

TO: South Dakota Railroad Board

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

DATE: May 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Observation Tour Review

Railroad board members participated in observation tours of the state-owned railroads May 7 – 9. The purpose of these tours is to ensure the track structure and properties are being maintained in accordance with the State Railroad Board expectations.

**Napa-Platte line:**

There was no hi-railing opportunity on this line due to storage cars on the line and gravel on most crossings from lack of rail traffic. Many crossing locations and sidings in towns were visited. The Tyndall area has slow drainage, and there are some adjacent properties to the railroad that appear to be a lowland with seasonal wetland. The twin culverts are separated but still allowing drainage through them. Last years tie replacement near Napa Junction conducted by Dakota Southern left some old ties in the ditches and mud on top of the gage section left from stuffing the new ties in position. Dakota Southern was moving storage cars to Napa Junction for the BNSF to take out. Heath Haden explained they were taking about 100 cars at a time, and after this batch there are 200 more cars to remove in the next 3 weeks. Heath agreed to notify the state when the last cars are moved, so the SDDOT could hi-rail the line while the crossings are still cleared of gravel. Weed control from last year looked good, and the drainages were clear.

**Yale line:**

Hi-railed the Yale line from Huron to Yale with RCPE roadmaster Cory Lunn. We stopped at one tall bridge approach where there was a big riprap project last year, it is holding in place and the high fill is not sluffing anymore. There is a good amount of ballast on top of the ties in various locations, ready for tamping. Track geometry is pretty good for class 1, There are a few broken ties, but not enough to be critical. Vegetation control looked very good from last year and all of the drainages are clear.

**Wolsey interchange and siding:**

The track is still in like new condition. Vegetation control looks good. There are still two large piles of grain in the gage section from last year, they are now rotted and might cause some water damage to the ties below.



Image of one location with old, spilled grain.

**Britton line:**

We hi-railed with DMVW Mark Trottier and MOW Supervisor Clint Sayler. We started up in North Dakota and worked our way toward Aberdeen. The track level is in great condition, especially since it has not been tamped since last fall. We checked the new bridge abutment that was installed last year and the culvert replacement that had flood issues last year. The James River area where the riverbank is eroding as close as 18 feet from the end of the ties was the main issue this year. The riverbank is about 5-6 feet high, with a steep slope above it to the rail grade. The riverbank has been eroding closer to the railroad and should be protected with approximately 600 feet of riprap. Last years weed control looked good. The upcoming project that includes ties, anchors and ballast will make great improvement.



Eroding bank that is moving to within 18 feet of RR ties



Satellite image showing approximately 600 feet of riverbank eroding close to the railroad grade.