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CITY OF COURTLAND

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15 November 2000

Office of the Secretary
Case Control Unit
STB Finance Docket No. 33407
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

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Office of the Secretary

DEC 13 2000

Part of
Public Record



**ENVIRONMENTAL
DOCUMENT**

Attn: Vicki Rutson
Environmental Project Manager
Environmental Filing

Re: Powder River Basin Expansion Project

Dear Ms. Rutson:

The City of Courtland, Minnesota, requests that the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation (DM&E) specifically accommodate Courtland's sanitary sewer forcemain when designing its rail, bridge and marshaling yard improvements.

In 1998 the City of Courtland constructed a sanitary sewer forcemain between Courtland and the wastewater treatment facilities in the City of New Ulm. This forcemain carries untreated sewage underneath the Minnesota and Cottonwood Rivers and in the vicinity of some wetlands. The main runs roughly parallel to the existing DM&E track a distance of 30 to 60 feet north of the centerline for approximately 4.5 miles.

When designed and constructed, the forcemain was designed to tolerate existing levels of vibration. But—without additional studies and specific plans for the DM&E project in this area—we cannot predict the impact of DM&E's expansion. The City has two concerns:

1. Construction during the DM&E project has the potential to damage the forcemain. This becomes a special concern with the possible location of the marshaling yard (Middle East Staging and Marshaling Yard, Alternatives B and C, Option B) and the possible reconstruction of a bridge over the Cottonwood River.
2. Increased ground vibration from increases in train length, weight and frequency has the potential to damage the forcemain.

Regarding the first item, best management practices and coordination between the DM&E and City of Courtland should be able to ensure protection of the sewer main.

Mission of the City of Courtland

We envision Courtland as a city with managed growth which offers a high quality of life for individuals, families and businesses at an affordable cost.

Indeed, Section 3.2.6.9 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (D-EIS) states: "DM&E would need to coordinate with the owners of all utilities crossed by or adjacent to the existing right-of-way to ensure that they are properly protected during reconstruction, and determine if they would require relocation or reconstruction to prevent future damage from rail operations."

Regarding the second item, Section 3.2.9 and Appendix F of the D-EIS notes that the increased weight, length, and speed of the trains would have the potential to increase ground vibration. Within 100 feet, the D-EIS states that vibration could be sufficient to cause minor structural damage. The D-EIS did not specifically consider sewer mains or other utilities when discussing structural damage, but presumably they could be similarly effected, particularly at joints or bends. Also note that such vibrations tend to be stronger in loose and soft soils, which presumably would include the loamy clays in this area. It appears likely that the increased rail traffic and its associated vibration could cause damage to the sewer main. Certain measures in the design and in the construction of the rail and the marshaling yard may mitigate the amount of vibration.

Upon consultation with the engineer for the sewer project, the City believes that both the rail construction and the increased ground vibrations of DM&E's expansion could have an adverse and damaging effect on the City's forcemain. A copy of a November 10th letter from the project engineer is enclosed. **The City of Courtland requests that the DM&E specifically address Courtland's sanitary sewer forcemain when designing its rail, bridge and marshaling yard improvements.** This would be consistent with general requirements in the D-EIS.

Thank you,



Dan Wietecha
City Administrator

Encl.

Cc: Courtland City Council
Hugh Nierengarten, City Attorney
Duane Hansel, Bolton and Menk, Project Engineer
Connie Minetor, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, L272316-01
Steve Kuettel, Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development,
CDAP-96-0338-R-FY98
Tim Fell, US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District
Steve Scharnweber, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation



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November 10, 2000

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Dan Wietecha
City Administrator
300 Railroad Street
Courtland, MN. 56021

RE: Sanitary Sewer Forcemain Impacts
DM&E Railroad Expansion

Dear Dan:

As you know, the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad is in the process of securing the necessary environmental and regulatory clearances necessary for a major expansion project of their line through Minnesota. In our recent conversation, you were concerned about the proposed project and its impact on the City of Courtland's existing 8-inch PVC sanitary sewer forcemain. I would like to provide some background information relative to the original design and construction of the forcemain and potential impacts of the proposed DM&E project.

The forcemain was constructed in conjunction with the City of Courtland's installation of a sanitary sewer collection system in 1998. The route of the forcemain follows the north side of the DM&E Railroad from Blue Earth County Highway 45 just south of Courtland to the City of New Ulm Wastewater Treatment Facility. The forcemain varies in distance from about 25 feet to about 60 feet from the railroad centerline. Throughout most of this 5-mile distance, the forcemain was constructed by open trench installation methods. For the crossing under the Cottonwood River near New Ulm, the forcemain was installed by directional boring methods.

There are two potential causes of concern for the integrity of the forcemain as related to the proposed DM&E project. The first would be whether increasing train loads or vibration could cause impacts to the existing forcemain. The second would be whether any proposed physical relocation of the tracks could cause impacts on the existing forcemain or the need for relocation. Since the forcemain carries raw, untreated sewage from the City of Courtland, breakage or disruption of the forcemain could cause untreated sewage to flow into the nearby Cottonwood or Minnesota Rivers and have major environmental consequences. Thus it is important that the integrity of the line be assured in conjunction with the proposed DM&E expansion.

I. Increasing Load or Traffic Impacts

Increased loads on the current railroad embankment or simply the speed and number of repetitions of vibrations on the current alignment, may have the potential for impacts on the existing forcemain.

At the time of the design of the forcemain, the proposed expansion of the DM&E Railroad was not public. During the permitting process, the DM&E made no reference to the proposed railroad improvement project or provided any additional design requirements. Therefore the design of the

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Dan Wietecha

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forcemain did not consider the future levels of train traffic, a higher number of repetitions or extra tracks which may be necessary to accommodate the railroad expansion. Therefore, these affects should be studied and investigated by the DM&E in conjunction with their project.

II. Effect of Relocations

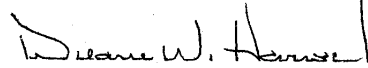
We discussed the switching yard proposal in the area of the Shag Road just south of the City of New Ulm. In this area, as well as others where additional rail lines or movement of the existing main line is anticipated, careful coordination of the impact on the existing forcemain will be necessary. As I recall, railroad safety requirements are that any construction operations within 25-feet of the railroad centerline need to be protected by flagmen on the rail line. If the potential relocation of any parts of the DM&E line will bring the tracks closer than this distance to the sanitary forcemain, future repairs and construction on the forcemain will necessitate additional safety measures and thus expense to the City of Courtland. Thus, it would seem prudent to relocate the forcemain in any areas where there may be potential conflicts between the proposed alignment of the DM&E facilities and the City's forcemain.

Another area of concern would be the crossing of the Cottonwood River near New Ulm. From what I have heard, the intent of the railroad is to replace the bridge over the Cottonwood River in this area. The existing forcemain was installed by directional boring methods under the Cottonwood River and is located about 55 feet east of the existing bridge. Prior to construction operations and operational changes on the DM&E in this area, studies should be performed to determine construction and operational impacts on the forcemain. These should include studies of the impact of piling installations and the potential for river scour, as well as operational and repair considerations for the existing forcemain.

As you can see, there are several areas of potential concern with the proposed DM&E expansion and its impact on the City's forcemain. With studies and design considerations, it is likely that any negative impacts can be mitigated. However, it is important that the DM&E undertake these studies in conjunction with their proposed expansion so that operational and environmental impacts do not result from the proposed project.

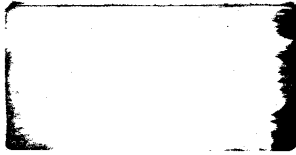
Sincerely,

BOLTON & MENK, INC.



Duane W. Hansel, P.E.

DWH/jgf



Nicollet County Tri-City Joint Powers

Dan Wietecha - City Administrator

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