

Midland County Nearby Businesses and Adjacent Residential Landowners' Attitudes Towards and Use of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail in Michigan

Prepared by:

Christine Vogt, Ph.D.
Afke Van der Woud
Joel Lynch, Ph.D
Charles Nelson, Ph.D.

Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources

Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824-1222
517-353-5190

prtr@msu.edu
www.prr.msu.edu/trails/pere_marquette_rail

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Executive Summary

The purpose of studying nearby businesses and adjacent residents was twofold. The first was to characterize the type and location of adjacent properties and to better understand the knowledge, involvement, and usage of the rail-trail by people who have relatively easy access to it. The second purpose was to assess residents perceptions about the maintenance of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail (PMRT) and its influence on their and the county's quality of life.

All nearby businesses and adjacent residents of the PMRT in Midland County were initially mailed a questionnaire in April 2000. Businesses were mailed a four-page questionnaire and residents an eight-page questionnaire. Businesses and residents also received a personalized letter and business reply envelope with the survey. Reminder postcards and a second mailing of the survey in May 2000 were also used to encourage participation of non-respondents. Eighty-six of the 142 businesses (60.6%) and 157 of the 277 residential landowners (56.7%) completed the questionnaire.

- Most businesses located near the rail-trail were either consumer services or retail. Individual businesses employed up to 10,000 full-time employees and 3,000 part-time employees. Approximately one-third of the businesses were adjacent to the trail and two-thirds were "near" the trail. Each company's main building was on average 200 yards from the trail. Businesses had been at their location for 24 years on average. Residents living adjacent to the rail-trail owned primarily single-family homes. On average, residential houses were 100 yards from the trail. Fifty-four percent of the residents have a full view of the trail, 37 percent have a partial view, and 8 percent are not able to see the trail from their house. Residents lived on average 20 years in this location and most purchased their property when the railroad was operating. Most of the residents were either retired or employed full-time. Approximately half of the households did not have children. The most common pre-tax income brackets for residents were more than \$60,000 (26%) and between \$20,000 and \$40,000 (23%). The most common reasons to recreate outdoors for residents were for fun and enjoyment and to enjoy nature.
- Businesses rated themselves better informed about the design and construction of the trail than residents did. Sixty percent of the businesses indicated they were either fully or moderately informed compared to 40 percent of residents. Compared to residents, there was a slightly higher proportion of businesses involved in the planning meetings of the trail during 1990-1994. Also, proportionally more businesses were involved in the development and maintenance of the rail-trail than residents. Fifteen percent of businesses were current members of the Friends of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail, while 5 percent of residents were members.

- Businesses indicated the rail-trail was used more after work than before work or during breaks. After work activities most commonly reported were biking, walking, running and in-line skating. During breaks employees were most likely to walk the rail-trail. Approximately 80 percent of residents indicated that at least one person in their household used the PMRT. The most commonly reported reasons for using the rail-trail were to exercise or improve their health. In half of the households, at least one person used the rail-trail either daily or weekly.
- Businesses were more supportive of the idea of a rail-trail before it was built than residents. Both businesses and residents had mixed feelings about planning/decision and construction processes, though businesses were slightly more positive. Results suggest nearby businesses and adjacent residents reported increased support for the rail-trail once it was completed.
- Businesses viewed the influence of the rail-trail as very positive for both the community and the county as a whole. Businesses were more neutral about the influence of the trail on their neighborhoods and employees. Overall, residents rated the influence of the trail less positively than businesses. Residents thought the trail had the most positive influence on the county, followed by the community. Many residents indicated the rail-trail has had little effect on the quality of their neighborhoods. The majority of businesses and residents believed the trail made no difference in the value of their property and the speed at which it would sell. However, more than a quarter of residents (28%) felt the trail would reduce selling time. Eighty percent of businesses and 70 percent of residents felt the rail-trail was a better situation than the abandoned railroad right-of-way. Only 2 percent of businesses and 12 percent of residents felt the rail-trail was worse use of the land.
- Eighty-two percent of residents rated the overall maintenance of the trail as good or very good. In terms of specific management aspects, 66 percent rated removal of trash as good or very good. Sixty-five percent rated sense of safety and security as good, and 62 percent rated the privacy of trailside residents as good. The majority of residents indicated that key changes of quality of life from to the trail were related to increases in recreation opportunities, community pride, personal enjoyment, health and fitness, having a non-motorized transportation route available, and community revitalization. A minority group of residents reported the trail had a negative influence. Thirty-two percent of residents noted an increase in noise. Other concerns raised were illegal motor vehicle activity, loitering, unleashed and roaming pets, discourteous users, and trespassing.

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Purpose of Study

This study of nearby businesses and adjacent residential landowners to the Midland County section of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail (PMRT) is part of a larger, multi-year study examining the usage and benefits of Midland County's Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. In addition to this study, nearby businesses and adjacent residents of the 2001 extension of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail in Isabella County were also studied in the fall of 2000.

The purpose of studying nearby businesses and adjacent residents was twofold. The first was to characterize type and location of these ownerships and better understand the knowledge, involvement, and usage of the rail-trail by people who have relatively easy access to it. The second was to assess residents' perceptions about the management of the PMRT and its influence on quality of life. Studies of this nature allow park and recreation managers and staff to better design and manage rail-trails so that the interests of nearby residents and businesses are addressed.

This report is organized in the following sections:

- Purpose of Study (page 1)
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- Results
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Description of the Midland County Section of the Pere Marquette Rail Trail

The Midland County section of the PMRT begins in the City of Midland and traverses the county for 22 miles before entering Isabella County (Figure 1). It was developed in four sections over a 4-year period beginning in 1992. The entire section is paved to a width of 12 feet in the City of Midland and 14 feet elsewhere in the county. It is open to non-motorized activities. Beyond linking the communities of Midland, Sanford, North Bradley, and Coleman, the PMRT also connects a number of city and county park and recreation facilities as well as numerous businesses.

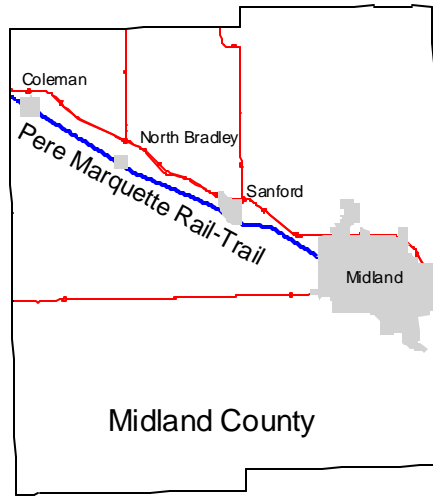


Figure 1.

Procedures for Conducting the Study

Names and addresses of all adjacent residents were acquired by reviewing plat maps and obtaining names and addresses from the Midland County tax assessor. Names and addresses of businesses within ¼ mile of the PMRT were obtained through phonebooks and on-site enumeration.

Two survey instruments were developed for the samples. The nearby business survey was four-pages and the adjacent resident survey was eight-pages (Appendices 1 and 2). A personalized cover letter and postage paid envelope was mailed along with the survey instrument (Appendix 3). The first mailing was April 18, 2000. A follow-up reminder and/or thank you postcard was mailed on April 26, 2000. Two weeks after the postcard mailing, a second survey mailing was sent to all those who had not yet responded. Of the 142 businesses that were mailed a survey, 86 returned a completed survey resulting in a 61% response rate (Table 1). Of the 283 adjacent resident names and addresses, six were returned as undeliverable and 157 (57%) returned a completed survey (Table 2).

Table 1. Response Rates for Nearby Businesses

| Original Sample Size | Returned | Overall Response Rate |
|----------------------|----------|-----------------------|
| 142 | 86 | 60.6% |

Table 2. Response Rates for Adjacent Residents

| Original Sample Size | Unreachable (a) | Adjusted Sample Size | Returned | Overall Response Rate |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 283 | 6 | 277 | 157 | 56.7% |

(a) Includes bad addresses or deceased individuals.

Results

The results are organized around six main themes. The first section is a description of business and resident respondents. The second and third sections describe their knowledge and use of the rail-trail. The fourth and fifth sections describe their support for the rail-trail and the estimated influence of the rail-trail on the community. The sixth section provides an overview of resident opinions about the management and use of the rail-trail.

Description of Nearby Businesses, Adjacent Residents, and their Location

Of the businesses that responded, more than two-thirds classified themselves as either consumer services or retail (Table 3). When asked as to whether they observe or serve rail-trail users, 45% reported doing so, with most providing food related services. The number of full-time employees ranged from none to 10,000 employees with a median of 4 employees. The number of part-time employees ranged from 1 to 3,000 employees with a median of 2 part-time employees. For adjacent residents, over 80% classified their property as a residential home site followed by a business operations (9%) (Table 4). Apartment or multi-family housing was the least common type of property found adjacent to the PMRT.

Table 3. Nature of Businesses

| Type of business: | Number (Percent) (a) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Consumer services or retail | 68 (74.7%) |
| Light industrial or warehousing | 7 (7.7) |
| Non-Profit | 7 (7.7) |
| Other | 9 (9.9) |
| Number of employees: | Range/Median |
| Full-time | Range: 0 – 10,000 Median: 4 |
| Part-time | Range: 1 – 3,000 Median: 2 |

(a) Multiple answers allowed.

Table 4. Adjacent Residents Self-Classification of Property Use

| Type | Percent (a) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Residential House | 83.2% |
| Business Operations | 9.0 |
| Undeveloped Land | 7.7 |
| Agricultural Use | 5.8 |
| Other (rental property) | 3.9 |
| Apartment or multi-family housing | 2.6 |

(a) Multiple answers allowed.

Nearly two-thirds of the businesses considered themselves near the rail-trail followed by 32% that placed themselves adjacent or right next to the rail-trail (Table 5). Most residents (95%) considered their property as being adjacent or right next to the rail-trail. Businesses and residents were also asked to estimate the distance from their main building or resident's home to the rail-trail. For businesses, estimated distances ranged from 10 to over 1,700 yards away with a median of 200 yards, while estimated distances for residents homes ranged from 1 to over 3,500 yards away with a median of 100 yards. The majority of residents (55%) have full view of the trail in a summer season, 37% have partial view and 9% cannot see the trail from their home (Table 6).

Table 5. Location of Property and Distance from Main Building/House in Relation to Rail-Trail

| Property is: | Businesses | Residents |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Adjacent or right next to trail | 32.1% | 94.9% |
| Trail intersects property | 2.4 | 5.1 |
| Near the trail | <u>65.5</u> | <u>NA</u> |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Estimated distance: | | |
| Range | 10-1,760 yards | 1-3,520 yards |
| Median | 200 yards | 100 yards |

Table 6. Visual Presence of Trail for Adjacent Residents

| Degree of trail view from house in the summer: | Percent |
|---|----------------|
| Full view of trail | 54.6% |
| Partial view of trail | 36.7 |
| Can't see trail at all | <u>8.7</u> |
| Total | 100.0 |

Length of occupancy at their current location was substantial for businesses and residents (Table 7). On average nearby businesses were at their current location for 24 years and adjacent residents for 20 years. Occupancy ranged from 1 to 100 years for businesses and less than a year to 70 years for residents. For residents, 123 (80%) purchased their property when the railroad was operating, while 30 (20%) purchased after the rail corridor was abandoned. For those who purchased afterwards, half said that the rail-trail was a positive influence in their purchase decision, citing ease of access for exercising and providing a safe place for children to play.

Table 7. Years Occupied Property

| | Businesses | Residents |
|--------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Range | 1 - 100 years | Less than 1 - 70 years |
| Mean | 24 | 20 |
| Median | 19 | 16 |

Adjacent residents were asked to describe themselves and their household in a series of demographic questions. Slightly more men (54%) completed the survey than women (46%). The average age of adults in respondents household was 54 years old, while children under 19 years old averaged 13 years. Most households included two adults. Slightly more than half (52%) had no children, while 48% had one or more children (Table 8). Most of the residents were either retired (37.1%) or employed full-time (34%) (Table 9). A little more than half the residents had lived in Midland County for between 1 and 40 years, while 16% lived in the county over sixty years (Table 10). Over half of the residents had some college schooling (Table 11). Of the three-quarters that provided income data, 26% earned \$60,000 or more in household income before taxes, while 19% earned \$40,000 to \$60,000, 23% \$20,000 to \$40,000, and 7% earned less than \$20,000 (Table 12).

Table 8. Number of Adults and Children in Households of Adjacent Residents

| <u>Adults in household</u> | | <u>Children in household (under 19)</u> | |
|----------------------------|------------|---|-------------|
| Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 1 | 24.1% | 0 | 51.5% |
| 2 | 70.5 | 1 | 23.2 |
| 3 | 5.4 | 2 | 12.1 |
| 4 or more | <u>0.0</u> | 3 or more | <u>13.2</u> |
| Total | 100.0 | Total | 100.0 |

Table 9. Employment Status of Adjacent Residents

| Employment status: | Percent |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Retired | 37.1% |
| Full-time employed | 34.4 |
| Self-employed | 16.5 |
| Part-time employed | 5.3 |
| Homemaker | 4.0 |
| Unemployed | 2.0 |
| Student | <u>0.7</u> |
| Total | 100.0 |

Table 10. Length of Residency in Midland County of Adjacent Residents

| Range in years | Percent |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 0-20 | 22.5% |
| 21-40 | 29.9 |
| 41-60 | 31.3 |
| 61-80 | <u>16.3</u> |
| Total | 100.0 |

Table 11. Highest Level of Education For Adjacent Residents

| Level of Education | Percent |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Graduate school | 12.6% |
| College diploma or some college | 41.9 |
| High school diploma | 41.3 |
| Less than high school | <u>4.2</u> |
| Total | 100.0 |

Table 12. 1998 Pre-tax Household Income of Adjacent Residents

| Income Range | Percent |
|----------------------|----------------|
| \$60,000 or more | 25.6% |
| \$40,000-\$59,999 | 18.6 |
| \$20,000-\$39,999 | 23.3 |
| Less than \$20,000 | 7.0 |
| Choose not to answer | <u>25.5</u> |
| Total | 100.0 |

Adjacent residents were asked why they recreate outdoors to better understand how they might use and appreciate the rail-trail. The top five reasons with mean scores between moderately and very important were for fun and enjoyment, to enjoy nature, promote health, be outside, and relax (Table 13). Reasons that were only slightly important were to explore other areas of the county and be alone. Cultural study and education and training for sports were the least less important to residents.

Table 13. Reasons for Adjacent Residents to Recreate Outdoors

| Members of household recreate to: | Not at all important | Slightly important | Mode- rately important | Very important | Extremely important | Mean score (a) |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Fun and enjoyment | 9.8% | 6.3% | 22.4% | 28.7% | 32.9% | 3.7 |
| Enjoy nature | 8.4 | 5.6 | 21.7 | 35.7 | 28.7 | 3.7 |
| Promote health | 10.4 | 9.0 | 22.2 | 31.3 | 27.1 | 3.6 |
| Be outside | 8.3 | 6.9 | 20.1 | 42.4 | 22.2 | 3.6 |
| Relax | 9.8 | 9.1 | 18.2 | 36.4 | 26.6 | 3.6 |
| Exercise | 15.0 | 8.2 | 25.2 | 31.3 | 20.4 | 3.3 |
| Spend free time | 18.4 | 11.3 | 25.5 | 24.1 | 20.6 | 3.2 |
| Be with others | 19.3 | 17.9 | 27.9 | 17.1 | 17.9 | 3.0 |
| Explore areas of the county | 30.5 | 19.1 | 17.7 | 19.9 | 12.8 | 2.7 |
| Be alone | 22.3 | 16.5 | 28.8 | 13.7 | 18.7 | 2.9 |
| Cultural study and education | 54.3 | 18.8 | 13.8 | 7.2 | 5.8 | 1.9 |
| Train for sports | 63.0 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 4.3 | 6.5 | 1.8 |

(a) Rating scale where "1" equals not at all important and "5" equals extremely important.

Knowledge and Involvement in the Development of the PMRT

Businesses rated themselves as better informed than residents about the design and construction of the PMRT (Table 14). Whereas 60% of the businesses indicated they were either fully or moderately informed about the design and construction of the rail-trail, only 40% of the residents indicated they were highly informed. Thirty-one percent of the residents felt that they were not at all informed. Of those businesses that responded to the questionnaire, 12 (14%) had a representative of the company attend at least one of the planning meetings during 1990-1994. Of the residents, only 15 (10%) indicated that they or a member of their household had attended at least one of the planning meetings during 1990-94.

Both groups were asked about their involvement in the planning, development or maintenance of the rail-trail. Fourteen businesses indicated that they were actively involved, whereas eight residents were involved at some point. Furthermore, 15% of businesses and 5% of residents were currently members of the Friends of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail, while 2% and 5% respectively had been members at one time or another (Table 15).

Table 14. Informed about Design and Construction of Rail-Trail

| | Businesses | Residents |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Fully informed | 19.3% | 11.6% |
| Moderately informed | 41.0 | 28.5 |
| Minimally informed | 19.2 | 29.3 |
| Not at all informed | <u>20.5</u> | <u>30.6</u> |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 15. Membership in Friends of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail

| Membership | Businesses | Residents |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Current | 15.1% | 5.3% |
| No longer | 2.3 | 5.3 |
| Never | <u>82.6</u> | <u>89.4</u> |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Usage of the PMRT

Businesses were asked to assess how their employees use the rail-trail. Of the businesses responding, 96% said they believed their employees used the trail. The rail-trail was used by employees more after work (57%) than before work (22%) or during breaks (26 %). For employees that used the rail-trail after work, most biked, walked, ran, or in-line skated. During their breaks, employees mostly walked for exercise or to unwind, while a smaller proportion biked, ran, or in-line skated for exercise. Those businesses that had employees using the rail-trail before work used it for exercise, and some used the trail to commute to work.

Adjacent residents were asked if they or member of their family use the PMRT. Eighty-three percent of the respondents or a member of their household have used it, primarily to exercise or improve their health (65%). Other important reasons included enjoying nature/being outside (17%), fun and enjoyment (11%), relaxing (3%), spending free time (3%), and being with others (1.0%).

Of those respondents and members of their household who used the PMRT nearly half reported using the rail-trail weekly or daily (Table 16). A spouse or another adult typically used the rail-trail a few times a year (36%). For all children, about one-third used the trail few times a year, one-third used it once or a couple of times a month, and one-third used the trail weekly or daily. When asked about the whether they have used another rail-trail besides the PMRT, only 5% of the respondents reported doing so.

Table 16. Adjacent Resident and Family Use of the PMRT

| | Few times a year | Once a month | Couple times a month | Weekly | Daily |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------|-------|
| Yourself | 29.2% | 4.2% | 19.2% | 33.3% | 14.2% |
| Spouse or another adult | 35.6 | 6.7 | 23.1 | 28.8 | 5.8 |
| Child (#1) | 31.3 | 7.8 | 26.6 | 25.0 | 8.4 |
| Child (#2) | 35.7 | 7.1 | 26.2 | 21.4 | 9.5 |
| Child (#3) | 30.4 | 13.0 | 30.4 | 17.4 | 8.7 |
| Child (#4) | 33.3 | 25.0 | 16.7 | 8.3 | 16.7 |
| Child (#4) | 33.3 | 25.0 | 16.7 | 8.3 | 16.7 |

Table 17. Support for the Rail-Trail

| Business: | Very opposed | Moderately opposed | Neutral | Moderately supportive | Very supportive | Mean (a) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Idea of trail before it was built | 2.4% | 0.0% | 30.1% | 19.3% | 48.2% | 4.1 |
| Trail planning and decision process | 2.4 | 0.0 | 45.8 | 16.9 | 34.9 | 3.8 |
| Trail construction process | 3.6 | 2.4 | 42.2 | 18.1 | 33.7 | 3.8 |
| Trail shortly after it was built | 2.4 | 2.4 | 17.9 | 27.4 | 50.0 | 4.2 |
| Trail today | 0.0 | 4.7 | 11.6 | 26.7 | 57.0 | 4.4 |
| Resident: | | | | | | |
| Idea of trail before it was built | 9.3 | 7.9 | 34.3 | 17.1 | 31.4 | 3.5 |
| Trail planning and decision process | 7.4 | 5.2 | 52.6 | 12.6 | 22.2 | 3.4 |
| Trail construction process | 7.4 | 5.1 | 50.7 | 13.2 | 23.5 | 3.4 |
| Trail shortly after it was built | 7.9 | 6.4 | 25.0 | 23.6 | 37.1 | 3.8 |
| Trail today | 7.0 | 7.0 | 11.2 | 18.2 | 56.6 | 4.1 |

(a) Rating scale where "1" equals very opposed and "5" equals very supportive.

Support for the PMRT

Both businesses and residents rated the rail-trail concept across various stages of the PMRT’s development, construction, initial completion, and current status. Two-thirds of businesses and about half of adjacent residents were supportive of the idea of the PMRT before it was built (Table 17). Yet, less than 3% of businesses and 18% of adjacent residents were opposed to the PMRT concept. Both businesses and residents were likely to have neutral opinions during the planning/decision and construction processes, although businesses were slightly more positive. However, support for the PMRT appears to have increased once it was completed, with 84% of businesses and 76% of residents being in support while only 5% of businesses and 14% of adjacent residents being opposed.

Perception about the Influence of the PMRT

Businesses and residents considered influence of the rail-trail on several levels from one’s own life to Midland County. For businesses, 93% felt the rail-trail has a positive influence on their community and 91% on Midland County as a whole (Table 18). On all four levels, only 1% of businesses felt the trail had negative influence. Residents also rated the influence of the trail as positive with 86% believing it is positive for their community and 83% believing it positive for Midland County as a whole. For all adjacent residents respondents (including those who do not use the PMRT), 61% rated the trail influence on their own life as positive and 14% as negative.

Table 18. Expected Influence of Rail-Trail

| | Very negative influence | Moderate negative influence | Neutral | Moderate positive influence | Very positive influence | Mean (a) |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Midland business: | | | | | | |
| Community | 0% | 1.2% | 7.1% | 35.3% | 56.5% | 4.5 |
| Midland County | 0 | 1.2 | 8.1 | 32.6 | 58.1 | 4.5 |
| Neighborhood | 0 | 1.2 | 17.6 | 49.4 | 31.8 | 4.1 |
| Employees | 0 | 1.2 | 42.9 | 41.7 | 14.3 | 3.7 |
| Midland resident: | | | | | | |
| Midland County | 0.7% | 0.7% | 12.6% | 37.1% | 49.0% | 4.3 |
| Community | 0.7 | 1.4 | 14.1 | 40.8 | 43.0 | 4.2 |
| Neighborhood | 2.1 | 4.2 | 25.0 | 45.8 | 22.9 | 3.8 |
| Family or other household members' lives | 5.7 | 4.3 | 27.0 | 36.9 | 26.2 | 3.7 |
| Own life | 7.3 | 6.7 | 25.3 | 30.0 | 30.7 | 3.7 |

(a) Rating scale where "1" equals very negative influence and "5" equals very positive influence.

In their own words residents were asked to express how they think the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail has affected the quality of their neighborhood. Many residents commented that the rail-trail has had little effect on the quality of their neighborhood. The most frequently mentioned effects on neighborhood quality related to the rail-trail: providing a safe recreation and exercise place for all community members; bringing people outdoors and providing opportunities to meet and get to know neighbors; and being a cleaner and visually more attractive area when compared to the former railroad (see Appendix 4 for a full listing of comments about the rail-trail’s effect on the quality of residents’ neighborhoods).

Nearby businesses and adjacent residents were also asked about their assessment of the rail-trail’s influence on their property values (Table 19). In terms of the time it would take to sell their business, the majority (88%) of businesses believed that the rail-trail would make no difference, while eight (9%) believed it would sell faster. In terms of value, 91% believed it would make "no difference" in the amount their business would sell at, while two businesses (2%) thought it would sell higher. Residents were more optimistic about the speed and value at which their property would sell. While the majority (69%) believed it would make no difference in the speed of sale, 28% believed it would help increase the speed of the sale. Similarly, while the majority, (76%) did not think the rail-trail’s presence would improve the amount at which the property would sell, 18% thought the rail-trails presence would bring in more money.

Table 19. Influence of Rail-Trail on Property

| Speed at which property would sell | Businesses | Residents |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| Faster | 9.4% | 27.7% |
| Slower | 2.4 | 3.4 |
| No Difference | 88.2 | 68.9 |
| Amount at which property would sell | | |
| More money | 2.4% | 18.4% |
| Less money | 7.1 | 4.8 |
| No difference | 90.6 | 76.9 |

Four out of five businesses that responded to the survey felt the rail-trail was better than the abandoned railroad right-of-way (Table 20). Explanations for those neutral and moderately worse ratings included issues related to the safety of trail users where access roads cross the rail-trail, conflicts with trail users especially related to dogs and trespassing, beliefs that the elimination of the railroad was detrimental to the economy, and that the trail’s development destroyed habitat for animals and wildflowers. Overall businesses were generally very satisfied (78%) with the trail being near their property (Table 21).

Of the residents who responded to the survey, 70% felt the rail-trail was either moderately or much better than the abandoned railroad. For the rest, nearly 18% were neutral about the situation, while 12% thought the rail-trail was worse than the abandoned railroad. Explanations for these ratings were categorized into negative, neutral and positive (see Appendix 5 for a full listing of comments. Negative comments included: loss of wildlife and habitat, increasing number of people and noise, and loss of privacy and increase of trespassing. Positive comments included: better maintenance, visual improvement of the area, provides a safe community recreation opportunity, and it makes good use of an otherwise useless property.

Resident were neutral respondents expressed they did not see much of a change and missed hearing the train, but that the rail-trail is quieter. Seventy-six percent of the residents were satisfied with having the rail-trail adjacent to their properties, while 13% were neutral and 11% were dissatisfied

Table 20. Comparison of Rail-Trail to Abandoned Railroad Right-of-way

| | Much worse | Moderately worse | Neutral | Moderately better | Much better | Mean (a) |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Businesses | 0.0% | 2.4% | 16.7% | 26.2% | 54.8% | 4.3 |
| Residents | 6.6 | 5.3 | 17.8 | 15.8 | 54.6 | 4.1 |

Rating scale where “1” equals much worse and “5” equals much better.

Table 21. Satisfaction with Rail-Trail Next to Facility or in Neighbor

| | Very Dissatisfied | Moderately Dissatisfied | Neutral | Moderately Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Mean (a) |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Businesses | 0.0% | 2.3% | 19.8% | 24.4% | 53.5% | 4.3 |
| Residents | 5.9 | 4.6 | 13.2 | 20.4 | 55.9 | 4.2 |

Rating scale where “1” equals very dissatisfied and “5” equals very satisfied.

Opinions About the Management and Use of the PMRT

Adjacent residents were asked to rate five management attributes of the rail-trail. A majority rated all these attributes as good or very good (Table 22). Overall maintenance of the trail was rated the highest with 83% of the respondents reporting it as good or very good. Removal of trash from containers and the absence of litter along trail were next highest with 76% and 66% respectively rating these conditions as good or very good. Residents were less impressed with the sense of safety, security, and privacy for trailside residents.

Table 22. Adjacent Residents Rating of Selected Conditions of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail

| | Very poor | Poor | OK | Good | Very good | Mean (a) |
|--|------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Overall maintenance of the trail | 1.5% | 0.0% | 16.1% | 46.7% | 35.8% | 4.2 |
| Removal of trash from containers | 1.5 | 0.7 | 21.6 | 44.8 | 31.3 | 4.0 |
| Absence of litter along trail | 2.3 | 3.8 | 27.8 | 39.1 | 27.1 | 3.9 |
| Sense of safety and security for trailside residents | 5.8 | 4.3 | 25.2 | 40.3 | 24.5 | 3.7 |
| Privacy of trailside residents | 8.7 | 5.1 | 23.9 | 43.5 | 18.8 | 3.6 |

Table 31. Rating scale where “1” equals very poor and “5” equals very good.

Adjacent residents were also asked to evaluate how the PMRT has influenced a variety of conditions from community pride and quality of life to unlawful or depreciative behaviors (Table 23). Those conditions perceived as increasing the quality of life, whether individual or community in nature, were ranked above the negative attributes. For instance, two-thirds or more of adjacent residents perceived that the PMRT had increased recreation opportunities, community pride, personal enjoyment, and community revitalization. In terms of negative effects, about two-thirds of the respondents noted that the PMRT had resulted in a loss of privacy or in increase in noise levels.

When asked about whether or not respondents experienced any specific conflicts or negative circumstances related to the rail-trail, 19% reported some conflict type. The situations reported most frequently related to trespassing, loss of privacy, vandalism and noise issues (see Appendix 6 for a full listing of reported conflicts and situations).

Table 23. Adjacent Residents Perceptions of Selected Conditions of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail

| Quality of Life Aspects | Increase of | Decrease of | No change | Not sure |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Recreation opportunities | 73.2% | 0.0% | 19.7% | 7.0% |
| Community pride | 69.5 | 0.7 | 18.4 | 11.3 |
| Personal enjoyment | 68.1 | 3.5 | 24.1 | 4.3 |
| Community revitalization | 67.1 | 0.0 | 23.6 | 9.3 |
| Health and fitness | 58.3 | 0.7 | 33.8 | 7.2 |
| Neighborhood enhancement | 58.5 | 1.4 | 30.3 | 9.9 |
| Preservation of open space/natural areas | 57.9 | 5.7 | 26.4 | 10.0 |
| Non-motorized transportation within the county | 53.6 | 30.0 | 28.3 | 18.1 |
| Positive social interactions | 42.6 | 1.4 | 44.7 | 11.3 |
| Aesthetic value | 38.7 | 5.1 | 37.2 | 19.0 |
| Natural and cultural education | 32.6 | 2.1 | 45.4 | 19.9 |
| Depreciative Behaviors or Other Problems | | | | |
| Privacy | 2.1 | 34.3 | 54.5 | 9.1 |
| Noise | 32.1 | 4.3 | 52.9 | 10.7 |
| Unleashed and roaming pets | 19.6 | 2.9 | 60.1 | 17.4 |
| Discourteous or rude users | 18.1 | 4.3 | 50.7 | 26.8 |
| Trespassing | 13.2 | 1.4 | 63.9 | 21.5 |
| Illegal motor vehicle activity on trail | 14.5 | 4.3 | 52.9 | 28.3 |
| Loitering | 12.9 | 2.1 | 59.3 | 25.7 |
| Illegal parking | 8.5 | 1.4 | 68.1 | 22.0 |
| Thefts | 5.6 | 1.4 | 73.2 | 19.7 |
| Vandalism | 4.9 | 1.4 | 72.7 | 21.0 |
| Drainage problems | 1.4 | 2.2 | 69.1 | 27.3 |
| Damage to farm crops/livestock | 1.5 | 0.0 | 72.6 | 25.9 |
| Actual liability suits | 0.7 | 0.0 | 67.4 | 31.9 |

Conclusions and Implications

The Pere Marquette Rail Trail (PMRT) adjoins the property of 277 non-corporate owners (primarily residences) and is near to 142 businesses. Many in these ownerships have seen an active railroad degrade into an abandoned industrial corridor and then be converted to an active rail-trail providing a paved surface for walking, running, bicycling, and in-line skating as well as connecting Coleman, North Bradley, Sanford and Midland by a non-motorized park and transportation system.

While two-thirds of the nearby businesses and half of the adjacent residents were supportive of the trail concept prior to construction, that support sagged during the planning and construction process. This may be due to relatively few (15 percent of businesses and 5 percent of residents) being actively involved during this phase. However, once the trail was built and officially opened support surpassed initial concept levels, as first hand knowledge of the trail was easy to obtain. It is especially revealing that today, almost a decade after the construction of the first section of the trail (City of Midland) support has risen to 84 percent of nearby businesses and 76 percent of residents. As managers have performed key management tasks, such as, surface maintenance, trash removal, litter cleanup and law enforcement patrol, nearby businesses and residents have gained confidence in the site and the rail-trail concept. Indeed 80 percent of adjacent resident households and 60 percent of nearby businesses now use the trail.

It is especially noteworthy that both nearby businesses and adjacent residents recognize that the trail is a county and community asset, even more than an asset for their employees and families. This awareness of assets that may not be a personal benefit, show a strong sense of community. However, managers, those in local government, police agencies, and others should not rest on their laurels. A minority, but a substantive one, noted key concerns related to noise, loss of sense of privacy, trespassing, illegal motor vehicle use, and loitering.

The PMRT is a park with hundreds of neighbors, each important. It is vital to address concerns in a way that enhances the recreational experiences of trail users, while protecting the rights of neighbors. Improved vegetative screening, rapid response to complaints concerning illegal activity such as motorized use and trespassing, positive education, and reinforcement of appropriate trail use and trail etiquette can continue to improve neighbor support for this highly regarded trail. Disregarding these now relatively small concerns can allow them to grow into significant problems, threatening the substantial support and goodwill of neighbors.

Appendix 1

Mail Questionnaire - Nearby Businesses

Survey of Midland County Businesses and Organizations
Located Near the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail

*Sponsored by Michigan State University, Michigan Dept. of Transportation,
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, and Midland County Parks*

Instructions

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey about your business or organization that is located near the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. Your responses are very important to Midland County and will also help other communities. Please read each question carefully before responding. Answer to the best of your ability and save any additional comments for the end.

The first set of questions asks about your business or organization.

1. How would you classify your business, organization, or operation that is next to the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? (*please T all that apply*)

- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL OR WAREHOUSE NOT-FOR-PROFIT
- CONSUMER SERVICES OR RETAIL SOMETHING ELSE (PLEASE DESCRIBE)_____

2. How long has your business or organization been at its current location (i.e., near the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail)? (*fill in number of years*)

_____ NUMBER OF YEARS OCCUPIED

3. How many full-time and part-time employees are employed? (*fill in a number*)

_____ FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES _____ PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

4. How would you describe the property in relation to the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail?

- TRAIL INTERSECTS PROPERTY
- ADJACENT OR RIGHT NEXT TO THE TRAIL
- NEAR THE TRAIL

5. How far is the main building from the actual trail? (*fill in a number in yards or miles*)

_____ YARDS OR _____ PORTION OF A MILE

6. Do you observe or service rail-trail users at your business, organization, or operation? (*please check no or yes and then continue with second part*)

- NO, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 7 YES, how would you describe this?
- POSITIVE, HOW? _____
- NEGATIVE, HOW? _____

7. Was the property near the rail-trail purchased or occupied before or during/after that section of the trail was built?(*please check no or yes and then continue with second part*)

- BEFORE, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 8 DURING OR AFTER, how much did the proximity to the trail influence buying the property? (*? one*)
- NO INFLUENCE
- POSITIVE INFLUENCE, EXPLAIN HOW?

- NEGATIVE INFLUENCE, EXPLAIN HOW?

The next questions ask about any involvement you or employees might have had in the development of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail.

8. Did you or employees attend any planning meetings during 1990-1994 for the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? *(please check one)*

NO YES NOT SURE NOT HERE DURING THAT TIME

9. How informed about the trail were you at the time of its design and construction? *(check one)*

Not informed at all Minimally informed Moderately informed Fully informed

10. Have you or any of your employees been involved in the planning, development or maintenance of the trail? *(please describe)*

NO CONTINUE TO QUESTION 11 YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE _____

11. Are you a member of the Friends of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? *(please check one)*

NEVER NO LONGER YES, CURRENTLY A MEMBER

12. Do you or any of your employees use the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail before work? During breaks? Or after work? *(check one for each time and then explain usage)*

No Yes If yes, what is the rail-trail used for?

BEFORE WORK _____

DURING BREAKS _____

AFTER WORK _____

13. How would you rate your level of support of the following items related to the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? *(please circle a response for each statement)*

| | Very opposed | Moderately opposed | Neutral | Moderately supportive | Very supportive |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| IDEA OF TRAIL BEFORE IT WAS BUILT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIL PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIL CONSTRUCTION PROCESS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIL SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS BUILT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

TRAIL TODAY

1

2

3

4

5

The next questions ask about how the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail might influence property values, the neighborhood and the community.

14. If you were to sell your property and facility in the near future, what influence do you think the rail-trail would have? *(please check one for each statement)*

SPEED AT WHICH PROPERTY

WOULD SELL ___ SLOWER ___ FASTER ___ NO DIFFERENCE

AMOUNT AT WHICH PROPERTY

WOULD SELL ___ LESS MONEY ___ MORE MONEY ___ NO DIFFERENCE

15. How would you rate the influence of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail on the following? *(please circle a response for each statement)*

| | Very negative influence | Moderate negative influence | Neutral | Moderate positive influence | Very positive influence |
|----------------|--|--|----------------|--|--|
| YOUR EMPLOYEES | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| NEIGHBORHOOD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| COMMUNITY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| MIDLAND COUNTY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

16. Overall, would you say having a facility near the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail is worse or better than being near the abandoned railroad right-of-way before it was converted into a rail-trail? *(please circle one response)*

| | | | | |
|------------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------------|
| Much worse | Moderately worse | Neutral | Moderately better | Much better |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Could you please explain why you selected your response? _____

17. Overall, how satisfied are you with having the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail next to your facility? *(please circle one response)*

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------|
| Very dissatisfied | Moderately dissatisfied | Neutral | Moderately satisfied | Very satisfied |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Study of Midland County Businesses and Residents

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it in the envelope or to C. Vogt, Michigan State Univ., 131 Natural Resources Bldg., East Lansing, MI. 48824-1222. If there is anything else to add, please include it on an additional sheet.

Appendix 2

Mail Questionnaire - Adjacent Landowner Residents

Survey of Midland County Residents Living Next to the
Pere Marquette Rail-Trail

*Sponsored by Michigan State University, Michigan Dept. of Transportation,
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, and Midland County Parks*

Instructions

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey about living next to the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. Your responses are very important to Midland County and will also help other communities understand rail-trails. Please read each question carefully before responding. Answer to the best of your ability and save any additional comments for the end.

The first set of questions asks about your property.

1. How would you describe your property in relation to the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail?
 ADJACENT OR RIGHT NEXT TO THE TRAIL
 TRAIL INTERSECTS PROPERTY

2. How far is your house from the actual trail? (*fill in a number in yards or miles*)

_____ YARDS OR _____ PORTION OF A MILE

3. How would you classify your property and dwelling that is near the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail?
(*please check all that apply*)

 RESIDENTIAL HOME
 APARTMENT OR MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING
 BUSINESS OPERATIONS
 AGRICULTURAL USE
 UNDEVELOPED LAND
 SOMETHING ELSE (PLEASE DESCRIBE) _____

4. During the summer, can you see the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail from your house?

| | | |
|------------|--------------|-----------|
| Not at all | Partial view | Full view |
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

5. How long have you occupied the property near the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? (*fill in number of years*)

_____ NUMBER OF YEARS OCCUPIED PROPERTY

6. Was your property near the rail-trail purchased or occupied before or during/after that section of the trail was built? (*please ? no or yes and then continue with second part*)

| | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> BEFORE, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> DURING/AFTER, how much did the proximity to the trail influence buying your house over other houses? (<i>? one</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> NO INFLUENCE <input type="checkbox"/> POSITIVE INFLUENCE, EXPLAIN HOW? _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NEGATIVE INFLUENCE, EXPLAIN HOW? _____ |
|---|---|

The next questions ask about any involvement you or members of your household might have had in the development of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail.

7. Did you or members of your household attend any of the planning meetings during 1990-1994 for the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? *(please check one)*

NO YES NOT SURE NOT HERE DURING THAT TIME

8. How informed would you say you and your household were at the time of design and construction of the rail-trail? *(please circle one)*

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Not informed at all | Minimally informed | Moderately informed | Fully informed |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

9. Have you or a household member been involved in the planning, development or maintenance of the trail? *(please check one and describe if your answer is "yes")*

NO, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 10 YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE _____

10. Are you a member of the Friends of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? *(please check one)*

NEVER NO LONGER YES, CURRENTLY A MEMBER

11. How would you rate your level of support of the following items related to the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? *(please circle a response for each statement)*

| | Very opposed | Mode- rately opposed | Neu- tral | Mode- rately support- ive | Very support- ive |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| IDEA OF TRAIL BEFORE IT WAS BUILT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIL PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIL CONSTRUCTION PROCESS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIL SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS BUILT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIL TODAY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

The next questions ask about how the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail might influence your property value, neighborhood and community.

12. If you were to sell your property in the near future, what influence do you think the rail-trail would have? *(please check one for each statement)*

SPEED AT WHICH PROPERTY

WOULD SELL SLOWER FASTER NO DIFFERENCE

AMOUNT AT WHICH

PROPERTY WOULD SELL LESS MONEY MORE MONEY NO DIFFERENCE

13. How would you rate the influence of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail on the following? *(please circle a response for each statement)*

| | Very negative influence | Moderate negative influence | Neutral | Moderate positive influence | Very positive influence |
|-------------------------------|--|--|----------------|--|--|
| OWN PERSONAL LIFE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS LIVES | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| YOUR COMMUNITY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| MIDLAND COUNTY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

14. Overall, would you say living near the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail is worse or better than living near the abandoned railroad right-of-way before it was converted into a rail-trail? *(circle one response)*

| | | | | |
|------------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------------|
| | Moderately worse | | Moderately better | |
| Much worse | | Neutral | | Much better |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Could you please explain why you selected your response? _____

15. Overall, how satisfied are you with having the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail in your neighborhood? *(please circle one response)*

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------|
| | Moderately dissatisfied | | Moderately satisfied | |
| Very dissatisfied | | Neutral | | Very satisfied |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

16. Please describe in your own words how the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail has affected the quality

of your neighborhood?

The next set of questions are about your involvement in outdoor recreation and usage of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail.

17. People recreate outdoors for many reasons and in many different ways. How important are the following reasons for outdoor recreation to you and your household? (please circle a response for each statement)

| <u>We recreate to:</u> | Not at all important | Slightly important | Moderately important | Very important | Extremely important |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| EXERCISE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| BE OUTSIDE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ENJOY NATURE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| PROMOTE HEALTH | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| RELAX | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| BE WITH OTHERS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| BE ALONE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| SPEND FREE TIME | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TRAIN FOR SPORTS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| CULTURAL STUDY AND EDUCATION | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| FUN AND ENJOYMENT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| EXPLORE AREAS OF COUNTY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

18. Do you or members of your family use the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail?

NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 20

YES, WHAT ONE REASON IN THE LIST ABOVE BEST DESCRIBES WHY YOU USE THE TRAIL? _____

CONTINUE TO QUESTION 19

19. How often do you and members of your household use the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? (*? one for each person in household*)

| | Few times a year | Once a month | Couple times a month | Weekly | Daily |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| YOURSELF | — | — | — | — | — |
| SPOUSE OR ANOTHER ADULT | — | — | — | — | — |
| CHILDREN (#1) | — | — | — | — | — |
| CHILDREN (#2) | — | — | — | — | — |
| CHILDREN (#3) | — | — | — | — | — |
| CHILDREN (#4) | — | — | — | — | — |

20. Do you or members of your household recreate on any other rail-trails? (*please ? one*)

___ NO ___ YES, WHICH ONES? _____

The next set of questions asks about your opinions about the use and maintenance of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail.

21. How would you rate the following conditions of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail? (*please circle a response for each statement*)

| | Very poor | Poor | OK | Good | Very Good |
|--|------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| REMOVAL OF TRASH FROM CONTAINERS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| PRESENCE OF LITTER ALONG TRAIL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| OVERALL MAINTENANCE OF THE TRAIL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| SENSE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR TRAILSIDE RESIDENTS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| PRIVACY OF TRAILSIDE RESIDENTS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

22. How has the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail influenced your household on the following items?

| <u>The Pere Marquette Rail-Trail has caused an:</u> | Increase of..... | Decrease of..... | No change | Not sure |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| VANDALISM | — | — | — | — |
| AESTHETIC VALUE | — | — | — | — |
| PRIVACY | — | — | — | — |
| HEALTH AND FITNESS | — | — | — | — |
| THEFTS | — | — | — | — |
| DAMAGE TO FARM CROPS/LIVESTOCK | — | — | — | — |
| PERSONAL ENJOYMENT | — | — | — | — |
| TRESPASSING | — | — | — | — |
| POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS | — | — | — | — |
| ACTUAL LIABILITY SUITS | — | — | — | — |
| ILLEGAL PARKING | — | — | — | — |
| RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES | — | — | — | — |
| ILLEGAL MOTOR VEHICLE USE ON TRAIL | — | — | — | — |
| NOISE | — | — | — | — |
| NATURE AND CULTURAL EDUCATION | — | — | — | — |
| UNLEASHED AND ROAMING PETS | — | — | — | — |
| DISCOURTEOUS OR RUDE USERS | — | — | — | — |
| LOITERING | — | — | — | — |
| DRAINAGE PROBLEMS | — | — | — | — |
| NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT | — | — | — | — |
| NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION WITHIN THE COUNTY | — | — | — | — |
| COMMUNITY PRIDE | — | — | — | — |
| PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE/ NATURAL AREAS | — | — | — | — |

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

— — — —

23. Have you had any specific trail-related problems with your property? *(please describe)*

NO, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 24 YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE _____

This final section of the survey asks for descriptive information on your household. This information will be kept in the strictest confidence and used for statistical purposes only.

24. What is your gender? MALE FEMALE

25. What are the ages of adults and children in your household? *(fill in age for each person)*

ADULT AGES: _____
 CHILDREN AGES: _____

26. How many years have you lived in Midland County? _____ YEARS IN LIFETIME

27. What is your present employment status? *(please check one)*

EMPLOYED, FULL-TIME RETIRED UNEMPLOYED STUDENT
 EMPLOYED, PART-TIME SELF-EMPLOYED HOMEMAKER OTHER

28. What was the highest grade or number of years you completed in school or college? *(please circle a number)*

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 8 9 10 11 12 | 13 14 15 16 | 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 |
| Thru High School | College/Tech. School | Graduate School |

29. Which statement best describes your total 1999 annual household income (from all sources and before taxes)? *(please check one)*

LESS THAN \$20,000 \$40,000 - \$59,999 \$ 80,000 OR MORE
 \$20,000 - \$39,999 \$60,000 - \$79,999 CHOOSE NOT TO ANSWER

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it in the envelope or to C. Vogt, Michigan State Univ., 131 Natural Resources Bldg., East Lansing, MI. 48824-1222. If there is anything else to add, please include it on an additional sheet.

Appendix 3

Businesses and Residents Accompanied Cover Letters: First and Second Mailings

23 March, 2000

«COMPANY_NAME»
«COMPANY_ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear Owner/Manager:

Michigan State University, the Michigan Department of Transportation and Midland County are cooperating to access the use and value of Rail-Trails. In particular, our study focuses on the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail in Midland County, stretching from Midland to Coleman.

We are surveying all business owners near the Pere-Marquette Rail-Trail. We acquired your name and address from recent tax records or by identifying businesses in the area.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about your experiences as a business or organization landowner next to the trail. Your responses are completely confidential and your name or business/organization will not be associated with any of the results.

Your responses is critical in developing a better understanding of how Rail-Trails impact local economies. The results will be heard by trail managers and those who fund trail development and management, including the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Please take the 10 or so minutes necessary to complete the questionnaire. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. However, if you choose not to participate, you will not suffer any penalty.

When you complete this questionnaire, please mail it back to us in the postage paid envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact either of us at the phone or fax number listed alongside, or use e-mail. If you need to contact the Michigan State University about this survey, chairperson Dr. David Wright, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, can be reached at 517-355-2180 or by e-mail at ucrihs@pilot.msu.edu. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Christine Vogt
Visiting Professor
vogtc@pilot.msu.edu

Charles Nelson
Associate Professor

Encl.

14 April, 2000

«COMPANY_NAME»
«COMPANY_ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear Owner/Manager:

Recently you should have received a survey in the mail from Michigan State University. We have not yet received your completed survey and are very interested in your opinions. If you mailed the survey already we must not have received it when this letter was written. If you have not completed the survey, please take the time to complete the survey enclosed.

We are surveying all business owners near the Pere-Marquette Rail-Trail. We acquired your name and address from recent tax records or by identifying businesses in the area.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about your experiences as a business or organization landowner next to the trail. Your responses are completely confidential and your name or business/organization will not be associated with any of the results.

Your response is critical in developing a better understanding of how rail-trails impact local economies. The results will be heard by trail managers and those who fund trail development and management, including the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Please take the 10 or so minutes necessary to complete the questionnaire. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. However, if you choose not to participate, you will not suffer any penalty.

When you have completed this questionnaire, please mail it back to us in the postage paid envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact either of us at 517-353-5190, or e-mail at vogtc@msu.edu. If you need to contact someone at Michigan State University other than the researchers about this survey, chairperson Dr. David Wright, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, can be reached at 517-355-2180 or by e-mail at ucrihs@pilot.msu.edu. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Christine Vogt, Ph.D.
Visiting Professor
vogtc@pilot.msu.edu

Charles Nelson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Encl.

March 22, 2000

«FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»
«OWNERS_ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear «FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»:

Michigan State University, the Michigan Department of Transportation and Midland County are cooperating to assess the use and value of rail-trails. In particular, our study focuses on the Pere-Marquette Trail in Midland County, stretching from Midland to Coleman.

We are surveying all adjacent landowners to the trail. We acquired your name and address from recent tax records. These records show that you own land near the Pere-Marquette Trail. If these records are incorrect or not current, please let us know. Also, if you have received a business or organization survey recently and you are also a resident, please complete both surveys.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about your experiences as a landowner next to the Pere-Marquette Rail-Trail, your household's use of the trail, and descriptive information about you and your household. If you own multiple parcels of land adjacent or near the rail-trail please respond to the parcel to which you reside or is most effected by the rail-trail. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results.

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Sincerely,

Christine Vogt
Visiting Professor
vogtc@msu.edu

Charles Nelson
Associate Professor

13 April, 2000

«FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»
«OWNERS_ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear «FIRST_NAME» «LAST_NAME»:

Recently you should have received a survey in the mail from Michigan State University. We have not yet received your completed survey and are very interested in your opinions. If you mailed the survey already we must not have received it when this letter was written. If you have not completed the survey, please take the time to complete the survey enclosed.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about your experiences as a landowner next to the Pere-Marquette Rail-Trail, your household's use of the trail, and descriptive information about you and your household. If you own multiple parcels of land adjacent or near the rail-trail please respond to the parcel to which you reside or is most effected by the rail-trail. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results.

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Appendix 4

Effects on the Quality of Life of Residents' Neighborhoods

Out of the 157 residents, 105 (66.9%) described how the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail has affected the quality of their neighborhood.

- A safe recreational area
- Added attraction
- Adds recreation (keeps walkers, bike riders, strollers off dangerous roads)
- All o.k.
- All old railroad property is much more attractive
- Appeals to families
- Attracts not only Midland Co. residents but also others (positive comments from others who have abandoned rails and would like them improved the same way)
- As the owner of 2 rental properties on the rail-trail, it is a positive selling point
- Both children and adults are able to walk, roller blade or bicycle with no fear of automobiles or interference.
- It's the best possible use of otherwise useless areas
- Brings community together
- Cleaned up somewhat better appearance
- Does not effect
- Don't know
- Don't know as it has any effect on quality of neighborhood
- Don't know as it has changed it
- Eight years ago I started a dahlia garden at the corner of Orchard and Main - adjacent to the rt. (over 4000 plants) The rt provides easy access to the garden
- Everyone in the neighborhood uses the rail-trail
- From health standpoint, more active year round use
- Cleaner, but sometimes also too managed
- Given people the opportunity to exercise in own area.
- Given kids and teens safe/fun opportunities (biking/blading)
- Gives the children a safe place to ride and roller blade
- Good
- Good for walking and riding bikes
- Has a positive affect, though our family does not use it a lot
- Has not affected quality of life, money could have been better spent to provide bike paths throughout community rather than one trail
- Big mistake to allow RR to abandon track, need to decrease not increase pollution
- Has turned the setting from a nice country living into a circus life
- Hasn't affected my neighborhood as far as I'm concerned

- Hasn't hurt it
- Hasn't seemed to have changed it any
- Is very convenient having there instead of walking or riding on the busy road
- Have no idea.
- If neighbors want let them pay assessments to use
- Ridiculous that trail is maintained on weekends, is this overtime for employees?
- Here before I came
- I can't speak for my neighbors, but I see neighbors every time I use it
- I do not believe it has had any effect on my neighborhood
- I don't live in neighborhood but my family uses trail and so do many of my tenants
- I guess most people like it
- I just didn't like the way I as used when I went to a meeting and asked about a right-of-way
- Also, the letter that told us to stay off when it was first purchased
- I have lost some of the privacy I could have.
- People using trail seem okay for most part.
- It gives access to some I'd prefer not to be able to look into my window
- I have met my neighbors in the area on the trail since I have moved here
- I like it because it gives kids and adults someplace to ride and walk instead of the streets
- I love to watch the many people who use the rail-trail
- I really don't know.
- I do know it is used a lot.
- We really have trouble with people not stopping at crossings.
- I see a lot of people using it for biking and walking
- Older people enjoy it
- I see people out on the trail almost every day (weather permitting) some come out alone, others with varying group sizes with family or friends - walking, biking, blading.
- People who would otherwise not get out or would be on the road less safely.
- I think it gets people outside and probably makes everyone using it mentally and physically stronger
- I think it provides a very nice place for families and young people to bike, walk and skate
- If you were in business say in Sanford would be a plus.
- If you were older living near the trail would be a minus.
- So far it appears to be a plus in most aspects.
- Improved relations with neighbors
- Improved site
- It's a magnet for people enjoying whole-some fun and exercise.
- It brings families together as they walk, run, bike and rollerblade
- It's a nice place to bike ride or roller blade
- It's like having a park right outside our front door, which is unusual in the country
- It's nice to be able to bike ride, roller blade and walk without the traffic
- It's the only place to safely ride bikes, roller blade or walk
- It brought a lot of noise, trash; they drink alcohol, use foul language, and run snowmobiles.
- We have no privacy, people are on the trail all hours of the night
- It gets most people on bicycles off the road where they can be a hazard.
- Place for lots of people to get exercise

- It gives people young and old something to do, walk, bike, etc.
- It has been a positive influence
- It has created a safer place for everyone because we did not have sidewalks for walking or biking activity
- It has given it "life"; made it more of a community.
- The timing was perfect, we are a health-minded culture
- It has improved the quality of our neighborhood
- It has offered a recreation area that is used by all age groups as well as families 1
- It hasn't changed much
- It is a cleaner and more pleasant appearance
- It is ok, only bad because of lowering the price of our land
- It is quieter
- It is well used by neighbors and people from out of this area1
- It keeps the walkers and bikers off the highway 9 months of the year, the other 3 months trail is full of snow and of no use
- It offers a means for children to travel safely to and from each other and town.
- Great for adult exercise
- It probably hasn't affected it at all for most people in the neighborhood, most of them moved here after the trail was already in.
- Looks better than railroad
- Made recreational opportunities more available
- Improved the r.r right of way greatly
- Mainly most of us use it to bike, walk or roller blade
- We see each other more than before
- More trash on ground
- More visibility of neighbors
- My dog and I use the trail for walks everyday.
- Bike on the trail.
- Met a good neighbor on the trail, who became a friend now.
- See many people using the trail.
- Easy and safe access for many
- My husband, son and I ride our bikes together, and also walk or walk our dogs along the trail. People also doing the same type of thing are friendly.
- It provides for a pleasant experience.
- Neighbors and handicapped must travel highway to my house because access was removed
- Neighbors passing back and forth from trail tend to socialize on the way; we have a handicapped neighbor who can get to our place in his Amigo by using the trail
- Nice open area, but has cut access to river (tittabawassee) for commercial development
- No effect
- No different, to a little better
- No direct access to property because of trail
- Noise and privacy
- None
- Not at all
- Not much change to neighborhood

- Only bad thing is it brings more snobby people and may be possible trouble around from this.
- I also live near rail-trail at another address (Dublin aver.) People get off at that road which I don't like, they should stay on rail-trail
- People are more aware of physical fitness today.
- People enjoy the outdoors.
- The rail trail is not "far" away
- People get out and exercise more
- Positive for children
- Probably the store is selling more pop, candy and chips and making money.
- Its main use seems to be women walking their dogs.
- Probably upgraded, gives children and families a place to go and be together
- Provided opportunity for physical exercise and enjoying nature of area.
- Has exposed users to beauty of our area
- Provides a safe place to walk or ride a bicycle
- Safe place for people to get out
- Safer for anyone to exercise or enjoy the outside
- Gets most people off the highway from traffic
- Some days it's good, some days it's bad.
- Late night people on it making noise.
- Good for exercise
- The children have a safe place to roller blade and ride bikes and us parents can be with them also.
- It's fun to meet our neighbors on the trail
- The trail improves the health of the community.
- Promotes activities within the community
- The view of the activities is pleasurable
- There is more camaraderie among neighbors as you see them out and about more
- Un-enforced leash laws
- Vandalism: broken windows
- Very good use of rail bed
- We enjoy seeing others use it
- We meet up with neighbors while we're on the rail-trail
- It allows us to travel around the community safely.
- You see more people enjoying
- It's nice and safe for kids

Appendix 5

Explanation of Why Living Next to the Rail-Trail is Better/Worse than Living Next to an Abandoned Railroad

Out of the 157 respondents (residents), 103 (65.6%) explained why living next to a rail-trail was better or worse than living next to an abandoned railroad. Of those respondents, 17 gave a negative explanation, 16 gave a neutral and 70 gave a positive explanation.

Negative:

- the railroad should never have been abandoned - saving weight on our roads
- Trails to ride should be built inner city first to encourage bicycling to work, etc.
- Safety for kids bicycling in town
- Because in building the trail our drive and access was taken away to the old road. Now we have to travel highway
- Because we had privacy with the railroad and now we don't
- Elimination of freight and passenger railway is detrimental to economy and environment
- I believe because of the rail-trail Our land has been rezoned - lowering the value of our land
- I could walk on the railroad without seeing people
- If the need for railroad occurs, it will have to be rebuilt which is impossible now
- It destroyed several varieties of wildflowers
- It takes money to maintain, plus people think our land is a right-of-way to trail
- Much property damage
- Noise, privacy, roaming pets
- People all hours, hollering, screaming (think someone's hurt)
- They don't maintain sides, weeds come in our yard and garage, noise
- Train noise was here and gone. Trail noise is here spring, summer and fall
- Used to wildlife along railroad, now it's mostly a dog run, no wildlife
- We have more people trespassing on our driveway with bicycles
- We used to enjoy hunting near there, now we are fearful of shooting in that direction

Neutral:

- Doesn't make any difference
- I am neutral, as I do not use
- I cannot see it - so no visual difference
- I miss hearing the train
- I walked the rails now I walk the trail
- If you are in the age group using the trail would be better, if not opposite
- It's across the road
- It doesn't matter

Neutral (continued):

- It has no effect on our life
- Liked trains
- Not much of a change - the trail is across the road
- People didn't walk their dogs and let them poop in my yard before, but we enjoy using it at the same time, so that makes me neutral
- Still miss the train, but rail-trail is quieter
- The same
- There are good days and bad days with people on the trail
- Use is not very heavy

Positive:

- Abandoned doesn't help
- Because it is well maintained
- Because it looks much neater and it has use now
- Better appearance
- Better it was used for something than nothing
- Better sites
- Better than growing up to brush and weeds
- Can now see people moving about
- Clean up area
- Cleaned up and better maintained right-of-way
- Cleaner
- Safer
- Community uses it
- Convenience of use for biking and walking without competing with motor vehicles
- Easy access for walking and biking
- Environmental improvement
- Great for family activities
- Provides personal exercise opportunities
- Esthetics
- No hunters
- Easy accessible
- Good for kids
- Good community use of property
- Place for people, families to go
- Good for village of Sanford
- I also own business on trail, property kept much better
- People enjoy
- I enjoy the rail-trail and I see many others do too
- I enjoy using the rail trail, the r.r. tracks were hard to walk on
- I enjoy using the trail but miss the privacy we used to have
- I loved the railroad trains and I'm glad they made use of old railway
- I used to ride my quad on the R.R. grade
- I walk the trail almost daily

- We enjoy watching the activity out of our windows

Positive (continued):

- It's convenient for walking and biking
- It's now a safe place to be
- It's now usable
- It adds a very positive view to our lives
- It gives people who use it great joy and relaxation
- It is a great improvement in appearance
- I enjoy the ready access to it for our activity (recreation) enjoyment
- It is a safe place for our family to ride
- It is nice to see people use it
- It is now maintained
- It is peaceful and clean
- It is amusing
- It is such a positive attitude for all ages
- It makes use of an otherwise useless piece of property
- Kept neat and clean
- Land is being used in a productive way
- Less of an eyesore
- Looks better
- Is quiet
- More attractive
- More exposure of the community
- More people can see and visit the Dahlia Hill gardens
- My children enjoy using the completed trail
- No traffic to contend with when riding bikes
- No trespassing when railroad.
- Use it every day now
- Not as much noise
- Old railroad ugly
- People enjoy is where they wouldn't the abandoned railroad
- Physical exercise is imperative to mental wellness; the trail offers that on a busy road area
- Property near trail has been converted to private use and has improved
- Rail-trail is much more attractive
- We can now use it
- Recreational opportunity
- Prevents further development
- That area, otherwise abandoned, is being used in a pleasant way
- Positive personal and family enrichment
- The abandoned railroad way did not affect us in any way, but we use the rail-trail all the time
- The care the trail receives is better than abandoned property
- The land is in good use and everyone gained from its use
- The property is being used for something positive to better our community
- The rail trail provides a much-needed public exercise path away from the streets and accessible to all

- The trail is well-groomed and connects the neighborhood
- The trail provides a safe, well cared for place for everyone to exercise.
- The abandoned bed didn't benefit anyone
- The train was a very negative, property value wise, without the train it is positive.
- This trail is heavily used
- To see good use made of the property
- No more train noise
- Usable vs. no use
- We enjoy biking, walking, skating
- We live in country and don't have sidewalks
- We usually see people use trail every day
- We use it
- We use it for walking and jogging
- We take pleasure in seeing others getting so much enjoyment from it
- You can actually use the rail trail

Appendix 6

Experienced Conflicts and Situations

28 (18.7%) residents indicated they had experienced trail related problems, 26 of those explained what these problems entailed.

- "Serious" cyclists who are rude and act as if they own the entire trail
- 2-3 acres land locked by trails, would like to have access to my taxable property
- Broken camper window (rocks)
- Stolen bicycle
- Horses terrorized on four occasions, stones thrown at barn (these are local people, most users are courteous)
- City removed our driveway obtained an easement from the street behind, now our drive is one block long and city does not maintain. We have to shovel snow for a block long.
- Do not want horse-trail.
- This will reduce wildlife habitat
- Kids throwing stones, so far not at house, but you wonder if or when it may happen
- Litter that comes with more people around - but some people pick it up
- Loud people late at night
- My driveway crosses the Rail-Trail and I would like to have stop signs (instead of yield) to warn company/delivery people.
- Noisy, nosy people and dogs annoying me when I try to relax in my front yard. I moved to the country for peace and quiet, try that near a rail-trail.
- Northwood students drive on it with cars and snowmobiles
- Our access is gone (driveway across to old road)
- People use it to access our property
- Dogs are walked over to our grass to poop, horses too.
- Snowmobiles run through our yard.
- Men snoop in my windows on purpose. Before they had no reason to walk by my house.
- People use my property for access to and from trail.
- Person using my toilet
- Someone made a trail across my woods. I didn't do anything about it
- The only problem is the initial letter we received to tell us to stay off the property, which we all thought was very rude and gave us a negative view of the whole thing.
- They told me I was planting too close to trail
- Trespassing across yard to get to trail
- Trespassing
- Theft
- Vandalism
- Unleashed dogs

- No privacy in own yard
- Noise
- Vandalism (6 broken windows, 1 door broken, \$200 damage to jeep)
- Wanted to put an access driveway across it so children could build homes
- Weeds
- Trash
- Loud noise (swearing)
- Dogs wandering all over
- We aren't allowed to mow and keep it clean across from us, we all kept it mowed when we had trains.
- Wind blown litter
- Young adults hanging around in the parking lot, not using the trail, making noise