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Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



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PUBLIC NOTICE D8 DWB-907

Subject: NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF THE BNSF RAILROAD BRIDGE ACROSS THE MISSOURI RIVER BETWEEN BISMARCK AND MANDAN, MORTON AND BURLEIGH COUNTIES, NORTH DAKOTA

All interested parties are notified that the U.S. Coast Guard, as lead federal agency, announces the availability of a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for the proposed replacement of the BNSF Railway Bridge 196.6. As a structure built over a navigable waterway of the United States, the proposed bridge would require a Coast Guard Bridge Permit concurrent with an environmental review. The Coast Guard has made the final EIS available for public review online through the Federal eRulemaking portal at <https://www.regulations.gov/> using docket number USCG-2019-0882.

The federal bridge statutes, including the General Bridge Act of 1946 (33 U.S.C. 525 *et seq.*), require that the location and plans of bridges in or over navigable waters of the United States be approved by the Secretary of Homeland Security, who has delegated that responsibility to the Coast Guard. The Missouri River is a navigable water of the United States as defined in 33 CFR 2.36(a). The Coast Guard's primary responsibility regarding BNSF's proposed railroad bridge is to ensure the structure does not unreasonably obstruct navigation. In exercising these bridge authorities, the Coast Guard considers navigational and environmental impacts, which include historic and tribal effects.

The Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for this project and, as such, is responsible for the review of its potential effects on the human environment, including historic properties and tribal impacts, pursuant to NEPA and NHPA. The Coast Guard is, therefore, required by law to ensure potential environmental effects are carefully evaluated in each bridge permitting decision.

WATERWAY AND LOCATION: Missouri River, mile 1315.0, between Bismarck and Mandan, Burleigh and Morton Counties, North Dakota

CHARACTER OF WORK: The purpose of the project is to construct a new, independent bridge across the Missouri River upstream of the in-place structure. The new structure would provide a significant improvement in operational reliability and safety, and would provide

enhanced structural redundancy thereby making it less susceptible to damage. As the current structure is over 130 years old, it requires substantial inspection and maintenance, which are disruptive to rail service. The new structure would be a single-track bridge, but have the capability to carry a second track in the future when and if volumes necessitate that addition.

MINIMUM NAVIGATIONAL CLEARANCES:

The four alternatives considered for the proposed project include different span lengths and different distances from the existing bridge. Specifically, the alternatives include:

- Preferred Alternative: Building a new bridge with 200-foot spans and piers 20 feet upstream of the existing bridge and removing the existing bridge.
- Offset Alternative 1: Building a new bridge with 200-foot spans and piers 92.5 feet upstream of the existing bridge (alternative considered keeping the existing bridge and removing the existing bridge)
- Offset Alternative 2: Building a new bridge with 400-foot spans and piers 92.5 feet upstream of the existing bridge (alternative considered keeping the existing bridge and removing the existing bridge)
- Offset Alternative 3: Building a new bridge with 200-foot spans and piers 42.5 feet upstream of the existing bridge (alternative considered keeping the existing bridge and removing the existing bridge)

The navigational clearances for the existing bridge and four alternatives are shown in the table below.

	Vertical Clearance	Horizontal Clearance
Existing Bridge	61.5 feet above OHW	389.5 feet between piers
Preferred Alternative	52.35 feet above OHW	191.0 feet between piers
Offset Alternative 1	52.35 feet above OHW	191.0 feet between piers
Offset Alternative 2	58.9 feet above OHW	385.0 feet between piers
Offset Alternative 3	52.35 feet above OHW	191.0 feet between piers

Datum: Minimum vertical clearances are measured above Ordinary High Water (OHW) using the NAVD88 datum.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

On January 8, 2020, the Coast Guard published a notice of intent to prepare an EIS (85 FR 930). On June 7, 2021, we published a notice of availability for a draft EIS seeking public comments, and announcement of a virtual meeting (86 FR 30323). Lastly, on June 14, 2021, we published a notice of extension to the public comment period (86 FR 31509), which extended the comment period to July 26, 2021.

The notice of availability solicited substantive and relevant comments related to the draft EIS. On June 30, 2021, the Coast Guard held a virtual public meeting to receive written and oral comments on the draft EIS. Public comments yielded very few substantive changes.

We developed a final EIS that addresses impacts associated with the alternatives mentioned in Section 2.0 of the draft EIS. These impacts include those environmental control laws listed in Appendix B of the Coast Guard's Bridge Permit Application Guide (available at [https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/DCO%20Documents/5pw/Office%20of%20Bridge%20Programs/BPAG%20COMDTPUB%20P16591%203D_Sequential%20Clearance%20Final\(July2016\).pdf](https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/DCO%20Documents/5pw/Office%20of%20Bridge%20Programs/BPAG%20COMDTPUB%20P16591%203D_Sequential%20Clearance%20Final(July2016).pdf)), as well as those impacts associated with floodplain rise, impacts to the Bismarck Water Reservoir and the Missouri River Natural Area. The final EIS also includes responses to all substantive and relevant comments received during the public comment period and virtual public meeting.

After a lengthy process to satisfy the requirements of Section 106 of the NHPA (54 U.S.C. 306108), the Coast Guard and consulting parties developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to dictate mitigation measures for removal of the existing bridge. The MOA was signed on September 27, 2022, and is available in Appendix B of the final EIS.

A water quality certification in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, as amended, for this project has been applied for by the BNSF Railway Company. No wetland will be taken or affected by this project.

The bridge is located in the floodplain. The 100-year flood elevation is 1638.1 feet, while elevation of the low member of the navigation span is 1680.8; elevations are referenced to NAVD88 datum.

DATES: The Coast Guard intends to issue a Record of Decision on November 28, 2022.



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By direction of the Commander,
Eighth Coast Guard District