

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis, and Administration

March 29, 2007

Mr. Jon Vraa
Sand Hill Settlement Historical Society
Box 166
Climax, MN 56523

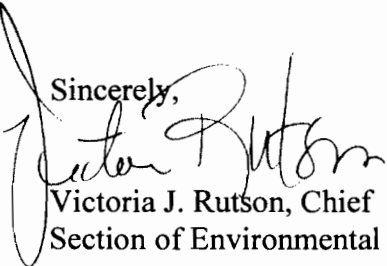
RE: STB Docket No. AB 497 (Sub-No. 3X) -- Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc. --
Abandonment Exemption in Polk and Norman, Minnesota

Dear Mr. Vraa,

The Surface Transportation Board's (Board) Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has prepared a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in the above-captioned abandonment proceeding involving Minnesota Northern Railroad, Inc.'s (MNR), petition to abandon approximately 17 miles of its stub-ended Ada Subdivision (the Line) between milepost 64.0 south of Beltrami, MN, and the end of the track at milepost 47.0, just south of Ada, MN, in Polk and Norman Counties, MN (see map). As a result of flood damage, there has been no rail service over the Line since February 21, 2006. SEA has determined that the proposed abandonment has the potential to have an adverse effect to National Register of Historic Places (National Register) historic properties within the project's right-of-way, or area of potential effect (APE). Pursuant to the Section 106 regulations (36 CFR 800) of the National Historic Preservation Act, SEA has prepared an MOA to outline the resolution of any adverse effect to identified National Register historic properties that may result from the proposed abandonment.

SEA has drafted the MOA in consultation with the Minnesota Historical Society or State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and MNR pursuant to 36 CFR 800.6(b)(iv). The MOA stipulates the procedures and guidelines for resolving adverse effects to historic properties that would be conducted following the proposed abandonment including track salvage and stream restoration efforts. Both track salvage and the related stream restoration that would be associated with the proposed abandonment have been determined by SEA to have the potential to adversely affect National Register eligible historic sites and structures. SEA is now seeking comments from the public and potentially interested parties regarding the MOA (see attached). Once executed, this MOA will serve as a legally binding agreement document that will stipulate the steps for mitigating adverse effects to identified historic and cultural resources located within the APE.

SEA invites interested parties and members of the public to submit comments regarding the MOA by **April 09, 2007**. Please send your comments to the Surface Transportation Board, Section of Environmental Analysis, Suite 1100, 395 E Street, SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001, to the attention of Troy Brady. **Please refer to STB Docket No. AB 497 (Sub-No. 3X) in your correspondence.** If you have questions regarding this letter or the MOA you should contact Troy Brady at (202) 245-0301, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at Troy.Brady@stb.dot.gov. Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

Victoria J. Rutson, Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis

Enclosures

cc: Minnesota Historical Society