

IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Case No. UPR-R-04-2, Order No. 29657

December 20, 2004

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Website: www.puc.state.id.us

Hearing is Jan. 6 for Caribou County rail abandonment

Boise – The Idaho Public Utilities Commission will conduct a public hearing on January 6 regarding Union Pacific Railroad’s intent to abandon a quarter-mile stretch of track in Caribou County.

The railroad wants to sell that portion of track to Agrium, the only user of the quarter-mile stretch. Agrium ships phosphate ore from a mining operation in Dry Valley. Agrium wants to buy the track to allow it to assemble larger dedicated trains and maximize its rail shipping activity.

Union Pacific indicated it would file with the federal Surface Transportation Board for an exemption that allows the railroad to abandon the rail line in as few as 30 days. To be eligible for an exemption, the railroad must certify that no rail traffic has moved on the line for two years and there are no outstanding complaints about lack of rail service.

While the commission does not make rail abandonment decisions, state statute requires the PUC to schedule a public hearing. The commission’s role is to determine if the abandonment 1) adversely affects the area being served, 2) impairs the access of Idaho shippers to vital goods and markets, and 3) whether the rail line has the potential for profitability. If the commission determines the proposed abandonment is not in the public interest, it files comments and represents the state before the Surface Transportation Board.

The hearing is scheduled for Jan. 6 at 10 a.m. in the commission hearing room at 472 W. Washington St. Those who cannot attend the hearing but want to make comments can participate by telephone. Contact the commission secretary at 208-334-0338 no later than Tuesday, Jan. 4, to make telephone arrangements.

Union Pacific’s application along with a “Combined Environmental and Historical Report,” is available on the commission’s Web site at www.puc.state.id.us. Click on “File Room,” then on “Rail Cases” and Case No. UPR-R-04-2. Physical copies are also available for inspection at the commission’s offices at 472 W. Washington St. in Boise.

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