

November 28, 2010



[Train storage irks residents \(http://record-eagle.com/local/x675532851/Train-storage-irks-residents\)](http://record-eagle.com/local/x675532851/Train-storage-irks-residents)

City asked to explore options on dormant cars

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TRAVERSE CITY — Railroad cars haven't moved for months on the tracks near Dan Welburn's condominium complex.

He estimates the 15 or so cars have been dormant since July, apparently there for storage. Now he and other residents of Lake Ridge condos, on the western edge of Boardman Lake in Traverse City, want them gone.

"They could be moved down farther," Welburn said. "They could be stored there, but at any rate, the question has to remain: Why do they have to be stored in the city in the first place?"

City commissioners will take up the issue Monday at a study session.

Monday's agenda lists City Manager R. Ben Bifoss and City Attorney Karrie Zeits as presenters on the topic. Neither could be reached for comment Friday.

Commissioner Jody Bergman anticipates hearing more about the city's options for dealing with the train cars.

She said she doesn't yet know what might be possible, since the city doesn't have jurisdiction over the tracks.

"I know they made an attempt to look at the different avenues," Bergman said. "I don't think anyone wants the city to become a storage yard for abandoned rail cars."

Local governments are limited to act when federal transportation corridors come into play, Mayor Chris Bzdok said.

He wants to know whether the city can file a complaint in such a situation, and whether enforcing local blight ordinances on the rusting cars is allowed.


"It's not being used for transportation. It's being used for storage," he said. If commissioners agree the issue is important, "then the city staff can turn up the heat a little bit."

A similar situation occurred about two years ago near Grawn, when a set of passenger cars was stopped along U.S. 31. Great Lakes Central Railroad, of Owosso, owned those cars.

Welburn said he believes the company also owns the cars near his condominium. Railroad officials could not be reached for comment Friday.

The area near Welburn's condo is situated near residential- and industrial-zoned space.

Residents wouldn't mind the cars pushed down the line, out of their view. Welburn said they have contacted city leaders and the Great Lakes rail company.

"I would hope that maybe we could start to work on this a little more aggressively," he said. "They are using our backyard for a scrap pile." 

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