

Michigan House of Representatives

Labor and Economic Opportunity Subcommittee

Room 307, House Office Building

House Office Building

124 N Capitol Ave, Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chair Jenkins-Arno, Vice-chair Robinson and Minority Chair Martus:

I am writing on behalf of **Flying Otter Vineyard & Winery**, a family-owned estate winery located in Adrian, Michigan, to express our strong support for proposed upgrades to the Southern Michigan Railroad Society's (SMRS) railroad track and bridge infrastructure that would re-establish and enhance rail access from Clinton Michigan into Raisin Township in Lenawee County.

As the owner of a destination winery situated on the rolling hills just outside the city of Tecumseh, I have witnessed firsthand the increasing interest in regional tourism and agritourism experiences. Flying Otter Vineyard and Winery is one of several wineries in the area, and we border the railroad track in question.

We are proud to be part of Michigan's growing agritourism and craft beverage industry. We attract visitors seeking authentic experiences—from vineyard tours and tastings to live music events under the stars. Our location just south of Tecumseh, places us near the important Ann Arbor, Adrian and Toledo Ohio markets. These communities have a demographic that has a keen interest in wineries like ours. While we believe we already offer a distinct and unique experience, restoring the rail SMRS right-of-way from Tecumseh to Raisin Township, where our facility is located, would create the opportunity to establish seasonal wine train tours. This would certainly become a unique experience in Southwest Michigan.

Adding wine trains would significantly add to the 7-9,000 passengers a year already experiencing Tecumseh and Clinton while enjoying the SMRS. This new traffic would serve as a catalyst for economic growth and cultural enrichment across our region. It would open the doors to a new stream of eco-conscious tourists, wine enthusiasts, and families interested in exploring the rural charm of Lenawee County. For businesses like ours, rail access means greater visibility, increased event and tasting room attendance, and the potential for sustainable growth that benefits both local entrepreneurs and the broader community.

Moreover, the extension of rail service aligns with current trends in green transportation and rural revitalization, offering an inclusive, low-impact alternative to vehicle travel. It also creates a tangible bridge between Michigan's urban and rural communities, fostering connection and economic equity.

Flying Otter Vineyard & Winery stands ready to partner with local and regional entities in promoting this opportunity and providing a welcoming destination for rail travelers. We urge all decision-makers, transportation authorities, and representatives to fully support the proposed upgrades to the rail corridor serving our region. The long-term economic, environmental, and cultural benefits make this a strategic investment in the future of our community and the vitality of Southeast Michigan.

Sincerely,

Kevin Germain
Owner, Flying Otter Vineyard & Winery

3402 Chase Rd
Adrian, MI 49221
flyingotter.com
kevin@flyingotter.com
810-241-1707