

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB Docket No. AB 33 (Sub-No. 287X)**

**Union Pacific Railroad Company – Abandonment Exemption –  
in San Mateo County, Cal.**

**BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) filed a notice of exemption under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.20 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the discontinuance of service and abandonment of the South San Francisco Industrial Lead rail line in San Mateo County, Cal. The rail line extends 0.57 miles from milepost 12.29 to milepost 12.86 in South San Francisco (the Line). A map depicting the Line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). 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.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

UP submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment would 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 report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules (49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(b)).<sup>1</sup> The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

***Diversion of Traffic***

According to UP, no local traffic has moved over the Line in the last two years. There is also no overhead traffic that would have to be rerouted. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources of recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; or result in the diversion of

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<sup>1</sup> The environmental and historic reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov) choosing "E-Library," selecting "Filings," then conducting a search for AB 33 (Sub-No. 287X).

rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network.

### *Salvage Activities*

Impacts from salvage and disposal of a rail line typically include removal of tracks and ties, removal of ballast, dismantling of any bridges or other structures that may be present on the rail right-of-way, and regrading of the right-of-way. Salvage may be performed within the right-of-way, or, if necessary, via the construction of new access points to the right-of-way. UP did not provide any information in its environmental report regarding its post-abandonment plans or if it intends to salvage the Line.

The Line is located in heavily developed mixed urban and industrial setting. The Line follows along the south side of Railroad Avenue between Magnolia Avenue to the west and near South Linden Avenue to the east. There are no bridges on the Line. Photos of the Line right-of-way viewed by SEA show that much of the track has been paved over and is being used for parking by local businesses situated on the south side of the Line.<sup>2</sup> Though not mentioned in its environmental report, UP confirmed to SEA that the owners of 8 lots adjacent to the Line have paved over the existing track to create driveway access from Railroad Avenue to their businesses. As a result, the only potentially salvageable portion of the Line where track remains intact is located east of Spruce Avenue.

Orange Memorial Park, a small recreational area, is located approximately a thousand feet to the west of the Line. The South San Francisco Centennial Trail passes through the park and runs to the south of the Line at Canal Street. Otherwise, the area is highly urbanized with residential housing located along the north side of Railroad Avenue and businesses along the south side of the Line.

To date, no parties have expressed interest in converting the Line into a trail or other public use. UP states that the Line is not suitable for use as a road or highway as the area is already well served by a variety of roads. UP has also indicated to SEA that it does not believe that trail use would be an appropriate future use for the Line since Railroad Avenue runs parallel to the track. However, the applicant has also indicated that it would be willing to evaluate any interest in trail use. If converted into a trail, the Line could serve as a connection to the nearby South San Francisco Centennial Trail.

The National Geodetic Survey has advised SEA that no geodetic station markers would be affected by the proposed abandonment.

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<sup>2</sup> Images of the right-of-way were viewed by SEA at <http://maps.google.com/> on June 15, 2010.

UP submitted the environmental report to several state and Federal agencies from which responses or comments have yet to be received. These include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the Natural Resources Conservation Service; and the California Environmental Protection Agency. SEA is providing copies of this EA to these agencies to ensure that they have an additional opportunity to provide comment.

Based on all information available to date, SEA does not believe that any salvage activities that would be conducted following abandonment of the Line would cause significant environmental impacts. SEA believes that any air emissions associated with salvage operations would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Noise associated with salvage activities would also be temporary and should not have a significant impact on the area surrounding the proposed abandonment.

## **HISTORIC REVIEW**

UP served the historic report on the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c). SEA has not heard from the SHPO regarding its opinion on the potential for the Line to contain properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. We are thus recommending a condition requiring UP to retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties including sites, buildings, structures and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) eligible for listing or listed on the National Register until completion of the Section 106 process.

SEA conducted a search of the Native American Consultation Database at <http://home.nps.gov/nacd/> to identify Federally recognized tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area and that would need to be contacted as part of the Section 106 process. No tribes were shown as having a potential interest in the proposed undertaking.

Guidance regarding the Board's historic preservation review process is available on the Board's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov/stb/environment/preservation.html>.

## **CONDITION**

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

Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties including sites, buildings, structures, and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) that are eligible for listing or listed on the National Register of Historic Places until the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 470f, has been completed. UP shall report back to the Section of Environmental Analysis

regarding any consultations with the California State Historic Preservation Office, the public, and any other Section 106 consulting parties that have been identified. UP may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until the Section 106 process has been completed and the Board has removed this condition.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, SEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is 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**

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 C.F.R. § 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. 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 C.F.R. § 1152.29).

## **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

The Board's Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact this office directly at (202) 245-0238, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance, Washington, D.C. 20423.

## **COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this EA, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, D.C. 20423, to the attention of Catherine Glidden, who prepared this EA. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's website, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB 33 (Sub-No. 287X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this EA, please contact Catherine Glidden, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0293, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at [gliddenc@stb.dot.gov](mailto:gliddenc@stb.dot.gov).

Date made available to the public: June 28, 2010.

**Comment due date: July 13, 2010.**

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

Attachment