



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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211875

August 18, 2004

File code:  
8300(P)  
CA-350

Mr. Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary  
Surface Transportation Board  
1925 K Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

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Office of Proceedings

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Subject: Docket No. AB-12 (Sub-No. 184X) Abandonment Exemption Wendel Alturas Line, California (Related to FD 32706); Request for Extension of Negotiations for Trail Use

Dear Mr. Williams:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eagle Lake Field Office, with the concurrence of the BLM Alturas Field Office requests extension of the negotiation period for rail banking the Wendel-Alturas segment of the Modoc Line referenced above, under the Surface Transportation Board's (STB) rules for Interim Trail Use and Rail Banking, 49 CFR 1152.29. This includes the entire Wendel to Alturas Line from MP 360.1 near Wendel to MP 445.6 (McArthur siding) near Alturas.

Through this letter we request that you extend the negotiating period under the Notice of Interim Trail Use (NITU) one year to enable the Bureau of Land Management and Union Pacific Railroad to continue our negotiations begun in the spring of 2003 for rail banking of the Modoc Line referenced above in Docket No. AB-12 (Sub-No.184X). This additional time is needed for BLM to secure an appraisal, negotiate with UPRR regarding the value of the lands to be rail banked and for BLM to secure funding to carry out rail banking arrangements negotiated with UPRR. The NITU negotiating period regarding this line will expire on September 3, 2004.

Our request for the one-year extension is based on the following:

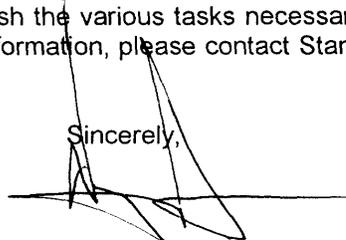
- BLM has taken the lead in past rail banking filings and needs to extend the rail banking negotiation period so that the opportunity to rail bank the line is not lost when the current STB authorized negotiation period expires on September 3, 2004;
- Lassen and Modoc Counties are active supporters of rail banking the line, having passed resolutions supporting rail banking in March and July 2003 (the resolutions were enclosed with BLM's 8-14-03 rail banking extension request that STB approved last year);

- BLM, Lassen and Modoc Counties, working together, are the public entities best suited to take on management of the railroad right-of-way corridor under the NITU process because of our on going management responsibilities of lands adjacent to the line and available staff and equipment in the local area (BLM manages approximately 50% of lands adjacent to the line and the counties are responsible for the private lands issues in the area).
- Lassen and Modoc Counties may later take on rail banking responsibilities with BLM because they are the public entities best situated to benefit from rail banking the line so that the right-of-way remains in place to preserve options for future rail reactivation and for interim trail use by local residents and area visitors;
- Prior to purchase of the Modoc Line a professional appraisal completed to our standards is required before BLM could expend public funds to acquire the right-of-way corridor under rail banking;
- Completion of an appraisal to meet BLM standards has not been completed due to limited federal and county funds available for this project however BLM and Lassen and Modoc Counties continue to seek additional funds for completing an appraisal and for acquiring railroad owned properties (see enclosed 3-9-04 Lassen County Letter to Congressman Doolittle) ;
- Following an appraisal there will need to be sufficient time to negotiate the sale price and secure necessary authorizations within the agencies and UPRR (federal appraisals are now handled through an appraisal team through the Department of Interior's Washington Office which requires additional coordination time);
- Securing funds will require special appropriations or other creative funding methods which will require at least another 12 months requested in this extension request.

We have begun active rail banking negotiations with Mike Sattler of Union Pacific Railroad's Omaha Real Estate Division, Special Projects branch. Mr. Sattler has talked with us on numerous occasions and we jointly field checked the abandoned segment of the Modoc Line with Mr. Sattler on June 23, 2003. We have explained our appraisal needs and funding constraints to Mr. Sattler and believe that he is in agreement that an extension is in order. We have kept Mr. Sattler informed on our efforts to seek funding and on our continued commitment to successfully rail bank this line.

We appreciate your consideration of this request for an extension. We request that you reaffirm the conditions of rail banking specified in the merger and extend the negotiating period for rail banking one year. We believe a one-year extension will provide much needed time for appraisal, negotiation, funding and acquisition and that a six-month extension is unlikely to provide sufficient time to accomplish the various tasks necessary to complete rail banking the line. If you need any additional information, please contact Stan Bales of my staff at 530-252-5311.

Sincerely,



Dayne Barron  
Field Manager

encl: lassen county- Doolittle letter, 3-9-04

cc: mike sattler, uprr -omaha  
congressman doolitte, roseville  
lee chauvet, ne cal rac  
scott kessler, modoc county  
bob sorvaag, lassen county  
laura cohen, rtc – sf

County of Lassen  
Board of Supervisors



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District 5

March 9, 2004

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MAR 15 2004

*Lassen County  
Department of Community Development*

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The Honorable John T. Doolittle  
United States House of Representatives  
2410 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Doolittle:

The Lassen County Board of Supervisors respectfully submits this letter in support of Modoc County's request of 1.9 million dollars to fund the purchase of the Wendel-Alturas segment of the Modoc railway corridor for railbanking.

It is of vital importance that this railway corridor remains intact for future rail reuse and for interim trail use.

Historically the Wendel-Alturas segment of the Modoc Line has been an essential link as an alternative north south route in the regional rail system in the event a natural or man caused disaster shut down rail service on the more vulnerable Sierra Cascade and Sacramento Valley Routes.

Economically, maintaining the linear continuity of the rail corridor is extremely important for the region, especially in light of the declining trend of the timber industry and the recent decision of Sierra Pacific Industries to shut down the Susanville Mill. Maintaining the rail corridor affords the opportunity for future reuse as a railroad for tourism, recreation, and industry as well as interim use as a trail also improving the tourism and recreation components of the regions economy.

Currently the Bureau of Land Management and the Counties of Lassen and Modoc are cooperatively working together to secure the rail corridor's linear continuity for public benefit. Since 1995 the corridor has been in an interim "railbanking" period authorized by the Surface Transportation Board. At present the actions needed to secure the corridor in its entirety are:

- 1) Appraisal to determine value of land
- 2) Purchase land for appraised value
- 3) Development of a corridor management plan

Modoc County's funding request will provide the impetus needed to move forward with securing the Wendel-Alturas segment of the Modoc Line. If railbanking does not occur, the corridor "fractures" into a mixture of underlying owners and the value and utility of the continuous linear corridor is lost now and for the future.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John E. Hanson in black ink.  
**JOHN E. HANSON**, Chairman  
Lassen County Board of Supervisors