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SERVICE DATE - MAY 13, 1998
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NO. AB-33 (SUB-NO.119X)

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY
-ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION-
IN ROCK, GREEN AND DANE COUNTIES, WI
(HARVARD SUBDIVISION BETWEEN EVANSVILLE AND "MX" CROSSING)

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Union Pacific Railroad Company has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of its railroad line located between milepost 119.0 near Evansville to milepost 134.0 near "MX"-a crossing of the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Company ("W&SR")- a distance of 15.0 miles in Rock, Dane and Green Counties, Wisconsin. 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

One active shipper, Oregon Farm Center, 321 Market Street, Oregon, WI 53575, has used the line for freight shipments of fertilizer. In 1995, the shipper had one carload, in 1996 the shipper has two carloads, and in 1997 the shipper had no carloads. The last shipment of fertilizer to move over the Line was in May 1996. The right-of-way is approximately 15 miles in length and is almost exclusively 100 feet in width with very few exceptions. The right-of-way begins on the southern edge of Madison and passes through the town of Oregon and terminates near Evansville, Wisconsin. The right-of-way is mostly rural and passes through rural agricultural land. The adjacent land is used for pasture and row crops. The topography is flat to gently rolling.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has 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. The railroad has 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. Contacts have included the National Geodetic Survey, the Dane County Regional Planning Commission, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

CONDITIONS

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified 18 geodetic station markers along the rail line and requests 90 days notice to plan relocation of any markers which may be disturbed or destroyed. Therefore, we recommend that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority: **The Union Pacific Railroad Co. shall consult with the National Geodetic Survey and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to disturbing or destroying any geodetic markers.**

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 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

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 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 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 Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, 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, Office of the Secretary, Room 2221, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Scott Decker, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-33 (Sub No. 119X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Scott Decker at (202) 565-1531.

Date made available to the public: May 8, 1998.

Comment due date: June 8, 1998.

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

PLEASE SCAN MAP