

2.7 RAIL FREIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The State of Arizona 2007 Railroad Inventory and Assessment cites twenty freight railroads operate on approximately 2,000 miles of heavy-railroad within the state of Arizona. Of the twenty operators, six service the Eastern Arizona Focus Areas.

BNSF Railway Company operates across 28 states. The system's Transcon BNSF Route runs from Los Angeles, California to Chicago, Illinois. The route travels through the northern section of Arizona—through Flagstaff, Winslow, Springerville as it makes its way to the state line. A branch line provides service to locations in Apache County near St. Johns.

Union Pacific Railroad provides heavy-rail service to the southern section of the state. The Sunset Route travels through southern Arizona connecting Los Angeles and New Orleans via Houston. Branch lines service Phelps-Dodge mine sites in Santa Cruz and Greenlee Counties. The line, which operates in Santa Cruz County, commences in Tucson and terminates in Nogales. The branch line that runs through Greenlee County connects with the Sunset Route in New Mexico.

Five regional railroads operate within the state; however, only one services the Eastern Arizona Regional Framework Study Area. The Apache Railway is a shortline railroad that transports goods such as waste paper, coal and animal feed from the BNSF Railway line in Holbrook and runs 38 miles to the Abitibi Paper Mill in Snowflake. A 7-mile branch line in Snowflake provides additional service as needed.

The Arizona Eastern Railway is one of two switching and terminal railroads that operate in the state. The service operates on approximately 135 miles of track between Miami to Bowie, where it connects to the Union Pacific Railroad. The line has freight docks in Safford and Claypool. The carrier primarily ships copper products (i.e., copper concentrate, copper rod), and also handles minerals, chemicals and building supplies.

Two local, freight rail lines operate within the study area. San Pedro & Southwestern Railway is a 7.5 railroad line operating near Curtiss and transports fertilizer and anhydrous ammonia. Phelps Dodge also operates a railroad service within its Morenci Mine which is the country's leading producer of copper. Approximately 15 miles of tracks run within the yard to transport copper concentrate, copper and acid.

A number of abandoned railroads tracks are laid between the Mogollon Rim and Copper Country Focus Areas and throughout the Cochise-Santa Cruz Focus Area. In 1976, the White Mountain Scenic Railroad – a passenger line between McNary and Maverick - ceased services primarily due to the closure of sawmill in McNary. The Apache Railway line provided freight service between Snowflake and McNary before terminating in 1984.

In the southeastern section of the state, several miles of track have been abandoned. The New Mexico and Arizona Railroad operated freight service parallel to the Sonoita Creek from Benson to Fairbanks and Rio Rico via Sonoita and Patagonia. The New Mexico and Arizona Railroad line also paralleled segments of the Arizona and Southeastern Railroad which was sold to the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad who extended the line from Douglas to El Paso. In 1955, the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad merged into Southern Pacific Railroad. By 1966, the tracks from Douglas eastward were abandoned. Then by the 1990s, the Southern Pacific Railroad terminated services between Paul Spur and Douglas. The San Pedro & Southwestern Railroad eventually acquired the Southern Pacific rail lines. The easement from Curtiss to Naco and Paul Spur is no longer utilized.