

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

311693

ENTERED
Office of Chief Counsel
June 30, 2026
Part of
Public Record

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN

**VERIFIED NOTICE OF EXEMPTION OF
MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
PURSUANT TO 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50**

Robert A. Wimbish
Thomas J. Healey
Fletcher & Sippel LLC
29 North Wacker Drive, Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60606-3208
(312) 252-1500

**ATTORNEYS FOR MINNESOTA
NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.**

Dated: June 30, 2026

FEE RECEIVED
June 30, 2026
SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION BOARD

FILED
June 30, 2026
SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION BOARD

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN

**VERIFIED NOTICE OF EXEMPTION OF
MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
PURSUANT TO 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50**

Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. (“MNN”) hereby submits this Notice of Exemption pursuant to 49 C.F.R. part 1152, subpart F, to abandon an approximately 11.14-mile rail line located in Norman and Polk Counties, MN.

In accordance with the requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(d)(2), MNN submits the following information:

General Corporation Information: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.22(a)(1)-(2)

MNN is a Class III common carrier by rail operating in the State of Minnesota.

The complete name and address of MNN is:

Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc.
1420 S Main Street
Crookston, MN 56716

Relief Sought: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.22(a)(3)

Pursuant to the Board’s class exemption procedures for the abandonment of out-of-service rail lines (49 C.F.R. part 1152, subpart F), MNN seeks authority to abandon an approximately 11.14-mile rail line located in Norman and Polk Counties, MN, extending from

milepost 40.20, located at approximately the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located at approximately the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN (“the Line”).

Map: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.22(a)(4)

A map of the Line proposed to be abandoned is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

MNN's Representative: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.22(a)(7)

MNN’s representative to whom correspondence regarding this abandonment should be sent is:

Robert A. Wimbish
Fletcher & Sippel LLC
29 N. Wacker Drive, Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606-3208
312-252-1500

ZIP Codes Traversed: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.22(a)(8)

The Line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Codes 56581, 56568, and 56523.

Qualification for Class Exemption: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(b)

Per the certification and verification attached hereto as Exhibit B, MNN has certified that no local revenue traffic has moved over the Line for at least two years, that overhead traffic (to the extent any has existed on this stub-ended track) can be rerouted over other lines, that no formal complaint has been filed by a user of rail service (or a state or local governmental entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service on the Line, and that no such complaint is pending with the Board or any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of the complainant during the last two years.

Consummation Date: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(d)(2)

MNN will not consummate the proposed abandonment any earlier than August 19, 2026, which is 50 days from the date that this notice is filed with the Board.

Suitability for Other Public Purposes: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.22(e)(4)

MNN seeks Board authorization to abandon the Line to facilitate salvage of the existing rail. Although MNN is not aware of any party that may be interested in acquiring the Line for other public purposes, it is amenable to discussing such uses with interested parties. Assuming that a mutually-agreeable trails use agreement can be successfully negotiated, MNN will concur in the group's anticipated request for a Notice of Interim Trail Use pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1152.29

Labor Protection: 49 C.F.R. 1152.50(d)(2)

The appropriate level of labor protection for the abandonment proposed herein is that set forth in *Oregon Short Line R.R. – Abandonment – Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). MNN does not believe that any employees will be adversely affected by the proposed abandonment.

Certificate of Compliance with Notice Requirements: 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(d)(2)

A certificate that the notice requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(d)(1) and 49 C.F.R. § 1105.11 have been complied with is attached hereto as Exhibit C.

Environmental and Historic Report: 49 C.F.R. §§ 1105.7 and 1105.8

An Environmental/Historic Report prepared in compliance with the requirements and specifications of 49 C.F.R. §§ 1105.7 and 1105.8 is attached hereto as Exhibit D. That report concludes that the proposed abandonment, if implemented, will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ *Thomas J. Healey*

Robert A. Wimbish

Thomas J. Healey

Fletcher & Sippel LLC

29 North Wacker Drive, Suite 800

Chicago, Illinois 60606-3208

(312) 252-1500

**ATTORNEYS FOR MINNESOTA
NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.**

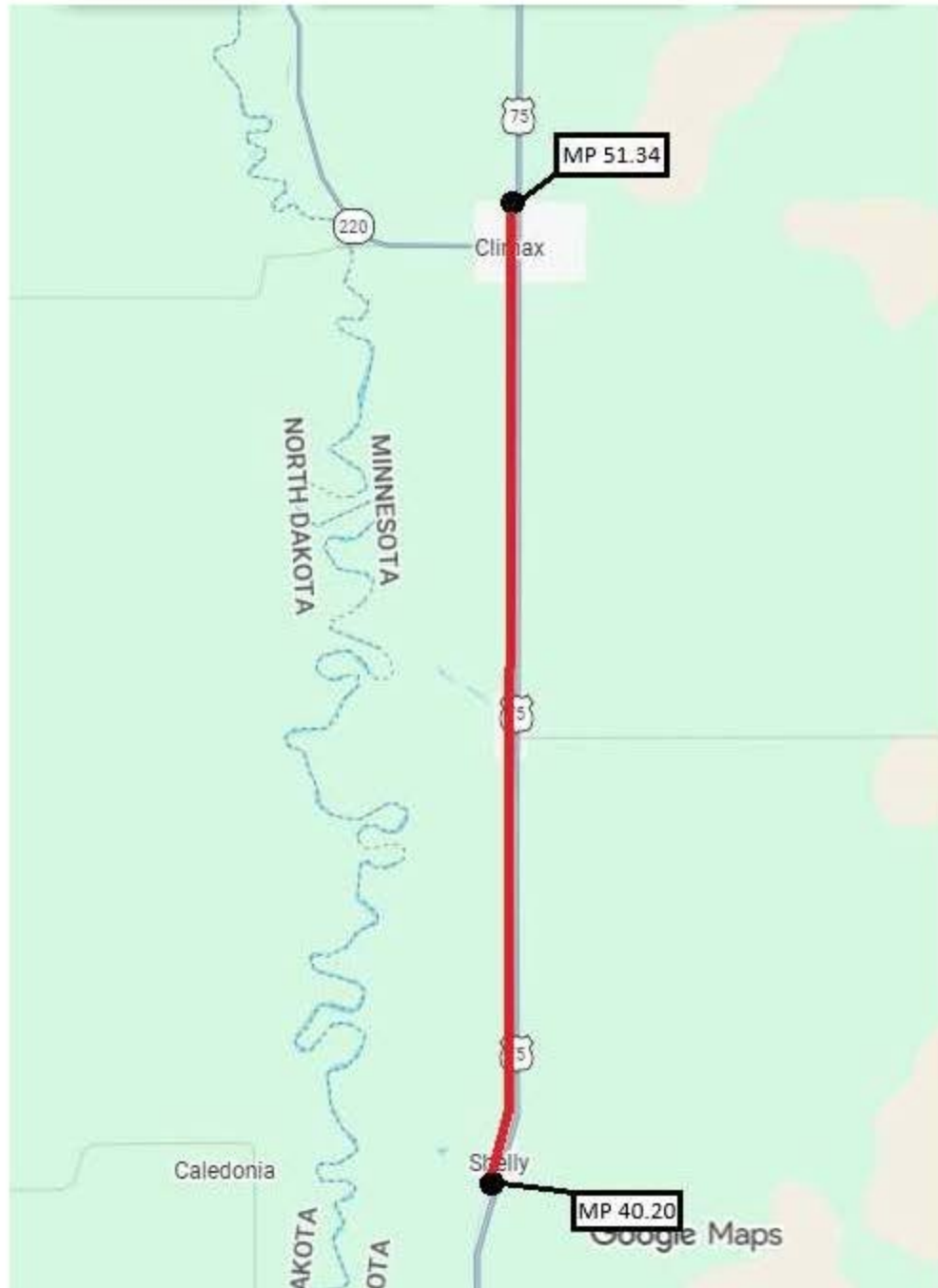
Dated June 30, 2026

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN

EXHIBIT A

MAP



BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN

EXHIBIT B

CERTIFICATIONS/VERIFICATIONS

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

VERIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION

I, Jason Bierwerth, declare and verify under penalty of perjury that the information set forth in the foregoing abandonment notice of exemption (the “Notice”) is true and correct.

Further, I certify that I am qualified and authorized to verify this Notice, and certify as follows:

1. MNN seeks authority to abandon an approximately 11.14-mile rail line located in Norman and Polk Counties, MN, extending from milepost 40.20, located approximately at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located approximately at the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN (“the Line”).
2. MNN has handled no local traffic over the Line for at least two years, and any overhead traffic can be rerouted over other rail lines; and
3. No formal complaint filed by a user of rail service (or a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding MNN’s cessation of service over the Line is either pending with the Surface Transportation Board or any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of the complainant within the past two years.

Dated: June 30, 2026



Name: Jason Bierwerth
Title: Manager of Operations
Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc.
1420 S Main Street
Crookston, MN 56716

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN

EXHIBIT C

CERTIFICATION

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE AND PUBLICATION

I, Thomas J. Healey, an attorney for Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc., hereby certify that, for the proceeding before the Surface Transportation Board docketed as Docket No. AB 497 (Sub-No. 8X), *Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. - Abandonment Exemption - In Norman and Polk Counties, MN*:

(1) The advance notice requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(d)(1) have been satisfied, to wit: On June 19, 2026, written notice of the proposed abandonment of rail service was mailed to the (a) United States Department of Defense, Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command Transportation Engineering Agency ATTN: SDTE-SA (Railroads for National Defense); (b) U.S. Department of Agriculture, Chief of the Forest Service; (c) National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program; (d) the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

(2) A newspaper notice was published by The Thirteen Towns, a newspaper of general circulation in Polk County, MN, on June 16, 2026, and by the Norman County Index, a newspaper of general circulation in Norman County, MN on June 23, 2026.

(3) Pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.11, as required by 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(d)(2), a draft copy of the appended Environmental/Historic Report with appropriate cover letter was served on all parties reflected on the service list for that Report on June 10, 2026.

Thomas J. Healey

Thomas J. Healey
Attorney for Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc.

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN

EXHIBIT D

ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORIC REPORT

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORIC REPORT

Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. (“MNN”) submits this combined Environmental and Historic Report (the “Report”) in compliance with the requirements of 49 C.F.R. §§ 1105.7 and 1105.8. Supporting correspondence, photographs and maps are appended. As explained herein, the proposed abandonment would not significantly¹ impact the quality of the human environment or affect the conservation of energy resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT - 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e)

1. Proposed Action and Alternatives.

MNN intends to file a notice of exemption with the Surface Transportation Board (“STB”) to abandon a rail line in Norman and Polk Counties, Minnesota, extending from milepost 40.20, located approximately at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located approximately at the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN

¹ See generally 49 C.F.R. § 1105.5(a) (2017) (incorporating “significant” standard of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27).

("the Line"). The Line is in Zip Codes 56581, 56568, and 56523. The Line has not seen local service in well over two years²

The abandonment notice of exemption will be filed pursuant to 49 C.F.R. Part 1152, Subpart F. No alternatives to the proposed abandonment appear reasonable, since the Line has been inactive to local traffic for at least two years, and there is no foreseeable prospect that a need for freight rail service would re-emerge. MNN believes that the only reasonable alternative to abandonment is retention of the subject railroad property as a federally-regulated, but dormant, freight railroad line.

A map showing the Line is attached hereto as Appendix A.

2. Transportation System. MNN does not anticipate that existing regional or local transportation systems or patterns will be significantly affected by the proposed abandonment, but has requested input from both Norman and Polk Counties, the Minnesota Department of Administration, c/o Parking and Transit, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Appendix B. No replies have been received. Since the Line has no active customers and is no longer needed to serve any customers, abandonment would not result in the diversion of traffic to other modes.

3. Land Use.

(i) MNN does not believe that the proposed abandonment would be inconsistent with regional and/or local land use plans, and has solicited comments from Norman

² The portion of the Line between Nielsville (milepost 46.0) and Shelly (milepost 40.20) was the subject of a 2018 STB abandonment proceeding in Docket AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X). MNN's abandonment authorization appears to have lapsed before MNN was able legally to consummate abandonment of that line segment, requiring MNN to include that line segment for abandonment here, in addition to the new line segment from Nielsville northward to the end of the line just to the north of Climax.

and Polk Counties. Appendix B. No response has been received. The National Geodetic Survey (“NOAA”) has also been contacted, but has not yet responded. Appendix B.

(ii) The Natural Resource Conservation Service (“NRCS”) has been contacted. Appendix B. No response has been received.

(iii) The Line is not located in or on the border of a designated Coastal Management Area, and MNN does not believe that the proposed abandonment will affect any land or water uses in such an area or result in any coastal impacts. Nonetheless, MNN contacted the Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program, c/o Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for comment, but has not yet received any comments. MNN also solicited comments from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 (“EPA Region 5”) to determine whether the proposed abandonment would have any bearing upon applicable federal, state and local water quality standards. Appendix B. MNN has received no comments from EPA Region 5.

(iv) This abandonment is being undertaken to salvage remaining rail and other ferrous metals, along with ties and ballast, but MNN is amenable to engaging in discussions with qualified entities to make the Line available for public recreational use consistent with 49 U.S.C. § 10905.

4. Energy.

(i) The proposed abandonment will not have any effect on the transportation of energy resources.

(ii) The movement and/or recovery of recyclable commodities will not be adversely affected by the proposed abandonment.

(iii) The abandonment will not result in an increase or decrease in overall energy efficiency. No rail freight traffic currently moves to or from points on the Line, and, thus, there will be no changes in existing transportation patterns or energy usage as a result of the proposed abandonment.

(iv) Not applicable. The abandonment of the Line will not cause the diversion of more than 1,000 rail carloads per year or an average of 50 rail carloads per mile per year to motor carriers.

5. Air.

(i) Not applicable. The Line has no active customers and is not needed to serve any active customers. The abandonment will not result in (A) a minimum increase in rail traffic of 100% or eight trains per day on any segment of rail line; (B) an increase in rail yard activity of at least 100%; or (C) an average increase in truck traffic of more than 10% of the average daily traffic or 50 vehicles per day on any road segment.

(ii) MNN believes that neither Norman nor Polk Counties are Class 1 or Nonattainment Area for any substance. In any event, abandonment of the Line will not result in traffic increases exceeding the thresholds at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e)(5)(ii)(A), (B) or (C).

(iii) Not applicable. MNN has contacted and requested comments from the EPA Region 5 and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Appendix B. No responses have been received to date.

6. Noise. Not applicable. None of the noise thresholds identified in 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e)(5)(i) will be exceeded as a result of the abandonment.

7. Safety.

(i) The proposed action will have no adverse effect upon public health or safety.

(ii) Not applicable. The proposed abandonment will have no effect on the transportation of hazardous materials.

(iii) To MNN's knowledge, there are no known hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been known hazardous material spills on the right-of-way of the Line.

8. Biological Resources.

(i) MNN does not believe that any critical habitat will be destroyed, altered or affected as a result of the proposed abandonment, nor that endangered or threatened species will be adversely affected by the abandonment.

MNN does not believe that the abandonment would adversely affect any species. MNN has requested comments from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Appendix B. No responses have been received to date.

(ii) Similarly, MNN has no reason to believe that any wildlife sanctuaries or refuges will be affected. MNN has contacted and requested comments from the National Park Service, as set forth in Appendix B. No response has been received to date.

9. Water.

(i) EPA Region 5 and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency have been contacted. Appendix B. No responses have been received to date.

(ii) The Army Corps of Engineers (the "Corps") has been contacted to determine if the proposed abandonment requires permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Appendix B. The Corps has not responded. In addition, MNN is unaware of the proposed abandonment affecting any 100-year floodplain.

(iii) MNN does not anticipate the discharge of any pollutants in relation to its proposed abandonment. Additionally, no material will be disposed of into waterways as part of the abandonment. Accordingly, MNN concludes that no permits under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act are required.

10. Mitigation.

Given the absence of anticipated impact of the abandonment, no mitigation efforts are anticipated.

* * * * *

HISTORIC REPORT - 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(d)

1. Map. A map of the Line is attached hereto as Appendix A.

2. Description of Line. The rail line is approximately 11.14 miles in length and of various widths, located near and between the towns of Climax and Shelly, in Norman and Polk Counties, MN, extending from milepost 40.20, located approximately at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located approximately at the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN. (the “Line”). The Line generally proceeds through rural terrain with a few smaller towns. The southern end of the Line was the northernmost point of a prior MNN abandonment effort that was consummated by MNN. *See Minnesota Northern Railroad, In. -- Abandonment — in Norman County, MN*, Docket No. AB 497 (Sub-No. 4X) (STB served Sep. 4, 2008). Prior to consummation of the abandonment authority sought in this docket, MNN intends to salvage the rail and other ferrous track-related materials along with ties and ballast. Additionally, given safety concerns, the bridge located at approximately milepost 51.1 will likely be removed by MNN, but the railroad has no current plans as to when that will occur. MNN is amenable to undertaking discussions to transfer the Line, including its bridges, to a trail

use sponsor for use as part of a public pathway for recreational use along the subject railroad corridor.

3. Photographs. Images of four bridges are included within Appendix C, with a map showing generally the milepost location of the bridges attached as Appendix D.

4. Information on Structures. There are four bridge structures which are believed by MNN to be at least 50 years or older on the Line, located near mileposts 51.1, 43.8, 42.8, and 41.7, all of unknown construction date. No other structures are believed to be in excess of 50 years of age.

5. History of Operations. The Line is believed to have been built by the St. Paul Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway around 1896. The Great Northern Railway assumed control shortly thereafter. In more recent times, the Line was operated by the BNSF Railway (“BNSF”). MNN bought the Line from BNSF in 1997. *Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc.—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Burlington Northern Railroad Company*, FD 33315 (STB served Mar. 12, 1997). No revenue traffic has moved over the Line over the past two years. The Line has been used on occasion for car storage during the preceding two years.

6. Engineering Documents. MNN will provide copies of any engineering documents in its possession.

7. Historic Criteria. MNN does not believe that any structures on the Line qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. MNN has contacted and given notice of the proposed abandonment to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (“MSHPO”), and, in doing so, identified the four bridges, and provided photographs of them.

Appendix C. MSHPO believes that no historic properties will be affected by the abandonment.

Appendix C. MSHPO has not requested any additional documentation regarding structures on the Line. MNN has no plans to remove the four bridges on the Line with the exception of the bridge located at approximately milepost 51.1, which will likely be removed by MNN at some unknown date in the future. MNN believes that no historic properties will be affected by MNN's plans for the Line.

8. Ground Disturbances. MNN is confident that significant subsurface ground disturbance occurred during construction of the Line. Based on available information, MNN does not believe that there are archaeological resources in the area. Access to the Line is generally good.

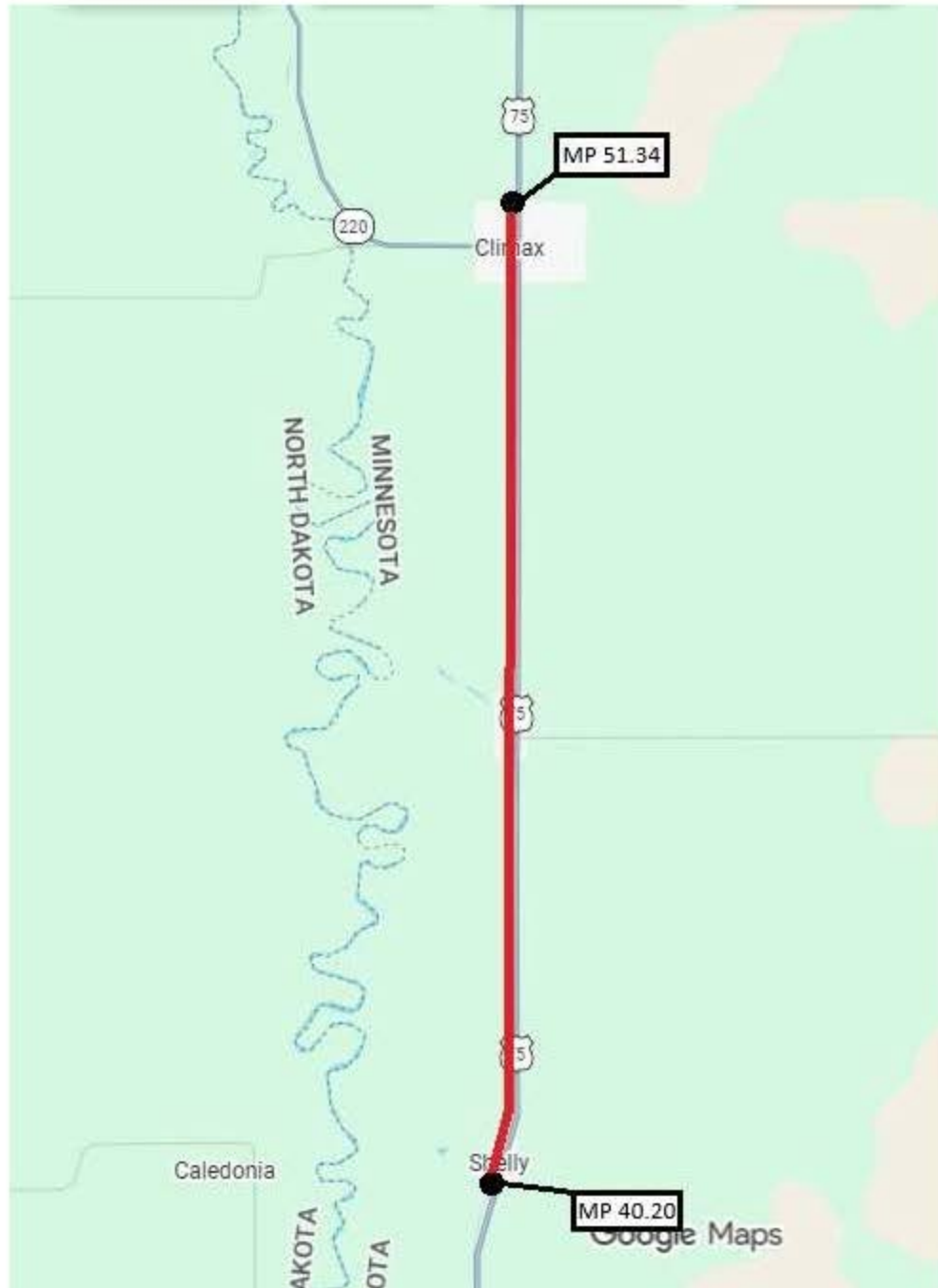
**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

APPENDIX A

MAP OF RAIL LINE



**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE

FLETCHER & SIPPEL LLC

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

29 North Wacker Drive
Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60606-3208

Phone: (312) 252-1500
Fax: (312) 252-2400
www.fletcher-sippel.com

TYLER J. KRAUS
(312) 252-1536
tkRAUS@fletcher-sippel.com

June 10, 2026

SEE ATTACHED SERVICE LIST

**Re: Docket No. AB-497 (Sub – No. 8X), Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. –
Abandonment Exemption – in Norman and Polk Counties, MN**

We recently provided you with a draft of the enclosed combined environmental-historic report for this proposed abandonment, but inadvertently omitted this cover letter, which contains information regarding the abandonment and draft report, and how your organization may participate in the docket.

On or after June 30, 2026, we are filing with the Surface Transportation Board a notice of exemption seeking authority to abandon an approximately 11.14 miles of rail line (the “Line”) near and between the towns of Climax and Shelly, in Norman and Polk Counties, MN, extending from milepost 40.20, located at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located at the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN. Attached is the Report describing the proposed action and any expected environmental (and/or historic) effects, as well as a map of the affected area.

We are providing this report so that you may review the information that will form the basis for the STB's independent environmental and historic analysis of this proceeding. If any of the information is misleading or incorrect, if you believe that pertinent information is missing, or if you have any questions about the Board's environmental and historic review process, please contact the Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA), Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC, telephone (202) 245-0245 and refer to Docket No. AB 497 (Sub-No. 8X). Because the applicable statutes and regulations impose stringent deadlines for processing this action, your written comments to OEA (with a copy to the undersigned) would be appreciated within three weeks.

Your comments will be considered by the Board in evaluating the environmental and/or historic preservation impacts of the contemplated action. If there are any questions concerning this proposal, please contact me directly. My contact information is contained at the top of the first page of this letter.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,

Tyler Kraus

Service List for Draft Environmental-Historic Report

Natural Resources Conservation Service:

Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854
c/o Mathew Waterworth
matt.waterworth@usda.gov

Minnesota State Clearinghouse:

c/o Minnesota Department of Administration
Parking and Transit
50 Sherburne Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55155
fmd.comments@state.mn.us

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

US Army Corps of Engineers
St. Paul District
180 Fifth St. East, Ste 700
St. Paul, MN 55101-1678
Cemvp-pa@usace.army.mil

Environmental Protection Agency:

US EPA Region 5
77 W. Jackson Blvd
Chicago, IL 60604
r5hotline@epa.gov

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Transportation Building
Central Office
395 John Ireland Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155
c/o Jennifer Witt
jennifer.witt@state.mn.us

National Geodetic Survey

1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282
ngs.infocenter@noaa.gov

Minnesota State Historical Preservation Office

State Historic Preservation Office
Administration Building #203
50 Sherburne Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55155
ENReviewSHPO@state.mn.us

and via U.S. Standard mail upon the following:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service:

Midwest Region Headquarters
5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990
Bloomington, MN 55437-1458

County Commissioners:

Norman County Commissioners
16 Third Avenue, East
Ada, MN 56510

Polk County Commissioners
612 N. Broadway, Suite 215
Crookston, MN 56716

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency:

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194

NOAA/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:

NOAA Headquarters
1401 Constitution Avenue NW,
Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

National Park Service

National Park Service Region 5
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102-4226

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORIC REPORT

Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. (“MNN”) submits this combined Environmental and Historic Report (the “Report”) in compliance with the requirements of 49 C.F.R. §§ 1105.7 and 1105.8. Supporting correspondence, photographs and certifications are appended. As explained herein, the proposed abandonment would not significantly¹ impact the quality of the human environment or affect the conservation of energy resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT - 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e)

1. **Proposed Action and Alternatives.**

MNN intends to file a notice of exemption with the Surface Transportation Board (“STB”) to abandon a rail line in Norman and Polk Counties, Minnesota, extending from milepost 40.20, located at the north end of the Marsh

¹ See generally 49 C.F.R. § 1105.5(a) (2017) (incorporating “significant” standard of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27).

River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located at the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN (“the Line”). The Line is in Zip Codes 56581, 56568, and 56523. The Line has not seen local service in well over two years.²

MNN now desires to abandon the Shelly to Nielsville and the Nielsville to Climax segments of the Line.

The abandonment notice of exemption will be filed pursuant to 49 C.F.R.

Part 1152, Subpart F. No alternatives to the proposed abandonment appear reasonable, since the Line has been inactive to local traffic for at least two years, and there is no foreseeable prospect that a need for freight rail service would re-emerge. MNN believes that the only reasonable alternative to abandonment is retention of the subject railroad property as a federally-regulated, but dormant, freight railroad line.

A map showing the Line is attached hereto as Appendix A.

2. Transportation System. MNN does not anticipate that existing regional or local transportation systems or patterns will be significantly affected by the proposed abandonment, but has requested input from both Norman and Polk Counties, the Minnesota Department of Administration, c/o Parking and Transit, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Appendix B. No replies have been

² The portion of the Line between Nielsville (milepost 46.0) and Shelly was the subject of a 2018 abandonment proceeding at the STB in Docket AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X). MNN’s abandonment authorization appears to have lapsed before MNN was able legally to consummate abandonment of that line segment, requiring MNN to include that line segment for abandonment here, in addition to the new line segment from Nielsville northward to the end of the line north of Climax.

received. Since the Line has no active customers and is no longer needed to serve any customers, abandonment would not result in the diversion of traffic to other modes.

3. Land Use.

(i) MNN does not believe that the proposed abandonment would be inconsistent with regional and/or local land use plans, and has solicited comments from Norman and Polk Counties. Appendix B. No response has been received. The National Geodetic Survey (“NOAA”) has also been contacted, but has not yet responded. Appendix B.

(ii) The Natural Resource Conservation Service (“NRCS”) has been contacted. Appendix B. No response has been received.

(iii) The Line is not located in or on the border of a designated Coastal Management Area, and MNN does not believe that the proposed abandonment will affect any land or water uses in such an area or result in any coastal impacts. Nonetheless, MNN contacted the Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program, c/o Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for comment, but has not yet received any comments. MNN also solicited comments from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 (“EPA Region 5”) to determine whether the proposed abandonment would have any bearing upon applicable federal, state and local water quality standards. Appendix B. MNN has received no comments from EPA Region 5.

(iv) This abandonment is being undertaken to salvage remaining rail and other ferrous metals, along with ties and ballast, but MNN is

amenable to engaging in discussions with qualified entities to make the Line available for public recreational use consistent with 49 U.S.C. § 10905.

4. Energy.

(i) The proposed abandonment will not have any effect on the transportation of energy resources.

(ii) The movement and/or recovery of recyclable commodities will not be adversely affected by the proposed abandonment.

(iii) The abandonment will not result in an increase or decrease in overall energy efficiency. No rail freight traffic currently moves to or from points on the Line, and, thus, there will be no changes in existing transportation patterns or energy usage as a result of the proposed abandonment.

(iv) Not applicable. The abandonment of the Line will not cause the diversion of more than 1,000 rail carloads per year or an average of 50 rail carloads per mile per year to motor carriers.

5. Air.

(i) Not applicable. The Line has no active customers and is not needed to serve any active customers. The abandonment will not result in (A) a minimum increase in rail traffic of 100% or eight trains per day on any segment of rail line; (B) an increase in rail yard activity of at least 100%; or (C) an average increase in truck traffic of more than 10% of the average daily traffic or 50 vehicles per day on any road segment.

(ii) MNN believes that neither Norman County nor Polk County is a Class 1 or Nonattainment Area for any substance. In any event, abandonment of the Line will not result in traffic increases exceeding the thresholds at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e)(5)(ii)(A), (B) or (C).

(iii) Not applicable. MNN has contacted and requested comments from the EPA Region 5 and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Appendix B. No responses have been received to date.

6. Noise. Not applicable. None of the noise thresholds identified in 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e)(5)(i) will be exceeded as a result of the abandonment.

7. Safety.

(i) The proposed action will have no adverse effect upon public health or safety.

(ii) Not applicable. The proposed abandonment will have no effect on the transportation of hazardous materials.

(iii) To MNN's knowledge, there are no known hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been known hazardous material spills on the right-of-way of the Line.

8. Biological Resources.

(i) MNN does not believe that any critical habitat will be destroyed, altered or affected as a result of the proposed abandonment, nor that endangered or threatened species will be adversely affected by the abandonment.

MNN does not believe that the abandonment would adversely affect any species. MNN has requested comments from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Appendix B. No responses have been received to date.

(ii) Similarly, MNN has no reason to believe that any wildlife sanctuaries or refuges will be affected. MNN has contacted and requested comments from the National Park Service, as set forth in Appendix B. No response has been received to date.

9. Water.

(i) EPA Region 5 and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency have been contacted. Appendix B. No responses have been received to date.

(ii) The Army Corps of Engineers (the “Corps”) has been contacted to determine if the proposed abandonment requires permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Appendix B. The Corps has not responded. In addition, MNN is unaware of the proposed abandonment affecting any 100-year floodplain.

(iii) MNN does not anticipate the discharge of any pollutants in relation to its proposed abandonment. Additionally, no material will be disposed of into waterways as part of the abandonment. Accordingly, MNN concludes that no permits under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act are required.

10. Mitigation.

Given the absence of anticipated impact of the abandonment, no mitigation efforts are anticipated.

* * * * *

HISTORIC REPORT - 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(d)

Map. A map of the Line is attached hereto as Appendix A.

Description of Line. The rail line is approximately 11.14 miles in length and of various widths, located near and between the towns of Climax and Shelly, in Norman and Polk Counties, MN, extending from milepost 40.20, located at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located at the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN. (the “Line”). The southern end of the Line was the northernmost point of a prior MNN abandonment effort that was consummated by MNN. *See Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. -- Abandonment — in Norman County, MN*, Docket No. AB 497 (Sub-No. 4X) (STB served Sep. 4, 2008). Prior to consummation of its abandonment authority, MNN intends to salvage the rail and other ferrous track-related materials along with ties and ballast. Additionally, given safety concerns, the bridge located at approximately milepost 51.1 will likely be removed by MNN, but the railroad has no current plans as to when that will occur. MNN is amenable to undertaking discussions to transfer the Line, including its bridges, to a trail use sponsor for use as part of a public pathway for recreational use along the subject railroad corridor.

3. Photographs. Images of four bridges are attached as Appendix C, with a map showing generally the milepost location of the bridges attached as Appendix D.

4. Information on Structures. There are four bridge structures which are believed by MNN to be at least 50 years or older on the Line, located near mileposts 51.1, 43.8, 42.8, and 41.7. No other structures are believed to be in excess of 50 years of age.

5. History of Operations. The Line is believed to have been built by the St. Paul Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway around 1896. The Great Northern Railway assumed control shortly thereafter. In more recent times, the Line was operated by the BNSF Railway (“BNSF”). MNN bought the Line from BNSF in 1997. *Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc.—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Burlington Northern Railroad Company*, FD 33315 (STB served Mar. 12, 1997). No revenue traffic has moved over the Line over the past two years. The Line has been used on occasion for car storage during the preceding two years.

6. Engineering Documents. MNN will provide copies of any engineering documents in its possession.

7. Historic Criteria. MNN does not believe that any structures on the Line qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

MNN has contacted and given notice of the proposed abandonment to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (“MSHPO”), and, in doing so,

identified the four bridges, and provided photographs of them. Appendix E. MSHPO has not yet responded. MNN has no plans to remove the four bridges on the Line with the exception of the bridge located at approximately milepost 51.1, which will likely be removed by MNN at some unknown date in the future. MNN believes that no historic properties will be affected by MNN's plans for the Line.

3. 8. Ground Disturbances. MNN is confident that significant subsurface
3. ground disturbance occurred during construction of the Line. Based on available information, MNN does not believe that there are archaeological resources in the area. Access to the Line is generally good.

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

APPENDIX A

MAP OF RAIL LINE

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

**APPENDIX B
CORRESPONDENCE**

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

**APPENDIX C
PHOTOGRAPHS**

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

APPENDIX D

MAP OF STRUCTURES

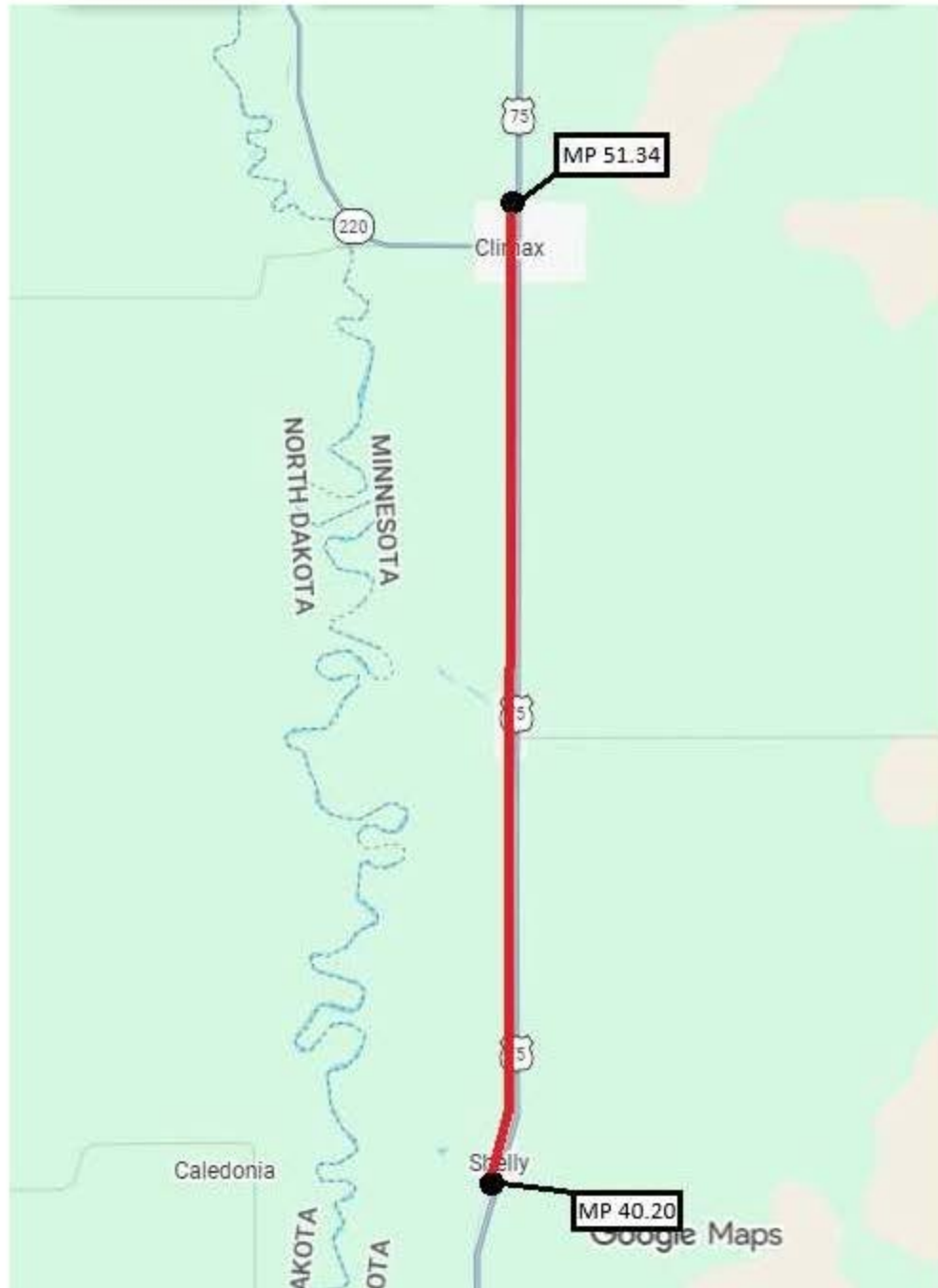
**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

APPENDIX E

MSHPO CORRESPONDENCE



**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

APPENDIX C

MSHPO CORRESPONDENCE

FLETCHER & SIPPEL LLC

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

29 North Wacker Drive
Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60606-3208

Phone: (312) 252-1500
Fax: (312) 252-2400
www.fletcher-sippel.com

TYLER J. KRAUS
(312) 252-1536
tkraus@fletcher-sippel.com

May 19, 2026

Minnesota State Historical Preservation Office

State Historic Preservation Office
Administration Building #203
50 Sherburne Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55155
ENReviewSHPO@state.mn.us

Re: **Docket No. AB-497 (Sub – No. 8X), Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. –
Abandonment Exemption – in Norman and Polk Counties, MN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

On or after June 28, 2026, Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. (“MNN”) intends to file with the Surface Transportation Board (“STB”) a notice of exemption for the abandonment of approximately 11.14 miles of rail line (the “Line”) near and between the towns of Climax and Shelly, in Norman and Polk Counties, MN, extending from milepost 40.20, located at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN to milepost 51.34, located at the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, MN. Kindly refer to the attached map of the Line as additional background.

The notice of exemption will be filed pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50(b), covering abandonment of rail lines over which no local traffic has moved during the previous two years. Photographs of certain bridges believed to be at least 50 years of age or older are attached and the approximate location of each structure is shown on the attached map. We believe that the attached list of structures along the line that are 50 years old or older is comprehensive.

Also, you may note that the portion of the Line between Nielsville and Shelly was the subject of a 2018 abandonment proceeding at the STB in AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X). See the attached, STB-served Environmental Assessment from that proceeding. Unfortunately, MNN’s abandonment authorization appears to have lapsed before MNN was able legally to consummate abandonment of that line segment, requiring MNN to include that line segment for abandonment here, in addition the new line segment from

Minnesota Historical Preservation Office
May 18, 2026
Page 2

Nielsville northward to Climax.

Kindly offer any written comments you may have regarding the proposed abandonment (if any) as soon as possible. Such comments should reference Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 8X) and be sent to the undersigned counsel for MNN.

In accordance with the STB's regulations, a copy of the Environmental/Historic Report prepared in connection with this abandonment will be forwarded to you at least twenty days before MNN's notice of exemption is filed at the STB. If you have any questions or need additional information in the meantime, please feel free to contact me at 312-252-1505. Thank you for your assistance on this matter.

Very truly yours,

Tyler J. Kraus

Tyler J. Kraus
On behalf of Minnesota Northern
Railroad, Inc.

TJK/TJK
Enclosure



Photos of MP 41.7 Bridge

41.7







Photos of MP 42.8 Bridge

A photograph of a wooden structure, possibly a fence or a barrier, made of horizontal wooden planks. A white rectangular label with the number "42.8" in black text is attached to the upper plank. The structure is surrounded by dry grass and some green vegetation. The lighting suggests it's daytime.

42.8





Photos of MP 43.8 Bridge

A photograph of a weathered wooden structure, possibly a bridge or a retaining wall, made of dark, aged planks. A black rectangular marker with the white number '43.8' is attached to one of the horizontal planks. The structure is situated on a bed of gravel and is surrounded by dry, yellowish-brown grass and some green weeds. The background shows a grassy field under bright sunlight.

43.8





Photos of MP 51.1 Bridge





Sand Hill
River

BRIDGE NO
60021









BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD,) DOCKET NO. AB-497
INC. – ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –) (SUB-NO. 7X)
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN)

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORIC REPORT

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
P.O. Box 705
Crookston, MN 56716

Applicant

THOMAS F. McFARLAND
THOMAS F. McFARLAND, P.C.
208 South LaSalle Street, Suite 1666
Chicago, IL 60604-1228
(312) 236-0204 (office)
mcfarland@aol.com

Attorney for Applicant

Dated: August 20, 2018

BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD,) DOCKET NO. AB-497
INC. – ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –) (SUB-NO. 7X)
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN)

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORIC REPORT

Pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7 and 1105.8, MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC., (MNN) hereby submits this Draft Environmental and Historic Report.

I. Environmental Report

MNN hereby submits the following information required by 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(e):

(1) Proposed action and alternatives. Describe the proposed action, including commodities transported, the planned disposition (if any) of any rail line and other structures that may be involved, and any possible changes in current operations or maintenance practices. Also describe any reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. Include a readable, detailed map and drawings clearly delineating the project.

On or about, but no earlier than September 10, 2018, Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. (MNN) intends to file a Notice of Exemption with the Surface Transportation Board (the Board) for abandonment of a rail line between Milepost 40.2 at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly and Milepost 46.0 at Second Street in Nielsville, MN, a distance of 5.8 miles in Norman and Polk Counties, MN (the Rail Line).

The Rail Line has been out of service and embargoed since December 14, 2015 due to a deteriorated bridge at Milepost 43.8. Prior to the embargo, there was not enough revenue from rail traffic over the line to warrant the cost of repair of the defective bridge. There has been no request for rail service during the pendency of the embargo. A copy of the embargo is attached as Appendix 1.

If the requested exemption is granted and becomes effective, MNN will remove and reuse or scrap the track materials on the Rail Line. MNN would abide by railroad industry standards in salvaging the track materials and in safely disposing of the crossties. MNN would sell or make a non-rail use of the land in the right-of-way of the Rail Line.

Rail operations and track maintenance would cease permanently in the event that the proposed exemption were to be granted and exercised.

There is no reasonable alternative to the proposed exemption because opportunity costs from the status quo and/or the cost to rehabilitate the bridge would be unduly burdensome without the exemption.

A map of the involved rail line is attached to this Report as Appendix 2.

(2) Transportation system. Describe the effects of the proposed action on regional or local transportation systems and patterns. Estimate the amount of traffic (passenger or freight) that will be diverted to other transportation systems or modes as a result of the proposed action.

MNN believes that the proposed exemption will have a minimal effect on regional or local transportation systems and patterns. Inasmuch as the rail line has been out of service for more than two years, there will be no diversion of rail traffic to truck as a result of the proposed abandonment.

(3) *Land use. (i) Based on consultation with local and/or regional planning agencies and/or a review of the official planning documents prepared by such agencies, state whether the proposed action is consistent with existing land use plans. Describe any inconsistencies.*

MNN believes that the proposed exemption will not be inconsistent with local or regional land use plans. Based on MNN's experience in the area, there is little possibility that additional businesses desiring rail service will locate along the Rail Line. In accordance with the requirements of this regulation, MNN has consulted by letter with the planning agencies of Norman and Polk Counties and the Towns of Shelly and Nielsville. See letter attached as Appendix 3.

(3) *(ii) Based on consultation with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, state the effect of the proposed action on any prime agricultural land.*

MNN does not believe that the proposed exemption would have any effect on prime agricultural land. The Rail Line is located in an urban area. Therefore, removal of trackage from the Rail Line should not have any effect on prime agricultural land. In accordance with this regulation, MNN has consulted by letter with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, formerly known as the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (Appendix 3 hereto). Any response will be furnished to the Board's environmental section.

(3) *(iii) If the action affects land or water uses within a designated coastal zone, include the coastal zone information required by Sec. 1105.9.*

The proposed exemption does not affect land or water uses in a designated coastal zone.

(3) *(iv) If the proposed action is an abandonment, state whether or not the right-of-way is suitable for alternative public use under 49 U.S.C. 10906 and explain why.*

In MNN's opinion, the right-of-way would not be suitable for alternative public use as a highway because there are adequate highways in the area. The right-of-way may be suitable for alternative public use as a recreational trail.

(4) Energy. (i) Describe the effect of the proposed action on transportation of energy resources.

The proposed exemption will have no effect on transportation of energy resources.

(4)(ii) Describe the effect of the proposed action on recyclable commodities.

The proposed exemption will have no effect on recyclable commodities.

(4)(iii) State whether the proposed action will result in an increase or decrease in overall energy efficiency and explain why.

The proposed exemption will have no effect on overall energy efficiency.

(4)(iv) If the proposed action will cause diversions from rail to motor carriage of more than: (A) 1,000 rail carloads a year; or (B) An average of 50 rail carloads per mile per year for any part of the affected line, quantify the resulting net change in energy consumption and show data and methodology used to arrive at the figure given. To minimize the production of repetitive data, the information on overall energy efficiency in Sec. 1105.7(e)(4)(iii) need not be supplied if the more detailed information in Sec. 1105.7(e)(4)(iv) is required.

Not applicable

(5) Air. (i) If the proposed action will result in either: (A) An increase in rail traffic of at least 100 percent (measured in gross tons miles annually) or an increase of at least eight trains a day on any segment of rail line affected by the proposal, or (B) An increase in rail yard activity of at least 100 percent (measured by car load activity), or (C) An average increase in truck traffic of more than 10 percent of the average daily traffic or 50 vehicles a day on any affected road segment, quantify the anticipated effect on air emissions. For a proposal under 49 U.S.C. 10901 (or 10505) to construct a new line or reinstitute service over a previously abandoned line, only the eight train a day provision in subsection (5)(i)(A) will apply.

Not applicable.

(5) (ii) If the proposed action affects a class I or nonattainment area under the Clean Air Act, and will result in either: (A) An increase in rail traffic of at least 50 percent (measured in gross tons miles annually) or an increase of at least three trains a day on any segment of the rail line, (B) An increase in rail yard activity of at least 20 percent (measured by carload activity), or (C) An average increase in truck traffic of more than 10 per cent of the average daily traffic of 50 vehicles a day on a given road segment, then state whether any expected increased emissions are within the parameters established by the State Implementation Plan. However, for a rail construction under 49 U.S.C. 10901 (or 49 U.S.C. 10505), or a case involving the reinstitution of service over a previously abandoned line, only the three train a day threshold in this item shall apply.

Not applicable.

(5)(iii) If transportation of ozone depleting materials (such as nitrogen oxide and freon) is contemplated, identify: the materials and quantity; the frequency of service; safety practices (including any speed restrictions); the applicant's safety record (to the extent available) on derailments, accidents and spills; contingency plans to deal with accidental spills; and the likelihood of an accidental release of ozone depleting materials in the event of a collision or derailment.

Not applicable.

(6) Noise. If any of the thresholds identified in item (5)(i) of this section are surpassed, state whether the proposed action will cause: (i) An incremental increase in noise levels of three decibels Ldn or more;

Not applicable.

(6)(ii) An increase to a noise level of 65 decibels Ldn or greater. If so, identify sensitive receptors (e.g. schools, libraries, hospitals, residences, retirement communities, and nursing homes) in the project area, and quantify the noise increase for these receptors if the thresholds are surpassed.

Not applicable.

(7) Safety. (i) Describe any effects of the proposed action on public health and safety (including vehicle delay time at railroad grade crossings).

The proposed exemption will have no effect on public health and safety.

(7)(ii) If hazardous materials are expected to be transported, identify: the materials and quantity; the frequency of service; whether chemicals are being transported that, if mixed, could react to form more hazardous compounds; safety practices (including any speed restrictions); the applicant's safety record (to the extent available) on derailments, accidents and hazardous spills; the contingency plans to deal with accidental spills; and the likelihood of an accident release of hazardous materials.

Not applicable.

(7)(iii) If there are any known hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been known hazardous materials spills on the right-of-way, identify the location of those sites and types of hazardous materials involved.

Not applicable.

(8) Biological resources. (i) Based on consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state whether the proposed action is likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or areas designated as a critical habitat, and if so, describe the effects.

MNN does not believe that it is likely that the proposed exemption would adversely affect endangered or threatened species or areas designated as critical habitat. In accordance with this regulation, MNN has consulted by letter with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Appendix 3).

(8)(ii) State whether wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests will be affected, and describe any effects.

MNN does not believe that the proposed exemption would affect wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, nor National or State parks or forests.

(9) Water. (i) Based on consultation with State water quality officials, state whether the proposed action is consistent with applicable Federal, State or local water quality standards. Describe any inconsistencies.

MNN believes that the proposed exemption will be consistent with applicable Federal, State or local water quality standards. In accordance with this regulation, MNN

has consulted by letter with Minnesota water quality officials (Appendix 3). Any response will be furnished to the Board's environmental section.

(9)(ii) Based on consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state whether permits under section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344) are required for the proposed action and whether designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains will be affected. Describe the effects.

MNN believes that permits under section 404 of the Clean Water Act are not required for the proposed exemption. MNN does not believe that the proposed exemption will affect any designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains. In accordance with this regulation, MNN has consulted by letter with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Appendix 3). Any response will be furnished to the Board's environmental section.

(9)(iii) State whether permits under section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1342) are required for the proposed action. (Applicants should contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or the state environmental protection or equivalent agency if they are unsure whether such permits are required.)

MNN believes that permits under section 402 of the Clean Water Act are not required for the proposed exemption. In accordance with this regulation, MNN has consulted by letter with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Appendix 3). Any response will be furnished to the Board's environmental section.

(10) Proposed Mitigation. Describe any actions that are proposed to mitigate adverse environmental impacts, indicating why the proposed mitigation is appropriate.

Not applicable.

II. Historic Report

MNN hereby submits the following information required by 49 C.F.R.

§ 1105.8(d):

(1) *A U.S.G.S. topographic map (or an alternate map drawn to scale and sufficiently detailed to show buildings and other structures in the vicinity of the proposed action) showing the location of the proposed action, and the locations and approximate dimensions of railroad structures that are 50 years old or older are part of the proposed action;*

The required topographic map is attached to this Report as Appendix 4.

(2) *A written description of the right-of-way (including approximate widths, to the extent known), and the topography and urban and/or rural characteristics of the surrounding area;*

The right-of-way to be abandoned is generally 100 feet wide. It extends generally through urban slightly rolling terrain.

(3) *Good quality photographs (actual photographic prints, not photocopies) of railroad structures on the property that are 50 years old or older and of the immediately surrounding area;*

Attached to this Report as Appendix 5 are photographs of the bridges on the Rail Line.

(4) *The date(s) of construction of the structure(s), and the date(s) and extent of any major alterations, to the extent such information is known;*

Not known, except that the bridges are thought to be more than 50 years old.

(5) *A brief narrative story of carrier operations in the area, and an explanation of what, if any, changes are contemplated as a result of the proposed action;*

The Rail Line was originally a part of a line of the Great Northern Railway between the Canadian border near Noyes, MN and Minneapolis, MN via Moorhead, MN. The Rail Line came under the ownership of BNSF Railway Company through a series of

mergers. It was acquired by MNN in 1997. An adjacent segment between Shelly and Perley, MN was abandoned in 2009. (Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 4X), *Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. -- Abandonment Exemption -- in Norman County, MN*).

(6) *A brief summary of documents in the carrier's possession, such as engineering drawings, that might be useful in documenting a structure that is found to be historic.*

No such documents are in MNN's possession.

(7) *An opinion (based on readily available information in the railroad's possession) as to whether the site and/or structures meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (36 CFR 60.4), and whether there is a likelihood of archeological resources or any other previously unknown historic properties in the project area, and the basis for these opinions (including any consultations with the State Historic preservation Office, local historical societies or universities);*

It is MNN's opinion that the bridges on the Rail Line do not meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historical Places, and that there is no likelihood of archeological resources or any other previously unknown historic properties in the project area. In accordance with this regulation, MNN has consulted by letter with the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (Appendix 3). Any response will be furnished to the Board's environmental section.

(8) *A description (based on readily available information in the railroad's possession) of any known prior subsurface ground disturbance or fill, environmental conditions (naturally occurring or manmade) that might affect the archeological recovery of resources (such as swampy conditions or the presence of toxic wastes), and the surrounding terrain.*

MNN has no knowledge of any prior subsurface ground disturbance or fill, or environmental conditions that might affect the archeological recovery of resources and the surrounding terrain.

Respectfully submitted,

MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
P.O. Box 705
Crookston, MN 56716

Applicant

Thomas F. McFarland

THOMAS F. McFARLAND
THOMAS F. McFARLAND, P.C.
208 South LaSalle Street, Suite 1666
Chicago, IL 60604-1228
(312) 236-0204 (office)
mcfarland@aol.com

Attorney for Applicant

Dated: August 20, 2018

Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X)

Appendix 1

Embargo

Print Embargo

Copyright (c) 2015 Railinc Corp. - All rights reserved.

MNN-MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD INC

Embargo Number: MNN000117
Amendment Number: 1

Status: Effective

Effective Date: 12-08-2017
Expiration Date: 12-08-2018
Allow Permit: No
Tier 2 Effective Date: 12-08-2017
Original Effective Date:

Roads Invited to Participate: BNSF

Original Requester : Monique Hollands - Ph: 1.2182814704 - Email: mnn@rrv.net

Bypass Local Waybills: No

Operating Station Notice: No

Effective Immediately: Yes

Include Empty Revenue Cars: No

Include All Empty Cars: Yes

Maximum Car Allowed:

Commodities: Target All Commodities

Geography:

Included Locations:

Origin:
BNSF-56041, SHELLY, MN
BNSF-56046, NIELSVILLE, MN
Destination: *
BI-DIRECTIONAL

Origin:
MNN-56041, SHELLY, MN
MNN-56046, NIELSVILLE, MN
Destination: *
BI-DIRECTIONAL

Umler Equip. Type : Target All Umler Equipment Types

No Weight Restrictions

Except These Cars: No Cars In Exception List

Embargo/OPSL Umler Element Status: No Umler Element

Clearance Code: No Clearance Code

Waybill Parties: Target All Waybill Parties

Cause: Bridge out of service

Cause Detail: Deteriorating broken pilings, will reevaluate bridge and repairs needed fall 2018

Note: Bridge at MP 43.8

Amendment History:

Amendment 1 (Current): Add/Remove Stations by Participant

Jeffrey J. Usher

Asst. Vice President-Business Services

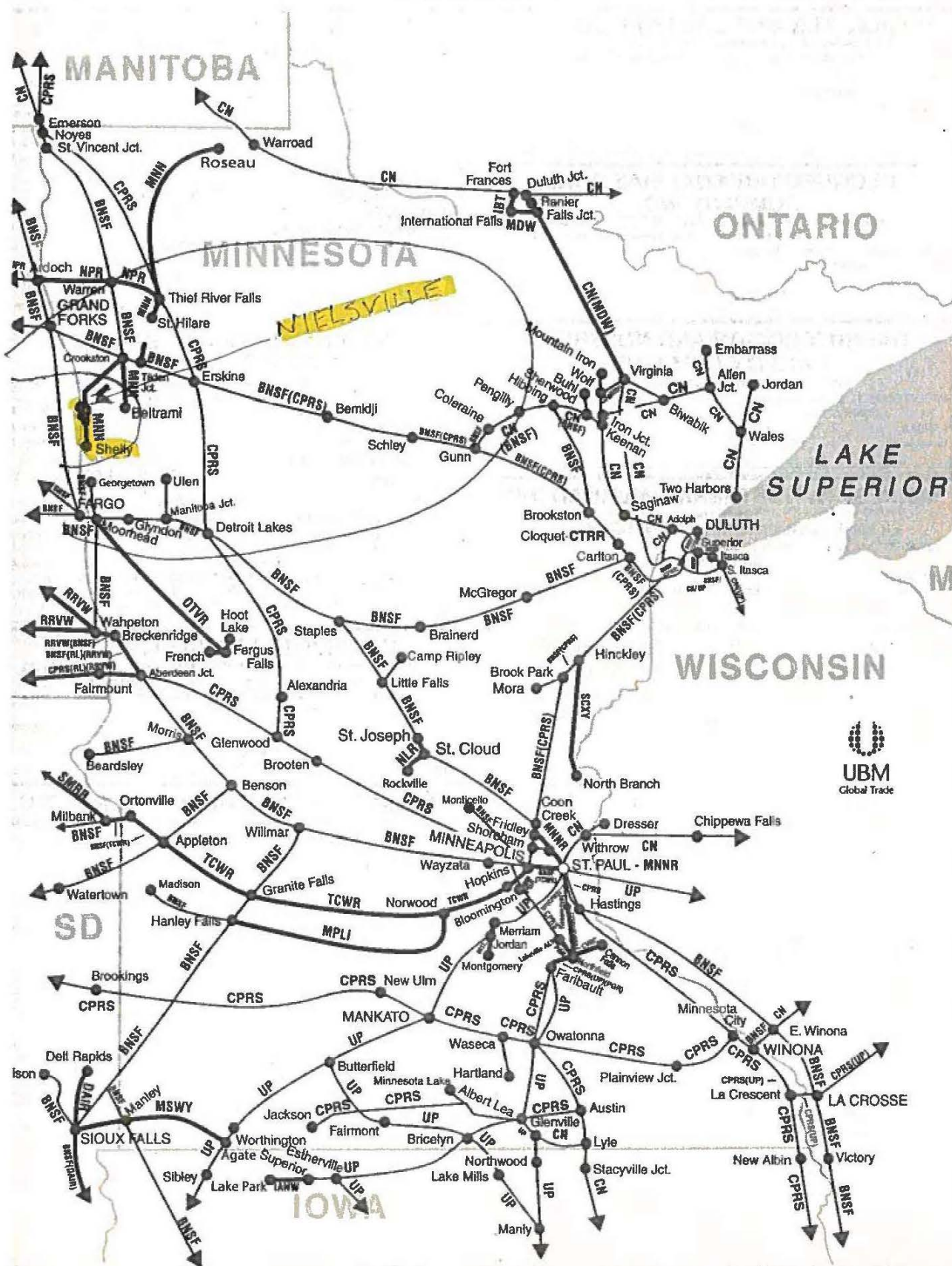
Association of American Railroads

Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X)

Appendix 2

Map of Rail Line

MN



Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X)

Appendix 3

Transmittal letter to governmental agencies

LAW OFFICE
THOMAS F. MCFARLAND, P.C.
208 SOUTH LASALLE STREET - SUITE 1666
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60604-1228
TELEPHONE (312) 236-0204
mcfarland@aol.com

THOMAS F. MCFARLAND

August 20, 2018

Natural Resources Conservation Service:

Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Room 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Minnesota Historical Preservation Office:

Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Blvd. West
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Region 3
One Federal Drive
BHW Federal Building
Fort Snelling
Twin Cities, MN 55111

Minnesota State Clearinghouse:

c/o Minnesota Department of Administration
200 Administration Building
50 Sherburne Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55155

County Commissioners:

Norman County Commissioners
16 Third Avenue, East
Ada, MN 56510

County Commissioners:

Polk County Commissioners
County Courthouse
612 N. Broadway, Suite 215
Crookston, MN 56716

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency:

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
190 Fifth Street East
St. Paul, MN 55101-1638

**Environmental Protection Agency
(regional office):**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 5
77 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Admin.:

National Geodetic Survey
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Springs, MD 20910-3282

City Planner:

Town of Shelly, Minnesota
Shelly City Hall
P.O. Box 126
Shelly, MN 56581

City Planner:

Town of Nielsville, Minnesota
320 Ingersoll Avenue
Crookston, MN 56716

National Park Service:

National Park Service
Chief, Land Resources Division
1849 C Street, N.W., #MS3540
Washington, DC 20240

Minnesota Department of Transportation:

Minnesota Department of Transportation
Transportation Building
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: STB Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X), *Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. --
Abandonment Exemption -- in Norman and Polk Counties, MN*

Dear Agency or Governmental Representative:

August 20, 2018

Page 2

On or about, but no earlier than, September 10, 2018, Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. (MNN) intends to file a Notice of Exemption with the Surface Transportation Board (the Board) for abandonment of a rail line between Milepost 40.2 at the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly and Milepost 46.0 at Second Street in Nielsville, MN, a distance of 5.8 miles in Norman and Polk Counties, Minnesota.

Pursuant to STB regulations at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7 and 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8, this letter is to request your assistance in identifying potential environmental and historic effects of the proposed abandonment. MNN does not anticipate any adverse environmental or historic impacts; however, if you identify any such adverse impacts, please identify them and describe any action that could be taken to mitigate such adverse impacts. Please provide a written response to this letter so that it can be included in a Draft Environmental and Historic Report that MNN will prepare and file with the STB.

COUNTY AND CITY PLANNING AGENCIES. Please state whether the proposed abandonment would be consistent with existing land-use plans. Describe any inconsistencies.

US SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE. Please state the effect of the proposed abandonment on any prime agricultural land.

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. Please state (1) whether the proposed abandonment is likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or areas designated as a critical habitat and, if so, please describe such effects; and (2) whether wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests will be affected and, if so, please describe such effects.

STATE WATER QUALITY OFFICIALS. Please state whether the proposed abandonment would be consistent with applicable Federal, State or Local water quality standards. Please describe any inconsistencies.

US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS. Please state (1) whether permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344) are required for the proposed abandonment, and (2) whether any designated wetlands or 100-year flood plains would be affected by the proposed abandonment. Please describe any such effects.

US AND STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCIES (OR EQUIVALENT AGENCY). Please (1) identify any potential adverse environmental effects of the proposed abandonment on the surrounding area, and (2) identify the location of any known hazardous materials spills on the right-of-way of the Rail Line, and list the types of hazardous materials involved, and (3) state whether permits under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1342) are required for the proposed abandonment.

THOMAS F. MCFARLAND

August 20, 2018

Page 3

STATE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION OFFICE. Please identify information and/or photographs of bridges and/or other structures located on the Rail Line that are 50 years old or older. Please state whether the proposed abandonment would have an adverse effect on such bridges and/or structures and, if so, please describe efforts that can be taken during removal of the tracks in the Rail Line to mitigate any such adverse effects.

Please send your reply to me as MNN's attorney to: Thomas F. McFarland, 208 South LaSalle Street, Suite 1666, Chicago, IL 60604. You may reach me by telephone at (312) 236-0204 if you have any questions or need further information. MNN appreciates your assistance in furnishing a reply to this letter.

Very truly yours,



Thomas F. McFarland
Attorney for Minnesota
Northern Railroad, Inc.

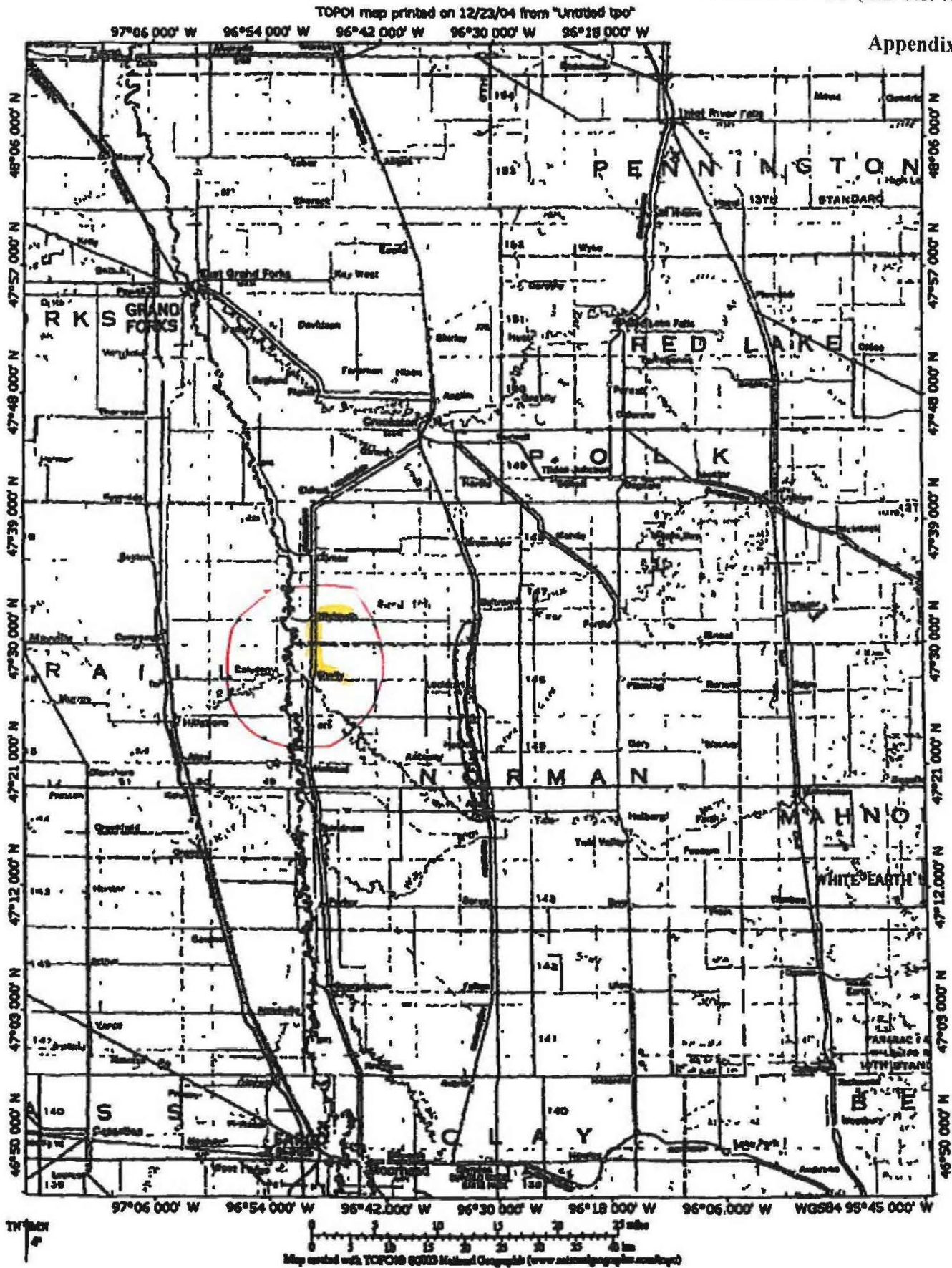
TMF:kl:1319 Agencies

cc: Mr. Jason Bierwerth

Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X)

Appendix 4

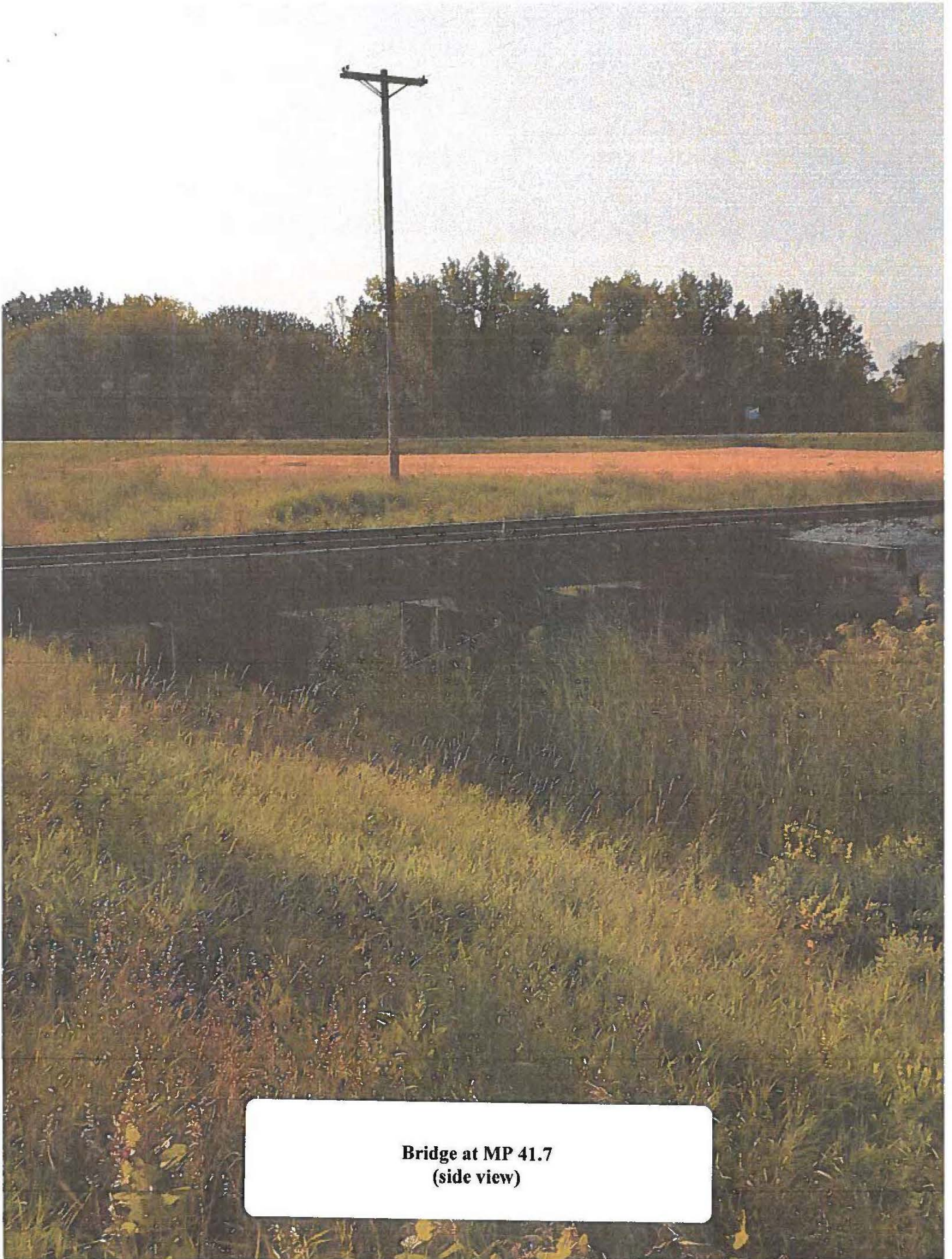
Topographic map



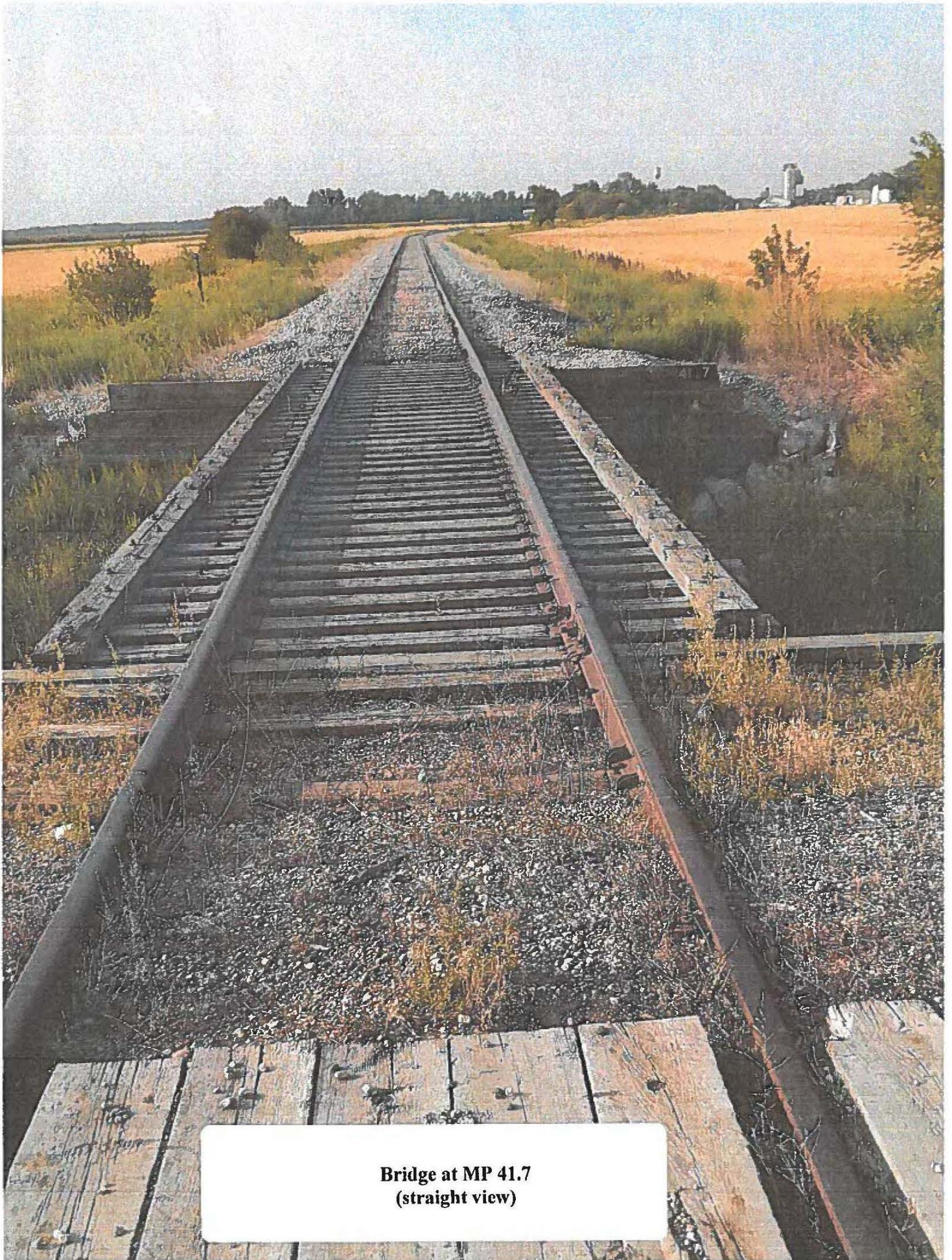
Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X)

Appendix 5

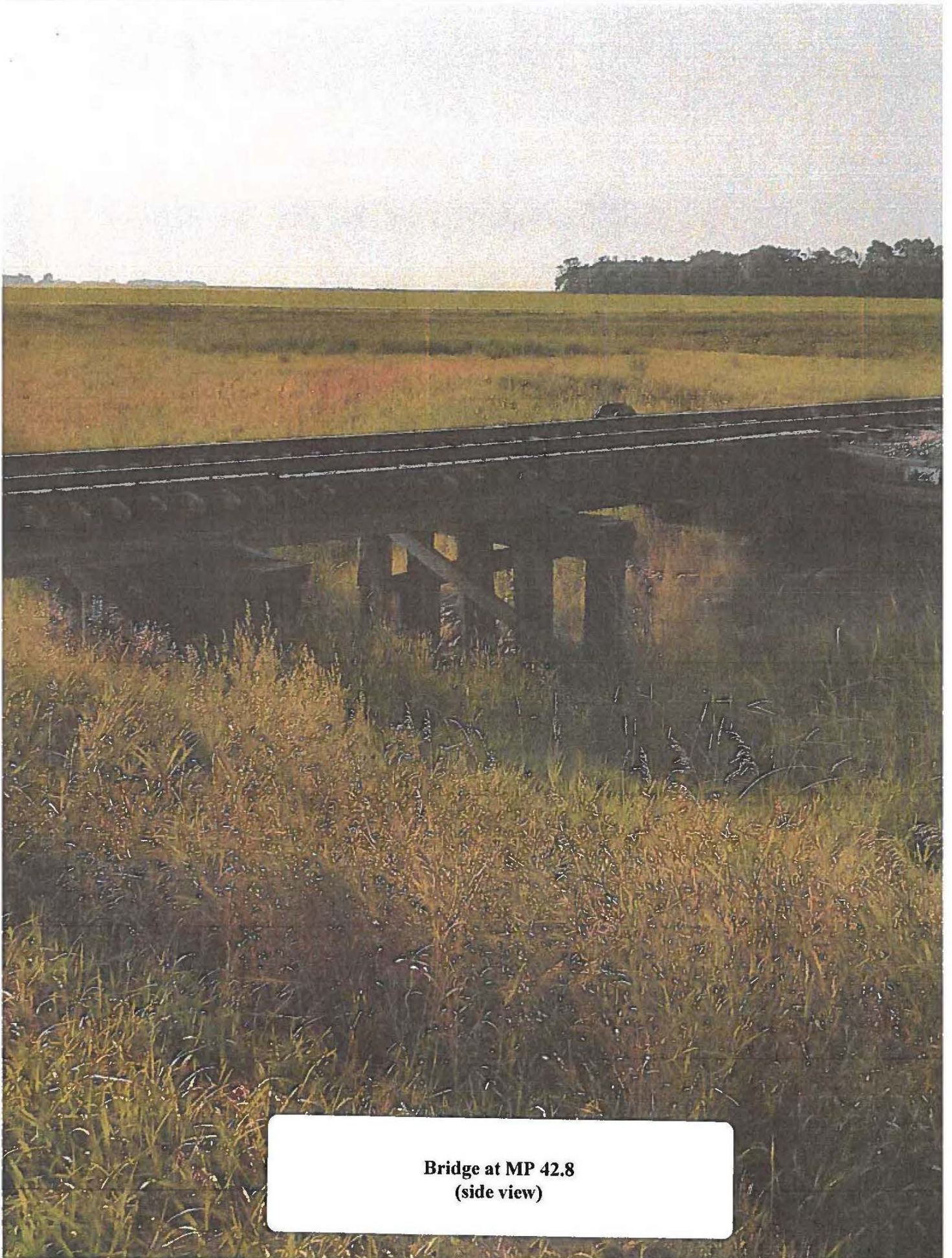
Photos of bridges on the Rail Line



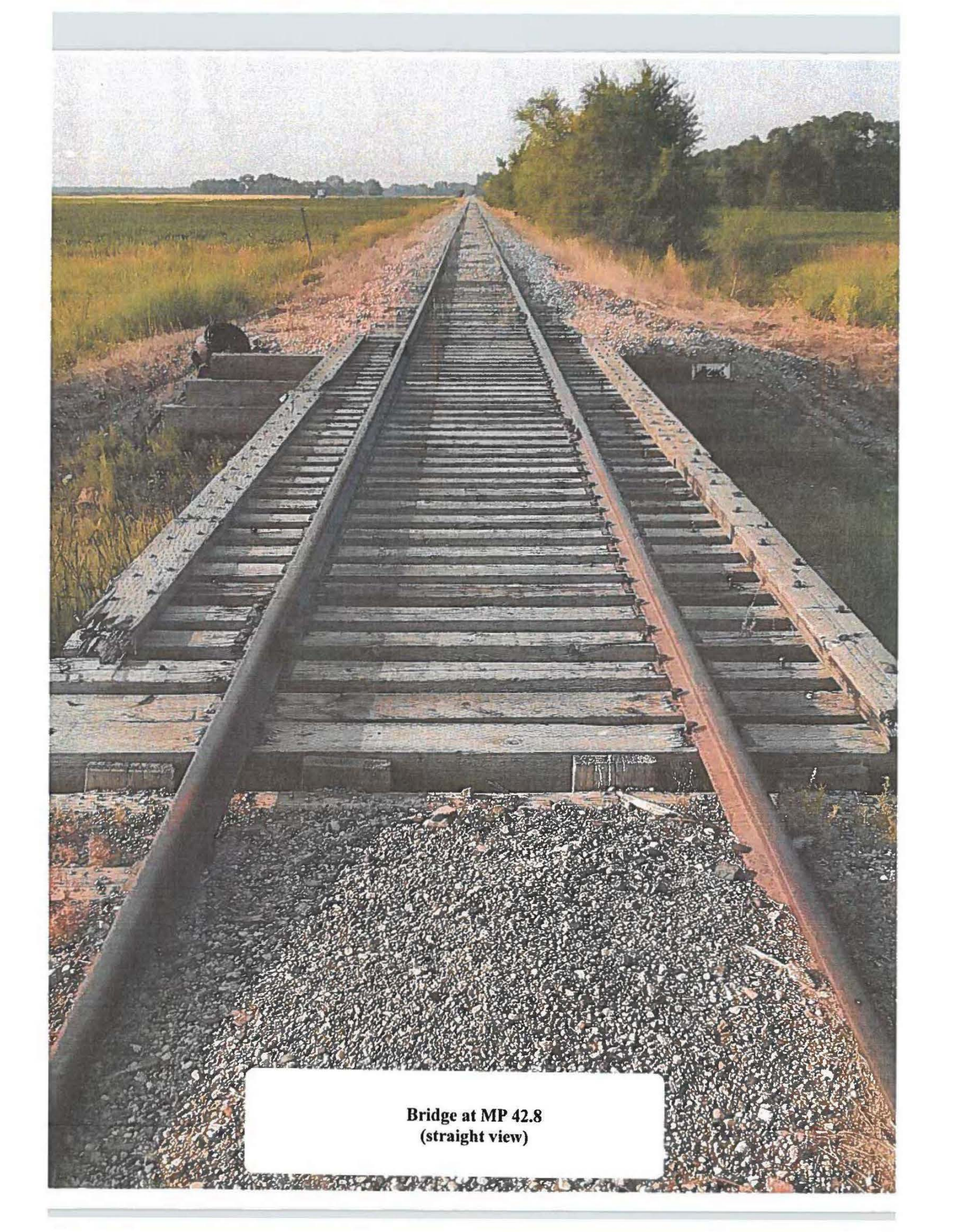
**Bridge at MP 41.7
(side view)**



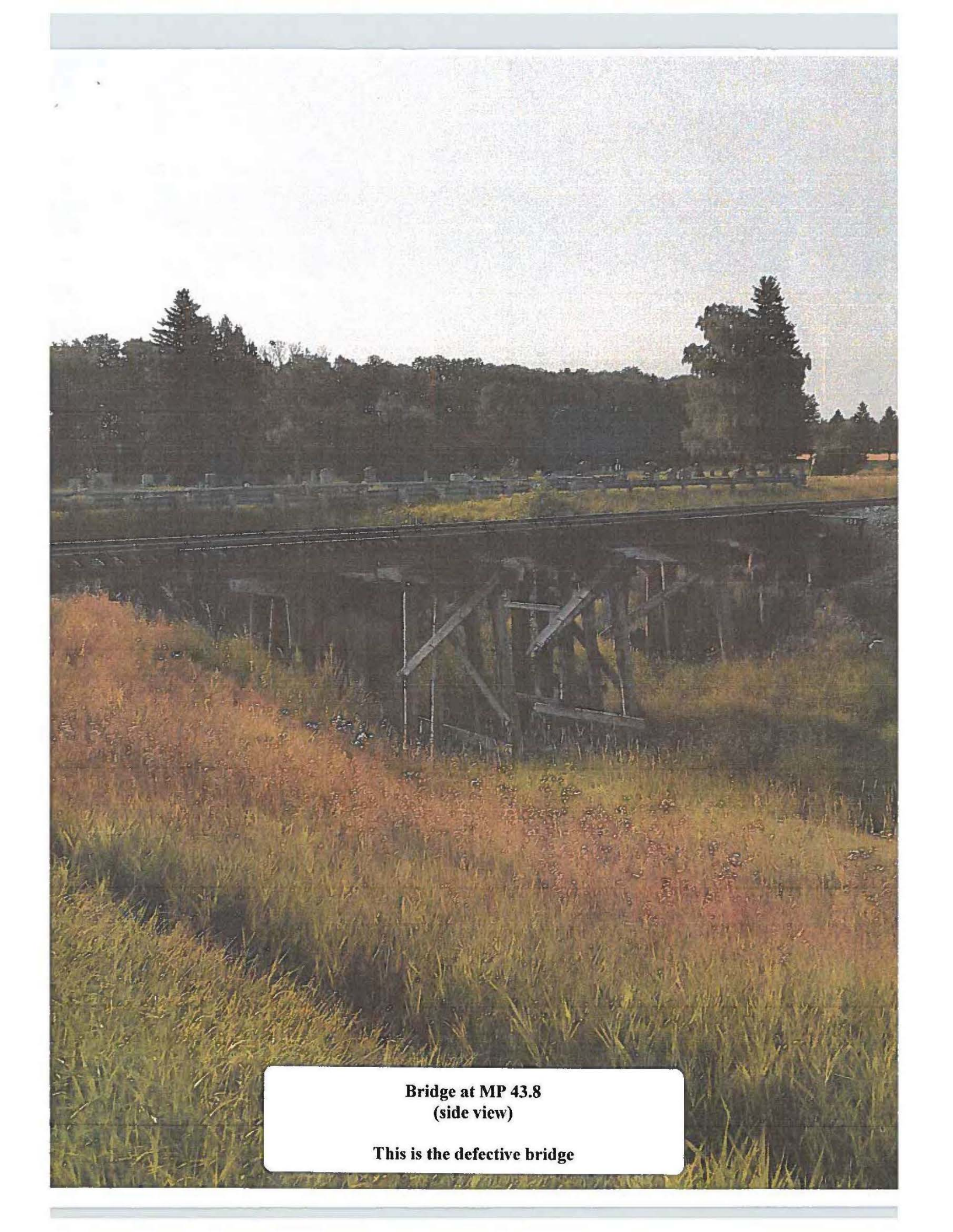
**Bridge at MP 41.7
(straight view)**



**Bridge at MP 42.8
(side view)**

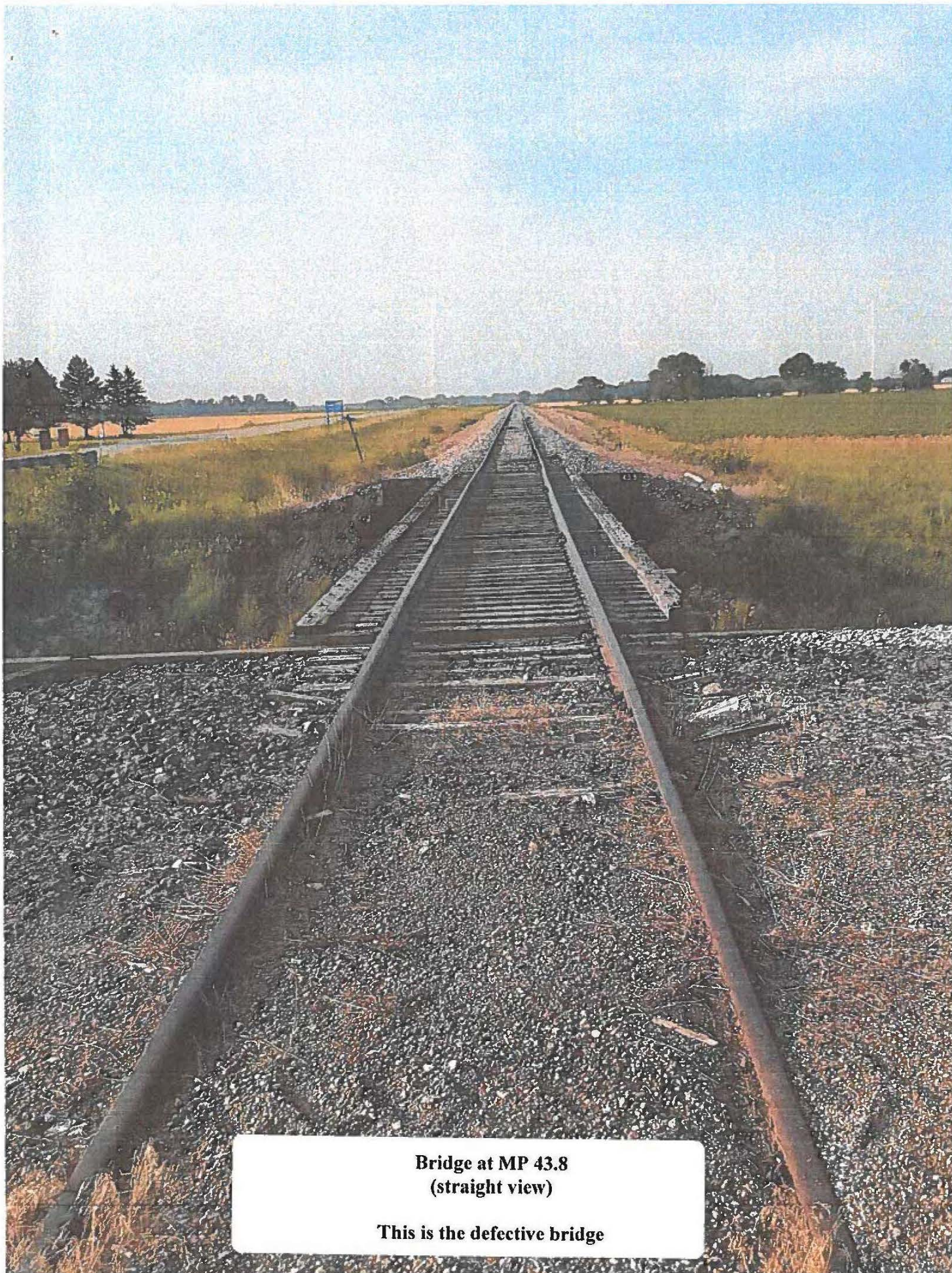


**Bridge at MP 42.8
(straight view)**



**Bridge at MP 43.8
(side view)**

This is the defective bridge



**Bridge at MP 43.8
(straight view)**

This is the defective bridge

STB Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X)
Verified Notice of Exemption

Appendix 7

Comments to DEHR

From: Fasbender, Peter <peter_fasbender@fws.gov>

To: mcfarland <mcfarland@aol.com>

Subject: STB Docket No. AB-497, MN Northern Railroad, Inc. - Abandonment

Date: Tue, Aug 28, 2018 1:12 pm

Mr. McFarland -

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has reviewed the subject notice of abandonment of rail line between Milepost 40.2 to 46 near Nielsville, MN in Norman and Polk Counties, MN. The proposed abandonment will have no effect to threatened or endangered species, nor its critical habitat. Additionally, the proposed action will have no impact to lands owned or secured by easements with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Please let me know if you have any additional questions, or if the project changes in scope. Thank you for coordinating this effort -

--

Peter J. Fasbender
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Minnesota and Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
4101 American Boulevard East
Bloomington, MN 55425
Telephone: (952) 252-0092, extension 210

From: Deborah Brooks - NOAA Federal <deborah.brooks@noaa.gov>

To: mcfarland <mcfarland@aol.com>

Cc: Surface Transportation Board <sea@stb.dot.gov>; Christine Gallagher - NOAA Federal <christine.gallagher@noaa.gov>

Subject: NGS RESPONSE, STB Docket No.AB-497 (Sub-No.7X)

Date: Mon, Sep 10, 2018 5:27 pm

Thank you for sharing your proposed
railroad abandonment for

Polk and Norman Counties, Minnesota.

Approximately 7 geodetic survey marks are located in the
area described. These marks may or may not be disturbed.

If marks will be disturbed by the abandonment, [THE
RAILROAD] shall consult with the National Geodetic
Survey (NGS) at least 90 days prior to beginning salvage
activities that will disturb, or destroy any geodetic station
marks described below.

Dist	PID...	Set.	Set_By	H	V	Vert_Source	Latitude.....	Longitude.....	Stab	C	Designation
.....	SL1679	1987	MNHD...	2	88	ADJUSTED	N472654.....	W0964918.....	B...	G	5409 C
.....	SL1678	1987	MNDT...	2	88	ADJUSTED	N472733.....	W0964907.....	B...	G	5409 G
.....	SL1670	1987	MNDT...	0	2	88/ADJUSTED	N473112.26985	W0964857.16945	B...	G	6012 AV
.....	SL1669	1987	MNDT...	2	88	ADJUSTED	N473137.6....	W0964903.8....	B...	G	6012 AW
.....	SL1604	1954	CGS...	3	.		N473137.56728	W0964903.78688		S	NIELSVILLE M
.....	DG8457	2004	MNDT...	0	3	88/LEVELING	N472744.82269	W0964900.92667	B...	G	PLUS
.....	SL1547	1954	CGS...	3	.		N472733.03896	W0964908.59560		G	SHELLY MUNIC

Additional advice is provided at <http://geodesy.noaa.gov/marks/railroad>

City of Nielsville
Box 68
Nielsville, MN 56568

September 10, 2018

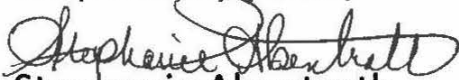
Thomas F. McFarland, P.C.
208 S. LaSalle Street
Suite 1666
Chicago, IL 60604-1228

Dear Mr. McFarland,

As per our phone conversation on September 10, 2018
I am writing to you to express the opinion of the City of
Nielsville Council. The City of Nielsville has no objection to the
abandonment of the rail line located between Milepost 40.2 at
the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, MN
and Milepost 46.0 at Second Street in Nielsville, MN . A distance
of 5.8 miles in Norman and Polk Counties in Minnesota.

Also, if you need to contact the City of Nielsville the correct
address is P.O. Box 68, Nielsville, MN 56568. Our contact phone
number is 218-946-2881.

Respectfully yours,


Stephanie Abentroth
City Clerk

June 11, 2026

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Tyler Kraus, Paralegal
Fletcher & Sippel LLC
29 N. Wacker Drive Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606

RE: Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc.—Abandonment Exemption
Docket No. AB-497 (Sub-No. 8X)
Norman and Polk County
SHPO ERP #2026-0976

Dear Tyler Kraus:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced project. Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office staff reviewed the documentation received on May 19 and June 9, 2026, under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 USC 306108) and its implementing federal regulations, “Protection of Historic Properties” (36 CFR Part 800).

Based on the documentation provided and for the reasons noted below, we believe the abandonment of the rail line would result in No Historic Properties Affected.

Federal regulations require submittals to include a description of the undertaking, specifying federal involvement. From the materials received, we understand this undertaking includes the Surface Transportation Board filing a notice of exemption for the abandonment of approximately 11.14 miles of rail line between the towns of Climax and Shelly, Minnesota. The current submittal is an extension of an undertaking our office reviewed in 2018 in which we opined that the abandonment would result in No Historic Properties Affected (SHPO ERP 2018-2899; Docket AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X)).¹

While the current submittal does not outline the details of the Surface Transportation Board’s efforts to consult with other interested parties or consider the views of the public, we assume the notice of exemption for the abandonment is sufficient to meet the requirements outlined in 36 CFR 800.2(c) and (d). Please notify our office if you receive any written disagreements with the findings and determinations.

¹ September 25, 2018, letter from Sarah Beimers, Environmental Review Program Manager, to Thomas F. McFarland.

The Section 106 process requires a reasonable and good faith effort to identify historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects (APE; 36 CFR 800.4). Historic properties are those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Although the documentation provided does not delineate an APE for the undertaking, we presume it is limited to the rail line and associated structures, such as the bridges referenced in the submittal.

In 2023, the relevant rail line was evaluated and found to be not eligible for inclusion in the National Register with concurrence from our office.

- XX-RRD-GNR029—St. Paul Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway Company/Great Northern Railway Company: Moorhead to Crookston

We do not believe additional investigations of the rail line or the associated bridges is warranted. However, as noted in our correspondence on the earlier undertaking, Docket AB-497 (Sub-No. 7X), our records show a previously recorded archaeological site lead, 21NRI (Georgetown Road), is near the proposed railroad abandonment. We understand the proposed abandonment will involve removal of track materials only. If that is the case, we do not believe further archaeological investigations are necessary. If ground disturbance occurs outside the current railroad right-of-way, an archaeological survey may be necessary.

Finding of Effect

Based on information available to us, it is our opinion that no historic properties will be affected by the undertaking as currently proposed. The Surface Transportation Board will need to reopen consultation with our office if you receive an objection from another consulting party or if the abandonment changes such that it would result in a revised APE and/or changes to the nature or scale of potential effects.

If you have any questions about our review of this project, please contact Barbara Howard, Environmental Review Historian, at Barbara.Howard@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,



Amy Spong
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Robert A. Wimbish (RWimbish@fletcher-sippel.com)
Thomas J. Healey (THealey@fletcher-sippel.com)

**BEFORE THE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

DOCKET NO. AB-497 (SUB – NO. 8X)

**MINNESOTA NORTHERN RAILROAD, INC.
– ABANDONMENT EXEMPTION –
IN NORMAN AND POLK COUNTIES, MN**

APPENDIX D

MAP OF STRUCTURES

