North Dakota Department of Transportation

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September 2, 2016

Docket Management Facility
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
W12-140
Washington, DC 20590-0001

DOCKET NO. DOT-OST-2016-0053; ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERIM NATIONAL MULTIMODAL FREIGHT NETWORK (NMFN)

The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) takes this opportunity to express its significant concerns with the Interim National Multimodal Freight Network (NMFN) set forth in this docket. As explained more fully below, the route mileage within North Dakota on the Interim NMFN is inadequate to meet the needs for a connected transportation system that serves Interstate freight transportation moving in and through our state. In making its final designation in this docket, USDOT must very substantially increase route mileage on the NMFN within North Dakota.

At the outset, NDDOT emphasizes that it fully supports the comments that it submitted jointly with four other state DOTs. That submission, by the 5-State Coalition group of Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, lays out important reasons why the final NMFN must include far more miles than the Interim NMFN, particularly including highway miles. AASHTO has filed comments with similar concerns and we are also supportive of AASHTO's comments to this docket. Those filings present USDOT with a framework of reasons as to why it should, in making a final NMFN designation, very substantially increase route mileage on the NMFN—including within North Dakota.

In this separate submission, the NDDOT sets forth its specific recommendations for the NMFN within North Dakota.

More specifically, USDOT's proposed NMFN contains inadequate miles on the roadway system to efficiently and effectively operate as an integral part of the NMFN. This especially is true for the western one-half of the United States. For example, from I-29 in Eastern North Dakota to the next transnational north/south route, which is in Western Montana, there is a distance of approximately 670 miles, as the crow flies. This would require trucks from the rich oil fields in Western North Dakota to travel a distance of approximately 335 miles (or about 5 hours) east or west to connect to the next north/south NMFN route. To expect our freight industry—and the Nation's economy—to routinely accept this amount of indirection is simply unacceptable. For this and other reasons, North Dakota is requesting the following highway-mode routes be added to the NMFN:

1. We request that the entire Longer Combination Vehicle (LCV) network (the National Network) within North Dakota be added to the NMFN. This would allow freight to move

along already identified corridors to best serve the people of the United States. (See enclosed map, Highway Mode Option 1.) Such designation would be fully consistent with the factors set forth in 49 USC 70103(c)(2). Such designation also furthers the policies set forth in the subparagraphs of 70103(c)(2) regarding access to energy and agricultural and natural resource products and facilities. Consistent with 49 USC 70103(c)(2), these routes also promote connectivity and faster goods movement.

2. If the USDOT determines that it will not add the entire LCV system within North Dakota to its Interim NMFN, as a **minimum** we request the following routes be added. (See enclosed map, Highway Mode Option 2.) As with designation of the LCV network in our state discussed immediately above, these designations would be fully consistent with the factors set forth in 49 USC 70103(c)(2). Such designations also further the policies set forth in the subparagraphs of 70103(c)(2) regarding access to energy and agricultural and natural resource products and facilities. Consistent with 49 USC 70103(c)(2), these routes also promote connectivity and faster goods movement.

    a. US 2 - from the Montana State Line to US 52
        i. US 2 is a major East/West corridor that runs from Washington State to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The portion proposed to be added in North Dakota runs from the Montana State line east to Minot into the newly constructed intermodal facility which links the BNSF Railroad and the Canadian Pacific Railroad to sea ports on both the East and West coasts of the United States, as well as ports in Canada; additionally, it connects to US 52 providing access into Canada. US 2 is also a vital link for Montana, Wyoming, and parts of South Dakota to connect to the intermodal facility in Minot.
    b. US 85 - from the South Dakota State Line north to US 2
        i. US 85 is part of the Ports to Plains Corridor which runs from the very southern tip of Texas near the Mexican Border all the way north to Canada. The portion in North Dakota that we are requesting to be added to the System ties into US 2 near Williston, North Dakota, which is the heart of the Baaken Oil Fields. US 2 leads directly into Minot, which recently constructed an intermodal facility which links the BNSF Railroad and the Canadian Pacific Railroad to sea ports on both the East and West coasts of the United States, as well as ports in Canada. US 85 is a vital route for freight to flow into the Baaken Oil Fields, which is the 2nd largest producer of oil in the United States. A lot of the supplies used in the Baaken come from the Minot intermodal facility which were shipped from other parts of the world. US 2 is also a vital link for Montana, Wyoming, and parts of South Dakota to connect to the intermodal facility in Minot. This route is also part of a congressionally designated high priority corridor.
    c. US 83 - from the South Dakota State Line north to US 2
        i. US 83 runs from the very southern tip of Texas near the Mexican Border all the way north to Canada. The portion in North Dakota that we are requesting to be added to the System ties into Minot, which recently constructed an intermodal facility which links the BNSF Railroad and the Canadian Pacific Railroad to Sea Ports on both the East and West Coasts of the United States, as well as ports in Canada. US 83 is a vital route for freight to flow into the Minot intermodal facility so it can be shipped to other parts of the world.

d. US 281 - from the South Dakota State Line north to I-94
    i. US 281 runs from the very southern tip of Texas near the Mexican Border all the way north to Canada. The portion in North Dakota that we are requesting to be added to the System goes thru Jamestown, North Dakota, which is only a few miles from the Spiritwood Energy Park, which is home to major energy and other manufacturing producers. US 281 also ties into US 52 which goes directly into Minot, which recently constructed an intermodal facility which links the BNSF Railroad and the Canadian Pacific Railroad to Sea Ports on both the East and West Coasts of the United States, as well as ports in Canada. US 281 is a vital route for freight to flow into the Minot intermodal facility so it can be shipped to other parts of the world.
e. US 52 - from I-94 to US 2
    i. US 52 is a direct connection from I-94 near Jamestown into Minot, which recently constructed an intermodal facility which links the BNSF Railroad and the Canadian Pacific Railroad to Sea Ports on both the East and West Coasts of the United States, as well as ports in Canada. US 52 is a vital route for freight to flow into the Minot intermodal facility so it can be shipped to other parts of the world.
f. US 2 - from the Minnesota State Line to I-29
    i. US 2 is a major East/West corridor that runs from Washington State to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The portion proposed to be added connects US 2 in Minnesota to the portion already proposed by USDOT to be on the Interim National Multimodal Freight Network in North Dakota.
g. US 12 - from the South Dakota State Line to the Montana State Line
    i. US 12 is a major connector route for Montana and South Dakota.
h. Highway 200 - from US 85 to the Montana State Line
    i. Highway 200 is a major connector route for Montana to the Baaken Oil Fields in North Dakota and the intermodal facility in Minot.

Each of these routes proposed to be added has a direct connection to our surrounding states and provides a link to the recently constructed intermodal facility in Minot. This intermodal facility provides better freight connections to the surrounding states. The next closest intermodal facility is located either in St. Paul, Minnesota, to the east (a distance of over 500 miles) or Spokane, Washington, to the west (a distance of over 900 miles). The Minot facility is strategically placed close to one-half way between the two facilities and will draw freight, including but not limited to energy, agricultural, and natural resource products and supplies for their extraction, from the surrounding states—which will in return utilize the routes identified in our request.

As noted in the FAST Act, freight movement is a multimodal endeavor. As such, NDDOT coordinated with the short line railroads operating in the state of North Dakota to determine priority routes that should be added to the NMFN. While Class 1 railroads play a vital role in long-distance movement of freight by rail, short line railroads in North Dakota provide the critical service of consolidating field to market truck-hauled agricultural and energy commodities for ultimate long-distance transport by the Class 1 railroads. Without this consolidation (and opposite-direction, supply-side distribution) of products, the Nation's production of commodity goods could not function efficiently and effectively. Therefore, it is critical that the following short line rail routes be added to the NMFN, as shown on the enclosed rail-mode map:

a. Northern Plains Railroad's entire system in North Dakota;

b. Red River Valley and Western Railroad's entire system, except for its Woodworth to Pingree and Chaffee to near Durbin routes;
c. Dakota Missouri Valley and Western Railroad's entire system in North Dakota.

Each of these systems provide long-distance rail connection services to energy and/or agricultural shuttle facilities vital to the economy of the state of North Dakota and the Nation's food and energy supply chains.

Rural states such as ours provide a lifeline for the entire United States. It is the rural states that provide a majority of the food that not only feeds the United States but much of the world. North Dakota is the number one producer of 12 crops, most of which are transported to other states or countries for consumption. All of these commodities travel by truck before they arrive at their final destination; many of them are then consolidated and transported by short line railroads. All of the proposed additions (both highway and short line rail modes) serve major agricultural producing areas in the state. By not having such additional routes on the NMFN, the United States may lose our competitiveness with other countries.

In addition to being the number one producer in 12 crops, North Dakota is also the number two producer of oil in the United States. Many of the supplies the oil industry uses to operate on a daily basis arrive by truck and/or short line rail. It is essential that the NMFN provides for this industry to remain competitive with the rest of the world.

In addition to the above specific recommendations for route additions, we also urge that USDOT provide, in designating the final NMFN, that any critical rural or urban freight corridors designated pursuant to 23 USC 167 are automatically added to the NMFN, even if they are designated pursuant to 23 USC 167 after USDOT publishes a map of routes and facilities on the final NMFN.

In proposing these additions to the Interim NMFN within our state, we note our concern that some may consider that there are limits on what a state may propose to add to the NMFN. We disagree. We strongly disagree with any interpretation by USDOT that imposes greater limitations on what a state government may propose to add to the NMFN than it imposes on others commenting to this docket.

Also as to state submissions to this docket, to the extent USDOT considers it necessary, we certify that we have satisfied the requirements that a state is to certify pursuant to 49 USC 70103(c)(4)(D).

In conclusion, we strongly encourage you to adopt our recommendations and additions to the NMFN. To the extent you consider not adopting these recommendations, we ask that before making a final decision contrary to our recommendations, you contact us to discuss the designations within our State.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and thank USDOT for its consideration.

Grant Levi

GRANT LEVI, P.E., DIRECTOR

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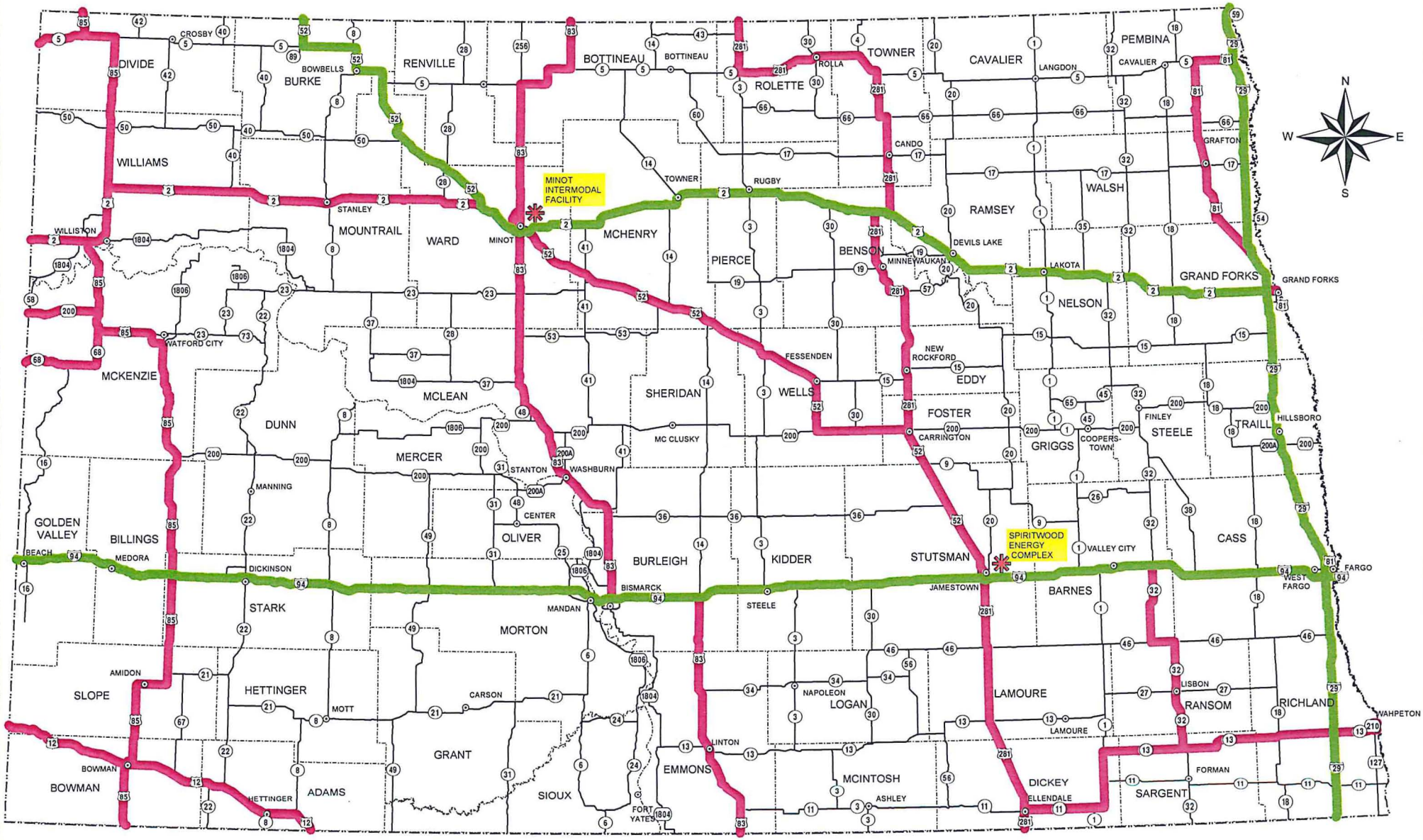
Enclosures

OPTION 1

NATIONAL MULTI-MODAL FREIGHT NETWORK (NMFN) - HIGHWAY MODE



RAIL SHUTTLE FACILITY

USDOT PROPOSED NMFM HIGHWAY MODE

NDDOT PROPOSED NMFN HIGHWAY MODE ADDITIONS

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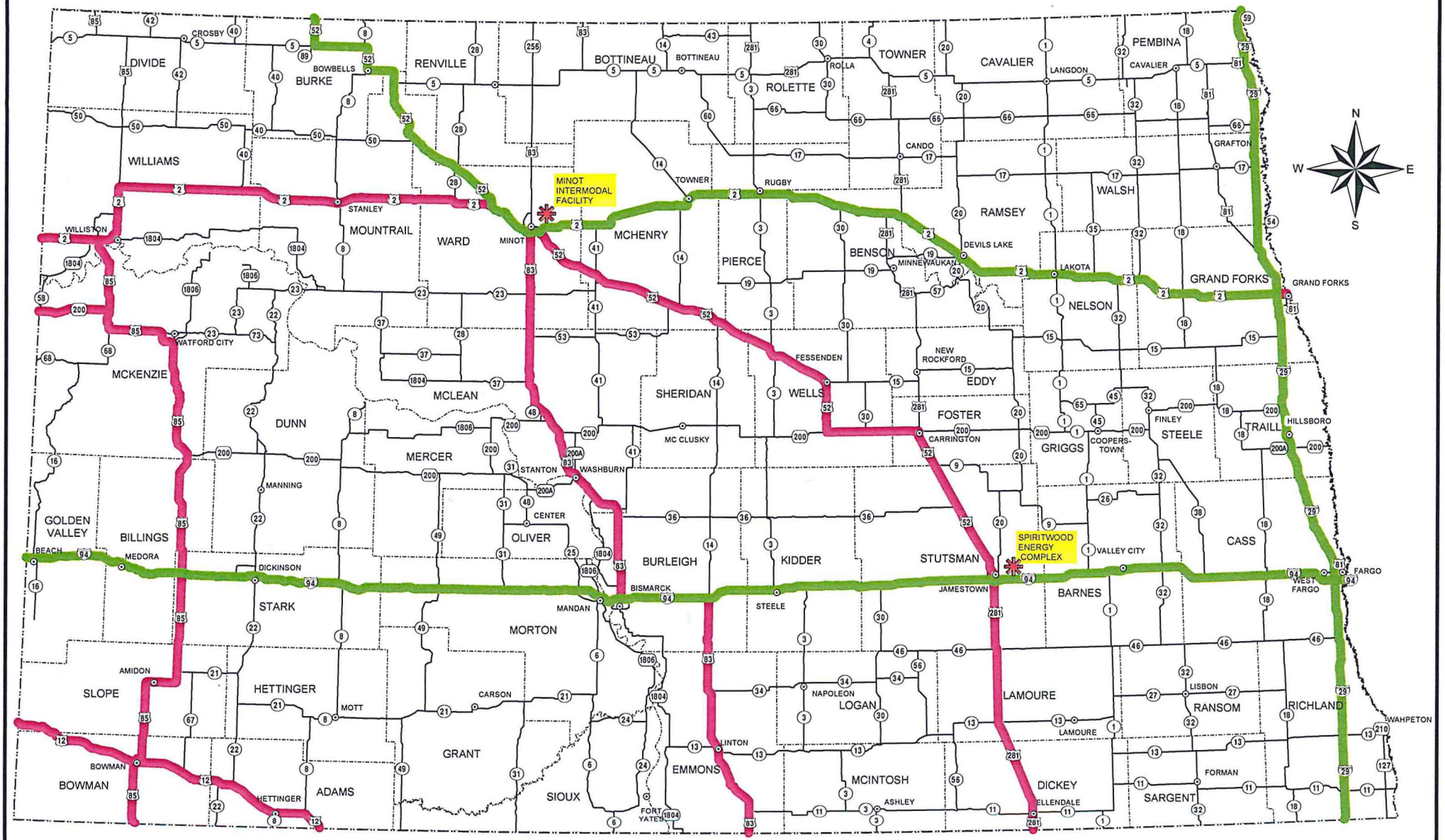
OPTION 2

NATIONAL MULTI-MODAL FREIGHT NETWORK (NMFN) - HIGHWAY MODE



RAIL SHUTTLE FACILITY

USDOT PROPOSED NMFM HIGHWAY MODE

NDDOT PROPOSED NMFN HIGHWAY MODE ADDITIONS

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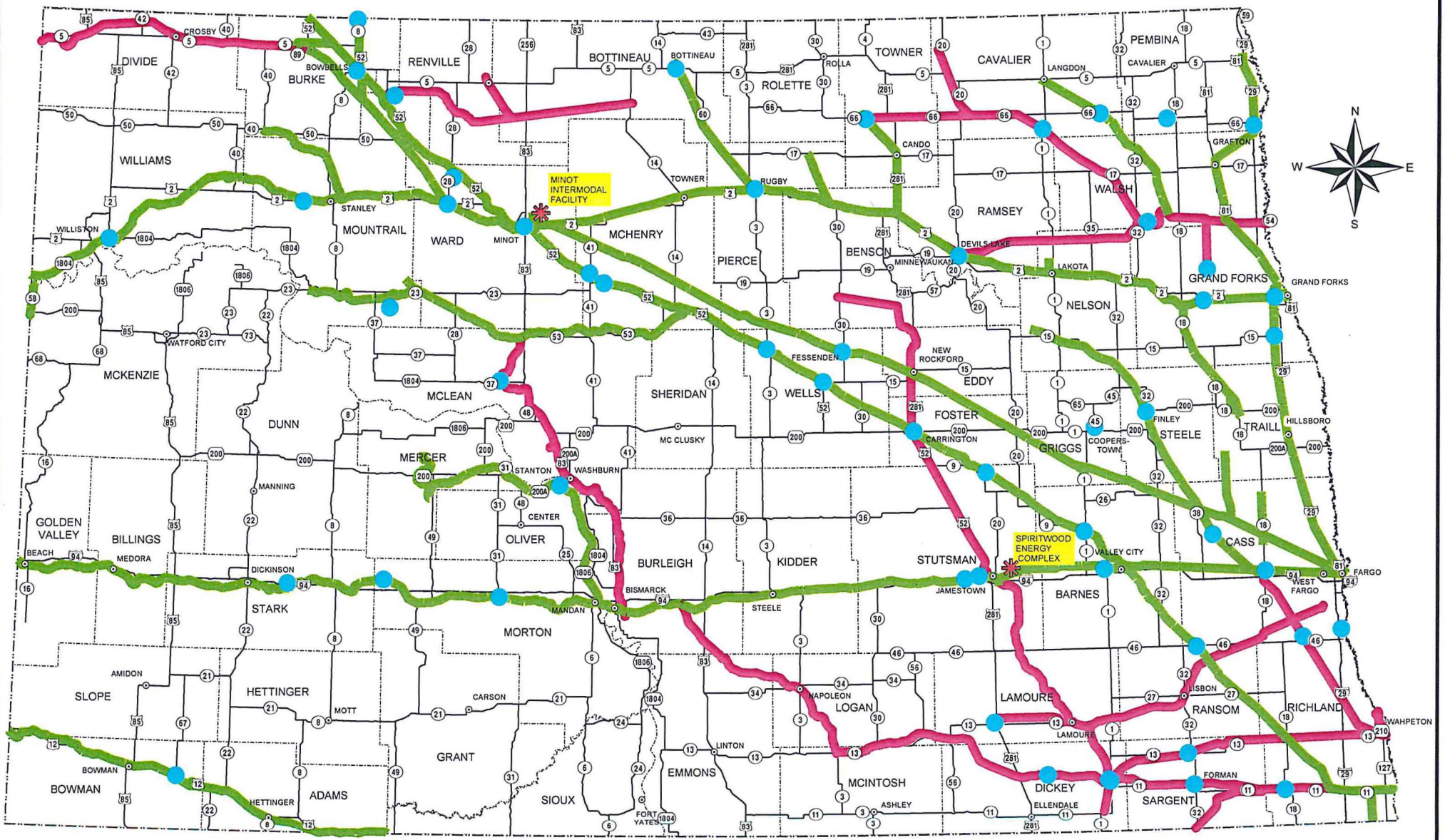
NATIONAL MULTI-MODAL FREIGHT NETWORK (NMFN) - RAIL MODE



RAIL SHUTTLE FACILITY

USDOT PROPOSED NMFN RAIL MODE

NDDOT PROPOSED NMFN RAIL MODE ADDITIONS

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