Tiffany Michels: In a November 1979 Houston County news article recalling the glory days of the railroad in Houston County, Ken Pritchard wrote, "The glory days of railroading are gone." Today like vultures, the state and private parties are picking over the bones of a fallen giant. In rural areas like Houston County, there isn't [00:00:30] much left except rusting rails, dilapidated bridges and rotting ties.

Tiffany Michels: [00:41] Things weren't always that way. There was a time however, when children dreamed of working for the railroad much in the same way children dream of running away to join the circus or becoming a doctor or fireman. Section crew, road crew, or conductor, railroading meant a good paying stead job. A job that was respected in the community. The [00:01:00] railroad left its mark on Houston County. It provided a vital economic communication and even a social link for residents.

Tiffany Michels: [01:17] And if the railroad laid tracks to a town, that town was considered to be well on its way to being a thriving established community. [00:01:30] Even today, the railroad is still having an impact on Houston County. Now that the right of Milwaukee Road's right of away has been abandoned, a battle is shaping up over who will gain control the railroad land. The state is considering turning it into a recreational trail. Adjacent land owners want the land for agriculture.

Tiffany Michels: [01:53] The Old Milwaukee Road. Well, today it's the incredibly popular Root River Bike Trail. Its trailhead is in the city [00:02:00] of Houston.