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NEWS RELEASE

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PRESERVATION ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED IN APRIL 3 MEETING ABOUT DM&E RAILROAD IN WINONA

The potential effects on historic properties of a proposed Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad Corporation rail line will be discussed at a public meeting at the Winona City Hall on April 3 at 7 p.m. State Historic Preservation Office staff will present a brief summary of the known historic properties in the project area and the proposed strategy to identify other properties and to evaluate and address effects. There will be opportunity for questions and discussion.

On Feb. 20, 1998, the DM&E Railroad filed an application with the Surface Transportation Board for authority to construct and operate a new rail line and associated facilities in east-central Wyoming, southwest South Dakota, and south-central Minnesota. The stated purpose of the DM&E's Powder River Basin Expansion Project is to attain access as a third rail carrier to Wyoming's Powder River Basin coal transport eastward, and to increase the safety and operational efficiency of DM&E's existing rail line in Minnesota and South Dakota.

In Minnesota, the rail corridor runs through the following counties: Winona, Olmsted, Dodge, Steele, Waseca, Blue Earth, LeSueur, Nicollet, Brown, Redwood, Lyon, and Lincoln. A few of the cities located along the line include Winona, St. Charles, Rochester, Owatonna, Waseca, Janesville, Mankato, New Ulm, Sleepy Eye, Springfield, Lamberton, Walnut Grove, Tracy, and Tyler.

The project involves authorization from the Surface Transportation Board as well as permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, these federal agencies need to take into account the effects of the project on properties that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The process is outlined in 36 CFR 800, the procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. These procedures are available on the Council's web page at <www.achp.gov>.

As part of the Section 106 process, federal agencies consult with the State Historic Preservation Office, tribes, and other interested parties, to identify historic properties and to assess effects. Information on cultural resources in the area of the DM&E project has been included in the draft and final Environmental Impact Statements, which have been circulated for public comment. As part of their review of the proposed cultural resource measures, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) would like to provide a focused opportunity for members of the public to express their views.

To date, the rail corridor itself, which was constructed as the Winona and St. Peter Railroad from 1863 to 1873, has been identified as a historic line; the line includes 390 bridges and culverts, many of distinctive design. Historic buildings along the line include depots in New Ulm and Sleepy Eye. In addition, 34 archaeological properties, mostly unevaluated, have been identified in the various project areas. It is expected that additional historic properties will be identified as the project planning process continues.

The State Historic Preservation Office asks that comments be submitted in writing, either at the meeting or within seven days after the meeting, so that those comments can be shared with the federal agencies and other parties. Comments can be addressed to: State Historic Preservation Office, 345 Kellogg Boulevard West, St. Paul, MN 55102.

It is important to note that this meeting only addresses the effects of the proposed project on historic properties. If there are any questions regarding the SHPO's Section 106 review of this project, contact the office at 651-296-5462.