

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 337 (Sub-No. 9X)

**Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation—Abandonment Exemption—in
Scott County, Iowa**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation (DM&E) filed a notice of exemption under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a line of railroad in Scott County, Iowa. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends approximately 1.95 miles from Milepost 7.52 to Milepost 9.47 near Eldridge, Iowa (the Line). A map depicting the Line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). If the notice becomes effective, DM&E would be able to conduct salvage and to dispose of the right-of-way. As discussed below, if the Surface Transportation Board (Board) were to grant DM&E abandonment authority, DM&E does not plan to salvage the Line, but rather, would sell the Line to the City of Eldridge, Iowa (Eldridge). Eldridge would then salvage the Line and convert the right-of-way into a recreational trail.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

DM&E prepared a combined Environmental and Historic Report that concludes the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. DM&E served the Environmental 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 The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

Diversion of Traffic

DM&E states that no traffic has moved over the Line in at least two years and that all overhead traffic has been rerouted. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment and

¹ The Environmental and Historic Reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.dot.gov by going to "E-Library," selecting "Filings," and then conducting a search for AB 337 (Sub-No. 9X).

discontinuance would not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; or result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network.

Salvage Activities

DM&E states that it has agreed to sell the rail right-of-way to the Eldridge for future use as a recreational trail. DM&E does not intend to conduct any salvage prior to selling the Line. DM&E would convey the Line to Eldridge with the rails, ties, rail-related structures, and other railroad appurtenances in place. Eldridge would then be responsible for conducting salvage by removing track and ties and repurposing the right-of-way for use as a trail.

Land Use, Soils and Wetlands, and Geodetic Station Markers

Eldridge submitted comments supporting the proposed abandonment. Eldridge states that incorporating the rail right-of-way into the city's recreational trail system would provide residents with new opportunities for engaging in outdoor activities, would facilitate public health by encouraging walking and biking, and could stimulate economic activity. OEA has concluded that the proposed abandonment would be consistent with the Eldridge's land use plans and is not recommending any environmental mitigation related to local land use.

The U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) submitted comments stating the NRCS does not believe that the proposed abandonment would have an adverse effect on soils and wetlands. Accordingly, OEA is not recommending any environmental mitigation related to soils or agricultural land.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) submitted comments stating that there are no geodetic survey markers located in the vicinity of the proposed abandonment. Therefore, OEA is not recommending any environmental mitigation related to geodetic survey markers.

Coastal Zone Management

The Line is not located in a coastal zone and no mitigation related to coastal zone management is necessary.

Freshwater Resources

Based on OEA's review of available geospatial data, the Line crosses Crow Creek, a small stream located at approximately Milepost 7.67, which enters the Mississippi River

near Panorama Park, Iowa.² The area immediately surrounding Crow Creek is located within the 100-year floodplain.³

DM&E requested comments from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) regarding the need for a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (see 33 U.S.C. § 1344). In comments submitted by email on August 17, 2016, the Corps states that, provided that salvage activities do not result in the discharge of fill material into waters of the United States, a Corps permit would not be required. Because DM&E does not intend to conduct any salvage activity prior to selling the Line, and because post-abandonment salvage would be limited to the removal of track and ties, the proposed abandonment would not result in any discharges to waterways or wetlands. Therefore, OEA concurs with DM&E and the Corps that a Section 404 permit would not be required and is not recommending any environmental mitigation related to that provision of the Clean Water Act.

DM&E also requested comments from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) regarding the need for a permit under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251). To date, the USEPA has not provided comments. By email dated August 17, 2016, IDNR recommended that the rail bed should be stabilized following the removal of rail ties in order to prevent issues involving stormwater runoff. OEA notes that DM&E does not propose to remove rail ties or conduct any other salvage activities prior to selling the Line to Eldridge. Following the sale of the Line, Eldridge would be responsible for conducting salvage and repurposing the Line as a recreational trail in an environmentally responsible manner. Because DM&E would not conduct any salvage activities as part of the abandonment, OEA concludes that the proposed abandonment would not require a Section 402 permit and is not recommending any environmental mitigation related to that provision of the Clean Water Act.

Because DM&E does not intend to conduct any salvage activities, OEA concludes that the proposed abandonment would not result in any adverse impact to water resources. Accordingly, no mitigation related to water resources is recommended.

Hazardous Materials

Based on OEA's review of available databases, there are no federally listed remediation sites in the vicinity of the Line.⁴ DM&E states that a Phase I Environmental

² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory, <http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html> (last visited October 5, 2016).

³ Federal Emergency Management Agency, GeoPlatform, <http://fema.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html> (last visited October 5, 2016).

⁴ Environmental Protection Agency, NEPAassist,

Site Assessment (ESA) was conducted in July 2016. The ESA identified one Recognized Environmental Condition (REC) in the vicinity of the rail right-of-way.⁵ The REC identified in the ESA consisted of residual petroleum hydrocarbon soil contamination related to the removal of two underground storage tanks at the former site of the Scott County Ready Mix concrete facility, which is located adjacent to the rail right-of-way. DM&E notes that IDNR reviewed this site in 1997 and did not identify any groundwater contamination. The IDNR issued a “No Further Action” letter in that year, indicating that environmental contamination at the site is no longer a concern.

Because DM&E does not propose to conduct any salvage activities that would result in the disturbance of soil at the Scott County Ready Mix facility, OEA does not foresee any potential environmental impacts from the proposed abandonment related to hazardous wastes. Accordingly, no mitigation regarding hazardous waste sites or hazardous material spills is recommended.

Biological Resources

DM&E requested comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding the potential impact of the proposed abandonment on endangered and threatened species that may be present in the project area. To date, USFWS has not provided comments.

Pursuant to 50 C.F.R. 402, OEA also conducted a search of the USFWS Information, Planning, and Conservation System in order to identify protected species.⁶ The table below shows the protected species known or thought to occur in Scott County, Iowa identified by OEA’s search. OEA notes that, based on a search using the USFWS critical habitat mapping tool, the Line is not located in or near critical habitat for any of the species identified.⁷

<http://nepassisttool.epa.gov/nepassist/entry.aspx> (last visited October 6, 2016).

⁵ An REC indicates the presence or likely presence of hazardous substances or petroleum products on or in the vicinity of a properties due to a release into the environment or under conditions where a release is likely.

⁶ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Information, Planning, and Conservation System, <http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/> (last visited October 5, 2016).

⁷ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Critical Habitat Portal, [http://ecos.fws.gov/crithab/](http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/http://ecos.fws.gov/crithab/) (last visited October 5, 2016).

Protected Species in Scott County, Iowa	
Mammals	Status
Indiana bat (<i>Myotis sodalists</i>)	Endangered
Northern long-eared bat (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>)	Threatened
Reptiles	
Eastern massasauga (<i>Sistrurus catenatus</i>)	Proposed Threatened
Clams	
Higgins eye pearlymussel (<i>Lampsilis higginsii</i>)	Endangered
Sheepnose mussel (<i>Plethobasus cyphus</i>)	Endangered
Spectaclecase (<i>Cumberlandia monodonta</i>)	Endangered
Plants	
Prairie bush-clover (<i>Lespedeza leptostachya</i>)	Threatened
Western prairie fringed orchid (<i>Platanthera praeclara</i>)	Threatened

The three clam species identified by OEA’s search—the Higgins eye (*Lampsilis higginsii*), sheepnose mussel (*Plethobasus cyphus*), and spectaclecase (*Cumberlandia monodonta*)—are typically found in large rivers with deep water and moderate currents. In Scott County, Iowa, these species are likely to be present in the Mississippi River or its larger tributaries. OEA believes that it is unlikely that these species would be present in Crow Creek, the stream that the Line crosses.

The Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalists*) and Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) are typically found in forests, where the bats roost during in trees during the summer, or caves, where they hibernate in the winter. The Eastern massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*) is not currently listed as a federally protected threatened or endangered species but is proposed for listing as threatened; individuals of this species are typically found in wet areas, including marshes and areas along rivers and lakes. Because the Line traverses agricultural land that has been significantly altered from its natural state, OEA believes that it is unlikely that any members of these vertebrate species would be present in or near the rail right-of-way.

Prairie bush-clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) occurs in native prairie areas and pastures. The Western prairie fringe orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) occurs most often in tallgrass meadows, but may also be found in fields and ditches. It is possible that individual prairie bush-clover and Western prairie fringe orchid plants may be present along a disused rail right-of-way, as is the case in this proceeding. Because DM&E does

not propose to conduct any salvage activities, however, the proposed abandonment would not result in any impacts to individuals of those species, if any are present.

OEA concludes that the proposed abandonment would not result in any impacts to federally listed threatened or endangered species. Accordingly, no mitigation related to protected species is recommended. OEA is providing a copy of this EA to USFWS for review and comment.

Air Quality

OEA believes that any air emissions associated with salvage operations would be temporary and would not have a significant impact on air quality.

Noise

Noise associated with salvage 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.

HISTORIC REVIEW

In this proceeding, DM&E proposes to abandon approximately 1.95 of rail line in Scott County, Iowa. The Board's approval of this proposed abandonment is considered an undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and is thus covered under its provisions.

Section 106 Consultation

Railroad applicants seeking to abandon a rail have been delegated the authority to contact SHPOs before the Section 106 process under NHPA officially begins. Pursuant to the Board's environmental rules at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.8(c), DM&E served the Historic Report on the State Historical Society of Iowa (the State Historic Preservation Officer or SHPO). The Historic Report that DM&E provided includes a topographic map of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) and the surrounding area, representative photographs of the Line, a narrative history of the rail line, and DM&E's opinion regarding the presence of historic properties within the APE and the eligibility of those properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (the National Register). The report is available to the public on the Board's website at www.stb.gov.

By letter dated August 5, 2016, the SHPO informed DM&E that the SHPO does not have sufficient staffing nor the legal responsibility to conduct extensive background research for Section 106 review. The SHPO further states that the SHPO will provide comments when provided with (1) information pertaining to the types of cultural resources that are or may be located in the Area of Potential Effect (APE), (2) the significance of cultural resources in the APE, and (3) an assessment of the effect this undertaking might have on historic properties in the APE.

DM&E also contacted the Office of the State Archeologist (the OSA) at the University of Iowa. The OSA provided comments stating that, although there are no previously recorded archaeological sites known to be associated with the rail line proposed for abandonment, there have been several previous archeological surveys completed in the vicinity of the Line. The OSA states that those archeological surveys did not identify any historic properties or other cultural resources in the areas overlapping the rail right-of-way. The OSA concludes that, since DM&E does not intend to regrade the right-of-way or undertake any salvage activities that could disturb the ground, the proposed abandonment would not affect any known or unknown but significant archeological sites.

By email dated October 12, 2016, the SHPO informed DM&E that, based on its review of the information provided by the OSA, there appear to be no previously recorded archaeological sites or other types of significant historical properties located within or immediately adjacent to the APE. The SHPO states that the SHPO would concur with the Board's finding of no historic properties affected pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.4(d)(1)(i), if the Board were to make such a finding.

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.2, OEA conducted a search of the National Park Service Native American Consultation Database to identify federally recognized tribes that may have ancestral connections to the project area.⁸ 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 of the proposed abandonment:

- Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe of South Dakota;
- Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota;
- Prairie Island Indian Community in the State of Minnesota;
- Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska;

⁸ National Park Service, National NAGPRA Program Native American Consultation Database, <http://grantsdev.cr.nps.gov/Nagpra/NACD/> (last visited October 6, 2016).

- Sac and Fox Nation, Oklahoma;
- Sac and Fox Nation of the Mississippi in Iowa;
- Santee Sioux Nation, Nebraska;
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation, South Dakota;
- Spirit Lake Tribe, North Dakota; and
- Upper Sioux Community, Minnesota.

In order to provide those tribes with an opportunity to comment on the potential impact of the proposed abandonment on traditional cultural properties that may be located within the APE, OEA is sending a copy of this EA to those tribes for review and comment.

History of the Line

According to the Historical Report submitted by DM&E, the Line was constructed as part of a rail line between Maquoketa, Iowa and Davenport, Iowa that was originally owned and operated by the Davenport & St. Paul Railroad Company (D&StP). DM&E states that the portion of the rail line between Maquoketa and Eldridge was constructed in 1872 and that this line was extended into Davenport in 1879. The Line, which is the subject of this undertaking, would have been part of this later extension. Other sources suggest a different construction timeline. A passage from a 1910 history of Scott County, for instance, reads:

“The Davenport & St. Paul Railroad was organized in 1868 and the road was completed in 1870 from Davenport through the county. Meeting with financial difficulties in 1874, the road was placed in the hands of a receiver, at which time it was completed to Fayette, Iowa, and a branch from Eldridge to Maquoketa, about 160 miles of road.”⁹

Prior to the construction of the rail line between Maquoketa and Davenport, established rail lines ran primarily east to west, and the new line, running north to south, would have provided a connection between these lines. For small towns in Scott, Clinton, and Jackson counties without an existing rail connection, the rail line facilitated economic development by providing a transportation option for agricultural goods, especially wheat. Historical sources suggest that the opening of the railroad was greeted enthusiastically. Historian J.W. Ellis writes:

“Before the railroads were built into the town, the farm products, the principal one being wheat, were hauled to Davenport, Lyons, Bellevue, or

⁹ Downer, H. E., 1910, *History of Davenport and Scott County Iowa: Illustrated* (Vol. 1), Brookhaven Press, pp. 914-915.

Dubuque and sold, wheat averaging about fifty cents a bushel. Attempts were made repeatedly to navigate the Maquoketa River, and a steamboat was built expressly for that purpose. These attempts, however, were never successful. When in September, 1870, the Daven and St. Paul Railroad completed from Davenport to this place, Maquoketa citizens rejoiced for it was a day for which they had long looked forward to, and now they were to see their hopes realized. On this same day, the 3d of September, the Iowa Midland, which extended from Clinton to Delmar, ran a train to Maquoketa on the Davenport tracks. From this time the town steadily prospered.”¹⁰

The sources cited above are in agreement that, by 1890, the Line was under the control of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company (also known as the Milwaukee Road or MILW). The earliest available U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographical maps of the area, which date to 1890 or later, also show the completed rail line extending between Maquoketa and Davenport and identify it as owned by MILW.¹¹

USGS maps and DM&E records indicate that the portion of the MILW line between Eldridge and Maquoketa was abandoned in stages, beginning in 1931. In that year, MILW abandoned an 8.98-mile segment of rail line between Long Grove, Iowa and DeWitt, Iowa. In 1938, the 3.15-mile segment between Long Grove and Eldridge was abandoned. And, a 13.6-mile segment was abandoned between DeWitt and Delmar, Iowa in 1971.

According to DM&E, the Soo Line Railroad Corporation (SOO) purchased the assets of MILW, including the Line. In 1997, SOO sold the Line, along with other properties, to I&M Rail Link (IMRL). In 2002, the Iowa, Chicago and Eastern Railroad (IC&E), an affiliate of DM&E, purchased the Line from IMRL. Finally, in 2008, Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) acquired the assets of DM&E and IC&E, including the Line. DM&E remains a subsidiary of CP.

Area of Potential Effect

In railroad abandonment cases, OEA defines the APE to comprise the rail right-of-way. In this case, the APE is approximately 1.95 miles in length and approximately 100 feet wide. The APE primarily traverses agricultural areas, but does cross several public roads by means of at-grade crossings and transects a semi-industrial area. The sole structure on the Line is a bridge spanning Crow Creek at approximately Milepost 7.67.

¹⁰ Ellis, J. W., 1910, History of Jackson County, Iowa: Illustrated (Vol. 1), Clarke Publishing Co., p. 558.

¹¹ U.S. Geological Survey, USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer, <http://historicalmaps.arcgis.com/usgs/>. (last visited October 6, 2016)

Historic Properties within the APE

Typical examples of historic properties in railroad abandonment cases include bridges, culverts, depots, other rail-related structures, or, in some cases, the rail corridor itself. A rail line or rail-related structures in the rail right-of-way are also sometimes considered to be contributing resources to historic districts through which they pass or to other historic properties located outside of the APE. In abandonment cases where salvage activity would result in ground-disturbing activities, the effect of these activities on known or undiscovered archeological sites must also be considered.

In the present case, the sole structure on the Line is the bridge spanning Crow Creek, located at approximately Milepost 7.67. This structure appears to be a deck plate girder bridge of common mid-twentieth century design. It is approximately 50 feet in length.

OEA believes that the rail corridor in this case may have historical significance under Criterion A of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation because of its association with the broad pattern of economic and demographic history in eastern Iowa. As discussed above, the rail line between Maquoketa and Davenport played a role in the economic development of towns in Scott, Clinton, and Jackson Counties between approximately 1870 and 1920. However, the Line represents only a small portion of that larger rail line, the majority of which has been previously abandoned. Because it is no longer intact as a continuous rail line, OEA believes that the rail corridor between Maquoketa and Davenport no longer maintains the integrity necessary to convey its historical significance. Accordingly, OEA has concluded that there are no historic sites or structures located within the APE that are eligible for listing in the National Register.

Effects to Historic Properties

When historic properties are located within the APE of a proposed rail abandonment, the granting of abandonment authority may meet the criteria for an adverse effect to historic properties under 36 C.F.R. § 800.5(a)(2)(vii). Once the Board grants abandonment authority, the railroad applicant is able to abandon its common carrier authority over the rail line proposed for abandonment. The rail line and any historic properties located within the APE are thereby transferred out of federal control and may be altered without additional review by the Board. In cases where a railroad intends to conduct salvage activities that would remove or alter historic properties, a railroad abandonment also meets the criteria for adverse effect under 36 C.F.R. § 800.5(a)(2)(i).

In the present undertaking, OEA understands that DM&E intends to sell the railroad right-of-way intact to Eldridge. DM&E does not intend to remove any track or alter any structures prior to disposing of the rail right-of-way. Following the sale of the rail line, Eldridge intends to remove track and ties and reuse the right-of-way as a

recreational trail. OEA does not generally consider the conversion of a rail line into a recreational trail to be an adverse impact to historic properties, when such properties are present in the project APE. Rather, OEA typically considers the reuse of an abandoned rail corridor as a trail to be beneficial for the purpose of historic preservation. The conversion of a rail line into a trail allows for historic structures, if any, to be preserved and for the right-of-way to remain intact. Further, many trails are managed with the specific objective of promoting knowledge of and appreciation for the history of the rail line.

OEA has concluded that the proposed abandonment would have no effect on historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register. This conclusion is based on the following considerations. First, OEA has determined there are no historic properties eligible for listing in the National Register located within the APE of the proposed abandonment. Second, DM&E does not intend to conduct any salvage activities as part of the proposed abandonment. And, finally, DM&E intends to sell the rail right-of-way intact to Eldridge for future use as a recreational trail, which would result in the preservation of the rail corridor.

Finding of No Historic Properties Affected

Pursuant 36 C.F.R. § 800.4(d)(1), OEA has found that no historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register would be affected by the proposed undertaking. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 C.F.R. § 800.11(d), consists of the railroad's Historic Report, all relevant correspondences, and this EA, which have been made available to the SHPO and the public through posting on the Board's website at www.stb.dot.gov.

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.4(d)(1)(i), we specifically invite the SHPO to concur with OEA's finding within 30 days of receipt of this EA. Under OEA's environmental rules, the environmental comment period in railroad abandonment cases where a notice of exemption has been filed under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 is typically 15 days from the issuance of the EA. In order to provide the SHPO and other interested parties with sufficient time to comment on OEA's finding of no historic properties affected, OEA is recommending a condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority in this proceeding requiring DM&E to maintain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties within the APE until the Section 106 process is complete. If the SHPO does not disagree with OEA's finding within the 30-day review period, and if no other party has raised concerns during that time, OEA will issue a Supplemental Final EA to remove this condition and allow DM&E to consummate abandonment of the Line.

CONDITIONS

We recommend that the following condition be imposed on any decision granting abandonment authority:

- 1. Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation (DM&E) shall retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of all historic properties including sites, buildings, structures, and objects within the project right-of-way (the Area of Potential Effect) that are eligible for listing or listed in the National Register of Historic Places until the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act has been completed. DM&E shall report back to the Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) regarding any consultations with the State Historical Society of Iowa (the State Historic Preservation Officer or SHPO) and the public. DM&E may not file its consummation notice or initiate any salvage activities related to abandonment (including removal of tracks and ties) until the Section 106 process has been completed and the Board has removed this condition.**

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, OEA concludes that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended condition is imposed, abandonment of the Line would 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 another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption would 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 Federal Register notice.

On September 29, 2016, Eldridge and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation filed a request for the issuance of a Public Use Condition in this proceeding.

TRAILS USE

Requests for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) are 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).

On September 29, 2016, Eldridge and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation filed a request for a Certificate or Notice of Interim Trails Use under the National Trails Act. If a trail use agreement is reached between the Eldridge and DM&E, then the proposed abandonment would be held in abeyance and Eldridge would be able to undertake salvage of the Line and repurpose the right-of-way for use as a trail.

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

If you wish to file comments regarding this Environmental Assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Joshua Wayland, who prepared this Environmental Assessment. Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's website, www.stb.dot.gov, by clicking on the "E-FILING" link. **Please refer to Docket No. AB 337 (Sub-No. 9X) in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.** If you have any questions regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact Joshua Wayland, the environmental contact for this case, by phone at (202) 245-0330, fax at (202) 245-0454, or e-mail at Joshua.Wayland@stb.gov.

Date made available to the public: October 14, 2016

Comment due date: October 31, 2016

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Director, Office of Environmental Analysis