



Division of Finance & Management

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TO: South Dakota Railroad Board

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

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SUBJECT: Observation Tour Review

The Department of Transportation (SDDOT) and South Dakota Railroad Board members (the "Board") participated in observation tours of the state-owned railroads to ensure that the track structures and properties are being maintained in accordance with the Board expectations.

Britton Line

A hi-rail inspection was conducted from Aberdeen to Britton, and then from Jarrett Junction to Geneseo, North Dakota. The track is in significantly better condition than in previous years, 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.

Site Visits:

- Claremont (Animal Fat Transload Site): Minor oil spots were observed on the gravel road, with no odor. Approximately 50 railcars were parked on the siding.
- The adjacent old grain elevator has been breached for grain removal, but demolition has not yet started.
- James River near Tacoma Park: The riverbank continues to approach the rail bed but shows no signs of recent erosion or further encroachment.



Photo in Claremont: Tank cars for the animal fat transload. The elevator in background has had the grain removed and the structure is to be removed.

Napa–Platte Line

This was the first year in many that the line was not filled with storage cars, allowing a hi-rail inspection from Napa Junction to Tabor.

- Obstructions: Six locations had fallen trees; five were cleared, and one required detouring around a one-mile section.
- Vegetation: The corridor was mowed and sprayed last summer. Some tall bushes and trees remain but did not interfere with the hi-rail vehicle. A new crop of thistles was noted in familiar locations.
- Track condition: Generally good for its age, though old ties are still scattered in ditches, and piles of ties in Tabor.

Issues Noted:

- Tabor Crossings: Four crossings paved over and later milled have not been repaired by Dakota Southern Railway. Temporary patches were applied by the city.
- Highway 25 Crossing: Included in DSRC's maintenance plan; in good condition except for a small pothole in one concrete panel.
- Tyndall Culverts: Cleaned last year by adjacent landowners and remain clear of silt. A new six-foot-wide cut in the earthen dike on the south side of the rail corridor has been opened, enabling natural water drainage to adjoining land.



To the left: some areas with encroaching brush.

To the right: gravel on crossing, trees across railroad and young thistle plants starting to grow.



Yale Line & Wolsey Interchange

Due to parked cars near Huron, hi-railing began just east of the James River and continued to Yale.

- Track condition: Good overall, with more than adequate ballast, effective weed control, and a manageable number of bad ties. Minor humps were observed but are not considered defects.
- Bridge condition: The large bridge east of the James River is in good condition. The recent riprap installation on the east approach is stable and holding well. There is some drift under the east side.

Wolsey Interchange:

- Still in near-new condition.
- Very minor humps are starting to develop.
- Spilled grain from last year has been removed.
- Weed control remains excellent.

Yale line bridge (photo below) in good condition, some drift below the bridge.

