

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



## Kevon Martis

*District 7 Commissioner*

**Chairman, Personnel, Ways and Means Committee**

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Representative Ann Bollin  
Chair-House Appropriations Committee  
Michigan State Capitol  
Room 351  
100 N. Capitol Ave.  
Lansing, MI  
48933

5/23/2025

### Re: Southern Michigan Rail Society Request

Dear Representative Bollin:

I represent Lenawee County Commission District 7 which includes a portion of the *Southern Michigan Rail Society's* (SMRS) rail right-of-way.

**Since I was first elected in 2020, improved transportation, particularly rail transportation, has been of prime concern to me and my district.**

Unlike other counties, **Lenawee County does not have direct access to the interstate highway network which is a key factor in attracting industry.** But we do have a *Norfolk Southern (NS)* railroad mainline that carries 24 freight trains a day on their busy Detroit-Kansas City artery. Large Class 1 railroads like *NS* focus on large customers and longer haul distances. They often rely upon local "short line" railroads to collect and distribute rail cars to smaller commercial and industrial customers. It has been my belief that the trackage owned by *SMRS* can become an important feeder line for already-existing county industries, particularly *Wacker Chemical, Eden Foods* and *Hardwoods of Michigan*, all of which have rail-adjacent facilities along the *SMRS*. And it can attract new industries that need direct access to the national rail network.

Two years ago, I brought together representatives of *Wacker, NS, SMRS*, Nikki Johnson of MDOT's rail section, representatives of *Lenawee Now*, our county's economic development organization as well as the CEO of the *A and B Railroad*, another short line railroad operating in my district. **There was broad agreement that by restoring the *SMRS* right-of-way a greater variety of economic development opportunities could develop in Lenawee County.**

### Wacker Chemical

Of particular interest is the case of *Wacker Chemical*. They operate a silicone manufacturing plant in Raisin Township in Lenawee County that is adjacent to *SMRS* right-of-way. In fact, they were previously served by rail at that facility during the Conrail era, but that ended when Conrail sold the branch. In the meeting I referenced above, *Wacker* had three of their logistics people talk about the importance of rail transportation. They also

discussed the value of restoring direct rail access for their Lenawee facility, which could **keep that facility competitive with their other locations which already enjoy direct rail and interstate highway access.**

It is important to Lenawee County that we retain *Wacker Chemical* and their high paying manufacturing and technical jobs and not lose them to other communities with better transportation infrastructure.

If granted, this appropriation request will not only benefit the SMRS tourist operations which already brings thousands of tourists a year into our county. **It would also become the first critical component of a long-term transportation infrastructure plan already developing in Lenawee County.**

On the behalf of my constituents in Lenawee Couy, I humbly ask for your support for this request.

Feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Martis', written in a cursive style.

Kevon Martis  
Lenawee County Commissioner  
Chairman, Lenawee County Ways and Means Committee  
517-403-2438