

24 December 2005

Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Director of Proceedings
Washington, D.C.

Re: Docket Number AB 33 229 X

Proposed Abandonment of Union Pacific Railroad's "Waxahachie Industrial Lead"

To all concerned parties:

I feel it would be in the best interest of both the City of Waxahachie and Ellis County, Texas – as well as the entire State – for the S.T.B. to review the proposed abandonment of the Union Pacific line currently known as the "Waxahachie Industrial Lead," extending from milepost 798.03 in the city limits of Waxahachie to milepost 802.66 (within the Nena community area).

This route is the last vestige of the former Missouri-Kansas-Texas ("Katy") Railroad's main line which ran compass south/southwest from Waxahachie to Hillsboro and served to connect the Dallas area with the M-K-T main via Fort Worth. The line was severed once the Union Pacific purchased the Katy's property. This action (among other things) effectively eliminated the possibility of near-term, cost effective intercity passenger train service routed directly between Dallas and San Antonio. Regrettably, it was apparent that the Texas Department of Transportation was not interested in working to stop the line's destruction, nor was anything done to secure the property for future use. The line's abandonment caused the right-of-way to be lost south of Nena through the towns of Forrester, Italy and Milford.

Historically, Waxahachie served as an important junction point for various railroad operations south out of Dallas. The M-K-T, as previously noted, passed through town en route to Austin and San Antonio. In addition, passenger and freight trains along the Burlington-Rock Island Joint Texas Division (nee Trinity and Brazos Valley) to Houston and Galveston called upon Waxahachie, by way of Katy trackage rights between that city and Dallas. Although this specific operational routine would no longer be possible, a similar scenario might be an option for tomorrow's travelers – if certain steps are taken today.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments has already identified the need for a Dallas – Waxahachie commuter ("regional") passenger train service and has added that line to its planning maps. The existing U.S. D.O.T. South Central High Speed Rail Corridor project calls for improved passenger operations along three lines emanating from the Dallas / Fort Worth Metropolitan Area, including a route between "Dallas / Fort Worth" (however that general location is eventually defined) and San Antonio via Austin. The expansion of the South Central Corridor project to include a new Dallas – Houston alignment is in the discussion stage and would certainly be a logical addition to the initiative.

These three proposals – Dallas / Waxahachie, Dallas / San Antonio and Dallas / Houston – have the theoretical ability to work in tandem to serve cities along the so-called "Texas Triangle," while continuing to function efficiently within their respective markets.

It would be wonderful if Waxahachie was once again a vital junction point for passenger train services operating between Dallas, Houston and San Antonio! The preservation of the line segment in question – or at least its right-of-way – may be the key ingredient necessary in order for that possibility to come true. When non-commutation intercity passenger trains are reestablished from Dallas to Waxahachie, those runs could continue on the existing BNSF route toward Teague, thence to the Gulf coast. At the same time, trains could also diverge onto UP's Waxahachie Industrial Lead, gaining access to the current UP main line to Waco via Hillsboro, through a shared Interstate 35E corridor or some other alignment (perhaps identified by TXDOT's Trans-Texas Corridor project).

No matter how our 21st Century passenger railroads might be routed when heading cross-country, they will still need access to the city centres. Without this specific line segment in place, corridor options due south of Waxahachie will be severely restricted. Passenger transportation planners may find their field of possibilities so compromised through the loss of this particular piece of trackage that it will be impractical to include Waxahachie on any Dallas – San Antonio railway map, at any cost.

I am not proposing that the Union Pacific be required to underwrite a passenger train network which has not yet even been formally identified, much less one in which they would not find themselves direct participants! What I am proposing, however, is a short period of additional time to get various agencies – such as the North Central Texas C.O.G., the Texas D.O.T., Ellis County and the City of Waxahachie, and others – involved in a discussion of this matter from the above outlined perspective, and do what is necessary to secure the land for future development.

We may not be talking about a traditional rail banking initiative or rails-to-trails proposal; but, this is nothing less important. In fact, considering the health and welfare of the entire north central Texas region for generations to come, this small matter may end up being vital in a way far greater than its diminutive size and scope might indicate.

I stand ready to assist in any way possible. If this board has questions concerning any of my comments, I am always eager to discuss them.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

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