

that it could also have benefits for other passenger vehicles.

In conclusion, it appears that parts marking and other provisions of the 1984 and 1992 Acts have given the law enforcement community tools they can use to deter thefts, trace stolen vehicles and parts, and apprehend and convict thieves. Theft rates leveled off after 1989-90 and have begun to drop. While the program to reduce auto theft has had an impact, there appear to be three areas with potential room for improvement: (1) Insurance companies and motor vehicle departments could take better advantage of the existing parts marking program by routinely requiring inspection of the markings of used parts acquired at body shops and used vehicles brought in for new titles. (2) To the extent that current parts markings can be obliterated, their long-term deterrent effect may be diminished. (3) Since many vehicles still do not have marked parts, the deterrent effect of parts marking at this time may be offset by increased thefts of the vehicles without marked parts.

#### Comments Sought

In addition to any comments regarding this report and its findings on effectiveness in deterring or reducing motor vehicle theft or enhancing recoveries, comment on the following questions are sought:

- Section 33113(b)(11) of Title 49 requires the report to include recommendations to Congress for legislative or administrative action for— (A) continuing without change the theft prevention standards prescribed under Chapter 331; (B) amending this chapter to cover more or fewer lines of passenger motor vehicles; (C) amending this chapter to cover other classes of motor vehicles. Please provide your comments on all or any one of these items, including the basis for your position.

- Given that the current marking methods cost the consumer less than \$5 per vehicle and that Congress allows up to \$22 per vehicle in 1995 dollars, are there more permanent methods for marking vehicles with the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) that can be accomplished within the Congressionally mandated limit? Please include documentation on the marking method, how permanent the markings are (how difficult it is to remove the markings and what evidence is likely to remain that there were markings), cost estimates including the cost of any materials, equipment, tooling and labor. Please identify the economic year for the cost estimates. Please include a description of how the markings are

applied including the time to mark all the major vehicle parts. If the information to be supplied is proprietary, application to the agency Chief Counsel's Office can be made.

- Are there other vehicle parts (e.g., air bags, radios) that should be classified as major parts and thus subject to parts marking? Some states allow glazing to be etched with the VIN. Should glazing be included as a major part and be required to be marked? Please provide a rationale with evidence to support any recommendations.

- Under the current standard, a limited number of lines are exempted from parts marking because the vehicles are equipped with factory installed antitheft devices as standard equipment. Because of the limited data available for evaluation, the effectiveness of antitheft devices as a deterrent could not be determined with much statistical confidence. Is there other evidence to support the effectiveness of antitheft devices? Please supply such evidence along with a description of the applicable antitheft device.

- Even though some insurance companies offer discounts for certain types of antitheft devices, it is unclear as to which devices are considered desirable for obtaining a discount. Also, what additional efforts are made by insurance companies to encourage parts marking and/or the installation of antitheft devices? What other measures does the insurance industry take to reduce the occurrence of motor vehicle theft? Please supply any supporting evidence that shows that these measures are helping to reduce motor vehicle theft or apprehending auto thieves.

All comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date will be considered, and will be available for examination in the docket at the above address both before and after that date. To the extent possible, comments filed after the closing date will also be considered. The NHTSA will continue to file relevant information as it becomes available in the docket after the closing date, and it is recommended that interested people continue to examine the docket for new material.

People desiring to be notified upon receipt of their comments in the rules docket should enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard in the envelope with their comments. Upon receiving the comments, the docket supervisor will return the postcard by mail.

**Authority:** 49 U.S.C. 30112, 33113(b).

**William H. Walsh,**

*Associate Administrator for Plans and Policy.*

[FR Doc. 97-16750 Filed 6-25-97; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 112X)]

#### Union Pacific Railroad Company— Abandonment Exemption—in Lancaster County, NE

On June 6, 1997, the Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) filed with the Surface Transportation Board a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a 1.88-mile segment of its Lincoln Branch, extending from milepost 492.88 near 33rd Street to milepost 494.76 near 10th Street in Lincoln, NE. The line traverses U.S. Postal Service Zip Code 68503 in Lancaster County, NE.

The line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in the railroad's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it. The interest of railroad employees will be protected by Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued within 90 days (by September 24, 1997).

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 petition for exemption. Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$900. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested persons 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 and any request for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be due no later than July 16, 1997. 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 No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 112X) 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) Joseph D. Anthofer, 1416 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68179-0830.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment 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 at (202) 565-1545. [TDD for the hearing impaired is available at (202) 565-1695.]

An environmental assessment (EA) (or environmental impact statement (EIS), if necessary) prepared by the Section of Environmental Analysis will be served upon all parties of record and upon any agencies or other persons who commented during its preparation. Any other persons who would like to obtain a copy of the EA (or EIS) may contact the Section of Environmental Analysis. EAs in these abandonment proceedings normally will be 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.

Decided: June 17, 1997.

By the Board, Vernon A. Williams,  
Secretary.

**Vernon A. Williams,**  
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 97-16767 Filed 6-25-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 111X)]

#### Union Pacific Railroad Company— Abandonment Exemption—in Jefferson County, WI

Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments and Discontinuances of Service and Trackage Rights to abandon and discontinue service over 2.0 miles of the Clyman Branch extending from the end of the line at milepost 110.0 to milepost 112.0, near Fort Atkinson, in Jefferson County, WI. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 53538.

UP has certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) any overhead traffic can be rerouted over other lines; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the

Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements of 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed.

Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on July 26, 1997, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,<sup>1</sup> formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),<sup>2</sup> and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29<sup>3</sup> must be filed by July 7, 1997. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by July 16, 1997, with: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: Joseph D. Anthofer, General Attorney, Union Pacific Railroad Company, 1416 Dodge Street, Room 830, Omaha, NE 68179.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

UP has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. The Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) will issue an environmental assessment (EA)

<sup>1</sup> The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines, 5 I.C.C. 2d 377 (1989) Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

<sup>2</sup> Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$900. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25)

<sup>3</sup> The Board will accept late-filed trail use requests as long as the abandonment has not been consummated and the abandoning railroad is willing to negotiate an agreement.

by July 1, 1997. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565-1545.

Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), UP shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by UP's filing of a notice of consummation by June 26, 1998, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Decided: June 18, 1997.

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

**Vernon A. Williams,**  
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 97-16768 Filed 6-25-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

## UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

### International Education and Cultural Activities; Open Grant Program

**ACTION:** Notice; Request for proposals.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Citizen Exchanges (E/P) of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award program. Public or private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to develop projects that link their international exchange interests with counterpart institutions/groups in ways supportive of the aims of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended, Public Law 87-256, also known as the Fulbright Hays Act.

The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries \* \* \*; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests,