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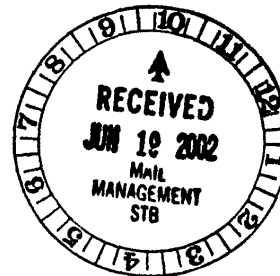
June 18, 2002

Vernon Williams, Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street, N.W., Room 700
Washington, DC 20006

ENTERED
Office of the Secretary

JUN 19 2002

Part of
Public Record



RE: STB Finance Docket #34177

Dear Mr. Williams:

205656

On behalf of the Cities of Marquette and McGregor, Iowa, as well as Clayton County, Iowa, I am submitting the following comments for consideration.

In October of 2001, a Clayton County partnership known as the McGregor-Marquette Area Legacy was awarded \$5 million from the State of Iowa's Vision Iowa program for a variety of activities. A portion of that award (\$1 million) is to be used for the construction of the Trail of Two Cities, a trail along the Mississippi River between Marquette and McGregor. These monies filled the financial gap to complete the project. Other funding sources include Iowa Department of Transportation Enhancement Funds and Iowa State Recreation Trail Funds, as well as monies from the local communities themselves.

This trail is a small (1 mile), but key piece of a national trail puzzle known as the Mississippi River Trail (MRT). The proposed MRT was declared a National Millennium Trail by the White House Council on the Millennium and extends from the Mississippi River's headwaters at Lake Itasca, Minnesota to New Orleans, Louisiana. The Mississippi River Trail, Inc., a non-profit organization, has already developed a trail from New Orleans north to St. Genevieve, Missouri. The Upper Mississippi River Trail Alliance has been meeting to promote the further development of the MRT and consists of representatives of Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The MRT will provide the backbone for a network of trails locally, regionally (providing connections to the Root River Trail in Minnesota and the Great River Road Bike Plan system in Wisconsin), and nationally as it is a part of the National Millennium Trail system and will connect with the American Discovery Trail (a nationally planned east coast to west coast trail). The MRT has been included in the Iowa Department of Transportation's *Iowa Trails 2000*, a trail plan for the State.

The Trail of Two Cities will also provide an important connection between the Cities of Marquette and McGregor, linking two historic business districts. Currently, the only route between the cities consists of a narrow corridor between a bluff and the Mississippi River. This narrow passage consists of Iowa DOT right-of-way for US Business 18 and the I&M Rail Link right-of-way. There is no provision for pedestrians or bicyclists in this passageway.

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The proposed Trail of Two Cities will provide visitors with a much easier and relaxed experience when visiting the area, by eliminating the need to get back in the car, drive a mile and search for parking. This project will also allow local residents, including the children of both communities, which are in the same school district, to interact without the use of vehicle transportation.

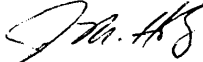
In order to bring this project to fruition, an easement will be required from the railroad to use a portion of railroad property adjacent to the Mississippi River. The McGregor-Marquette Area Legacy, as well as members of the Vision Iowa Board, have met previously with I&M Rail Link officials to discuss an easement agreement, but had not come to an agreement prior to notice of this sale. I&M Rail Link officials had expressed two main concerns at those meetings; 1) Safety; and; 2) Access to the rail lines for maintenance.

It is our belief that the proposed project will improve the overall safety of this corridor by providing a separate means for pedestrians and bicyclists to move through the corridor. And that this can be done to the satisfaction of the railroad. Currently, they must use the highway or the railroad, both of which are unsafe, and in the case of the railroad, trespassing. As far as access to the rail lines for maintenance, we believe the proposed project will not hinder access in any way and may actually provide better access.

It is our hope that the IC&E will negotiate in good faith, an agreement with the Cities of Marquette and McGregor that will provide the necessary easement to construct the Trail of Two Cities.

Sincerely,

MSA Professional Services, Inc.



James M. Holz
Team Leader

cc: William C. Sipple, Fletcher & Sipple LLC
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