

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Highway Administration****Environmental Impact Statement: Richmond County, NC**

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement will be prepared for a proposed highway project in Richmond County, North Carolina.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Roy C. Shelton, Operations Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, 310 New Bern Avenue, Suite 410, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601, Telephone: (919) 856-4350.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on a proposal to improve and/or relocate US 1 in Richmond County from Sandhill Road (SR 1971) south of Rockingham to Indian Lake Road (SR 1479) north of Marston, a distance of approximately 35.4 kilometers (22 miles).

Improvements to the corridor are deemed necessary to improve travel in Richmond County by reducing overall travel time, reducing through and truck traffic congestion in downtown Rockingham, and improving traffic safety along existing US 1. The proposed project is also considered to be a key element in the state's effort to provide a multi-lane US 1 facility from the South Carolina state line to the Virginia state line.

The range of alternatives under consideration include the "no-action" or No-Build Alternative, alternates using various other transportation modes, widening the existing two-lane highway to a four-lane or multi-lane facility, and constructing a multi-lane controlled access highway on new location. Incorporated into the study of various build alternatives will be various grade and alignment designs.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. Small group informational meetings and citizens information workshops have been established for this project. In addition, a corridor public hearing will be held. The public will be notified in advance of the workshops and public

hearing through the use of newspaper advertisements and a direct mailing to persons on the project mailing list. The draft EIS will be circulated for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing. No formal scoping meeting is planned at this time.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program)

Issued on: August 29, 1997.

Roy C. Shelton,

Operations Engineer, Raleigh.

[FR Doc. 97-24150 Filed 9-10-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Finance Docket No. 33448]

Arizona & California Railroad Company Limited Partnership—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company

Arizona & California Railroad Company Limited Partnership (ARZC), a Class III rail common carrier, has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.41 to acquire and operate approximately 83.5 mainline route miles of rail line over two connecting branch lines and a connecting spur track from The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF), as follows: (i) The Centralia-Hoquiam Line, which extends from milepost 0.6, at or near Centralia, WA, to the western end of the line at about milepost 74.1, at or near Hoquiam, WA, including the Horn Spur Track, which connects to the Centralia-Hoquiam Line at milepost 72.5 and extends northward to the end of the track at approximately milepost 2.0; and (ii) the Elma-Shelton Line, which extends from milepost 0.0, at Elma, WA, (connecting to the Centralia-Hoquiam Line at about milepost 46.7) northward

to the end of BNSF-owned track at milepost 25.1, at or near Shelton, WA.¹

In connection with ARZC's acquisition of the Subject Lines, ARZC will also acquire incidental trackage rights as follows: (i) BNSF will assign its trackage rights to operate over Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP)² from (a) milepost 68.9 to milepost 69.4 and (b) milepost 70.3 to 72.0, at and near Aberdeen, WA; (ii) BNSF will grant to ARZC incidental trackage rights, for the sole purpose of operating overhead rail freight service, that extend from BNSF milepost 0.6 to BNSF milepost 0.4, at or near Centralia, WA; and (iii) BNSF will assign its rights under a December 11, 1994 agreement between its predecessor, Northern Pacific Railway Company, and the United States of America, pursuant to which BNSF provides service on a government-owned line from its connection with the Elma-Shelton Line to Bangor, a distance of approximately 44 miles, and a branch line to Bremerton Navy Yard, a distance of approximately 4.6 miles.³

The transaction was expected to be consummated on or after August 29, 1997. The Subject Lines and the incidental trackage rights will be operated by an operating division of ARZC, d/b/a Puget Sound & Pacific.

If the notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke does not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 33448, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Jo A. DeRoche, Esq., Weiner, Brodsky, Sidman & Kider, P.C., 1350 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005-4797.

Decided: September 4, 1997.

¹ The Centralia-Hoquiam Line, the Horn Spur Track, and the Elma-Shelton Line are collectively referred to as the Subject Lines.

² The notice of exemption states that should the assignment by BNSF to ARZC of incidental trackage rights over UP's rail line require UP's consent, such consent will be obtained.

³ On August 21, 1997, Simpson Timber Company (Simpson) filed a petition to stay or revoke the exemption in this proceeding. ARZC replied in opposition to Simpson's petition. BNSF also sought leave to intervene in the proceeding and submitted a reply in opposition to Simpson's petition. Simpson subsequently requested permission to withdraw its petition. BNSF is granted permission to intervene and Simpson is granted permission to withdraw its petition.