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OEA

SERVICE DATE – AUGUST 14, 2026

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Docket No. AB 497 (Sub-No. 8X)**

**Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. – Abandonment Exemption – In  
Norman and Polk Counties, Minn.**

**ABANDONMENT TYPE**

The time for comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) has expired in this:

(X) Notice of Exemption ( ) Petition for Exemption ( ) Regulated Abandonment

( ) **NO NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED**

(X) **NEW COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED**

In this proceeding, Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. (MNN) 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 approximately 11.14-miles of railroad, extending from milepost 40.20 at approximately the north end of the Marsh River Bridge south of Shelly, to milepost 51.34 at approximately the north side of Golf Course Lane, north of Climax, in Norman and Polk Counties, Minnesota (the Line). The Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) served a Draft EA for this proceeding on July 24, 2026, for public review and comment. In the Draft EA, OEA concluded that the proposed action would not significantly impact the quality of the human environment.

On August 7, 2026, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) submitted a letter providing information on ecologically significant remnant prairie areas along the right-of-way and recommendations to limit disturbance of lands during any construction or salvage activities. In addition, MNDNR requested that the bridges be removed as part of any salvage activities related to abandonment of the Line. MNDNR anticipates that bridge removal may require a permit from MNDNR. To address MNDNR's concerns, OEA is recommending a condition requiring MNN to consult with MNDNR prior to the commencement of any abandonment-related salvage.

The Draft EA comment period has ended. Accordingly, OEA recommends that the following condition be imposed upon any decision granting abandonment authority:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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

Prior to the commencement of any abandonment-related salvage activities, Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. shall consult with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources regarding its concerns about the bridges and potential impacts to ecologically significant remnant prairie areas along the right-of-way.

If the above condition is imposed, OEA believes that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

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

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respect to any portion of the Line covered by the interim trail use agreement for the duration of the agreement.