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OEA

SERVICE DATE—JULY 2, 2026

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. 400 (Sub-No. 8X)

**Seminole Gulf Railway, L.P. – Abandonment Exemption –
In Lee and Collier Counties, Fla.**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Seminole Gulf Railway, L.P. (SGLR) filed a notice of exemption with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 seeking exemption from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Lee and Collier Counties, Florida. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends approximately 11.4 miles from milepost AX 979.39 at the northern right-of-way boundary of Estero Parkway in the Village of Estero to milepost AX 990.80 near Wiggins Pass Road (the Line). A map depicting the Line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA). If the notice becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The Line extends from Estero Parkway in the Village of Estero south through Estero and the City of Bonita Springs into Collier County, terminating near the extension of Wiggins Pass Road. The Line lies within a predominantly suburban corridor of residential and commercial development and occupies a generally 130-foot-wide right-of-way, crossing eighteen public roads. According to SGLR, it acquired the Line in 1987 from CSX Transportation, Inc. and subsequently experienced a steady decline in freight traffic, beginning with the loss of pine stump shipments, followed by the loss of aggregates traffic to two cement batch plants. SGLR states that the last two remaining rail freight customers, both of which required off rail transloading, shifted their respected operations to other locations in 2008, and SGLR has not moved freight over the Line since. The corridor, which traverses ZIP codes 33928, 34134, 34135, and 34110, is now the subject of interest for potential trail conversion.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

SGLR submitted a combined environmental and historic report (E&H Report) that concludes the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the proposed abandonment of the Line, including salvage. SGLR served the E&H Report on a

number of appropriate federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules [49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(b)]¹ implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Diversion of Traffic

According to SGLR, no local traffic has moved over the Line since 2008, and overhead traffic on the Line has been rerouted. Therefore, the proposed abandonment would not result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network. Nor would the proposed abandonment adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities or the transportation of ozone-depleting materials.

Salvage Activities

Impacts from salvage and disposal of a rail line typically include removal of tracks and ties, removal of ballast, dismantling of any bridges or other structures that may be present on the rail right-of-way, and regrading of the right-of-way. Salvage may be performed within the right-of-way, or, if necessary, via the construction of new access points to the right-of-way. According to SGLR, if any salvage work is to be done, it would take place within the right-of-way, would be surface work only and would not disturb subsurface resources.

SGLR requested comments from the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). On April 7, 2026, NRCS submitted a comment stating that the proposed abandonment would have no negative impact on prime agricultural land.

SGLR requested comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding the potential impact of the proposed abandonment on protected wildlife, including federally listed threatened and endangered species. To date, USFWS has not provided comments.

To identify protected species in the project area, OEA conducted a search of the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system.² The IPaC search identified several federally listed species that may occur within the vicinity of the proposed abandonment. There are five protected mammal species in the project area: Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridanus*, endangered), Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*, endangered), mountain lion (similarity of

¹ The E&H Report is available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.gov by clicking "Search STB Records;" selecting "Filings" in the "Search for" dropdown menu; entering "AB" "400" "8" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then selecting "Search." The E&H Report was filed on May 13, 2026.

² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC), <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/location/index> (last accessed June 26, 2026).

appearance) (*Puma concolor*, threatened due to similarity of appearance), tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*, proposed endangered), and West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*, threatened).

In addition, there are six protected bird species present: crested caracara (*Caracara plancus audubonii*, threatened), eastern black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis jamaicensis*, threatened), Everglade snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*, endangered), Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*, threatened), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Dryobates borealis*, threatened), and rufa red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*, threatened). There are three protected reptile species: American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*, threatened due to similarity of appearance), American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*, threatened), and eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*, threatened). There is one protected insect species, the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*, proposed threatened). There are three protected plant species: Aboriginal prickly-apple (*Harrisia aboriginum*, endangered), beautiful pawpaw (*Deeringothamnus pulchellus*, endangered), and Florida prairie-clover (*Dalea carthagenensis floridana*, endangered). According to the IPaC report, there is no critical habitat for these species in the project area. OEA has determined that these federally listed threatened or endangered species would not be affected because of the abandonment's limited scope of salvage and the minimal habitat value in the developed rail corridor right-of-way. OEA is providing the USFWS Florida Ecological Services Field Office a copy of this Draft EA for its review.

Although the Line is within Florida's coastal zone, according to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, though this project is covered by Executive Order 12372, the Florida State Clearinghouse does not select this project for review. OEA will provide a copy of this Draft EA to the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP).

SGLR requested comments from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). However, OEA has not received any comments to date. SGLR does not intend to appreciably remove or alter the contour of the roadbed underlying the rail line, and disturbed areas will be limited to the right-of-way wherever possible. SGLR also has no plans to undertake in-stream work or dredge and/or fill any materials in connection with the proposed abandonment. However, the Line passes through 100-year floodplains. Accordingly, OEA will provide a copy of this Draft EA to the Corps and FEMA for their review.

OEA believes that any air emissions associated with abandonment activities would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Similarly, any noise related to abandonment activities would also be temporary and should not have a significant impact on the area surrounding the proposed abandonment.

Based on all information available to date, OEA does not believe that the proposed abandonment would cause significant environmental impacts. In addition to the parties on the

Board's service list for this proceeding, OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to the following agencies for review and comment: USFWS, FCMP, Corps, and FEMA.

HISTORIC REVIEW

SGLR served the E&H Report on the Florida State Historic Preservation Office (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO), pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c).³ SHPO noted that the Seminole Gulf Railway has been recorded in Lee County as Florida Master Site File No. 8LL2445, assessed as insufficient information to make a determination of its eligibility due to a limited segment of the resource being present within the area of potential effects. SHPO also noted that the resource has not been recorded within Collier County. SHPO requested a review document to assess eligibility and determine effects of the proposed abandonment. Accordingly, OEA is recommending a condition requiring the railroad 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 of Historic Places until completion of the Section 106 process. Guidance regarding the Board's historic preservation review process is available on the Board's website at <https://www.stb.gov/resources/environmental/historic-preservation-overview>.

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.2, OEA conducted a search of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Tribal Directory Assessment Tool (TDAT) to identify federally recognized Tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area.⁴ The database indicated that the following federally-recognized tribes may have knowledge regarding properties of traditional religious and cultural significance within the right-of-way (the APE) of the proposed abandonment: the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Accordingly, OEA is sending a copy of this Draft EA to these Tribes for review and comment.

³ Applicants seeking authority from the Board to abandon railroad lines may act on behalf of the Board when complying with the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act. Applicants are authorized to initiate the Section 106 review process and carry out some of its steps, but the Board retains overall responsibility for the Section 106 review. See 36 C.F.R. § 800.2(c)(4); 49 C.F.R. Part 1105; Delegation Letter (Dec. 9, 2009). The Delegation Letter can be found at a link on the bottom of the Board's website overviewing historic preservation at <https://www.stb.gov/resources/environmental/historic-preservation-overview>.

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Tribal Directory Assessment Tool, <https://egis.hud.gov/tdat> (last accessed June 26, 2026).

CONDITIONS

OEA recommends that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority:⁵

Seminole Gulf Railway, L.P. (SGLR) shall 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) that are eligible for listing or listed in the National Register of Historic Places until the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 U.S.C. § 306108, has been completed. SGLR shall report back to the Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) regarding any consultations with the Florida State Historic Preservation Office and the public. SGLR may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until the Section 106 process has been completed and the Board has removed this condition.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, OEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is imposed, abandonment of the Line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

PUBLIC USE

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 C.F.R. § 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Board's Federal Register notice of the proposed abandonment. The Federal Register notice is also issued as a Board decision and is available on the Board's website.⁶

⁵ If an interim trail use agreement under 16 U.S.C. § 1247(d) and 49 C.F.R. § 1152.29 is reached for the Line (or a portion thereof), compliance with this condition is not required with respect to any portion of the Line covered by the interim trail use agreement for the duration of the agreement.

⁶ Board decisions are available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.gov by

TRAIL USE

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 C.F.R. § 1152.29). The Federal Register notice is also issued as a Board decision and is available on the Board's website.⁷

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Board's Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact this office directly at (202) 245-0238, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance, Washington, DC 20423.

COMMENTS

OEA encourages interested parties to submit their comments on the Draft EA electronically through the Board's website at <https://www.stb.gov/>. From the Board's home page, scroll down to the blue "How to File" box. Select the "E-Filing (recommended)" button. From the E-Filing page, select "Environmental Comments" under "Select your E-Filing Type." Log-in accounts are not needed to file environmental comments electronically, and brief comments can be typed in the comment field, and lengthier comments can be attached as Word, Adobe Acrobat, or other file formats.

Alternatively, comments submitted by mail should be addressed to: Adam Assenza, Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001, Attention: Environmental Filing, Docket No. AB 400 (Sub-No. 4X) If you have any questions, please contact Adam Assenza by email at adam.assenza@stb.gov or by phone at 202-245-0301.

clicking "Search STB Records;" selecting "Decisions" in the "Search for" dropdown menu; entering "AB" "400" "8" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then selecting "Search."

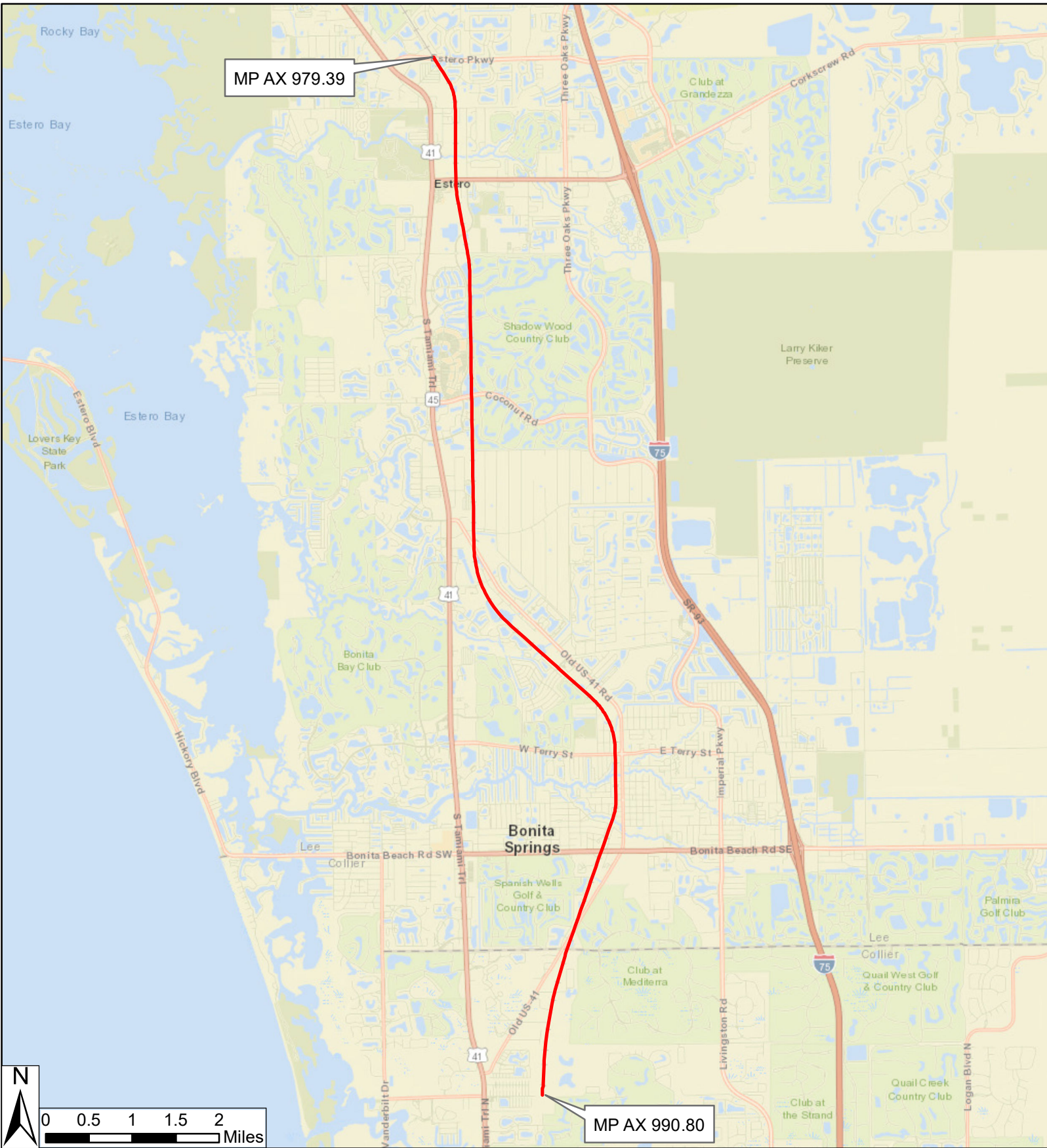
⁷ Id.

Date made available to the public: July 2, 2026.

Comment due date: July 17, 2026.

By the Board, Danielle Gosselin, Director, Office of Environmental Analysis.

Attachment

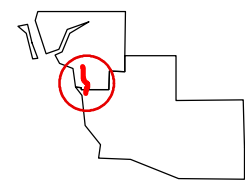


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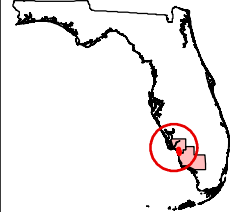
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Legend
— The Line

Note: Maps produced by the STB's Office of Environmental Analysis are based on information provided by the applicant and are for reference purposes only.



Lee and Collier Counties



Florida