



# THE STOUFFER REPORT

**Senator Bill Stouffer**  
**Capitol Building, Room 332**  
Senate District 21  
**For the Week of:**  
October 29, 2007

Jefferson City, MO 65101  
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## **An Innovative Economic Development Project for North Missouri**

Economic development projects are an exciting tool for cities small and large to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for their citizens. These projects create and help retain jobs as well as support growing incomes for a community's tax base. The city of LaPlata, located in Macon County, is the potential site for a 170-acre railroad-themed resort that would create an estimated 400 to 500 jobs for the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> Senatorial District.

LaPlata was established as a trading post in 1827. The North Missouri Railroad (later known as the Wabash Railroad) came to town 40 years later. The Santa Fe Railroad arrived in La Plata in 1887, passing through the town on its way from Chicago to Kansas City. The Wabash railroad is no longer running. However, the Amtrak station is still operating on the Santa Fe rail system. Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* makes a stop in LaPlata on its way from Chicago to Los Angeles. Volunteers in La Plata have restored the art deco depot to its original appearance and the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe lines still pass through.

So it seems fitting that a town with such historic railroad significance hosts the railroad-themed attraction called the Silver Rails Resort. Current plans for the retreat include a resort hotel housing 500 to 700 guest rooms, a 60,000-square-foot convention center, a health and wellness center, an indoor waterpark, a camping area that includes secluded cabins, a shopping district, restaurants, as well as a rail and Missouri Arts and Cultural History museum. The Silver Rails Conference and Events Center, located in the old Wheatcraft Motor Company Building in downtown LaPlata, is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2008.

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Local couple Thomas and Kelly Marshall are owners of the [Depot Inn & Suites](#), which is tucked away near the remaining railroad track in town. The Marshalls, together with TrainWeb, spearheaded the economic development project.

This attraction not only benefits the community of LaPlata, but surrounding areas will see the positive effects as well. Silver Rails Resort will offer day trips to Hannibal, the boyhood home of celebrated author Mark Twain; Walt Disney's childhood home, Marceline; and nearby Amish communities. A train will run through the resort to pick up guests from the art deco Amtrack station and take them to their guestrooms, making Silver Rails Resort the only major attraction in the country where visitors can get on a train and ride the rails to their vacation retreat.

Another benefit to this economic development project is that it will use totally green energy — environmentally-friendly, renewable, and non-polluting energy sources, including the use of a wind farm and solar panels.

Rural Missouri counties can have the same entrepreneurial spirit and creativity as larger cities like Kansas City and St. Louis. LaPlata is great example of how a rural Missouri community can retain the beauty and serenity of a small city while at the same time use an economic development project like the Silver Rails Resort to bring in new businesses and restore the downtown area to the way it looked in the past.

For more information about economic development opportunities for your community or if you have questions or comments about any other issue, please call my office toll free (866) 768-3987 or send me an e-mail at [bstouffer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:bstouffer@senate.mo.gov).

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