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SERVICE DATE - APRIL 30, 2001

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB - 33 (Sub No. 176X) - Union Pacific Railroad Company
Notice of Exemption - In Calcasieu Parish, LA

BACKGROUND

In the above entitled proceeding, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UPR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152.52, Subpart F seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment and discontinuance of service over its rail line from milepost 694.71 to milepost 696.98 a distance of 2.27 miles in Calcasieu Parish, LA. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the notice 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

UPR states that there are no shippers on the rail line and that there has been no service on the rail line for more than two years. UPR further states that no overhead traffic is moving over the rail line. The rail line is located within the city limits of Lake Charles, LA. The right-of-way consists of a mixture of both residential and commercial properties.

UPR believes that there are no structures on the right-of-way that are 50 years old or older.

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.

To date, the following agencies have submitted comments indicating that no adverse environmental impacts would result from the proposed abandonment: U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; and the Department of Army, Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District. Additionally, the City of Lake Charles supports the proposed abandonment by way of resolution 93-00.

CONDITIONS

Because the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Geodetic Survey has not yet completed their review, we preliminarily recommend the following condition. A copy of the Environmental Assessment has been sent to the above mentioned agency for consideration.

1. **The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Geodetic Survey (NGS) 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.**

CONCLUSIONS

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

The City of Lake Charles, LA, has passed a resolution (Resolution No. 93-00) asking that UPR to complete its abandonment of the rail line and dedicate or transfer the residual property to the City. The City is interested in using this right-of-way to construct an additional access to U.S. Interstate I-10.

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 Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Dana White, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-33 (Sub No. 176X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to Troy Brady at (202) 565-1593.**

Date made available to the public: April 30,2001.

Comment due date: **May 15, 2001 (15 days).**

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

MAP TO BE SCANNED