

SERVICE DATE – MAY 8, 2026

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

Docket No. AB 1301X

BELVIDERE & DELAWARE RIVER RAILWAY COMPANY—ABANDONMENT
EXEMPTION—IN HUNTERDON COUNTY, N.J.

Decided: May 8, 2026

Belvidere & Delaware Railway Company (BDR) filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR part 1152 subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon approximately 3,288 linear feet of rail extending from Alexandria Creek milepost 34.27 to a point 566.75 feet south of milepost 35 in Hunterdon County, N.J. (the Line). Notice of the exemption was served and published in the Federal Register on April 9, 2026 (91 Fed. Reg. 18,020). The exemption is scheduled to become effective on May 9, 2026.

The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served a Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) on April 14, 2026, recommending that one condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority. In the Draft EA, OEA stated that BDR submitted a combined environmental and historic report and served the report on the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c). Based on the available information, OEA stated that it did not believe that the proposed abandonment would cause significant environmental impacts. OEA stated that it had not heard from the SHPO and therefore had not been able to consider the SHPO's opinion before determining the effect of the proposed abandonment on historic properties eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Accordingly, OEA recommended a condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority requiring BDR to retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties, including sites, buildings, structures, and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) eligible for listing or listed in the National Register until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 54 U.S.C. § 306108.

OEA issued its Final Environmental Assessment (Final EA) on May 4, 2026. The Final EA notes that on April 7, 2026, before the Draft EA was issued, BDR submitted a comment letter from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that was not considered in the Draft EA. NRCS stated that the proposed abandonment would have no impact on farmland, and OEA accordingly concluded the proposed abandonment would have no impact on farmland and did not recommend any additional mitigation. Further, the New Jersey SHPO submitted a letter concurring with OEA's no adverse effect determination, stating that the proposed abandonment would have no effect on historic properties. As a result, OEA no longer recommends that the Section 106 condition recommended in the Draft EA be imposed.

Therefore, OEA is not recommending that any conditions be imposed in this proceeding. Accordingly, a finding of no significant impact under 49 C.F.R. § 1105.10(g) will be made pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1011.7(a)(3)(ix).

It is ordered:

1. Abandonment of the Line will have no significant effect on the quality of the human environment and conservation of energy resources or on historic resources.
2. If consummation has not been effected by BDR's filing of a notice of consummation by April 9, 2027, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.
3. This decision is effective on its service date.

By the Board, Anika S. Cooper, Chief Counsel, Office of Chief Counsel.