

30306

SERVICE DATE - JUNE 28, 1999
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-33 (SUB-NO. 136X)

Union Pacific Railroad Company--Abandonment
Exemption--in Hidalgo County, TX

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled proceeding, the Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP), 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 Abandonments and Discontinuances of Service and Trackage Rights over a 16.0-mile line of railroad known as the Santa Rosa Industrial Lead from milepost 145.0 near Edinburg to milepost 161.0 near Rogerslacy, in Hidalgo County, TX. 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

The Line consist mainly of 75-pound rail and track material. UP states that tentatively, it has been determined that the line consists of 216.75 acres. The line consists of 6.95 acres of reversionary land and 209.80 acres of non-reversionary land. The right-of-way consists of a narrow strip of land that ranges from 100 to 150 feet wide an is level throughout the entire length. The adjacent land use is mainly agricultural. In its notice UP states that there has been no traffic on the line during the past two years and it is doubtful there would ever be sufficient traffic on the line in the foreseeable future to justify any costs of operating and maintaining the line.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

UP 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 Hidalgo County, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Teas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. EPA, Region 6, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Texas Department of Transportation,

Railroad Commission of Texas and the State of Texas. We have reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, 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

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, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20423, to

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the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 136X) 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 28, 1999.**

Comment due date: July 13, 1999.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

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PLEASE SCAN MAP