



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Watco to Acquire Great Lakes Central Railroad

Pittsburg, Kansas (March 6, 2025) – Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLC) and Watco Railroad Company Holdings, Inc. (Watco) announce an agreement whereby Watco will acquire ownership of the GLC, the largest Class III regional railroad in Michigan with approximately 400 miles of track stretching through Central and Northern Michigan. Watco has been an equity investor in the GLC since 2013.

“The Great Lakes Central Railroad has been a vital part of Michigan’s transportation network and both my father, Louis P. Ferris, Jr., and I have been deeply passionate about its role in connecting industries and communities,” said Jennifer Ferris, President and CEO of the Great Lakes Central Railroad. “Thanks to our tremendous team, GLC has experienced remarkable growth over the years, strengthening our service and expanding our capabilities. With Watco as a long-time partner since 2013, we are confident they will honor the legacy we have built while continuing to serve Michigan’s industries and communities with the same dedication and excellence.”

The rail lines run north from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to Cadillac with branches to Thompsonville, Traverse City, and Petoskey. Serving 15 Michigan counties, the GLC interchanges with the CSXT, Mid-Michigan Railroad, Huron and Eastern Railway, Canadian National, and Watco’s Ann Arbor Railroad which provides connectivity to Norfolk Southern. The GLC ships a diverse range of commodities including soybeans, corn, and other agricultural products, fertilizers, plastics, and LPG.

“Watco has a long history of working with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) through its two other short line railroads in Michigan,” said Peter Anastor, MDOT Office of Rail director. “We look forward to growing our strong partnership with Watco in preserving and enhancing critical rail service in Michigan, while providing excellent service to customers along the state-owned rail corridor between Ann Arbor and Northern Michigan.”

The agreement will enhance Watco’s presence in the state of Michigan, complementing services provided by Watco’s Grand Elk and Ann Arbor railroads.

“We are committed to honoring the history of the GLC and building upon our strong partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation and our valued customers,” said Watco CEO Dan Smith. “This acquisition allows us to further support and grow our Michigan customer base, and we look forward to continuing the legacy of excellence that the Ferris family has established.”

Watco will begin operations of the line pending approval by the Surface Transportation Board.

About Watco

Watco is a leading transportation service and logistics company. Meeting customer needs on a day-to-day basis has enabled Watco to continually grow throughout our more than 40-year history. Today, Watco provides rail, transloading, terminal and port, and logistics services for customers throughout North America and Australia. For more information, visit www.watco.com.

Media Contact: Tracie VanBecelaere, Watco | (620) 704-1288 | media@watco.com