

Willmar Rail Connector & Industrial Access Project

Willmar Wye

Project Summary

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and its partners BNSF Railway (BNSF), city of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission are proposing to add a rail connection between two existing BNSF railway subdivisions and modify surrounding roadways. The proposed project is referred to as the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Park Access Project, or “Willmar Wye.” The proposed project is funded through multiple sources including federal, state, local, and private contributions.

Purpose of Environmental Assessment / Environmental Assessment Worksheet

An Environmental Assessment / Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EA/EAW) has been prepared for this project as a part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process (42 U.S.C. § 4231 et seq.) and Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process (M.S. 116D). At the federal level, the Environmental Assessment (EA) is used to determine the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the federal sponsor agency for this project. At the state level, the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is used to provide sufficient environmental documentation to determine the need for a state EIS or that a Negative Declaration is appropriate.

A combined EA/EAW document has been used to streamline the environmental review process. The EA/EAW documents the project's purpose and need along with anticipated social, economic, and environmental impacts. The EA/EAW also includes impacts to resources protected by federal Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Federal Highway Administration’s Section 4(f) regulations related to public park lands and historic sites.

Ways to Review the EA/EAW Document:

The document is available on the project website: www.dot.state.mn.us/d8/projects/willmarwye

Printed copies of the document are also available for review during normal business hours at the following locations:

- Willmar Public Library, 410 Fifth Street SW, Willmar
- MnDOT District 8 Office, 2505 Transportation Road, Willmar
- MnDOT Library, 395 John Ireland Boulevard, St. Paul
- Environmental Conservation Library, Minneapolis Central, 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

Public Hearing

Projects following the federal EA process require that a public hearing or opportunities for hearings be provided. The EA/EAW document has been released by the MnDOT for a required 30-day public review and comment period (February 6-March 8, 2017). In accordance with NEPA provisions, MnDOT is conducting a public hearing to obtain comments on the environmental report regarding the proposed Willmar Wye project. Public input received at the public hearing and written comments received throughout the 30-day public comment period will be considered along with agency opinions in future project decisions made by MnDOT and FHWA. A court reporter is available to record all verbal testimony, which is then entered into the public hearing record along with other public hearing information and materials.

Public Hearing Procedures (5:30 p.m. February 23, 2017 at 2505 Transportation Road in Willmar)

If you would like to provide public verbal comments on February 23:

After a brief presentation, verbal comments may be given to the audience until those wishing to testify publically are finished. To ensure everyone has an opportunity to comment, please review the following procedures for the public hearing:

- Please fill out the registration slip at the sign-in table and give it to MnDOT or consultant staff.
- Sign-in at the podium to assist the court reporter in collecting comments.
- State your name and address at the start of your comments.
- Focus your comments related to the environmental document for this project.
- Please limit your comments to 5 minutes so that others have the opportunity to speak.
- You may comment a second time as part of the verbal testimony after others have testified.

If you would like to provide private verbal comments:

The court reporter will be available upon completion of the public verbal comments to take your private comments until 7 p.m.

If you would like to provide written comments:

You may provide written comments using the comment form available at the sign-in desk. Please submit completed forms in the comment box.

Opportunities to Comment before or after Public Hearing:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will consider public and private testimony as the final decisions are made regarding the Willmar Rail Connector & Industrial Access Project. There are several ways to provide comments on the environmental document. **Comments will be accepted through March 8, 2017.**

- **E-mail:** p.rasmussen@state.mn.us (subject line: Willmar Wye Comments)
- **Fax MnDOT District Office:** 320-214-6305 (attn.: Paul Rasmussen)
- **Via US Mail to:**

Paul Rasmussen
MnDOT District 8
2505 Transportation Road
Willmar, MN 56201-2207