

# THE MICHIGAN PASSENGER

Your source for passenger rail news since 1973

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Volume 40, Number 4



Michigan Association  
of Railroad Passengers

[www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)

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## Subsidy for Amtrak services triples

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

On Oct. 1 the costs of Amtrak service to Michigan taxpayers jumped from approximately \$8 million to \$25 million a year.

The increase in cost was due to section 209 of the Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act of 2008 (PRIIA) which stipulates that states must cover more of the difference between revenue and expenditures on routes under 750 miles long serving their state.

Prior to the implementation of PRIIA's section 209, Michigan was already covering the difference with a subsidy for the Pere Marquette serving Grand Rapids to Chicago and the Blue Water serving Port Huron to Chicago but not the Wolverine serving Pontiac to Chicago. Amtrak covered all of the difference between revenue and expenditures on the Wolverine route prior to the current fiscal year which began on Oct. 1.

When PRIIA was signed

into law in 2008, some rail advocates, including many MARP members, were worried that the Michigan legislature might not be agreeable to increasing the state's subsidies.

"We have a legislature that is very open to rail in general," said Tim Hoeffner who is Director of Rail at the Michigan Department of Transportation. "It is maybe one of the friendliest legislatures to rail in my time at MDOT."

(See PRIIA, page 3)



**WORKING ON THE RAILROAD.** Norfolk Southern track gangs replace rails and ties in West Dearborn in an effort by the Michigan Department of Transportation to bring speeds on the tracks between Dearborn and Kalamazoo from 79 mph to 110 mph. Read an account of the work being performed on page 8. (Photo by Steve Sobel)

## MDOT accelerates track work

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

Transportation officials are hoping to squeeze two construction years of work into one season this fall along the Michigan-owned rail line between Dearborn and Kalamazoo.

Amtrak, the Michigan Department of Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railway are coordinating their efforts to rehabilitate a major portion of the railroad by Thanksgiving by opening up long construction windows four days a week between freight and passenger traffic during the mornings and afternoons.

"This work provides great

benefits from more reliable track conditions and eliminates the need for similar track disruptions next year between Dearborn and Kalamazoo," said Al Johnson, MDOT Rail Operations Manager.

The goal of the construction blitz is to get passenger train speeds up to 110 M.P.H. by 2016 and cut the travel time between Detroit and Chicago by more than two hours.

When all 2013 phases of the project are complete in November, more than 30 miles of new track and 130,000 new crossties will be installed by crews working ten-hour days.

Wolverine trains #350 and #353 have seen the bulk of delays and schedule changes during the construction. Some trains have been cancelled outright while others have terminated at Jackson with buses transporting passengers to their final destinations.

Amtrak and MDOT officials warn that all Michigan trains can be affected by the construction and urge passenger to check with Amtrak at the Amtrak website or automated phone service when making final preparations to leave for the train station.

**Turn to page 8 to see and read more about the construction.**

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## The Michigan Passenger

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The Michigan Passenger welcomes submissions on passenger rail issues for publication. Material sent for publication should be sent to our Editor at: editor@marp.org.

Clippings from newspapers and magazines must include the publication's name and date. Photos sent in by e-mail should be in JPEG format.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. To subscribe to this publication, join MARP by filling out the application below. All MARP members receive a copy of this publication sent to their home or business.

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## About MARP...

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) was established in 1973 as a consumer advocacy group to improve intercity rail and bus service, improve local transit and encourage the preservation of historic railroad stations.

MARP is not affiliated with Amtrak, the railroads, governments or any political party. MARP is incorporated as a Michigan non-profit organization and is exempt from federal income tax under the IRS code, 501(c)(3) as a charitable educational organization. Dues and donations to MARP may be tax-deductible in accordance with the IRS code.

MARP is an all-volunteer organization. Its membership consists of passengers and citizens who want a viable, balanced transportation system in Michigan. We can all use the help we can get!

<http://www.marp.org>

[marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/michigan-association-of-railroad-passengers>

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### MARP Membership Application 2013

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## PRIIA (Continued from page 1)

The state legislature included the increased subsidy when it approved the 2013-2014 fiscal year budgets last spring without political rancor which seemed to surround comparatively smaller increases in the subsidy during prior legislative sessions.

If anything, PRIIA has seemed to have the effect of improving amenities on Michigan trains.

In August, Amtrak announced it would be adding a “quiet car” to the Wolverine trains.

The quiet car gives passengers a place to relax without being disturbed by other passengers using electronics, phones or talking.

In September, Amtrak announced it is offering bicycle ser-

vice on the Blue Water. For a \$10 fee, passengers can bring their bicycle onto the train and leave it on a rack in the café car.

Advocates of bicycle service such as the League of Michigan Bicyclists say that the service helps bridge the gap between the train station and the passenger’s final destination or origination point.

MDOT is working with Amtrak to introduce Wi-Fi service this

January to the Wolverine trains.

MDOT’s share of the cost of the service will be \$1 million which Hoeffner said should be recouped within a year through increased ticket revenues from increases in ridership.

“There definitely seems to be a relation between the amenities and PRIIA. There seems to be an effort by Amtrak to increase ridership on state-funded trains,” he said.

## Ridership gain squeezes parking in Port Huron

BY JOHN DeLORA

It’s no secret that ridership on the Michigan-supported Blue Water has been soaring. Ridership through the end of July is up 9.6 percent over the same period last year.

The Blue Water ridership surge is causing parking problems at the Port Huron Amtrak station.

The 60 space parking lot has been overwhelmed, leading Port Huron officials to begin considering options, including:

- Expanding the existing lot (very difficult but probably possible, depending on willingness of nearby landowners to sell at a reasonable price),
- Establishing an off-site lot with a shuttle bus connection to the station (not likely to be popular with passengers),
- or building a new station with a much larger parking area.

What is the cause of this ridership surge?

### Grant denied

The Western Michigan Inter-city Passenger Rail Connectivity and Expansion Initiative learned in September that it was turned down for a \$58.3 million federal grant.

The Western Michigan group, led by the city of New Buffalo, applied for the federal Transportation and Investment Generating Economic Grant (TIGER) to build a 19 mile-long passing track between Niles and Dowagiac and a connecting track between Amtrak-owned tracks and CSX tracks in New Buffalo which would allow Amtrak’s Pere Marquette to stop at the new station in the city.

The total cost of the project was projected at \$71.9 million with the state of Michigan covering the difference between the federal grant.

New Buffalo Mayor Migs Murray said that the city intends to re-apply if the TIGER grant program continues.



**CRAMMED IN.** Some passengers boarding Amtrak’s Blue Water train in Port Huron end up parking on the lawn outside the station because all of the designated parking is full. (Photo by John DeLora.)

A recent midweek survey of the Port Huron lot showed cars parked everywhere possible, including in between the Amtrak station tracks and the busy CN freight mainline close by. The survey revealed 113 cars at the station; the surprise was that 92% of the cars bore Canadian license plates.

Why are our neighbors using Amtrak so heavily?

A check of Amtrak and VIA fares provides an answer.

The VIA coach fare from London, ON to Vancouver is \$587.00 CDN, while the Amtrak coach fare from Port Huron to Vancouver (using the Empire Builder) is \$384.00 US. If a passenger is not time-sensitive, they can lower the cost even further by using the following routing: Port Huron to Chicago, then Chicago-Los Angeles on the Southwest Chief, then the Coast Starlight to Seattle, then the bus connection to Vancouver. Cost:

\$316.00 US. This roundabout routing is offset by the much lower cost and the spectacular scenery on the Coast Starlight. Canadians can save \$203.00 by using the Empire Builder route and a whopping \$271.00 by using the Southwest Chief routing.

In the meantime, passengers might be better off having someone drop them off at the station, rather than taking a chance on absolutely no spaces being available.



**ALMOST DONE.** A CN freight train passes underneath the walkway to passenger boarding platform at the new Troy Transit Center. Construction at the center continued last summer despite continued legal fights over ownership of the property. In May, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled that the developer of an adjacent shopping center has title to the transportation center land. The city of Troy and Grand Sawka Properties have been fighting over the transit center property since 1999. The city has appealed the latest ruling to the Michigan Supreme Court, and has begun preparations for condemnation proceedings. (Photo by Steve Sobel.)



## Past, present and future

# Englewood is a major crossroads in the Midwest

BY CLARK CHARNETSKI

In the 1934 Howard Hawks film comedy "Twentieth Century" once-great Broadway producer Oscar Jaffe (John Barrymore) and his entourage of business manager Oliver Webb (Walter Connolly) and publicist Owen O'Malley (Rosecoe Karns) are aboard the world's most famous train as it pulls out of Chicago's LaSalle St. Station, one step ahead of the Cook County Sheriff. Six minutes later, as Webb and O'Malley are discussing their plight, the train begins to slow down and stop. The conductor calls out "EN-GLEWOOD."

At Englewood Jaffe's one-time protégée and now famous Broadway and Hollywood actress Lily Garland (Carole Lombard) is seen climbing aboard. She could become Jaffe's salvation if he played his cards right.

What is this station "Englewood" and why did many of America's most noteworthy passenger trains stop at this little station just seven miles south of the loop? And why does the \$141 million "Englewood Flyover," now under construction, promise to add significantly to the solution to the snarled Chicago rail traffic?

As you leave Union Station in Chicago on Amtrak heading for Michigan, just after the train goes over the Dan Ryan Expressway you will notice some jostling as you cross over the former Rock Island tracks which now carry Metra trains from LaSalle St Station to the southwest suburbs. That crossing is Englewood. You are on the tracks of the former Pennsylvania Railroad line from Chicago to Fort Wayne and the East Coast. It is now owned by Norfolk Southern (NS.)

For about another ten miles, this NS line also follows the right of way of the former New York Central. Those tracks were removed when the New York Central and the Pennsylvania Railroad merged into the Penn Central. At this point the line now splits with the left tracks going east to Porter, Toledo and New York. (At Porter Michigan trains head to Michigan.)

Heading toward Chicago, New York Central (NYC) passenger trains followed curved connecting tracks onto the Rock Island tracks to get to either La-



Salle Station or Grand Central Station in the Loop. Various NYC trains used both stations. The NYC-RI junction was at 61st St. tower.

In the late 1800s many of the railroad tracks on the South Side were raised to be above street level. The elevated rapid transit line that gives the Loop its name was extended south to 63rd Street. A branch from this line was also built to Jackson Park, a Chicago World's Fair site. The area around the intersection of 63rd and Halsted streets became a commercial center for a growing working class neighborhood that was renamed Englewood.

Englewood junction lies at 63rd Street between Halsted and State streets. A small station was built on a triangular shaped piece of land surrounded by the Rock Island, Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads. It was located on the south side of 63rd Street and was jointly owned by the three railroads. The Rock Island and Pennsylvania lines cross at nearly right angles to each other and are carried over 63rd Street on bridges. The curved connecting track of the New York Central forms the eastern boundary of the station.

The station was a two story affair trimmed with Bedford, In-

diana limestone with front door access from 63rd Street. When it was built there was a street car line on 63rd Street. The first floor contained mail and baggage facilities and a stairway to the second floor. Part of the station was essentially built into a hillside. Just to the west of the station was a driveway to a small parking area. From track level the station looked like it came out of a hole in the ground and 63rd Street looked like it was in a trench. The first floor of the station was surrounded by retaining walls.

Most of what has been written about Englewood concentrates on the trains that used it. The author could find little about the station itself. The most extensive article was written by George W. Hilton for the December 1980 issue of Trains Magazine. "The One Best Place to Watch Trains" is an account of his train watching days in the 1940s. I recall stopping at Englewood on New York Central trains between Chicago and Ann Arbor. I only visited the station after it had closed just shortly before it was demolished.

The portion of the second floor directly above the first contained the stairway and a concourse/waiting room. Attached to that second floor por-

On the left, a vintage postcard shows Englewood Union Station in the early 20th Century. Downtown Chicago is visible in the distance. The station is gone in the modern view of this same site and it would include the Dan Ryan Freeway going to the horizon. (Postcard from Clark Charnetski's collection.) Below, the approaches to the new Englewood Flyover are finished and are awaiting the installation of the bridge segment. (Photo by Steve Sobel.)

tion were three enclosures built on the elevated ground adjacent to the main part of the station. There was one for each of the three main railroads. These contained additional heated waiting areas and had doorways leading to each of their respective platforms. It was not unlike the gates at airports. Canopies sheltered the three platforms, which were at top-of-rail height. Some Nickel Plate trains also used the NYC facilities and tracks at Englewood.

Why did famous trains like the Twentieth Century Limited, the Broadway Limited and the Twilight Limited all stop at Englewood?

Englewood provided a transfer point between Rock Island trains from the west and the trains of two major railways to the east. In the movie "Twentieth Century" the actress Lily Garland was traveling from Los Angeles to New York City. Even though a traveler had planned to transfer in the loop, if his inbound train were running behind schedule he could still make the connection at Englewood. The Rock Island had an extensive commuter service, so passengers living in suburbs served by the Rock Island would find Englewood handy.

(See ENGLEWOOD, page 5)



# South Of The Lake planning moves forward

BY HUGH GURNEY

Consultants HNTB have narrowed the options to four possible routes for improved passenger train service between Porter Indiana and Chicago Union Station, MDOT spokesman Mohammed Alghurabi and HNTB presenter Matt Webb reported at a briefing in Dearborn on Sept. 24.

Each of these four routes meets the basic requirements of the year-long study -- two parallel tracks to be used exclusively by passenger trains that provide frequent and reliable service at speeds of up to 110 mph.

Up to 56 trains a day will use these tracks as they operate between Chicago Union Station and such diverse points as Kalamazoo, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis and beyond.

Over the coming winter, HNTB consultants will apply even more stringent criteria as they weed out the weaker alternatives and come up with a single, preferred alternative.

A Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement will then be drafted describing all aspects of the alternative including possible drawbacks such as moveable bridges, impacts on the neighborhoods the project passes through and all impacts on the natural and built environment.

In tandem, a Service Development Plan will be drafted covering such factors and likely ridership and sources of funding.

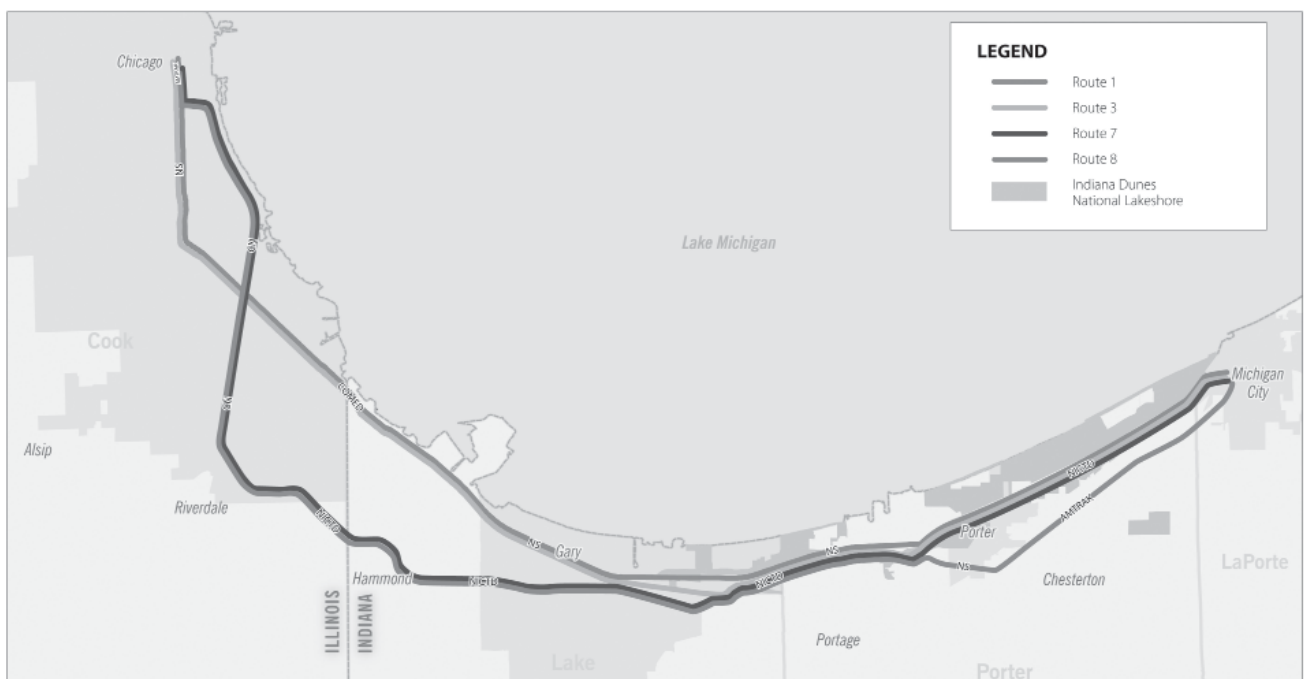
Both the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement and the Service Development Plan should be completed by the end of 2014 and submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration.

The FRA will then make a Record of Decision as to the preferred alternative. A detailed Tier 2 Environmental Impact

## PROPOSED SOTL ROUTES



## ELIMINATED SOTL ROUTES



Statement will follow.

In response to the frustration expressed by some in the audience as to the time it was taking to complete the study, Alghurabi explained that it will be quicker to do the required analysis right rather than have it done quickly and sloppily and sent back by the FRA.

Until the Tier 2 Environmental Study is completed, the project is not eligible for federal funding. The project will not

provide for true high speed operations of up to 220 mph, but they are not precluded.

The South of the Lake Study is a joint effort of the Michigan, Indiana and Illinois departments of transportation in conjunction with the Federal Railway Administration. MDOT is the lead agency.

Those interested in studying the four routes now under consideration and making comments can go to [www.greatlakesrail.org](http://www.greatlakesrail.org)

to review all the material discussed at the public briefing or call 877-351-351-0853. Comments can be submitted on line at the web site or mailed to:

**Bob Parsons**  
**Public Involvement**  
**and Hearings Officer**  
**Michigan Department**  
**of Transportation**  
**P. O. Box 30050**  
**Lansing, MI 48909**  
**Comments must be submitted**  
**by October 28, 2013.**

## ENGLEWOOD (Continued from page 4)

Some famous people originating their trips in Chicago would use Englewood because it was a short climb up the stairs from their cab or limo to their train.

The construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway in the 1950s through the heart of the South Side and Englewood led to the demise of Englewood Junction as a station. Amtrak service ended

shortly after it started operations in 1971, and Rock Island Rockets stopped for their last time on January 1, 1979. Commuter service ended shortly before that. Englewood became just a junction, albeit a very busy one. On an average day, 78 Metra RI trains, 14 Amtrak trains and 46 NS freight trains use the junction.

To relieve and simplify Chicago area railway lines, a program dubbed CREATE was envisioned. One of its key elements is to separate the NS/Metra grade crossing at Englewood. Project

P1: "63rd and State Flyover" will allow three Metra tracks to pass over the four NS/Amtrak tracks with allowances for a future fifth track. This project will also allow Metra to shift some of its trains from Union Station to LaSalle Station, thus freeing up some slots at Union. Completion of this project is the end of 2014.

At the present time, most of the bridgework has been completed, though the section directly over the NS/Amtrak tracks still has to be installed. The structure is being built for about one quar-

ter of a mile on each side of the crossing, including over the Dan Ryan Expressway. After the tracks are placed onto the bridge, the old RI tracks and the crossing diamonds will be removed. The former NYC connecting track will be retained.

Two other CREATE projects will also have a major impact in this part of Chicago: The 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project and the Grand Crossing Project. (See [www.createprogram.org](http://www.createprogram.org).)



## Meeting notes

# MARP celebrates 40 years of service

BY HUGH GURNEY

Almost sixty people gathered at Durand Union Station on Sept. 14 for MARP's 40th Annual Meeting. Some were long time members who recalled early meetings around a kitchen table while others are very new to the organization.

State Representative Ben Glardon from nearby Owosso applauded MARP's work on behalf of railroad passengers and the preservation of historic stations. Melissa Horste from Senator Carl Levin's office likewise saluted MARP's achievements and briefed the group on legislative issues. The Senate has approved \$1.45 billion for Amtrak in Fiscal Year 2014 but the House of Representatives has come up with a lower figure so a compromise figure needs to be worked out. She expects a Continuing Resolution to fund the agency until the end of the year. It is too early to say how much will be available for High Speed Rail and New Starts.

Federal Railroad Administrator Joe Szabo sent video greetings, noting that Michigan had experienced a 30% growth in ridership since 2005. At the moment, all are working hard to make up for decades of poor investment, with crews at work right now to upgrade the tracks between Dearborn and Kalamazoo for 110 mph speeds. A completely renovated station in Battle Creek is now open and work is progressing well on new transportation centers in Troy and Dearborn.

U. S. Representative Dave Camp of Midland sent a congratulatory letter, commending MARP for its efforts to promote passenger train safety and conserve historic railway locations.

Michael Benham of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority briefed that group on the status of the proposed Howell to Ann Arbor commuter rail project, generally referred to as WALLY. Graphs from recent studies demonstrate that property values in a transit shed outperform a region as a whole by 41.6%. In 2010, MDOT upgraded tracks and grade crossings on about 4/5 of the proposed route, so trains can now operate at 59 mph. A layover track was constructed at Osmer, just north of Ann Arbor. Twenty three ex-Metra coaches have been completely rebuilt



Top photo, the audience at Durand Union Station's ballroom watches and listens to presentations during MARP's 40th Annual meeting in Durand on Sept. 14. Bottom left photo, MARP Executive Committee member Jim Wallington presents Norma Ward with a \$1,000 travel certificate from America by Rail Chairman Larry Swartz for Ward's years of service towards rail travel. Bottom right photo, Keynote speaker Kevin Keefe, publisher and vice president for Kalmbach Publishing shares his experiences on the rails in Michigan. (Photos by Larry Sobczak)

by Great Lakes Central Railroad under contract with MDOT. Windows have been replaced, all new seats installed, and wheelchair access provided. Over 2,500 people walked through several of these cars during the recent Ypsilanti Heritage Days.

Benham is encouraged by the response of Watco, the new owners of the Ann Arbor Railroad, who are far more positive about letting the commuter trains come into downtown Ann Arbor on the portion of the route that they own.

A total of \$19 million in capital costs is needed to get WALLY up and running. Annual operating costs are estimated at \$7.2 million, about 2/3 of which would be covered by passenger fares and the Michigan Comprehensive Transportation Fund.

Ridership estimates are within the range of other new commuter rail projects, while start up costs are lower than the average. Benham thanked Tim Fischer of the Michigan Environmen-

tal Council and Transportation for Michigan for providing the funds to enable one of the commuter cars to be on display in Hamburg on Saturday, September 21. For information, check <http://tiny.cc/FriendsOfWALLY>.

Tim Hoeffner, Director of MDOT's Office of Rail, wished MARP a Happy 40th Anniversary. Starting on October 1, the State of Michigan will be financially supporting all Amtrak operations in Michigan including the Wolverine, Blue Water and Pere Marquette. Despite this, Hoeffner does not anticipate any major changes in operations. MDOT's investment in Wi Fi will more than pay for itself within a year or two. Bicycles are now permitted on the Blue Water for an additional ten dollars. Quiet cars are now part of all Wolverine trains. Hoeffner is hopeful that Amtrak's focus on corridor trains outside the Northeast Corridor will keep operational costs down.

If ridership in Michigan this September is comparable to last

September, total ridership for the 2013 Fiscal Year will be around 890,000. Overall, revenue is holding up well, down slightly on the Blue Water and Pere Marquette, but up by \$1 million on the Wolverine. While ridership has been down slightly on the Pere Marquette, possibly due to competition from Megabus, Hoeffner is not alarmed.

Hoeffner reported on rail projects throughout the state. A major rebuild of the Wolverine route between Dearborn and Kalamazoo is underway at this time. The transportation centers in Birmingham/Troy and Dearborn are coming along well. The new Grand Rapids station is taking shape. CSX has agreed to implement Positive Train Control on its route, saving MDOT hundreds of thousands of dollars. Planning for the East Lansing station is moving forward and Ann Arbor has hired a consultant for that project. MDOT is working with M-1 on plans for a new

(See MEETING, page 7)



## Tour Chicago Union Station during MARP's Nov. 2 meeting

The Nov. 2 MARP meeting will be held in Chicago Union Station, 225 South Canal Street, where we will be treated to tours of behind-the-scenes locations within the station, including the fascinating Control Center which guides the movement of all trains within the adjoining yard. You will also have a chance to observe situations that have been addressed by the Chicago Union Station Passenger Action Taskforce (CUSPAT) headed by Larry Krieg.

The meeting will begin at 11:30 a.m. following the arrivals of Wolverine train #351 at 10:47 a.m. and Pere Marquette train #371 at 10:38 a.m. Taking the Blue Water train is not recommended since it does not arrive in Chicago until almost noon.

If you do not qualify for the usual 10% or 15% discounts (NARP, Senior, Military, AAA), you may request a Convention Fare Discount Code (10% discount) by sending an email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com). We'll email the information you need to obtain this fare.

For overnight lodging, one of our members has found a reasonable rate at the Embassy Suites Chicago, 1445 Lake Cook Rd, Deerfield, IL 60015. The hotel offers complimentary drinks Friday and Saturday evenings, a full breakfast in the morning, and a shuttle to the nearby Lake Cook Road Metra station. See [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) for instructions for finding and booking a room.

If you have questions or need more information, email us at [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).



**DEARBORN UPDATE.** Work continues on the new transit center on Michigan Avenue near Greenfield Village in Dearborn. The \$28.2 million transit center will be capable of handling intercity and commuter passenger rail as well as intercity and commuter bus service. An opening date is yet to be announced but it will likely be in 2014. The city of Dearborn received federal grants to build the center. The top photo shows Amtrak's Wolverine train #355 passing under the partially completed walkway to the boarding platform. The bottom photo shows the transit center from Michigan Avenue. (Photos by Steve Sobel)

## MARP receives international congratulations

Dear MARP:

I am writing to congratulate the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers at its meeting in Durand, Mich. on September 14, 2013 at the Durand Union Station, marking the association's 40th anniversary.

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARP) had existed for three years when the first steps were taken to create Transport 2000 Canada in 1976. Transport 2000 in Britain and France agreed to Canadians adopting the name and aims of the movement, and the structure of the Canadian entity was loosely inspired by the cooperation of the National Association of Railroad Passengers with

state ARPs such as MARP.

Since the foundation of Transport 2000 Canada, MARP and the National Association have been a constant source of inspiration and assistance to their Canadian partners. Nationally, Anthony Haswell, founder of NARP gave early advice on the founding of a national rail passenger association. The NARP board gave a generous grant to Transport 2000 Canada at a time when the latter was faltering and in debt with support by Michigan MARP board members and more.

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers members John DeLora and Jim Wallington travelled at different times

to Ottawa to assist us – John to appear before our Senate Committee on Transport to testify on the need for a VIA Rail Canada Act with a model law based on NRPC's Found Act; and Jim to interview me for Passenger Train Journal, giving us an international profile and hence credibility. Our thanks for these and other helping gestures!

Since that time the two associations have worked to strengthen international land links between Michigan and Canada: The fate of the International Limited, related Customs and Immigration (INS) problems, the prospects of a renewed rail tunnel Detroit-Windsor, the DRIC highway project, High

Speed rail, cuts to VIA services in southwest Ontario and a new Indian Trails bus service to Sault Ste Marie Michigan have been some subjects of our joint efforts.

MARP has been kind enough to give the undersigned with an International Friendship Award. In fact, it is MARP itself who should be recognized for its international friendship for Transport 2000/Action Canada. Many thanks to all at MARP and bon anniversaire!

**Harry Gow,  
Founding and Past President,  
Transport Action Canada  
(Formerly Transport 2000  
Canada)**

### MEETING (Continued from page 6)

Detroit station which would tie in with the M-1 streetcar project. Work on the M-1 project will likely get underway in the spring. Consultants on the South of the Lake project have come up with a reasonable number of alternatives to review. Michael Benham of AAATA is working on the Howell-Ann Arbor commuter project and Alex Bourgeau of SEMCOG is taking the lead on the Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail project.

Hoeffner expressed the need

for broader public support, citing Westrain as an example. We need to get more young people involved in the debate over transportation.

After a delicious lunch, Chad Cushman offered greetings to MARP on its 40th Anniversary on behalf on Indian Trails, which is over 100 years old. Indian Trails is proud of its association with MARP, with the Amtrak Thruway Services it provides and with the Michigan Flyer, which is experiencing tremendous growth.

Kevin Keefe, publisher and vice president for Kalmbach Publishing, spoke of growing up in Niles and his association with

old time railroad employees who still considered that they worked for the Michigan Central, not the New York Central. He recalled crack trains like the Wolverine, Mercury and Twilight Limited. At MSU, he became familiar with the Grand Trunk, the Maple Leaf and other fine trains on that line. He commended Michigan for real progress in making 110 mph speeds a reality.

Keefe then showed a series of visuals of the Twilight Limited at its peak in the 1950's. This was an extra fare, all parlor car train that ran between Detroit and Chicago for many years.

During the short business meeting, Jim Wallington an-

nounced that the next MARP meetings would be at the Bangor station on October 12 and the Chicago Union Station on November 2. On behalf of American By Rail, Wallington presented a \$1,000 Travel Certificate to Norma Ward for her successful efforts to save the Durand Union Station and for her many years of service as a tour director for America By Rail.

The meeting concluded with a series of visuals showing some of the accomplishments of MARP over its forty years, including rehabilitation of the Chelsea Depot and hosing down the Detroit Michigan Central Station as a Bicentennial Project.



# Working on the railroad

## Weather, equipment and tight train schedules challenge crews replacing rails between Dearborn and Kalamazoo

*Michigan Passenger contributor Steve Sobel spent several days observing and photographing the accelerated work schedule along Amtrak's Wolverine Train line between Dearborn and Battle Creek. Transportation officials are attempting to squeeze upgrades that would normally take two years or longer under normal work schedules into one season. See page one for more details. Sobel returned with this report:*

**BY STEVE SOBEL**

The second day of track improvements didn't come easy for the crews out on the Michigan Amtrak line between Ann Arbor and Dearborn on Sept. 10.

Mother Nature dished out one of the few days with temperatures over 90 degrees in this area this summer. A record of 94 was supposedly not broken, missing out by 1 degree if you go by National Weather Service reports.

But don't tell these guys that.

The water brigade was busier than normal this afternoon once the sun really got working. Yet, this Norfolk Southern crew, one of several out on the tracks, was working hard to replace ties and rails in the work window between the departure of Amtrak train 351 and 5 p.m..

When I showed up the crew was near the Ann Arbor station and they had already laid 1500 feet of rail while another rail crew four miles east was doing similar work.

One crewman was working a large circular magnet that picks up everything metallic such as tie plates, spikes, old clips, discarded spike buckets and of course other metallic stuff (such as pop cans that were here and there.) The workman was unloading a car full of this stuff and depositing it in one pile for pickup later by a bigger hauler.

Another man was working a machine that follows the crew laying the new 136 pound rail while putting the old, worn-out 140 pound rail on one side to be picked up by crews later. This machine was installing Amtrak "clips", which are somewhat different than what Norfolk Southern used on their tracks.

Unfortunately the machine didn't accept the slightly different clips and work stopped while several men attempted a fix or to modify what the machine couldn't handle. About an hour later, the machine once thought modified, wasn't. This held up the crew doing the rail installation.

The mismatching clips meant the crew could not finish replacing the intended additional 1500 feet of rail before the 5 p.m. deadline. With this in mind, the crew called it a day to prevent the delay of scheduled trains.

Just as well, it was too hot! With the crew taking a rest at the Amtrak station's shady side, I got some photos of the crew.

I learned a lot through a short conversation with Johnny who was in charge of the crew.

He told me where the other crews were working, such as a tie gang around Dearborn, working west. Another rail gang was about four miles east of the Ann Arbor station and working west.



Above, Norfolk Southern rail crews use heavy machines to install a new rail along the Michigan Line in Ann Arbor. Left, a clip and magnet machine clears the way for the new rail. Below, the crew rests at the Ann Arbor station after a hot day in the sun.

(Photos by Steve Sobel)



He also mentioned that they hope to work until the end of November. If all goes well, he said "we should finish in Jackson by that time". When the cold weather sets in, he didn't think any track work would be ongoing then.

As far as tie replacement, they're only replacing ties that weren't replaced last year when those two work sessions were done to upgrade the speeds close to the normal speed, but many ties needed replacement this time around as well.

Their goal is to first get the track up to 79 mph although he said they could do 90 mph in places where there are no curves, especially west of Chelsea.

I asked him about the "Rusty Rail siding in Chelsea". He replied and was also confirmed by Don, the station agent in Ann Arbor, that this siding has been in use for a few weeks now, although track speeds on the siding are still 30mph. But it's better than those back up moves

they were doing for some time.

The passing siding back near Wayne won't be in use until the track gangs complete the tie replacement as they're doing now. This gang I was told has about 60 men doing the work, which Johnny again said "the ties in that area were in very bad shape."

Basically they're currently replacing one rail at a time and in a few days the other rail will be replaced. Once this is done, the tie gangs will come in and replace the ties that have been earmarked for replacement. I was told that this is the best way to do this, by replacing the worn rail with the new rail first then when the tie gang shows up with the big machine, ties are removed, replaced, the spikes now in place to hold the new rail will be removed, replaced again and the other holes will be filled in with a glue like substance to preserve the new ties. This process doesn't disturb the clips being installed today.