses along the Line, OEA would not expect the proposed abandonment to impact prime farmland. Nevertheless, OEA is providing a copy of this EA to NRCS for review and comment.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Jacksonville District (Corps) had not responded to the railroad's environmental report at the time this EA was prepared. However, because any culverts on the Line would remain in place and dredge and fill activities are not proposed by CSXT, OEA believes that a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1344) would not be required for salvage activities. Nevertheless, OEA is providing a copy of this EA to the Corps for review and comment.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had not responded to the railroad's environmental report at the time this EA was prepared. However, because of the urban land uses surrounding the Line, OEA does not expect that the proposed abandonment would adversely impact federally listed threatened or endangered species protected under the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.). Nevertheless, OEA is providing a copy of this EA to the USFWS for review and comment.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4 (USEPA) responded to the railroad's environmental report and stated that it had no environmental concerns or comments. The Florida State Clearinghouse also stated that it did not have any comments or concerns.

Upon review of Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Florida Coastal Management Guide (updated September 7, 2018), OEA determined that the entire state is included within its coastal zone. However, the FDEP document clarifies that for completing federal consistency reviews under the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1451 et seq.), only the geographical area encompassed by the 35 Florida coastal counties and the adjoining territorial sea is utilized. Therefore, because Alachua County is designated a Florida Interior county, OEA concludes that proposed abandonment is not subject to a state coastal management consistency certification. Likewise, the Florida State Clearinghouse, which coordinates federal consistency reviews, stated that it did not have any comments or concerns.

The Alachua County Environmental Protection Department stated that the Line is in the vicinity of the Cabot Carbon/Koppers Superfund Site. OEA reviewed USEPA's information on this Superfund Site² and determined that the Koppers portion of the site is located immediately west of the Line and the Cabot Carbon portion is located immediately east of the Line. The Cabot Carbon/Koppers Superfund Site has been under USEPA oversight since the 1980s. Although USEPA stated that it had no environmental comments or concerns on the proposed abandonment, OEA is providing a copy of this EA to the Superfund Division at USEPA Region IV for review and comment.

The City stated that the Line is designated as a trail link in the City's Parks Master Plan and the Transportation Mobility Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, the City disagreed with CSXT's assessment that the Line would not be suitable for interim trail use/rail banking.

HISTORIC REVIEW

CSXT submitted a historic report as required by the Board's environmental rules [49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(a)] and provided a copy to the Florida Division of Historic Resources (i.e., State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO), pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c). As part of its public outreach, CSXT also placed a notice of the proposed abandonment in The Gainesville Sun on November 23, 2018 and notified local governments of the proposed abandonment. Both the historic report and this EA are available on the Board's website, and OEA is providing the SHPO with a copy of this EA.

CSXT did not specify when the Line was constructed or by whom. However, CSXT stated that there are no bridges or other structures on the Line that are 50 years or older. CSXT does not believe the Line warrants inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National

² Community Involvement Plan, Cabot Carbon/Koppers Superfund Site, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, November 2017.

Register) and opined that there are no archeological resources or railroad-related historic properties in the project area.

OEA has not heard from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and therefore has not been able to consider the SHPO's opinion before determining if the Line may be potentially eligible for listing in the National Register. Accordingly, OEA is recommending a condition requiring the railroad 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 of Historic Places until completion of the Section 106 process. Guidance regarding the Board's historic preservation review process is available on the Board's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov/stb/environment/preservation.html>.

OEA conducted a search of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Tribal Directory Assessment Tool at <https://egis.hud.gov/tadat/>, to identify federally recognized tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area. The databases identified three tribes for Alachua County (search date of December 7, 2018):

- Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana,
- Miccosukee Tribe of Indiana, and
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

OEA is providing each tribe with a copy of this EA for review and comment.

CONDITIONS

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

- CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) 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. CSXT shall report back to the Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) regarding any consultations with the Florida State Historic Preservation Office and the public. CSXT 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 from all sources to date, OEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is imposed, 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 and no salvage activities), 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 C.F.R § 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 the time specified in the Federal Register notice. 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).

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, D.C. 20423.

COMMENTS

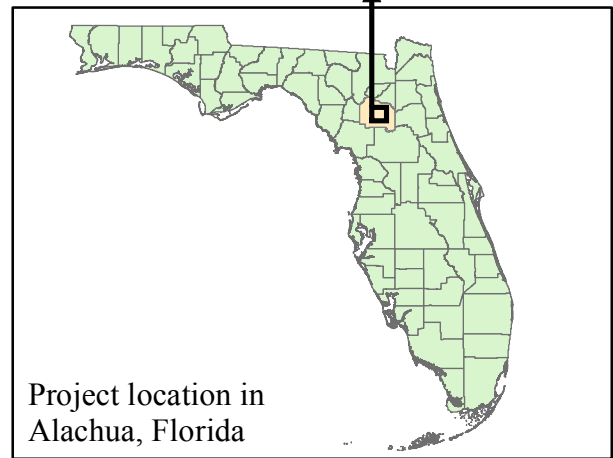
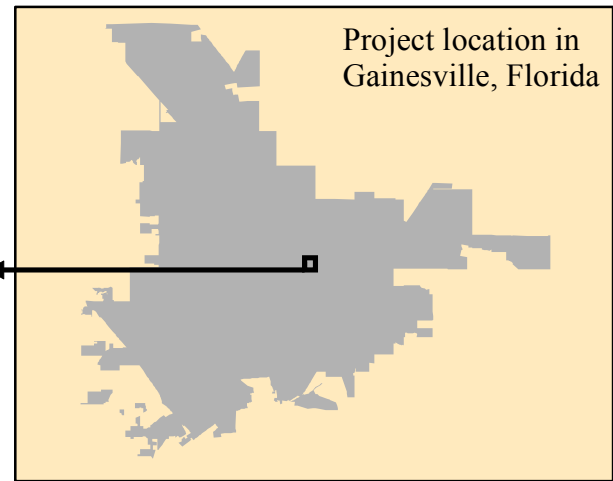
If you wish to file comments regarding this EA, please send your written comments to Surface Transportation Board, Washington, D.C. 20423, to the attention of Dave Navecky, who prepared this document. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's website, www.stb.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB 55 (Sub-No. 786X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this EA, please contact Dave Navecky, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at 202-245-0294 or e-mail at david.navecky@stb.gov.

Date made available to the public: January 31, 2019.

Comment due date: February 14, 2019.

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Director, Office of Environmental Analysis.

Attachment

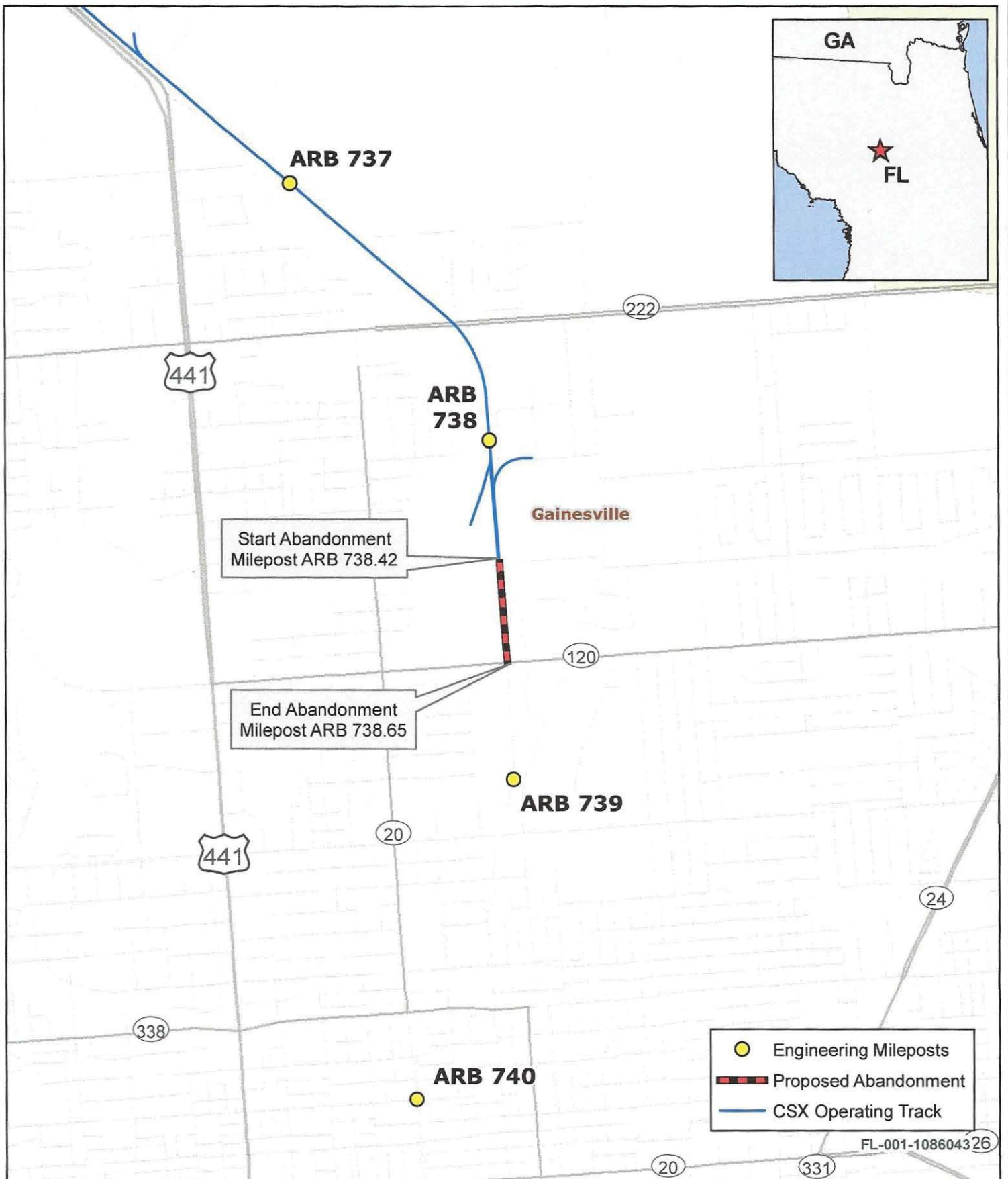


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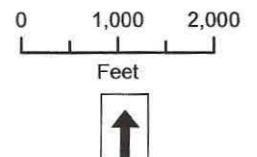
-  The Line
-  Right-of-way (approximate)

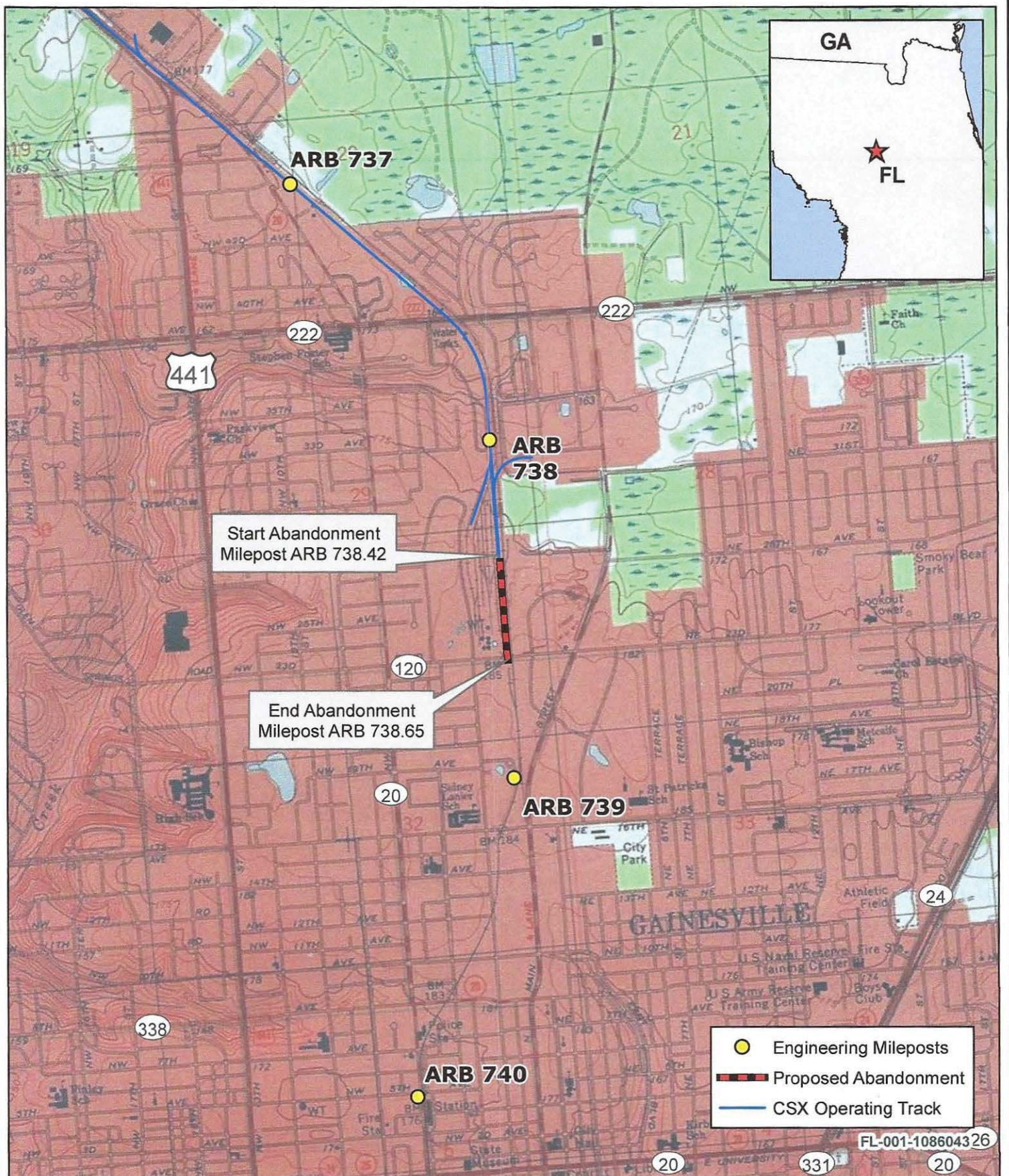
Note: Maps produced by the Surface Transportation Board's Office of Environmental Analysis are based on information provided by the railroad applicant and are for general reference only.





CSX Transportation, Inc.
Proposed Abandonment
Gainesville, Alachua County, FL
Milepost ARB 738.42 to ARB 738.65
Total Distance of approx. 0.23 Miles
Jacksonville Division - Deerhaven Subdivision
STB Docket No. AB 55 (Sub-No. 786X)





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