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SERVICE DATE - MARCH 26, 1997

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**AB-439 (SUB-NO. 2X)**, Dallas Area Rapid Transit Abandonment Exemption in Dallas County, TX; **AB-12 (SUB-NO. 191X)**, Southern Pacific Transportation Company Discontinuance of Service Exemption in Dallas County, TX; **AB-39 (SUB-NO. 22X)**, St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company Discontinuance of Service Exemption in Dallas County, TX.

### BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Southern Pacific Transportation Company (SPT), and St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company (SSW), and collectively referred to here as Applicants, have filed a petition of exemption for the abandonment of DART's and SPT/SSW's discontinuance of service over a line of railroad extending from milepost 6.94 at Tenison Park in Dallas to milepost 281.65 at Plano Parkway in Plano, TX. (Milepost numbering changes at Gifford Junction in Dallas, where milepost 13.74 and milepost 273.00 designate the same point.)

The exemption will include DART's abandonment of the Soumethun Branch, extending from milepost 273.00 at Gifford Junction to milepost 269.78 at Lover's Lane. The total distance of the involved rail lines (collectively known as the "White Rock/Plano line") is approximately 18.67 miles, in Dallas and Collin Counties, TX. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroads will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

A map depicting the subject lines is attached to this environmental assessment.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

There has been no traffic on the various line segments for two years or more. If abandonment and discontinuance is approved, DART plans to utilize the rights-of-way of the Soumethun Branch and the Plano Segment for an extension of its North Central Corridor light rail transit system. Thus, these portions of the line segments may not be available for other

alternative public use.

The line segments are located in the Dallas metropolitan area that includes urban and suburban development.

None of the bridges on the lines will be removed, Instead DART plans to incorporate the bridges into its expansion plans.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Applicants 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. Applicants 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.

The Texas Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that the White Rock Creek Bridge, at milepost 273.3, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. See attached letter, dated February 10, 1997.

#### **CONDITIONS**

The Texas Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that the White Rock Creek Bridge, at milepost 272.3, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. We recommend that a condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority requiring Applicants to retain their interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of the White Rock Creek Bridge until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16. U.S.C. 470f.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended condition, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the lines 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, parts of 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 Assistance (OPA) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPA directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, 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, Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Dana White, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-429 (Sub No. 2X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Dana White at (202) 565-1552.

Date made available to the public: March 21, 1997

**Comment due date: April 21, 1997. (30 Days)**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachments - Attachments not attached. Available from STB  
docket.