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SEA

SERVICE DATE - FEBRUARY 14, 2003
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-33 (SUB-NO. 168X)

**Union Pacific Railroad Company – Abandonment Exemption – in Hardin County, IA
(Eldora Junction Line in Eldora, IA)**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) 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 1.12 miles of rail line in Hardin County, Iowa over the Eldora Junction Line. The proposed abandonment extends from Milepost 5.10 to Milepost 6.22 in Eldora, Iowa. 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

UP states that the right-of-way is about 100-feet in width and is composed of 9 acres of reversionary and 3 acres of non-reversionary property. The line passes through Eldora, Iowa on generally level topography.

The line has been out of service since December 2000, because of poor track condition. UP states that North Central FS is the only shipper on the line and that there is no overhead traffic on the line.

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 and historical reports 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 and reviewed the record in this proceeding.

The U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has submitted comments stating that the area contains prime agricultural land, and caution should be taken during salvage activities to ensure that the drainage systems and other agricultural infrastructure are not

adversely impacted at the soils mapped as Nicollet and Webster Nicollet. UP states that the proposed abandonment does not traverse the areas identified by the NRCS.

UP states that it believes there are no historic sites, structures or archeological resources in the project area.

Traffic

Although the line has been out of service since December 2000, according to UP, the amount of goods shipped by North Central FS in the first half of 2002 is as follows: 399 tons, or a four railcar load equivalent of Diammonium Phosphate; 315 tons, or a three plus railcar load equivalent of Potash; and 211 tons, or a two plus railcar load equivalent of Urea. The amount of goods shipped by North Central FS in 2001 is as follows: 537 tons, or a five plus railcar load equivalent of Diammonium Phosphate; 1130 tons, or an eleven plus railcar load equivalent of Potash; and 498 tons, or a five railcar load equivalent of Urea. Using year 2001 data as the base year,¹ the proposed abandonment could result in the conversion of about 22 railcars to truck traffic. Using a conversion factor of 4 trucks per railcar,² SEA calculated that, if all the rail traffic is diverted to truck traffic, about 88 loaded trucks per year or 176 total trucks (assuming an empty backhaul) could be added to area roadways. On a per day basis less than one truck per day could be added to the area roadways during a 240 workday year.³

UP states that state highways 175 and 215 are in the area, and route 175 connects to U.S. 65 about 10 miles west of Eldora, Iowa.

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 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

¹ Because 2001 is the most recent complete year of data, the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is using 2001 as the base year.

² The conversion factor is an estimate used to calculate the rail to truck conversion of varied commodities.

³ 240 workdays result when weekends and holidays are subtracted from a 365 day year.

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 Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Rini Ghosh, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 168X) 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.

Date made available to the public: **February 14, 2003.**

Comment due date: March 14, 2003.

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

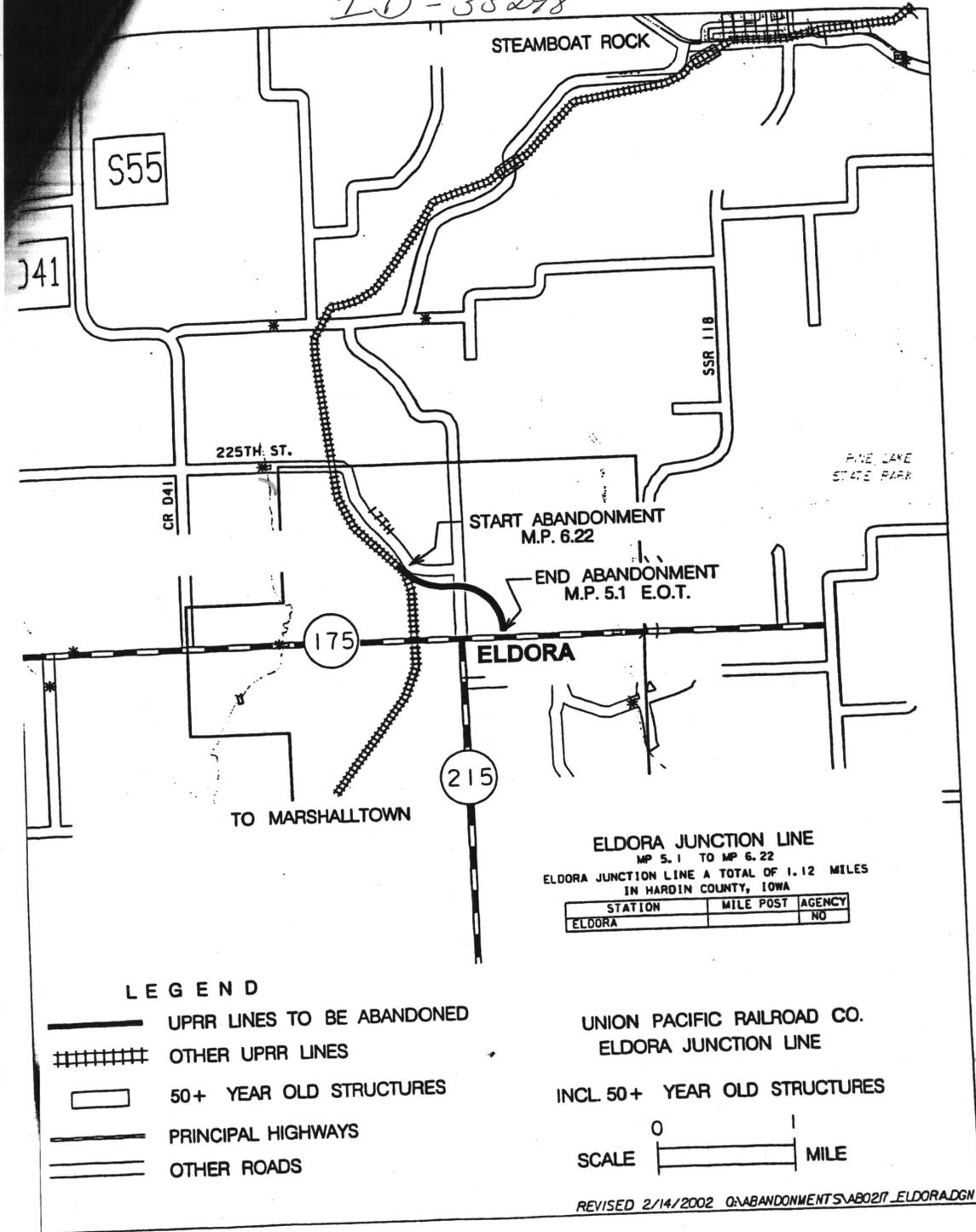
Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

AB-33 (SUB-NO. 168X)

ID-38298

ATTACHMENT 1



ELDORA JUNCTION LINE
 MP 5.1 TO MP 6.22
 ELDORA JUNCTION LINE A TOTAL OF 1.12 MILES
 IN HARDIN COUNTY, IOWA

STATION	MILE POST	AGENCY
ELDORA		NO

LEGEND

- UPRR LINES TO BE ABANDONED
- OTHER UPRR LINES
- 50+ YEAR OLD STRUCTURES
- PRINCIPAL HIGHWAYS
- OTHER ROADS

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD CO.
 ELDORA JUNCTION LINE
 INCL 50+ YEAR OLD STRUCTURES

SCALE MILE

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