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SERVICE DATE - AUGUST 16, 1999

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-6 (SUB-NO. 384X)

**The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company--  
Abandonment Exemption--in Minnehaha County, SD**

### **BACKGROUND**

In the above entitled proceeding, the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF), has 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 abandonment of a 2.98-mile line of its railroad between milepost 147.15 and milepost 150.13 near Sioux Falls, in Minnehaha County, SD. 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**

BNSF states that the line was embargoed on October 5, 1998 due to poor condition and is no longer suitable for operations. BNSF also states that there has been no traffic on the line during the past two years.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

BNSF 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. UP 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)]. 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. Contacts have included the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management; South Dakota Dept. Of Environmental and Natural Resources; South Dakota Dept. Of Game, Fish, & Parks; Minnehaha County Board of Commissioners; Natural Resources Conservation Service; Sioux Falls Parks & Recreation Department; U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; State Clearinghouse; U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; U. S. Army Engineer District, Omaha; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; South Dakota Dept. Of Transportation; South Dakota State Historical Society, National Geodetic Survey; the Department of Defense, Military Traffic Management Command; the South Dakota Public Utilities

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Commission; Chief of Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; and the National Park Service. We reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS), has advised that one geodetic station marker has been identified that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. NGS request that it receive not less than 90 days' notification in advance of any salvage activities in order to plan for its relocation. NGS also sent a copy of the list and location of the marker to BNSF.

### **CONDITIONS**

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

The National Geodetic Survey (NG) has identified one geodetic station marker that may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Therefore, BNSF shall notify NGS and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to salvage activities in order to plan for its relocation.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, and subject to the recommended conditions, we conclude that, as significantly 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 abandonment 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 exemption in the Federal Register. However, 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**

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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.

**ENVIRONMENTAL 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-6 (Sub-No. 384X) 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: **August 16, 1999.**

**Comment due date: August 31, 1999.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment

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MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.