



THE SENATE
STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHAEL PRUSI
SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

April 29, 2010

38TH DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 30036
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909-7536
PHONE: (517) 373-7840
DISTRICT OFFICE: (906) 524-4551
TOLL-FREE (IN-DISTRICT): (866) 305-2038
FAX: (517) 373-3932
senmprusi@senate.michigan.gov

COMMITTEES:
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
AND REFORM (MVC)
HUNTING, FISHING AND
OUTDOOR RECREATION (MVC)
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
SENATE FISCAL AGENCY
BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Chairman Daniel R. Elliot III
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

RE: Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad Company – April 9, 2010 petition to abandon approximately 42.93 miles of rail line in Ontonagon and Houghton Counties of Michigan
STB Docket No. AB-415-2X

Dear Chairman Elliot,

We write today to voice our opposition to a petition recently filed by the Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad Company (E&LS) before the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to abandon 42.93 miles of rail line connecting the communities of Ontonagon and Sidnaw in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

In December of last year, Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation (SSCC) announced that it would be permanently closing the SSCC Ontonagon Mill, a profitable facility that employed over 200 local residents in a county with a population of just under 7,000 people. The closure of the Ontonagon Mill was devastating to the local area economy, and the Village of Ontonagon is working feverishly to locate buyers interested in acquiring the Mill for reuse. However, should the STB approve the E&LS petition for abandonment, the absence of available rail transportation would severely hinder both those efforts and future economic development efforts in the region as well.

The availability of rail transportation is vital to the natural resource-based economy of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Our vibrant forest products industry and other area businesses rely on the E&LS railroad to serve their transportation needs, and the State of Michigan has provided significant financial assistance to the E&LS railroad to meet those needs as well. As legislators representing Michigan's Upper Peninsula in the Michigan Legislature, we want the E&LS railroad to succeed and prosper. However, we want to reiterate our opposition to the efforts of the E&LS railroad to abandon Ontonagon and Houghton Counties, and we respectfully request that the STB hold a field hearing on this matter in the Western Upper Peninsula in order to provide those who will be directly impacted by the proposed abandonment the opportunity to voice their concerns in person.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL PRUSI
Senate Democratic Leader
38th District

MIKE LAHTI
State Representative
110th District