53294 SERVICE DATE – NOVEMBER 6, 2026
OEA

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 290 (Sub-No. 426X)

Norfolk Southern Railway Company – Abandonment Exemption –
In Madison 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 a line of railroad in Madison County, Ohio. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends approximately 0.96 miles from milepost XD 24.73 +/- between Maple and South Walnut Steet to milepost XD 25.69 +/- on the eastern edge of Midway Street in the City of London (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 appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

According to NSR, the Line was originally part of the Columbus and Xenia Railroad Company, located entirely in the State of Ohio, and opened for operation in 1850. After several mergers and leases, NSR acquired the Line as part of the acquisition of Conrail by NSR and CSX Transportation, Inc. NSR states the right-of-way width varies along the Line ranging from 65 feet to 100 feet wide. According to NSR, there are two structures (bridges) on the Line, one spanning Oak Run and the other spanning an unnamed waterway. NSR states that the land adjacent to the Line consists of a combination of residential and commercial areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

NSR submitted a combined environmental and historic report (E&H Report) concluding that the proposed abandonment of the Line, including salvage, would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. NSR 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 NSR, no local traffic has moved over the Line over the last five years, and there is no overhead traffic to be 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 in 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. If abandonment authority is granted, NSR indicates that it does not intend to salvage the Line from milepost XD 24.73 +/- to Main Street but rather reclassify this segment as industrial track. However, NSR intends to salvage the remaining segment of the Line, from Main Street to milepost XD 25.69 +/- at Midway Street. NSR also intends to remove all the rail, crossties, and railroad appurtenances from the existing roadbed; and the two structures (bridges) which are located on this segment of the Line will be left intact and in place.

NSR states that during salvage the roadbed would be smoothed to a level surface, no ballast would be removed, no new soil disturbance would occur, no digging or burying of any kind would be permitted, the contour of the roadbed would remain as is, and existing drainage systems would remain intact. NSR further states that all salvaged steel components would either be reused or sold as scrap, and crossties may be reused in other railroad operations or disposed of in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. In addition, by phone on October 26, 2026, NSR stated that west of Cherry Street there is a small section of track where small trees have grown in the right-of-way, and it plans to cut those trees during salvage to remove them from the right-of-way.

Land Use

NSR considers the proposed abandonment to be consistent with and to promote existing land use plans. NSR requested comments on the proposed abandonment from the City of London and Madison County. To date, OEA has not received a response. Therefore, OEA is providing the City of London and Madison County a copy of this Draft EA for their review.

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[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" "426" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then selecting "Search." The E&H Report was filed on October 13, 2026.

NSR notified the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the proposed abandonment by letter dated September 9, 2026. To date, OEA has not received a response. However, because the Line is located in the City of London and NSR states that no ballast would be removed and no new soil disturbance would occur, OEA concludes that the proposed abandonment is unlikely to have an adverse effect on prime agricultural land.

Hazardous Materials/Spills and Safety

NSR states that the proposed abandonment would have no detrimental effects on public health and safety. There are no known hazardous waste sites or sites where there have been hazardous spills on the Line. Therefore, OEA concludes that the proposed abandonment is unlikely to affect the transportation of hazardous materials.

Biological Resources

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

To identify protected species in the project area and to meet the Board's requirements under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act, OEA conducted a search of the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system.[2] The following three species may be present in the project area: Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), an endangered mammal; salamander mussel (*Simposonaias ambigua*), a proposed endangered clam; and monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), a proposed threatened insect. According to the IPaC report, there is no designated or proposed critical habitat for these species in the project area.

Because tree removal is contemplated, OEA determined that the proposed abandonment could affect the Indiana bat. In a letter dated November 2, 2026, USFWS submitted comments recommending the following conservation measures to protect the Indiana bat: 1) Tree clearing activities for trees ≥ 5 inches diameter breast height (dbh) will occur only between October 1 and March 31. Trees < 5 inches dbh may be cleared at any time of year; 2) tree cutting/trimming will not fragment a connective corridor between 2 or more forest patches of at least 5 acres; and 3) tree cutting/trimming will not exceed 5 acres of forest.

OEA has determined that with these measures in place, the proposed abandonment "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the Indiana bat. USFWS concurred with this finding in its November 2, 2026 letter. Accordingly, OEA recommends that a condition requiring NSR to conduct the conservation measures identified by USFWS prior to and during salvage activities be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

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[2] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Information for Planning and Consultation Tool (IPaC), https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov (OEA accessed on November 2, 2026, Project Code: 2027-0013291).

Because no bridge removal is contemplated, no land disturbance or instream work is contemplated, no ballast would be removed, no new soil disturbance would occur, no digging or burying of any kind is contemplated, the contour of the roadbed would remain as is, existing drainage systems would remain intact, and no proposed critical habitat is present, OEA anticipates that the proposed abandonment is unlikely to affect stream conditions or hydrological regimes. Therefore, OEA has determined that the proposed abandonment is not likely to jeopardize the federally proposed endangered salamander mussel.

OEA anticipates that impacts to potential monarch butterfly habitat from the proposed abandonment would be negligible to minor and would be primarily limited to proposed salvage activities, which could result in the temporary loss of nectar and milkweed plants that may be growing within the right-of-way. While some adverse impact could occur, these impacts would not appreciably reduce the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of this species. Therefore, OEA has determined that the proposed abandonment is not likely to jeopardize the federally proposed threatened monarch butterfly.

Additionally, salvage activities may impact several species of migratory birds. To ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, OEA is recommending a condition requiring NSR to clear vegetation in preparation for salvage activities before or after the breeding bird nesting season to avoid inadvertent removal of active nests (i.e., nesting adults, young, or eggs); or, if clearing is required during the nesting season, to consult with USFWS on appropriate nest survey methods prior to any clearing or salvage activities. OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to the USFWS, Ohio Ecological Services Field Office, ODV, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for their review.

NSR notified the National Park Service (NPS) of the proposed abandonment and requested assistance in identifying any potential effects on wildlife sanctuaries or refugees, National or State parks or forests. To date, NPS has not provided comments. Because the Line does not cross any wildlife sanctuaries or refuges, National or State parks or forests, OEA believes that no such area would be affected by the proposed abandonment.

Water Resources

The Line is not located within a designated coastal zone. Therefore, no further consultation is necessary.

NSR requested assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5 (USEPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District (USACE) in identifying whether permits under Sections 402 and 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. §§ 1342 and 1344) are required for the proposed abandonment, respectively. To date USEPA and USACE have not provided comments. Because NSR does not intend to conduct any excavation or other ground-disturbing activities, alter the contour of the roadbed underlying the Line, conduct any in-stream work, or dredge and/or use any fill materials in connection with the proposed abandonment, there would be no discharge of dredged or fill materials into Waters of the United States (WOTUS) or jurisdictional wetlands. Therefore, OEA does not anticipate the need for permits under Section 402 and 404 of the CWA and believes that the proposed abandonment would not likely affect any floodplains. OEA is providing USEPA and USACE a copy of this Draft EA for their review.

By letter dated September 9, 2026, NSR requested assistance from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) in identifying any potential effects on water quality standards. To date, Ohio EPA has not provided any comments. Because no excavation or other ground-disturbing activities, instream work, or dredging and/or filling activities are contemplated, and no freight rail traffic would be diverted to truck traffic, OEA believes that the proposed abandonment would not likely affect water resources or floodplains. OEA is providing a copy of this Draft EA to Ohio EPA for its review.

Air Quality and Noise

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.

Summary

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: City of London; Madison County; USFWS, Ohio Ecological Services Field Office; ODV; ODNR; USEPA, Region 5; USACE, Huntington District; and Ohio EPA.

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] Based on available information, the SHPO submitted comments stating 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.[4]

Therefore, pursuant to the Section 106 regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 C.F.R. § 800.4(d)(1), and following 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

[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] Ohio History Connection, 2026-MAD-69392.

36 C.F.R. § 800.11(d), 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 www.stb.gov.

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.[5] 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, Oklahoma; Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma; Miami Tribe of Oklahoma; Seneca-Cayuga Nation; and Shawnee Tribe. Accordingly, OEA is sending a copy of this Draft EA to these Tribes for their review and comment.

CONDITIONS

OEA recommends the following conditions be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

1. Prior to and during any abandonment-related salvage activities, Norfolk Southern Railway Company shall conduct the following conservation measures to protect the Indiana bat: 1) Tree clearing activities for trees ≥ 5 inches diameter breast height (dbh) shall occur only between October 1 and March 31. Trees < 5 inches dbh may be cleared at any time of year; 2) tree cutting/trimming shall not fragment a connective corridor between 2 or more forest patches of at least 5 acres; and 3) tree cutting/trimming shall not exceed 5 acres of forest.

2. To comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSR) shall clear vegetation in preparation for abandonment-related salvage activities before or after the breeding bird nesting season to avoid inadvertent removal of active nests (i.e., nesting adults, young, or eggs), or, if clearing is required during the nesting season, consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on appropriate nest survey methods for that area prior to any clearing activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, OEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended conditions are 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

[5] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Tribal Directory Assessment Tool, https://egis.hud.gov/tdat (last accessed November 3, 2026).

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]

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

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[6] 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" "426" "X" sequentially in the four boxes for "Docket Number," then selecting "Search."

[7] Id.

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

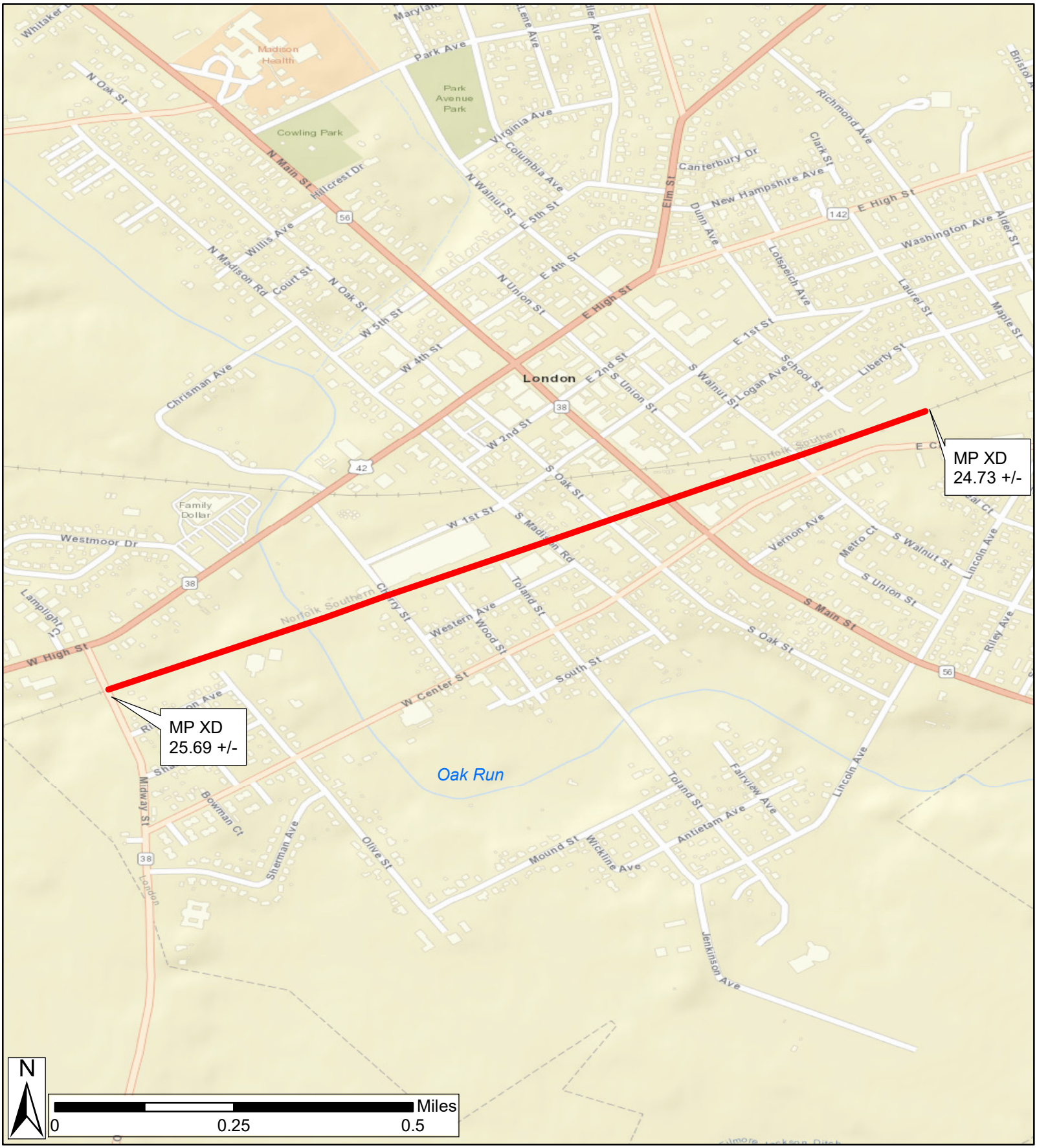
Alternatively, comments submitted by mail should be addressed to: Karen Stevens, Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001, Attention: Environment Filing, Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 426X). If you have any questions, please contact Karen Stevens by email at Karen.Stevens@stb.gov or by phone at 202-245-0304.

Date made available to the public: November 6, 2026.

Comment due date: November 20, 2026.

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

Attachment



Docket No. AB 290 (Sub-No. 426X)
Norfolk Southern Railway Company
Abandonment Exemption
Madison County, Oh.

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.



Madison County



Ohio