

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FINDS THAT "GREAT SALT LAKE & SOUTHERN'S" NEW RAIL-LINE CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION PROPOSALS IN UTAH MEET TRANSPORTATION STANDARDS OF THE LAW**

Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda J. Morgan announced today that, subject to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) issuance of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the NRC's capacity as the "lead" federal agency, the Board has found that a proposed, new rail-line construction project in Utah meets the transportation criteria of 49 U.S.C. 10901 governing new construction proposals. The project involves the construction of track ancillary to the creation, subject to NRC approval, of an interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel (SNF) in Skull Valley, UT. The interim facility later is to be replaced by a permanent one to be constructed by the U.S. Department of Energy.

The proposal envisions the Great Salt Lake and Southern Railroad's (GSLS) construction of a longer, 32-mile line between Low, UT, and Skull Valley or an alternative, shorter track segment 1.8 miles west of Timpie, UT. As one of three federal "cooperating agencies" participating in the preparation of the NRC's EIS, the Board made clear that it is the NRC that must determine whether or not the interim storage facility should be built and that, if the facility is not built, the proposed rail projects would be unnecessary.

GSLS had asked the Board to find that construction of either line (though it would prefer to build the longer one) would meet the transportation criteria of Section 10901. The 32-mile line would connect the proposed storage facility with a Union Pacific Railroad Company line. The alternative proposal would entail the construction of two 2000-foot side tracks and the construction of a "run-around track" that would allow a locomotive to "run around" a train of railcars to reach either end. The shorter line would be part of an intermodal complex where SNF shipping casks from arriving rail cars would be transferred to heavy-haul trucks for carriage by road to the proposed storage facility. The Board will consider the proposed construction further upon the conclusion of the environmental review process.

The Board published notice of GSLS's construction application in the *Federal Register* in January 2000 and at that time requested public comments. The Board received comments in support of the application from United States Senator Rod Grams; the Tooele County [Utah] Commission; the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians; Consolidated Edison Company of New York Inc.; Dairyland Power Cooperative; GPU Nuclear, Inc.; Illinois Power Company; Northern States Power Company; Southern California Edison Company; and the Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. Comments opposing the application were filed by Cargill Incorporated Salt Division and the State of Utah Department of Transportation (Utah DOT).

In the decision issued today, the Board found that GSLS is financially fit to undertake the construction and to provide service and that there is a public demand or need for the proposed service. Although the Utah DOT maintained that GSLS's application should not be reviewed until the environmental review process is completed, the Board stated that its practice is to consider construction requests by first reviewing relevant transportation issues, then by addressing environmental issues. The Board emphasized that no construction could begin until all environmental matters are fully considered.

The Board issued its decision today in *Great Salt Lake and Southern Railroad, L.L.C.-- Construction and Operation--In Tooele County, UT*, STB Finance Docket No. 33824. A printed copy is available for a fee by contacting: **D~To-D~ Office Solutions, Room 405, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006, telephone (202) 466-5530**. Today's decision is also available for viewing and downloading via the Board's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>

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