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SERVICE DATE - MAY 4, 1999

DO

FR-4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-561X]

Rio Valley Railroad, Inc.--Abandonment Exemption--In Cameron County, TX

[STB Docket No. AB-562X]

Rio Valley Switching Company--Discontinuance of Service Exemption--In Cameron
County, TX

On April 14, 1999, Rio Valley Railroad, Inc. (RVRI), and Rio Valley Switching Company (RVSC) jointly filed with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemptions from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 for RVRI to abandon, and RVSC to discontinue service over, an 8.808-mile line of railroad, known as the Rio Hondo Line, extending between milepost 0.316 near San Benito and milepost 9.19 at Rio Hondo, in Cameron County, TX.¹ The line traverses U.S. Postal Service ZIP Code 78583 and includes the station of Rio Hondo.

The line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in RVRI's and RVSC's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

The interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions set forth in Oregon Short Line R. Co.--Abandonment--Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

¹ The beginning of the Rio Hondo Line, from milepost 0.066 to milepost 0.316, is not included in the proposed abandonment and discontinuance.

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By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting exemption proceedings pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by August 2, 1999.

Any offer of financial assistance under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 10 days after service of a decision granting the exemptions. Each offer must be accompanied by a \$1,000 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested parties should be aware that, following abandonment of rail service and salvage of the line, the line may be suitable for other public use, including interim trail use. Any request for a public use condition under 49 CFR 1152.28 or for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be due no later than May 24, 1999. Each trail use request must be accompanied by a \$150 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(27).

All filings in response to this notice must refer to STB Docket Nos. AB-561X and AB-562X and must be sent to: (1) Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001; and (2) Thomas F. McFarland, Jr., McFarland & Herman, 20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1330, Chicago, IL 60606-2902. Replies are due May 24, 1999.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment and discontinuance procedures may contact the Board's Office of Public Services at (202) 565-1592 or refer to the full abandonment or discontinuance regulations at 49 CFR part 1152. Questions concerning environmental issues may be directed to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) at (202) 565-1545. [TDD for the hearing impaired is available at (202) 565-1695.]

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An environmental assessment (EA) (or environmental impact statement (EIS), if necessary) prepared by SEA will be served upon all parties of record and upon any agencies or other persons who commented during its preparation. Other interested persons may contact SEA to obtain a copy of the EA (or EIS). EAs in these abandonment proceedings normally will be made available within 60 days of the filing of the petition. The deadline for submission of comments on the EA will generally be within 30 days of its service.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at
“WWW.STB.DOT.GOV.”

Decided: April 27, 1999

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary