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SEA

SERVICE DATE - JULY 25, 2003

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 201X)

**Union Pacific Railroad Company – Abandonment Exemption – in Franklin County, 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 7.84 miles of rail line in Franklin County, Iowa. The proposed abandonment extends from milepost 318.66, near Hampton, to milepost 326.50 near Coulter, and is part of the western portion of the Bristow Subdivision. 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 line traverses an area that varies in topography from flat to gently sloping and is adjacent to fair to good agricultural land. The right-of-way is generally 100 feet in width, and may be suitable for trail use, according to UP.

AgVantage FS, Incorporated (AgVantage) at New Hampton, Iowa, is the sole customer on the line and there is no overhead traffic on the line. UP states that upon abandonment the rail might be retained for subsequent use or sold to a salvage company.

### **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 National Geodetic Survey has submitted comments stating that five geodetic station markers may be affected by the proposed abandonment and requests 90 days notification in advance of any activities that may disturb or destroy these markers.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has submitted comments stating that the proposed abandonment would not affect any prime agricultural lands unless water conveyance systems are adversely affected. NRCS recommends that research should be undertaken to identify those systems and to address proper activities in and around them.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has submitted comments stating that if the proposed abandonment involves the extraction of any bridges, all fill material must be removed to an upland, non-wetland site, all pilings must be removed to at least one foot below streambed elevations, all disturbed areas must be seeded with native grasses, and measures should be taken to insure that sediments are not introduced into waters of the United States.

### **Traffic**

UP states that in 2001, AgVantage shipped or received 753 railcars of corn, 9 railcars of potash, 2 railcars of Urea, 6 railcars of diammonium phosphate, and 1 railcar of superphosphate. In 2002, AgVantage shipped or received 942 cars of corn, 8 cars of potash, and 6 cars of diammonium phosphate. Using year 2002 data as the base year,<sup>1</sup> the proposed abandonment could result in the conversion of about 956 railcars to truck traffic. Using a conversion factor of 4 trucks per railcar,<sup>2</sup> SEA calculated that, if all the rail traffic is diverted to truck traffic, about 3,824 loaded trucks per year or 7,648 total trucks (assuming an empty backhaul or empty arrival, depending on whether the goods are shipped or received) could be added to area roadways. On a per day basis about 32 trucks per day could be added to the area roadways during a 240 workday year.<sup>3</sup>

UP states that AgVantage has already terminated its rail use on the line and has begun to truck grain to its facility on UP at Chapin, Iowa. UP will continue to provide rail service for AgVantage at Hampton, Iowa, and Coulter is located on a state road, which is about one mile east of Interstate 35.

### **HISTORIC REVIEW**

The railroad submitted a historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. The railroad served the report on the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHPO) pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). UP states that it knows of no historic sites or structures or archeological resources on the line or in the project area. According to UP, there are three bridges on the line that are 50 years old or older, but UP believes these

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<sup>1</sup> Because 2002 is the most recent complete year of data, the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is using 2002 as the base year.

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

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

bridges are not historically significant. The SHPO has not yet completed its review of the proposed abandonment.

## CONDITIONS

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

1. Based on the comments of the National Geodetic Survey (NGS), 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.**
2. Based on the comments of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we recommend that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority: **prior to conducting salvage activities, Union Pacific Railroad Company shall consult with NRCS District Conservationist Margaret Mueller to identify water conveyance systems in the area of the proposed abandonment, to determine whether any identified system would be adversely affected, and to devise measures to protect prime agricultural lands, if any identified system would be adversely affected.**
3. Based on the comments of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, we recommend that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority: **if salvage activities include bridge removal, Union Pacific Railroad Company shall (1) remove all fill material to an upland, non-wetland site; (2) remove all pilings to at least one foot below streambed elevations; (3) seed all disturbed areas with native grasses; and (4) take measures to ensure that sediments are not introduced into waters of the United States.**
4. The State Historical Society of Iowa has not yet completed its review of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, we recommend that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority: **Union Pacific Railroad Company shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of the line and all sites and structures on the line until the completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.**

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended conditions are 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 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. 201X) 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](mailto:ghoshr@stb.dot.gov).

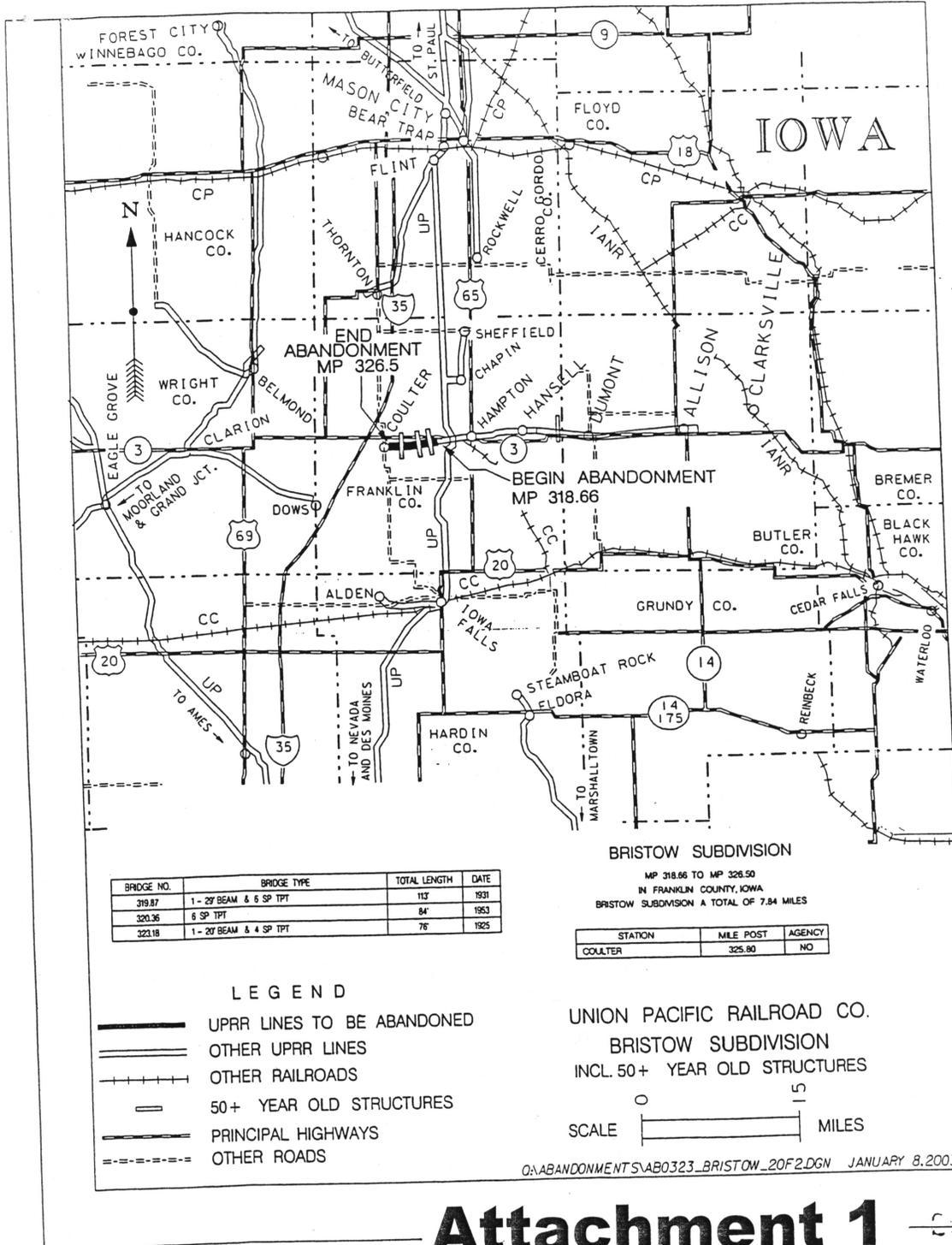
Date made available to the public: **July 25, 2003**

**Comment due date: August 22, 2003.**

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

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

AB-33-201X



# Attachment 1