

53200
OEA

SERVICE DATE – SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 290 (Sub-No. 422X)

**Norfolk Southern Railway Company– Abandonment Exemption –
In Scioto County, Ohio**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) 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 railroad extending over 24.43 miles between milepost CT 80.57 +/- to approximately milepost CT 105.0 +/- in Scioto County, Ohio (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 traverses United States Postal Zip Codes 45662, 45652, 45663, 45660, 45671 and 45657. The entirety of the Line is located within Scioto County, Ohio. The right-of-way is 100 feet wide. There are fourteen bridge structures along the Line. The bridge construction style is either open deck or ballast deck, and the bridges were constructed between 1897 and 1941. According to NSR, no customers have been served on the Line for over ten years. NSR ownership of the right-of-way underlying the Line is mixed, with a combination of mostly fee simple with other parcels held via easement. The Line does not contain any federally granted right-of-way.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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

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" "290" "442" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then

Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Diversion of Traffic

According to NSR, no local traffic has moved over the Line for over ten years. 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. In this case, NSR intends to salvage the Line's rail and related track material, which would consist of removing the rail and track material from the existing roadbed. The contour of the existing roadbed would remain as is, and existing drainage systems would remain intact. NSR would not remove bridge structures. No ballast would be removed, and no new soil disturbance would occur.

NSR reached out to Scioto County requesting comments on land use and planning efforts for the County. The Scioto County Engineer provided a letter on July 9, 2025 confirming that the abandonment fits with long-range plans for the county and stated that the county is interested in converting the right-of-way to a trail.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) indicated via emails dated July 11, 2025 and June 12, 2026 that the proposed abandonment would not have an adverse impact on prime farmland. NRCS stated that compliance with the Farmland Policy Protection Act is not required. Therefore, no further consultation with NRCS is recommended.

NSR requested comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding the potential impact of the proposed abandonment to protected wildlife, including federally listed threatened and endangered species.

The USFWS, Ohio Ecological Services Field office submitted an email dated July 14, 2025 stating it had no comment on the proposed abandonment.

To identify protected species in the project area, OEA conducted a search of the USFWS' Information for Planning and Construction (IPaC) system.² Thirteen species identified in the

selecting "Search." The E&H Report was filed on August 13, 2026.

² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Information for Planning and Consultation Tool (IPaC),

area include: the Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalist*, *Endangered*), the Long-Eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*, *Endangered*), the Tricolored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*, *Proposed Endangered*), the Eastern Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*, *Proposed Endangered*), the Clubshell (*Pleurobema clava*, *Endangered*), the Northern riffleshell (*Epioblasma rangiana*, *Endangered*), the Pink mucket (pearlymussel) (*Lampsilis abrupta*, *Endangered*), the Rayed Bean (*Villosa fabalis*, *Endangered*), the Salamander mussel (*Simpsonaias ambigua*, *Proposed Endangered*), the Snuffbox mussel (*Epioblasma triquetra*, *Endangered*), the Monarch butterfly (*Danaus Plexippus*, *Proposed Threatened*), the Small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*, *Threatened*), and the Virginia spiraea (*Spiraea virginiana*, *Threatened*). Additionally, the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, *Non BCC Vulnerable*) and nine additional birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act may be present between the months of March and September. No critical habitat or wildlife refuges were identified within the area of the proposed abandonment. OEA concludes that the proposed abandonment would have no effect on these species because salvage activities would not include any subsurface ground disturbance, or any removal of trees, grassland, shrublands, or forested habitat, and no critical habitat is present. OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to the USFWS Ohio Ecological Services Field Office, for its review.

NPS notified the National Park Service (NPS), Midwest Region of the proposed abandonment and requested assistance in identifying any potential effects on wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests. To date, NPS has not provided comments. OEA believes that no such area would be affected by the proposed abandonment because the Line does not cross any wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests. OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to NPS, Midwest Region for its review.

OEA has determined that the Line is not located within a coastal zone. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Management confirmed that a Federal Consistency review is not required via email on July 7, 2025. Accordingly, no further consultation is necessary.

NSR requested assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in identifying whether permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) would be required for the proposed abandonment. To date NSR has not received a response from USACE. NSR has no plans to undertake in-stream work or dredge and/or fill any materials in connection with the proposed abandonment. Therefore, OEA believes a Corps permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1344) would not be required.

OEA is providing USACE, Louisville District, a copy of this Draft EA for its review.

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Surface Water submitted letters on July 15, 2025 and June 29, 2026 stating that the proposed abandonment would be consistent with Federal and State water quality standards and indicated permits under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act 33 U.S.C.1342 would not be required. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Air Pollution Control noted in the same letter provided on July 15, 2025 that

any dust emissions should be controlled and the burning of demolition debris is prohibited pursuant to OAC rule 3745-19.

OEA believes that any air emissions associated with abandonment-related salvage activities would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality. Similarly, any noise related to abandonment-related salvage 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: NPS Midwest Region; USEPA, Region 5; USFWS, Ohio Ecological Field Office; and USACE, Louisville District.

HISTORIC REVIEW

NSR served the E&H Report on the Ohio History Connection (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO), pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c)³ and followed up with additional correspondence on June 22, 2026 and July 17, 2026. In a letter dated July 21, 2026 the SHPO noted the deck plate girder bridge located at milepost CT 104. 52 may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. However, SHPO indicated that the proposed abandonment of the line and the potential conversion to trails use would not impact the integrity of the property such that it would alter its potential eligibility. The SHPO commented that no historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected within the right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect, or APE) of the proposed abandonment.

Accordingly, pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 C.F.R. § 800.5(b), in consultation with the SHPO and the public, OEA has determined that the proposed abandonment would not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 C.F.R. § 800.11(e), consists of NSR's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this Draft EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public through posting on the Board's website at www.stb.gov. 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>.

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 overlooking historic preservation 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: Delaware Nation of Oklahoma, Delaware Tribe of Indians, Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Osage Nation, and Seneca-Cayuga Nation. Accordingly, OEA is sending a copy of this Draft EA to these Tribes for review and comment.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided by all sources to date, OEA concludes that, as currently proposed, 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.⁵

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.⁶

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Tribal Directory Assessment Tool, <https://egis.hud.gov/tdat> (last accessed August 31, 2026).

⁵ Board decisions are available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.gov by clicking "Search STB Records;" selecting "Decisions" in the "Search for" dropdown menu; entering "AB" "290" "422" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then selecting "Search."

⁶ Id.

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 homepage, 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. Brief comments can be typed in the comment field, and lengthier comments can be attached as Word, Adobe Acrobat, or other file formats.

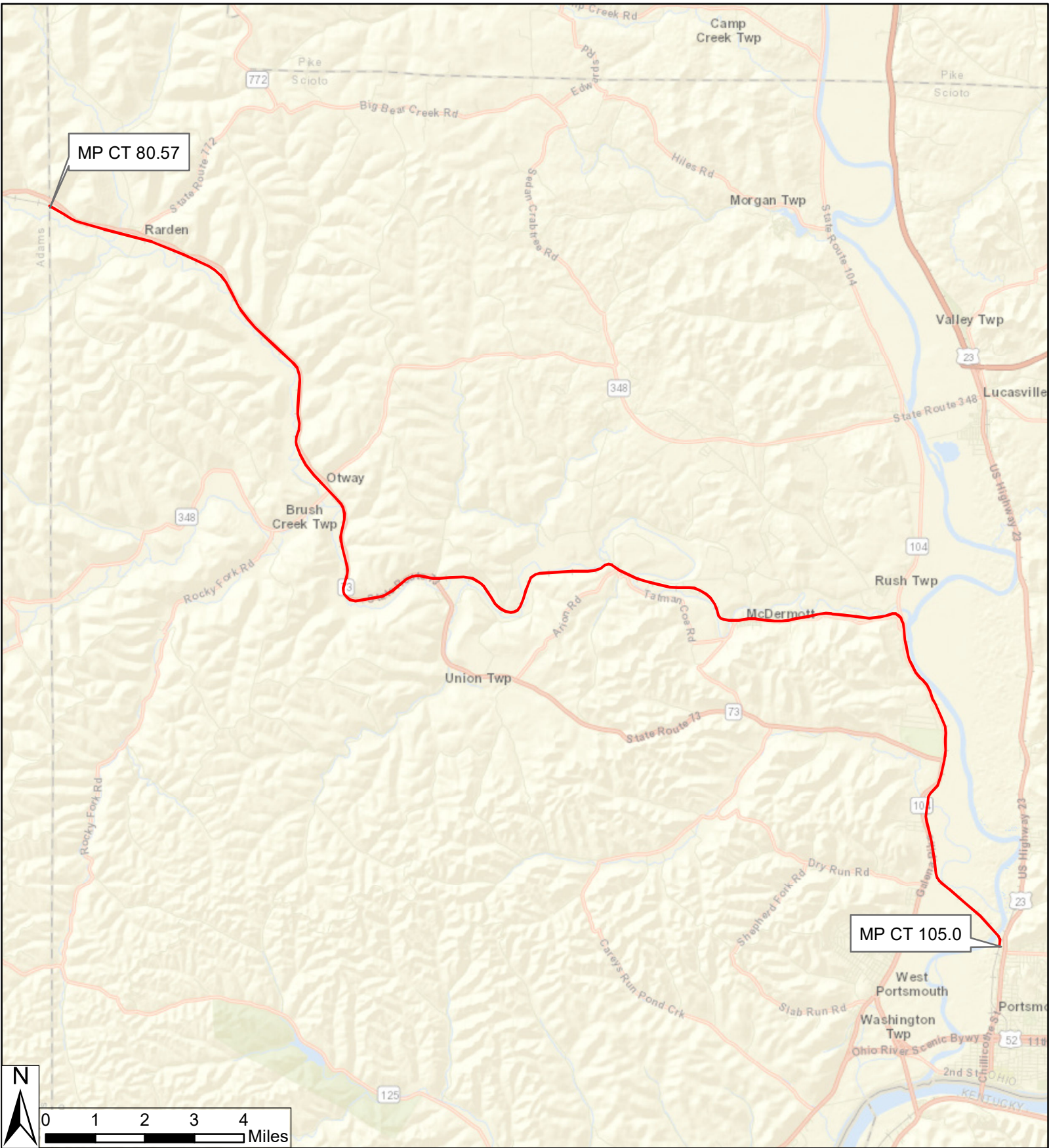
Alternatively, comments submitted by mail should be addressed to: Andrea Poole, Surface Transportation Board, 395 E. Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001, Attention: Environmental Filing, Docket No. AB 290 (Sub-No. 422X). If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Poole by email at andrea.poole@stb.gov or by phone at 202-245-0305.

Date made available to the public: September 9, 2026.

Comment due date: September 24, 2026.

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

Attachment

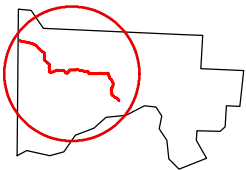


STB Docket No. AB 290 (Sub-No. 422X)
Norfolk Southern Railway Company
Abandonment Exemption
In Scioto County, Ohio

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.



Scioto County



Ohio