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SERVICE DATE – DECEMBER 6, 2002

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-33 (Sub No. 191X)

**Union Pacific Railroad Company - Abandonment Exemption
In Davis and Weber Counties, UT**

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled proceeding, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UPR), the Applicant, has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152, Subpart F seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment, discontinuance of service and trackage rights of the Salt Lake Subdivision (Line) from milepost 754.31 near Valencia to milepost 778.00 near Ogden, a distance of approximately 23.69 miles, in Davis and Weber Counties, Utah. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the areas served is appended to the report. If the notice becomes effective, the Applicants will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

UPR states that the Line was constructed in 1883 by the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway and served as the Rio Grande's Salt Lake - Ogden main line. UPR states that no local traffic has moved over the Line in at least two years and that no formal complaint has been filed regarding cessation of rail service. The Applicant further states that no overhead traffic is moving over the Line. UPR describes the surrounding area as generally level and traversing both rural and urban areas with a majority of the Line passing through high-density urban communities.

UPR states that the property is suitable for public purposes including continued use as a public transportation corridor, including highway, trail, mass transportation, and energy transmission lines. UPR describes the area traversed by the rail line as consisting of federally granted right-of-way, portions of which are subject to reversionary interests.

UPR has sold the right-of-way to the Utah Transit Authority for potential future use as commuter rail transportation, however, UPR will retain an operating easement over the Line until abandonment authority has been granted. Once abandonment authority has been granted, UPR also intends to salvage the track structures. Finally, UPR states that it would remove all 44, public and private, at-grade crossings located on the line proposed for abandonment. SEA

believes that removal of these at-grade crossings would reduce the number of injuries and fatalities that might otherwise occur.

UPR states that the Line contains two bridges that are 50 years old or older. However, UPR does not believe that the bridge structures are not of unique construction and therefore not historic in nature. UPR also believes that any archaeological sites within the right-of-way would have been disturbed during initial rail line construction and that salvage activities should not adversely impact previously undisturbed archaeological sites.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

UPR has submitted an environmental and historic 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. UPR 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 have reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding. We have also consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's environmental and historical report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment.

Comments have been received from the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers(COE), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Utah State Historical Society, and the Utah Department of Environmental Quality - Water Quality Division.

The following agencies have been contacted, however, to date, comments have not been received: Utah Department of Environmental Quality - Hazardous Waste Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region VIII, Nation Park Service, the U.S. Department of Commerce - National Geodetic Survey, and the Davis and Weber County Commissioners.

Land Use

The Davis and Weber County Commissioners have not completed their review. Therefore, we recommend that UPR consult with the Commissioners of Davis and Weber Counties prior to initiating any salvage activities.

The NRCS states that if rail abandonment activities are confined to the existing right-of-way that adjacent farmlands will not be impacted.

Water

The COE has completed its review of the proposed abandonment and determined that a permit is not required.

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality - Water Quality Division stated that salvage activities would require UPR to obtain a Construction Stormwater Permit.

Biological Resources

The FWS has completed its review of the proposed abandonment and has identified the following threatened and endangered species in the project area: Ute Ladies-tresses, June Sucker, Bald Eagle, Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, Odgen Rocky Mountainsnail, and the Canada Lynx. The FWS has expressed particular concern for the endangered June Sucker and any activities that may adversely impact waters draining into the Utah Lake system. The FWS has also recommended that a Biological Assessment be completed before it can comment on any potential impact.

Cultural and Historic Resources

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has not completed its review of the proposed abandonment. NGS requests that it receive not less than 90 days' notification in advance of any salvage activities that may affect the marker in order to plan for their relocation.

The Utah State Historical Society has completed its review of the Line and determined that the two bridges appear to meet the basic listing criteria on the National Register of Historic Places, pursuant to 36 CFR 60.4.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality - Hazardous Waste Division has not completed its review. Therefore, DEQ-HW requests that UPR consult with their office to identify all hazardous waste sites that may be located within the right-of-way prior to abandoning this Line.

CONDITIONS

Because many of the agencies we rely on to complete our environmental analysis have not yet completed their review, we preliminarily recommend the following conditions. A copy of the Environmental Assessment has been sent to those agencies for consideration.

- 1. The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Geodetic Survey has not completed its review of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend that Union Pacific Railroad consult with NGS prior to initiation of any salvage operations and notify NGS not less than ninety days prior to commencement of such operations.**
- 2. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's has completed its preliminary review of the proposed abandonment and determined that a biological assessment would be required to continue consultation. Therefore, we recommend that a condition be placed on any**

decision granting abandonment authority prohibiting the railroad from salvaging or disposing of the entire right-of-way until completion of the Section 7 process of the Endangered Species Act, 16, U.S.C. 1531.

- 3. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region VIII, has not completed its review of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend that Union Pacific Railroad consult with the EPA and secure all necessary permits, under 40 CFR 122.6, prior to initiation of salvage or disposal activities.**
- 4. The Utah State Historical Society (SHPO) has completed its review of the proposed abandonment and determined that the two bridges appear to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, we recommend, imposition of a condition requiring Union Pacific Railroad to retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of the two bridges until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.**
- 5. The Utah Department of Environmental Quality - Hazardous Waste Division (DEQ-HW) has not completed its review of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend imposition of a condition requiring that Union Pacific Railroad, prior to abandoning its rail line, shall consult with DEQ-HW to identify all potential hazardous waste sites located on the railroad right-of-way.**
- 6. The Davis and Weber County Commissioners (Counties) have not completed their review of the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, we recommend that Union Pacific Railroad consult with the Counties prior to initiation of any salvage activities in order to address any concerns the Counties may have.**

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed and if the recommended environmental conditions are 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

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does take place, 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 Surface Transportation Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

Union Pacific Railroad intends to transfer ownership of the Line to the Utah Transit Authority for potential future commuter rail service.

TRAILS USE

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Surface Transportation 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. 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 (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at (202) 565-1592 or mail inquiries to the 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 Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Troy Brady, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-33 (Sub No. 191X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to Troy Brady at (202) 565-1643.**

Date made available to the public: December 6, 2002.

Comment due date: **December 23, 2002 (15 days)**.

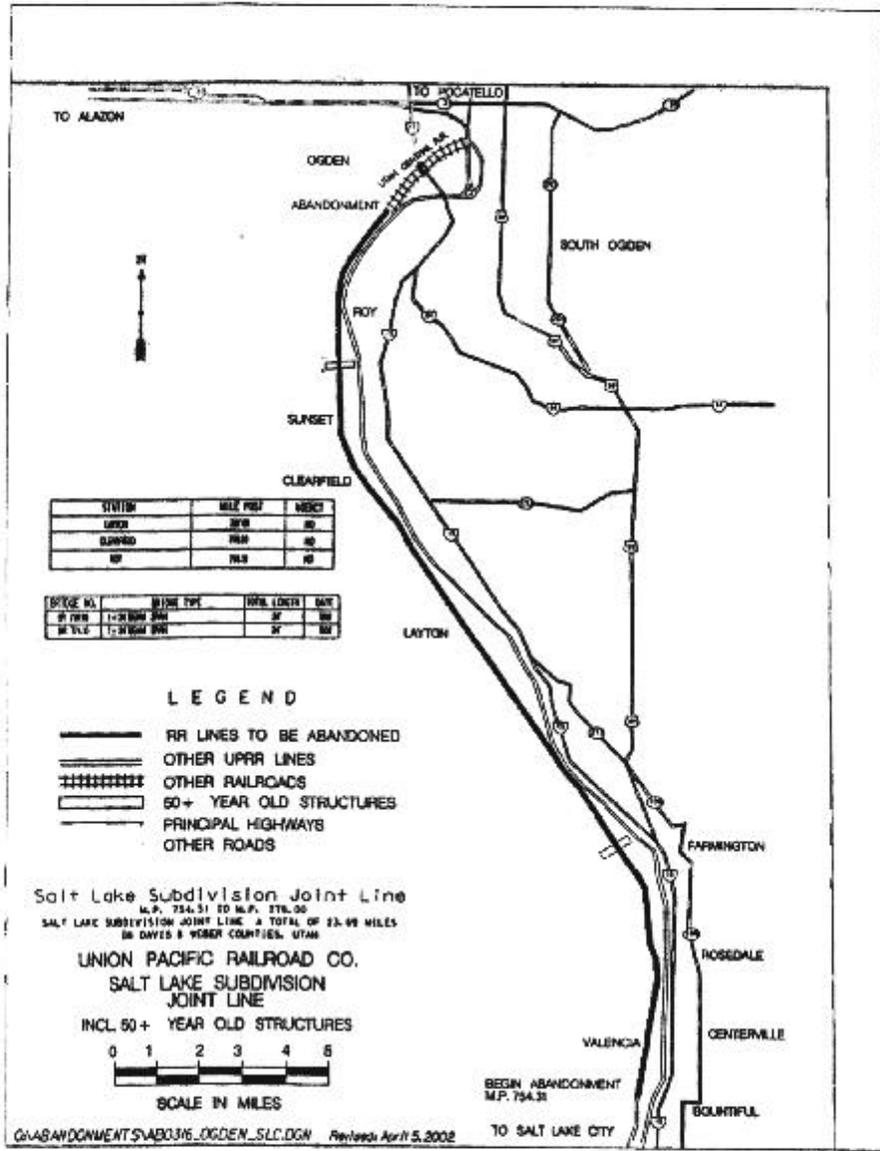
By the Surface Transportation Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

ID 33162

Attachment 1



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