

1. Introduction

For more than a century, a large railroad yard has existed in Southwest Detroit in an area bounded by Greenfield Road, John Kronk, Livernois, and Dix. This yard, which was originally developed to handle box car traffic, is just a short distance west of the junction of mainline railroad tracks running east-west and those running roughly north-south (Figure 1). It is now undergoing transformation with an expanded intermodal freight capacity by the railroads.

A significant volume of freight being moved by railroads today is delivered to the rails by trucks. Following the train trip, it is again moved by truck to its final destination. These movements between rail and truck are termed intermodal freight transportation. The most common movements involve transferring containers or trailers between railroad flatcars and trucks. This activity usually takes place at a location called an intermodal terminal.

The Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal project (DIFT) is proposed to facilitate, at one location, development of a complex of terminals operated by the four Class I Railroads that serve Michigan.¹ The purpose is to provide efficient intermodal service to business and industry.

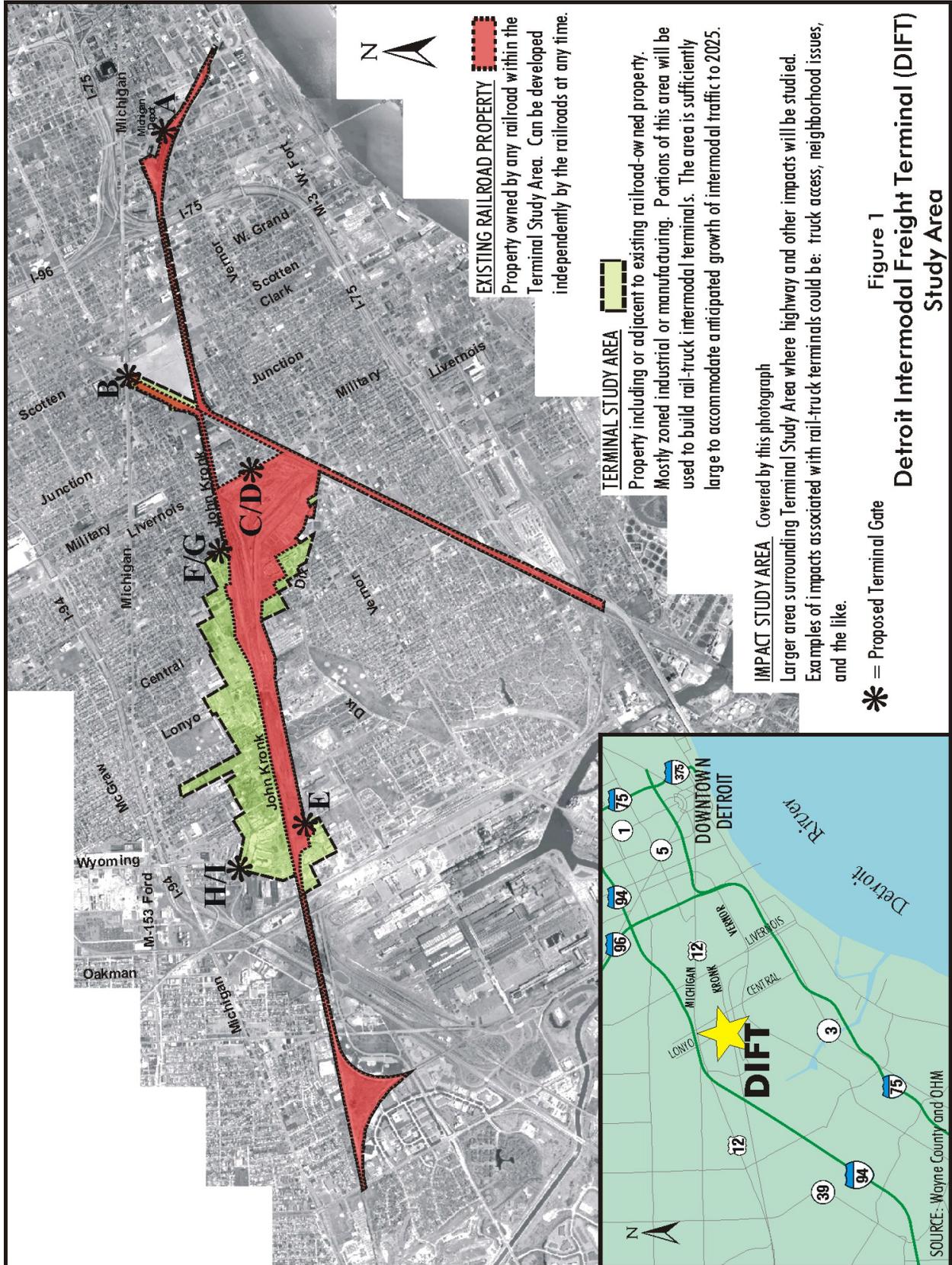
Presently, there are two intermodal terminals in close proximity in Southwest Detroit: Detroit-Livernois Yard (operated by CSX and Norfolk Southern) and the newly-created Canadian Pacific Expressway Terminal behind the Michigan Central Depot just north of Bagley (operated by Canadian Pacific Railway). These form the nucleus of what is referred to as the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal, the DIFT. The DIFT project would require acquisition of some properties (see Figure 1) to provide an opportunity for all Class I railroads to participate. It would also include infrastructure improvements to improve access to the site from the freeway network.

There are five other intermodal freight terminals in the Detroit and Southeastern Michigan area (Figure 2). Recent information gathered for the DIFT project indicates the railroads are currently shifting their operations, in part, to the Detroit-Livernois Yard—the site of the proposed DIFT. Information also points to capacity deficiencies at some existing yards.

In light of these conditions, it is important that the movement of freight that drives jobs and economic growth in southeast Michigan be facilitated. It is also important to respect the quality of life of the residents of Southwest Detroit/East Dearborn where the DIFT is proposed to be located.

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has studied this intermodal freight situation over a number of years. The results of these studies have led MDOT to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate alternatives and their related impacts to address this growing commerce.

¹CSX, Norfolk Southern, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific



1.1 Purpose of Information

This Scoping Information identifies issues of interest that may result from property acquisition, infrastructure improvements, and changes in access patterns.

The proposed action and its impacts will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The process of gathering project-related data for the environmental analysis began with the Mercer Management Consulting Reports of 1993/1994 and continued through the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Feasibility Study (available at www.mdot.state.mi.us/projects/dift_phase2/), which was completed in 2001. This packet identifies the social, economic and environmental issues that are expected to be factors in evaluating the proposed improvements. Impact categories are identified. The level of significance of any impact category as presented herein may change as more data become available.

1.2 Scoping/Review Comments

Scoping is an integral part of the environmental impact analysis. It allows the early exchange of information among governmental agencies and the public at all levels and provides a mechanism to identify potential environmental issues at an early stage in the assessment process. For this study, the scoping meeting will introduce the MDOT/Consultant Project Team; define the project schedule; and, solicit improvement concepts as well as key issues of an economic, environmental, social, and/or transportation nature. A list of agencies invited to the scoping meeting is contained in the appendix.

1.3 Studies and Evaluation of Alternatives

Technical studies will be prepared to contribute to the development of the Draft EIS. Technical memoranda will also be prepared, as appropriate, for the following impact categories:

- Traffic
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Historic/Archaeological Resources
- Hazardous Materials

1.4 Future Procedures

Development of practical alternatives and the accompanying environmental analysis will be summarized in the Draft EIS. It will be the subject of comment at a public hearing. Based on input from the public, and other communications with stakeholders and agencies, further refinements will be made to arrive at the recommended alternative. A Final EIS and a Record of Decision will be prepared after the Public Hearing.