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SERVICE DATE - NOVEMBER 23, 2001

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-33 (Sub-No. 185X)

**Union Pacific Railroad Company – Abandonment Exemption – in Pulaski County,
Arkansas (Junction Bridge Line and Rock Street Industrial Lead)**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) 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 portions of the Junction Bridge Line and the Rock Street Industrial Lead in Pulaski County, Arkansas. The portion of the Junction Bridge Line proposed for abandonment extends 0.63 miles from milepost 343.65 in North Little Rock, Arkansas to milepost 343.02 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the portion of the Rock Street Industrial Lead proposed for abandonment extends 2.1 miles from the Amtrak connection near milepost 345.3 in Little Rock, Arkansas to milepost 347.4 near East 6th Street in Little Rock, Arkansas. A map depicting the rail lines 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

According to UP, there are no shippers on the lines proposed for abandonment, and no commodities have moved over the lines for more than two years. UP states that there has been no local traffic on the lines for two years, and overhead traffic could be rerouted on other nearby rail lines.

The area surrounding the proposed abandonment is urban, according to UP, and is mainly industrial and residential.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The applicants 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 applicants

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.

UP states that it plans to sell a portion of the right-of-way and donate 2 bridges to the City of Little Rock for use in the President William Jefferson Clinton Library project, and to sell another portion of the right-of-way to the Heifer Project.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has submitted comments stating that the area of the proposed abandonment is zoned for urban or residential use and the proposed abandonment will not impact "Important Farmland."

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality has submitted comments stating that it did not have enough information to determine whether the proposed abandonment would be consistent with water quality standards.

The National Geodetic Survey has also submitted comments stating that the proposed abandonment could affect seven geodetic station markers.

The Department of Arkansas Heritage (SHPO) has submitted comments stating that there are four National Register of Historic Places sites in the area of the proposed abandonment and one National Register Historic District. According to the SHPO, the abandonment as proposed by UP will not adversely affect the cultural resources in the area.

CONDITIONS

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

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has identified seven 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: **Union Pacific Railroad Company shall consult with NGS and provide NGS with 90 days notice prior to disturbing or destroying any geodetic station markers.**

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is imposed, abandonment of the lines 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 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.

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, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Rini Ghosh, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 185X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Rini Ghosh, the environmental contact for this case by phone at (202) 565-1539, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at ghoshr@stb.dot.gov.

Recent events involving a principal postal facility within Washington, D.C., may affect for a period of time the receipt of materials mailed to the Board, as well as customer receipt of reply mail sent from the Board. Until the timely delivery of mail has been reestablished, the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) requests that individuals filing comments regarding this or other environmental assessments take the following additional steps to ensure receipt of their correspondence during the comment period:

1. Telephone or e-mail the environmental contact indicated above prior to the close of the comment period and inform them that you have mailed a comment.
2. If the comment has not been received, the environmental contact will discuss alternative modes of delivery.
3. Retain a copy of your comment for your records should alternative modes of delivery need be necessary.

SEA is committed to carrying out its duties to the public and regrets any inconvenience these new procedures may cause.

Date made available to the public: **November 23, 2001.**

Comment due date: December 7, 2001 (15 Days)

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

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

MAP TO BE SCANNED