



Division of Finance & Management

Office of Air, Rail & Transit

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TO: South Dakota Railroad Board

FROM: Jack Dokken, Office of Air, Rail, and Transit

DATE: August 19, 2026

SUBJECT: Observation Tour Review

Britton Line

Personnel: Scott Lockwood, Rocky Matson, Jack Dokken, Steve Scharnweber, DMVW – Mark Trottier

Date: May 5

A hi-rail inspection was conducted from Aberdeen to Britton, and then from Jarrett Junction to Geneseo, North Dakota. The track is in good condition, largely due to a mild winter and dry weather conditions.

- Track condition: good alignment, solid ballast (with only minor fouling in a few locations), and excellent weed control.
- Ties: Some aging ties need replacement, but within normal expectations.
- Drainage: Structures are in good condition and free of debris.
- Upcoming work: A grant-funded project will address tie replacement, anchor installation, ballast upgrades, and some new rail on the entire line from Aberdeen to Geneseo Junction.
- Crossings: Some crossings could be surfaced and aligned.

Site Visits:

- Claremont (Animal Fat Transload Site and Elevator): Minor oil spots were observed on the gravel road, with no odor. Around 10 railcars were parked on the siding.
- The adjacent old grain elevator had been breached for grain removal, but demolition had not started at the time of observation tour. Demolition was completed in the week of May 11, 2026.



Above are before and after pictures of the Claremont Elevator site.

James River near Tacoma Park: The river's encroachment has been addressed by placing rip rap to stabilize the riverbank. The bank remains close to the rail bed, but there is no evidence of recent erosion or further encroachment. Below are the before and after pictures:



James River site before and after pictures.



Eastward facing.



Northwestward facing

Napa–Platte Line

Personnel: Scott Lockwood, Jack Dokken, Rocky Matson

Date: May 6

Hi-rail inspection from Napa Junction to Tabor.

- **Vegetation:** The corridor from Napa to Tabor was full of dead weeds from previous summer. Some tall bushes and trees remained but did not interfere with the hi-rail vehicle. A new crop of thistles was noted in familiar locations. Weed spraying operations were completed by Dakota Helicopters June 26, 2026. The weed spraying was effective.
- **Track condition:** Generally good for its age, though old ties remain scattered in ditches, and the Town of Tabor requested removal of a pile of old ties within city limits.
- SDDOT Yankton Region and the Office of Air, Rail, and Transit collaborated on the cleanup of old railroad ties and OTM in Tabor in January 2026, with cleanup activities completed on May 12, 2026.
- The Yankton Region coordinated efforts with the City of Tabor, and removed all scrap ties and OTM, back dragged the area, and planted grass seed. The project resulted in receiving a check for \$2,535 for scrap metal and scale tickets totaling \$3,398.40 for removal costs.

Challenges and Successes Noted:

- Rock Island purchased Locomotive SPTX 2288 from Dakota Southern who had it stored on state owned rail line at Napa Junction since 2024.
- With help from Board member Lockwood, staff coordinated with Rock Island and BNSF to have the locomotive removed from state owned rail line.

Below are the before and after pictures of the Tabor tie and OTM cleanup.



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Napa Junction: Rock Island's Locomotive at Napa Junction removed.



Napa to Platte: Some areas with encroaching brush.



Napa to Tabor: Several areas with weed overgrowth.



Napa to Platte: Trenched berm outside of Tyndall.