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LEONARD, STREET AND DEINARD

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION



May 24, 2002

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VIA FACSIMILE

David M. Konschnik
Director, Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

**Re: *Soo Line Railroad Company – Abandonment – Hennepin County, Minnesota
AB57 (Sub. 52X)***

Dear Mr. Konschnik:

This office represents Soo Line Railroad Company with respect to the above captioned Abandonment proceedings. I understand that the Memorandum of Agreement that Soo Line and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation officer have entered into to fulfill the Section 106 historic condition has been forwarded to your office. The purpose of this letter is to explain the need for expeditious processing of the Memorandum of Agreement.

The parties are seeking to have the condition removed as quickly as possible for a number of reasons. The condition currently prohibits the sale or alteration of the property, and projects on the property that have been in the works for many years are awaiting completion. On one end of the property, the Minneapolis Midtown Greenway trail project is awaiting the go-ahead to complete a significant extension. On the other end, a sale of a portion of the property will allow the Greenway to connect to other regional trails. The abandonment will allow the construction of trail segments that members of the public eagerly await. However, construction on these crucial pieces of trail cannot take place until the Section 106 condition has been removed and rail salvage operations have begun.

In addition to the trail construction, the Soo Line is anxious to salvage the high quality rail that is currently in place on this segment for use elsewhere in the interstate rail system. Plans for the reuse of the rail are on hold until salvage operations can take place.

Looming over all of our activities here is the reality in Minnesota of an extremely short construction season and the necessity of scheduling work crews in that very tight time schedule.

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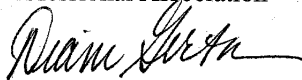
The Section 106 process has taken far longer than the parties had anticipated, and the chance to schedule all that we had hoped to accomplish this season is threatened.

To that end, Soo Line respectfully requests that the Section 106 condition be removed as expeditiously as possible. The mitigating condition that the SHPO and the Railroad have agreed to is one that requires the preparation of a nomination form for the property that is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Much of the background work for that nomination has been completed, but the consultants that have been retained by the Railroad to prepare the Nomination indicate that removal of the tracks is necessary so that documentation of the permanent condition of the eligible area can go forward. While we hope to conclude all of the work this summer, it is the removal of this condition that is currently the main obstacle.

The Board's staff has been extremely helpful as we try to move this project forward, and we do appreciate their assistance. If there are any questions that we can answer or if any additional information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

LEONARD, STREET AND DEINARD
Professional Association



Diane P. Gerth
DPG:km

cc: Bill Tuttle
John Nail
Judy Mitchell
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