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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
395 E. Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423
Section of Environmental Analysis

EO-1094

CG

September 29, 2008

Mr. Herb Jones
Director, Government Affairs
Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation
140 North Phillips Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Re: **STB Finance Docket No. 33407, Dakota Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation
Construction into the Powder River Basin: Review Comments, Phase I & II
Archaeological Investigations of the Minnesota Rehabilitation Segment of the Powder
River Basin Expansion Project - Two Pines (LBG- MN2)**

Dear Mr. Jones:

The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has completed its review of the above-referenced report. We have attached a copy of our written comments to this letter and will be providing you with an interactive spreadsheet (MSEXcel format) via email that includes columns for comment location, reviewer's comments, action taken, and review. Please address each comment provided and specify any textual changes to the report in your response to us by providing an electronic copy of the revised report with "track changes" activated.

Should you have questions as you review the attached comments, please feel free to contact me (Catherine.Glidden@stb.dot.gov; 202-245-0293) or Randy Withrow of the Louis Berger Group (rwithrow@louisberger.com; 319-373-3043). We look forward to working with you on the review of this document.

Sincerely,

Cathy Glidden
Environmental Protection Specialist
Section of Environmental Analysis

Enclosure: Comment Response Form

Comment #	Comment Location in Document				Comment	Name of Reviewer	Action Taken to Address Comment
	Chapter	Section	Page	Paragraph			
1	General				STB will not accept reports that list sites located within the APE as "unevaluated" (i.e., 21WN71). Sites may be recommended "eligible", "not eligible", or "potentially eligible". We recognize that complete evaluations may not be possible for all sites due to lack of access or other restrictions imposed on subsurface testing, therefore, if further work is needed to fully establish NRHP eligibility, then the consultant should recommend that the site be considered "potentially eligible" pending completion of additional work. The scope of that additional work should also be clearly defined and stated in the form of recommendations. Please revise the report as necessary.	Withrow	
2	General				Overall readability for review purposes would be greatly improved if the site descriptions presented in Chapters 6, 7 & 8 were combined into a single chapter and ordered in an east to west sequence. This would not only parallel the linear format used in Chapter 5 to review survey coverages, but it would also avoid the awkward splitting of site descriptions in Chapters 6 (Precontact Sites) and 7 (Historical Period Sites) for those sites that include both precontact and historic period components (e.g., 21BE288, 21LY126, 21LN74). I think most reviewers would prefer an integrated approach that considers the eligibility of sites and their archaeological components in a more holistic fashion. This also would help to understand the degree, if any, that historic occupation has intruded into the precontact deposits.	Withrow	
3	General				Chapter 8 (Railroad Stations) reads like a small report within the overall survey report with its own historic context, discussion of field methods, evaluation criteria, site descriptions, and recommendations summary. In comparison, the two previous chapters on precontact and historical period sites have only site descriptions. I suspect this is an artifact of the report's mixed authorship, but this internal lack of consistency certainly detracts from what is otherwise a quality report. My suggestion here, building on my previous recommendation, would be to include the Chapter 8 site descriptions in a single chapter along with all the other sites identified along the project corridor. Historic contextual information for the project and a discussion of how evaluation criteria are applied to all other sites are presented in Chapters 3 and 4 so perhaps you could integrate the information specific to railroad sites in the same places. Your recommendations summary would certainly complement the more general statement regarding railroad sites already in Chapter 9.	Withrow	
4	1	1.2.2	1.3		The APE for this segment is defined as DM&E ROW only and specifically excludes segments in Owatonna and Mankato since these are not owned by DM&E. A statement should be added to clarify the fact that no rehabilitation work will occur along those segments as part of this project.	Withrow	
5	4	4.3.1	4-9	2	8	C. Schoen	
6	4	4.3.1	4-10	1		C. Schoen	

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7	5	General			Please integrate information regarding the nature and location of geomorph testing that was performed for the project with the description of survey coverages provided in Chapter 5. To the extent that the archaeological survey team had access to and utilized findings produced by the geomorphological survey, the authors need to state how that information was or was not used to assess the need for subsurface investigations along the ROW and to define archaeological Test Areas.	Withrow	
8	5	General			Project maps included with the report (Appendix B) show the location of all "Test Areas" identified by the survey team, but it appears that unless a site was discovered within the test area, no detailed maps are provided to illustrate/document the investigations that were conducted at each of these Test Areas, e.g., location of previous disturbances, location of subsurface tests, etc. We think it would be helpful to add these maps to the discussion section in Chapter 5.	Withrow	
9	5				It would be helpful to cite the specific Chapter, Section and page numbers for related site descriptions as part of the Chapter 5 discussion	Withrow	
10	6	6.5.2	6-22	4	Add "centimeters below datum" before first use of "cmbd" and place "cmbd" in parens.	C. Schoen	
11	6				Site 21BE288 has been impacted by previous railroad construction; however, a large area with site deposits appears to remain undisturbed. Based on your description of test unit results, it also appears that the remaining site deposits contain artifacts and other materials that have potential to address research questions regarding site activities and subsistence. Please explain in the text why you feel it is necessary for the site as a whole to remain intact in order for it to retain research potential and significance as stated in your recommendations. How is this situation different from the situation at 21BE290 which has also been impacted by previous railroad construction, but where the "information potential...is sufficient to overcome the loss of the portion of the site removed by railroad construction"? Can this somehow be quantified so it seems less subjective?	Withrow C. Schoen	
12	6	6.7			Similarly, Site 21BE0289 also has archaeological integrity, diagnostic ceramics, and a high volume of bone fragments. The authors acknowledge that the site is probably a game processing camp, which I think is significant as it may be a single activity site. No test units were excavated and only 8 shovel tests were dug, so a hearth or midden might be present. Can't the site yield important new information even if it is small because it was truncated by the railroad? Could you please explain why Site 21BE0289 is not at least potentially eligible under Criterion D and should be further evaluated by Phase II testing?	C. Schoen	
13	6	6.8	6-56	1	Replace "Site DME-11" with "Site 21BE0290".	C. Schoen	
14	6	6.8.3	6-67	1	"This rim form was the dominant type present at the Cambria village site (21BE0002) (Shay, 1966:24)." Recommend noting that type Site 21BE0002 is located near MP 155 and about 3 miles west of Site 21BE0290.	C. Schoen	

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	Chapter	Section	Page	Paragraph			
15	6	6.9.5	6-85	4	8	Withrow C. Schoen	
16	6	6.9	6-72			C. Schoen	
17	6	6.10.6	6-92	1-2		C. Schoen	
18	6	6.11	6-92, 6-93			C. Schoen	
19	6	6.12.5	6-102	1		C. Schoen	
20	6	6.16	6-111 - 6-114			Withrow	
21	6	6.19	6-118 - 6-120			C. Schoen	
22	6	6.19	6-118 - 6-120			C. Schoen	
23	6	6.20				C. Schoen	

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24	6	6.20.5	7-132		With the fact that Site 21LN0073 has intact archaeological deposits that include diagnostic artifacts attributable to the Lake Benton phase, artifacts that reflect lithic tool manufacture/retouching and hunting, cooking, and game processing activities, and the likelihood of additional untested deposits under spoil piles, it seems that the site has at least moderate potential to be yield significant data. The "limited number of artifacts" can simply be the result of limited testing of the site. Can you please provide more justification for your recommendation of not eligible?	C. Schoen	
25	6	6.21	6-133 - 6-149		Why are there two different site numbers for the archaeological deposits across this terrace along Lake Benton? The site materials are similar, albeit often deeper at Site 21LN0074. The former railroad bed cuts through the landform, but Site 21LN0073 is identified on both the north and south sides of the old grade. Why wasn't the site simply extended westward?	C. Schoen	
26	6	6.21.5	6-149		How do you know that there are six components? For example, couldn't the materials from the B horizon be associated with the overlying A horizon or the Bb horizon be associated with the overlying Ab horizon?	C. Schoen	
27	6	6.21	6-149		If Site 21LN0074 is eligible, why isn't adjacent Site 21LN0073, which has data that could contribute to understanding Site 21LN0074 and shares many of the same characteristics as the latter site?	C. Schoen	
28	7	7.1.1	7-2	1	Please specify what "W&SIP" stands for	C. Schoen	
29	7	7.1.3	7-5		Please provide a recommendation on site eligibility for the Stockton Quarry (21WN71). If this site exists on DME property, why was not work done to establish the full extent of the site boundary outside the ROW?	Withrow	
30	7	7.1.3	7-5	1	"Should impacts be planned within the site boundaries..." Don't the site boundaries include the ROW? Thus, aren't there impacts to the site?	Withrow	
31	7	7.3.3	7-21		How can you make a recommendation of eligibility under Criterion D at Site 21LY0127 when no subsurface testing was performed to demonstrate the presence/absence of intact archaeological deposits that might "shed light on labor conditions, the technology of the industry, and the development and growth of this business from a local business enterprise to an enterprise of national importance." Wouldn't these topics be better addressed through archival research and informant interviews? Aren't they topics for Criterion A? I would expect the archaeology to contribute information about intrasite organization, foundation construction, locations of machinery footings, demolition or removal of earlier structures, or landscaping/grading.	C. Schoen	
32	7	7.4	7-21 - 7-24		Wouldn't it have been more useful to have the site map of Site 21LY0126 with the historic site discussion as the results of the survey relate almost exclusively to the historic remains?	C. Schoen	

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33	7	7.4	7-21 - 7-24		What is the distance between the former residence located outside of the ROW at Site 21LY0126 and the artifact scatter within the ROW? Please include copies of the relevant segments of the historic map (North West Publishing 1902) and 1838 and 1950 aerial photographs to show the location of the residence in relation to the ROW and site deposits. The aerials would be especially useful for understanding how the materials in the ROW relate to the structures and features once present outside of the ROW. Can this information be used to estimate the site boundary for the historic component?	C. Schoen	
34	7	7.4	7-23 and 7-24	1	There appears to be a discrepancy with the identification of the site. The information provided suggests that the artifact scatter is associated with the former residence/farmstead south of the ROW, but then you state that "This area was in the vicinity of an elevator and other structures recorded on the 1902 plat map of the project area, as well as a more recent structure depicted on the 1963 USGS topographic map of the area, but which has since been removed". Which is it?	C. Schoen	
35	7	7.4.2	7-24	4	18 mammal bones were recovered from ST 5, which is the same shovel test in which the single flake was found at 60 to 70 cmbs. What was the depth of the animal bone? Is there any reason to think the bone is associated with the precontact deposit?	C. Schoen	
36	7	7.4.4	7-24	6	Please provide a recommendation on site eligibility for this site (21LY126). For sites that lie outside the project ROW STB recommends that it be considered potentially eligible pending further investigations to define site boundaries and gather data sufficient to establish eligibility. Consultant should recommend that DME conduct work outside the ROW to accomplish this.	C. Schoen	
37	6	7.4	7-27		Why weren't each of the 5 depressions at Site 21LN0074 at least shovel tested to determine depth, archaeological integrity, probable culture affiliation, and function?		
38	7	7.4	6-134 7-26		Where is the second fire ring? It does not appear on either site map for 21LN0074.	C. Schoen	
39	7	7.4	7-27		Why not identify the large depression at the northeast end of the site on the map as a "borrow" for clarification if that is what the surface feature is? Why not number the depressions and fire rings as surface features?	C. Schoen	
40	7	7.5	7-28		Why no discussion of Test Unit 2?	C. Schoen	
41	7				Couldn't the historic artifacts found at adjacent Site 21LN0073 also be associated with the historic component ("hobo jungle") at Site 21LN0074? Again, the data suggest one site and if 21LN0074 is eligible prehistorically and historically (which I agree it is), then 21LN0073 should also be eligible.	C. Schoen	
42	8	8.1	8-2		According to Roger Grant and Charles Bohl (1988:17) in <i>The Country Railroad Station in America</i> , railroad loading stations were established eight to ten miles apart as local markets for farmers and ranchers as it was considered impractical to carry goods or drive livestock more than ten miles to obtain railroad service. This fact might support interpretation of Minnesota City, Dover, Byron, etc. as loading stations.	C. Schoen	

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43	8	8.2	8-3		3	C. Schoen	
44	8	8.2.1	8-3			C. Schoen	
45	8	8.4	8-17	1	1	C. Schoen	
46	8	8.5.2	8-35			C. Schoen	
48	8		General			C. Schoen	
49	8	8.5.11	8-62 - 8-65			C. Schoen	
50	8	8.5.15	8-78	1	2	C. Schoen	
51	8	8.5.15	8-85			C. Schoen	
52	8	8.5.18	8-95			C. Schoen	
53	9	9.2.1	9-9	2		C. Schoen	

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54	10	10.0	10-1		Author misstates the purpose of the geomorphological survey. The author implies that any areas identified as having potential for buried archaeological deposits are automatically "too deeply buried to be identified through standard archaeological survey methods". Many archaeological surveys routinely test for buried sites, frequently to depths of 2 to 3 meters using conventional methods and non-mechanized hand tools. Please revise this statement.	Withdraw	
55	10	10.1	10-1	2	The statement summarizing the results of the geomorphology survey is incomplete. It does not mention SMG's additional recommendations to test areas identified as having low to moderate potential for archaeological deposits. Please revise to include the consultant's complete recommendations.	Withdraw	
56	10	10.3	10-12		TPRG recommends archaeological testing for 24 drainage crossings identified by SMG as having high geologic potential for buried archaeological sites. SMG also recommends testing for 17 additional crossings judged to have low to moderate potential for buried archaeological deposits, but these are not included in TPRG's management recommendations. If TPRG disagrees with SMG's recommendations for these areas, then a justification statement must be provided.	Withdraw	
57	10	General			Please add recommendation that additional survey will still be needed for newly acquired ROW and any ancillary activity areas as defined in the ID Plan as you mention on page 1-6.	Withdraw	

