

# THE MICHIGAN PASSENGER

Your source for passenger rail news since 1973

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Michigan Association  
of Railroad Passengers

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

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## Ann Arbor station moves ahead

**By Larry Sobczak**

Ann Arbor is pressing ahead with plans for a new Amtrak station even though the University of Michigan withdrew from the project in January and a location is yet to be determined.

The Ann Arbor City Council voted 9-2 on June 4 to accept a \$2.8 million federal grant to

build a new Amtrak train station somewhere inside the city limits.

Possible station sites include redeveloping the current Amtrak station on Depot Street, as well as the possibility of building a new train station on Fuller Road.

The University of Michigan originally wanted to partner with the city on the Fuller Road site

which is adjacent to the university's medical center and hospital in order to share a parking garage.

The university backed out of the proposal because of vocal opposition. The proposed site included undeveloped park property.

(See ANN ARBOR, page 5)



**NICE STOP.** Passengers at the refurbished Battle Creek Intermodal Terminal wait for an Amtrak train to come to a stop before boarding. Turn to page 8 for more about the \$3.8 million in renovations that were recently completed thanks to a federal grant awarded in 2010. (Photo by Steve Sobel)

## Troy Transit Center foe under recall

**By Larry Sobczak**

Troy Mayor Janice Daniels faces a recall election on Nov. 6 because she attempted to block an \$8.4 million multi-modal transit center which is funded entirely through federal grants and will host Amtrak trains and Smart bus service.

According to the Oakland County Elections Division, Daniels' opponents collected 8,882 valid signatures on a petition citing her opposition to the transit center as the reason to recall her. Opponents needed only 7,985 signatures to trigger a recall election.

In December, Daniels was one of four members of the seven member city council who were able to block a crucial vote to request bids for the architectural and engineering contracts for the transit center.

The council needed to request bids by the end of 2011 in order to comply with timelines for the federal grants. The Troy Chamber of Commerce was able to broker a deal to sway an op-

posing council member to approve the request for bids in January.

The Federal Railroad Ad-

(See TROY, page 4)

## Remote Beaver Island connects with Amtrak

**By Larry Sobczak**

Soon it will be possible to go to any of the more than 500 destinations in the Amtrak system from Beaver Island, Michigan.

No, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder has *not* announced a billion dollar railroad bridge to the 55 square-mile island in northern Lake Michigan with 657 year-round residents.

Instead, Indian Trails, which is the Amtrak Thruway operator in northern Michigan, is estab-

lishing a bus stop near the Beaver Island Boat Company's ferry dock in downtown Charlevoix and the ferry business will serve as the bus service's local ticket agent.

This means that anyone can purchase tickets with Beaver Island as the origination (or destination) with any Amtrak station or Thruway stop as the destination (or origination) in the U.S. and Canada.

(See BEAVER, page 3)

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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: larrysobczak@hotmail.com

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>

<http://twitter.com/michrailpass>

## Membership Application

Clip this form and mail your check or money order to: Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, PO Box 532256, Livonia, MI 48153-2256

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\* We do not sell, rent or trade email addresses. We use emails for important time-sensitive news and when urgent phone calls are needed for elected officials.

#### MEMBERSHIP DUES

Student (under 21)	\$15
Seniors (65+)	\$15
Individual	\$25
Family	\$30
Advocate	\$50
First Class	\$100
Lifetime	\$500

Contact me, I want to be **active!**

Please send me information about the National Association of Railroad Passengers

I want to be notified no more than 4 times per year by email or phone when critical issues arise

Total Dues: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

# \$15.8 million improves Wolverine service

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced May 10 a final agreement on \$15.8 million for the West Detroit Connection Track project that will eliminate congestion for Detroit-area Amtrak passengers by addressing a bottleneck that comes from serving both freight and passenger rail on the same tracks.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration is providing a grant for \$7.9 million, which is being matched with another \$7.9 million from the State of Michigan. The project is set to break ground in West Detroit later this year.

"President Obama's bold vision of investing in rail projects like the West Detroit Connection Track will create jobs and grow our economy over the long-term by moving people and goods more quickly and efficiently than ever before," said Secretary LaHood. "In eliminating a long-standing bottleneck, we are creating capacity to handle future rail demand as our population grows, while strengthening the foundation for economic development across the region."

Currently both freight and intercity passenger trains make a connection through Bay City Junction. The West Detroit Connection Track project will provide new track to separate freight and passenger train movements. Amtrak's "Wolverine" service, which provides three daily round trips between Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac, will use the new track. West Detroit Junction is a key link between the Dearborn Station and the Detroit New Center Station. In 2009, this track moved 444,127 passengers on the Wolverine service.

West Detroit Junction is a key part of the Chicago to Detroit line, which has seen nearly



Amtrak's Wolverine Train leaves Detroit's New Center area bound for Dearborn. Travel between these two cities will improve as a result of a \$15.8 million track improvement project. (Photo by Steve Sobel)

\$400 million in federal investments in the state of Michigan under president Obama's High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program. The line now reaches speeds of 110 mph between Porter, IN and Kalamazoo, MI and will reach 110 mph on 80 percent of the track by 2016.

The Chicago to Detroit line is part of the Midwest Regional Rail Network, which is located in one of five densely populated mega-regions, areas already overwhelmed by congestion and in need of better transportation options. Bringing safe, fast, con-

venient, affordable high-speed rail to these areas will create jobs, increase economic opportunities and relieve congestion.

"This is yet another example of how federal, state, and local governments, as well as the railroads, are working hard to eliminate rail bottlenecks and improve service for both freight and passenger rail customers," said Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo.

More than 100 million people call the Midwest region home. Using the Gross Domestic Product as a measure, the Great

Lakes-Midwest economic region would be the fifth largest economy if it were its own country.

The Federal Railroad Administration and its 32 state partners are making great progress on High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program-related projects across the country. With \$10.1 billion in federal funding, they're moving forward with 153 projects, laying the foundation for a 21st century passenger rail network.

*From a U.S. Department of Transportation press release.*

## BEAVER

(Continued from page 1)

Beginning Aug. 1st, Indian Trails plans on the southbound Thruway bus to stop at 11:10 a.m. on Bridge Park Drive in Charlevoix and the northbound Thruway bus to stop at 9:20 p.m. at the same location.

"It will be a nice little addition," Mayor Norman "Boogie" Carlson Jr. said in an article

that appeared in The Charlevoix Courier in June.

Charlevoix City Manager Rob Straebel said in a memo that city staff members highly support the coming bus service as a way to bring more visitors to the community and allow for an important link to the Beaver Island ferry service.

"There are no concerns. We have looked at every aspect of this," Straebel told The Charlevoix Courier in June.

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARP) has long been supportive of the new bus stop and the increased connections throughout the state.

MARP Northern Michigan Chairman Don Monteith has been promoting the stop in Charlevoix for years because of the intermodal connections and the ticket agent for the ferry service.

"This is great," said MARP Chairman Robert Tischbein. "They're taking existing assets and putting them all together."



# Jackson gains connections to East Coast cities

By Hugh Gurney

The City of Jackson has improved rail connections with all points in the eastern United States, thanks to a dedicated Amtrak Thruway Bus now operating daily between Jackson and the Toledo Amtrak Station.

In Toledo, passengers can transfer to Amtrak trains serving Boston, New York, Washington D.C. and many other East Coast destinations.

Effective May 7, passengers can board a motor coach at the Jackson Amtrak station at 7:35 p.m. which will take them to Toledo where they may board the Capitol Limited for Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C. and intermediate points. In Washington, passengers can transfer to southbound trains

serving the Southeastern States including Florida. Passengers can also transfer in Pittsburgh to a train serving numerous destinations in Pennsylvania including Harrisburg and Philadelphia. The Capitol Limited offers both coach and sleeping accommodations and a full service diner.

In Toledo, passengers can also board the Lake Shore Limited for Erie, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, and other upstate New York points. At Albany, the Lake Shore Limited splits with one section going down the Hudson River to New York City and the other section heading East through Massachusetts to Boston. The Lake Shore Limited also offers both sleeping and coach accommodations, a diner and a café car for lighter

refreshments.

Baggage can be checked from Toledo to major cities along the routes of each train

Each morning, passengers returning to Toledo aboard either the Capitol Limited or the Lake Shore Limited can board the dedicated Amtrak Thruway Coach, to Jackson at 9:25 a.m.

"This new service offers savings in both time and expense. Previously, rail passengers had to go west to Chicago to connect with Eastbound trains. Now they can board these trains in Toledo and save \$30.00-\$40.00 or more each way," Jackson resident John Guidinger said.

"This service doesn't benefit just Jackson," Kay Chase of Kalamazoo said. "People from all

over south-central Michigan now have better train connections to the East Coast. It's both faster and cheaper than going through Chicago."

The Amtrak Thruway Bus to and from Toledo also serves East Lansing, Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Detroit.

The Jackson Amtrak Station, the oldest continuously operating train station in the nation, is located at 501 East Michigan Avenue, just East of downtown Jackson.

Free parking is available adjacent to the station.

For travel and ticket information, visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) or call 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-800-523-6590).



**DAMAGED LOCOMOTIVE.** In May, crews loaded this Amtrak engine onto a flatbed car in Jackson in preparation for its transport by train to Amtrak's facilities in Beech Grove, Ill. The locomotive leading Amtrak's Wolverine Train #351, had collided Feb. 1 with a truck with a low-bed trailer that was stuck on the tracks on North Portage Road near East Michigan Avenue. As many as 10 people were treated for non-life threatening injuries from the train carrying 68 passengers and five crew members. (Photo by Gerald Grosman)

## Amtrak wins round in court

A federal judge upheld a law that gives Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration the "authority to promulgate binding rules governing the conduct of its contractual partners, the freight railroads."

Representing the freight carriers, the Association of American Railroads sued the Department of Transportation over the constitutionality of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) in 2011, claiming that the law gave excessive regulation power to a private corporation with a "historically poor record of on-time performance and (a) chronic inability to generate revenue sufficient to cover its operating

costs."

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg relied on the Supreme Court's determination that Amtrak should be considered a governmental entity for the purpose of constitutional individual-rights claims.

"Amtrak was created by special law for the furtherance of governmental objectives, and the government sets its goals; the President appoints eight of the nine directors; Amtrak is required to submit annual reports to Congress and the President; the government owns more than 90% of Amtrak's stock; Amtrak relies on more than a billion dollars in congressional appropriations annually; and Congress

sets salary limits for Amtrak's employees," stated the judge, demonstrating how interwoven the passenger train company is with the federal government.

The judge ruled that the government is sufficiently involved to legally render the regulating power to Amtrak, and dismissed the railroads' claim.

Canadian National Railroad (CN) cited this court case as a defense to a complaint Amtrak had filed against CN in March for poor on-time performance of its passenger trains operating on CN's railroads.

CN and Amtrak have asked for a mediator to settle their on-time performance dispute.

## TROY (Continued from page 1)

ministration, which is administering the grant, agreed to extend the deadline on the transit center in order to accommodate the political snafu.

Daniels has defended her stance against the transit center as being fiscally responsible.

Matt Binkowski, who is one of the recall organizers, told Deadline Detroit the reasons for recalling Daniels transcend a single issue such as her unsuccessful opposition to the Troy Transit Center.

"Two other City Council members voted against it and we aren't trying to recall them," he said. "Troy has become a bit of a laughing stock."

Daniels, who has never been elected to a political office before November and is a founder of the Troy Area Tea Party, attracted the attention of national media outlets such as The New York Times because it is unheard of to turn down no-match federal grants.

Daniels has also attracted national attention because of alleged inflammatory attitudes towards homosexuals on her Facebook page and subsequent media appearances and meetings.

As of late June, there was no visible work at the site slated to become the Troy multi-modal transit center. The transit center will replace the Plexiglas shelter that now serves as the Birmingham Amtrak station a few hundred yards northwest from it.

# Indian Trails launches 'hearing loop' technology

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Indian Trails, Inc., have teamed up to install "hearing loop" technology on a fleet of 17 motorcoaches operating 34 scheduled routes that serve passengers throughout Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas.

"I'm quite sure this is the first American bus line with hearing loops," says David G. Myers, a professor of psychology at Hope College in Holland, Mich., who has hearing loss and is one of the nation's foremost advocates for hearing loops.

The inside of a bus, train, airplane or transportation terminal can be noisy enough that passengers with ordinary hearing aids can't separate important public announcements from the sound of a crowd, a crying baby, background music, or nearby conversations. A hearing loop can make a dramatic difference, enabling most hearing aid wearers to clearly hear the PA system by broadcasting its sound directly into their ears.

Hearing loops are based on a simple technology that enables hearing aids equipped with "telecoils" or "T-coils" to amplify a single source of sound (telephone, television,

PA system, etc.) instead of amplifying all sounds, as ordinary hearing aids do. Nearly 70 percent of hearing aids in the U.S. are already equipped with telecoils, which are just tiny coils of copper wire.

"The Indian Trails/MDOT installation of hearing loops on inter-city buses is a model of transportation accessibility for the entire country," adds Myers, who runs the website [www.hearingloop.org](http://www.hearingloop.org).

The motorcoaches with hearing loops are operated by Indian Trails, Inc., a family business based in Owosso, MI, with a 100-year history of innovation. Previously, it was the first company to install two-way radios, video monitors, stereo sound systems, and WiFi on a fleet of buses.

For tens of thousands of Michiganders, the Indian Trails routes are their only way to connect with the national transportation network of airports, Amtrak, and Greyhound.

Hearing Loop Systems and Contacta, Inc., of Holland, Mich., assisted with the custom design and engineering of the loop systems.

"MDOT was excited about this opportunity to provide state funds to Indian Trails,

to allow Indian Trails to make hearing loops available on a portion of its fleet and two inter-city bus stations," said Sharon Edgar, administrator, MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation. "MDOT and Indian Trails share a commitment to increasing the accessibility of our transportation system."

MDOT also installed hearing loops on a pilot basis at bus stations in Saginaw and Bay City.

Hearing loops are important to many of the estimated 1.4 million Michigan residents who currently have hearing loss, a number that is expected to double in 10 years. About 11 percent of the general population has significant hearing loss, and one-third of people 65 and older.

"This is proven technology that represents an enormous improvement in the on-board experience of many of our passengers who are hard of hearing," said Gordon Mackay, president of Indian Trails. "The cost was relatively low—about \$800 per bus—and very little maintenance is needed. We would eventually like to see it installed in all of our motorcoaches and in all bus stations."

Source: PR Newswire (<http://s.tt/1f6mP>)

## VIA Rail planning on major cuts in Canada

The Canadian government is cutting VIA Rail's budget which will result in a loss of some route frequencies and affect some Michigan and Ontario travelers using stations in Windsor and Sarnia.

Windsor will lose an early morning VIA Rail train departing for Toronto on Saturdays and Sundays and a mid-evening return train from Toronto on Friday and Saturday nights.

On Friday and Saturday nights, VIA cut the train that arrives in Windsor from Toronto at 9:50 p.m. Instead the train that leaves Toronto at 5:30 p.m. will finish its route in London.

The cuts mean there will be only three trains leaving Toronto

coming to Windsor on Fridays and Saturdays, while there are four on other weekdays and Sundays.

Sarnia will lose one of its two daily round-trips to Toronto.

The cuts also mean that 200 people will lose their jobs.

The three VIA Rail agents at Sarnia's train station on Palmerston St. learned two weeks ago that they will be permanently laid off in September, leaving the station unmanned during train departures.

Two VIA Rail workers will lose their jobs in Windsor.

The cuts to VIA Rail's budget total \$41 million over the next three years.



A VIA Rail train departs Windsor bound for Toronto with the Detroit skyline in the background. (Photo by Steve Sobel).

### ANN ARBOR (Continued from page 1)

Eli Cooper, the city's transportation program manager, said that the city has already spent \$700,000 planning the project and another \$1.2 million relocating utility services along Fuller Road in preparation for the project. He said those expenditures will cover the city's required match needed to receive the grant.

Cooper said Ann Arbor was selected for the \$2.8 million grant because its Amtrak sta-

tion is the busiest in the state of Michigan and the second busiest on the Detroit-to-Chicago line.

He said the current station on Depot Street is not adequate to meet current demands, and that's even before taking into consideration anticipated growth.

Cooper said parking on Depot Street is always occupied by travelers and businesses in the area.

The current loading platform is frequently jammed for arriving trains and Cooper was told by Michigan Department of Transportation and Amtrak officials to plan for 1,000 foot long trains in the future.

## Mega Bus expands Mich. routes

The Grand Rapids Press reports Megabus, a company whose bright blue, curb-side buses offer fares starting at \$1, is looking to set up shop in Grand Rapids, with three daily trips to and from Chicago, East Lansing and Detroit.

Megabus already services a route between Detroit, Ann Arbor and Chicago, and has since the company's North American operations began in 2006. Megabus also is operated as bus and Megatrain services in the United Kingdom.

Service in Grand Rapids could start within a few months, Megabus President Dale Moser said, and is contingent on approval of a license agreement

slated for consideration by the city's Parking Commission.

Megabus set its sights on Grand Rapids recently, Moser said, because of online chatter on travel blogs and from users interacting with the company on social media. Megabus monitors the Internet "extremely closely" for new service opportunities, Moser said.

It offers fares starting at \$1 through supply and demand economics, he explained, with the cheapest fares going to travelers who are among the first to book a seat on a given bus.

The cost then increases incrementally from \$1, and typically average \$20 for most passengers.

## MEMBERS MEETING SCHEDULE

(Meetings begin at 10 a.m.,  
except where noted)

**July 28** – Grand Rapids, Grand  
Rails 2012-77th Annual NMRA  
National Convention, the Rapid  
Central Station, 2nd Floor  
Conference Center, Bartlett  
Street SW, Grand Rapids

**September 22** – Durand Union  
Station, Durand. ANNUAL  
MEETING

**October 13** – St. Louis  
Historical Society, which is  
housed in the c. 1910 Pere  
Marquette Railroad Station, 110  
E. Crawford Street, St. Louis,  
MI

**November 10** – Essex, Ont.,  
historic Michigan Central  
Station, 17 miles southeast of  
Ambassador Bridge between  
Detroit and Windsor

**Check [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) for  
additions and changes to this  
schedule.**



**OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION.** National Train Day was kicked off May 12 in Holland with an official proclamation from Mayor Pro tempore Bob Vande Vusse (center) to Amtrak Conductor Darrell R. Omans (right) shortly after Amtrak's Pere Marquette train arrived at the station. Holland Area Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Sally Laukitis looks on. National Train Day was also celebrated in Bangor, Niles and Flint as well as dozens of locations nationwide.

(Photo by John Langdon)

## June meeting notes: Muskegon, a real railroad town

By Hugh Gurney

On June 16, MARP members made the trip to Muskegon, where we met at the beautifully restored Muskegon Union Depot.

It was the first time in memory that MARP had met in this beautiful port city. The last passenger train left Muskegon Union Depot on April 30, 1972.

Fortunately, travelers still come and go as the building is now the information center and headquarters for the Muskegon County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Muskegon Railroad Historical Society Archivist Andy Busard explained that Muskegon was a real railroad town through the 1960's, with three major railroads, the Pere Marquette, the Grand Trunk Western and the Pennsylvania connecting with railroad ferries that transported loaded freight cars across Lake Michigan to Milwaukee.

At the Union Depot and at the nearby Grand Trunk Depot, passengers transferred to these ferries for the Lake Michigan trip.

Using extensive photographs and visuals of actual timetables, Busard carefully traced the history of railroading in and around Muskegon from 1869, when the first railroad was built, until to-

day.

It is ironic that the first connecting railroad to reach Muskegon is the last to serve the community, paralleling Lake Michigan north from Holland and Grand Haven to Muskegon.

In board business, the MARP Executive committee:

- Moved its investment fund from Pratt Fund, to the Vanguard Total Stock Market Index Investment

- Heard reports from Langdon, Hinkins and Fischer who

attended a conference in Detroit dealing with rail connections between Michigan and Canada. A new rail tunnel could be in the works.

- Heard a brief report on the quarterly newsletter.

- Heard a report on membership renewals from Kathleen Newell.

- Heard a report that the city of Ann Arbor has accepted a \$2.8 million federal grant to construct a new station (see page one.)

- Heard a report that Mega

Bus plans on increasing its service in Michigan (see page 6.)

- Heard a report that Indian Trails will add Charlevoix and Beaver Island onto the Amtrak Thruway service it is contracted to operate in northern lower Michigan (see page one.)

- Heard a report about the executive committee nominations (see below.)

*Complete minutes of this meeting will be posted on [marp.org](http://marp.org) upon board approval.*

## Nominations for MARP board announced

The nomination committee reported in June that most MARP officers, regional chairs and at-large executives plan on serving another term and will run unopposed during the election at the annual meeting in September.

Barney Whittier resigned earlier this year as vice-chairman and Larry Krieg has been nominated to replace him.

Jim Wallington agreed to serve as acting East/Central Michigan Chairman and John Langdon agreed to serve as acting West Michigan Chairman until volunteers can be found to replace them.

Treasurer David Randall told the MARP board that he plans

on resigning because he is moving out of state. Treasurer is an appointed position and MARP Chairman Robert Tischbein said that an appointee will be announced once the position is vacant.

The officer nominees are:

- Chairman: Robert Tischbein
- Vice Chairman: Larry Krieg
- Secretary: Hugh Gurney

The regional chairman nominees are:

- Metro Detroit: Jim Hinkins
- East/Central Michigan: Jim Wallington, Acting.

- West Michigan: John D. Langdon, Acting.

- Northern Michigan: Don Monteith.

The at-large executive nominees are:

- John D. Langdon
- Jim Wallington
- Kay M. Chase
- Kathleen Newell

Anyone interested in filling the East/Central Michigan and West Michigan Regional Chairman positions should contact Robert Tischbein.

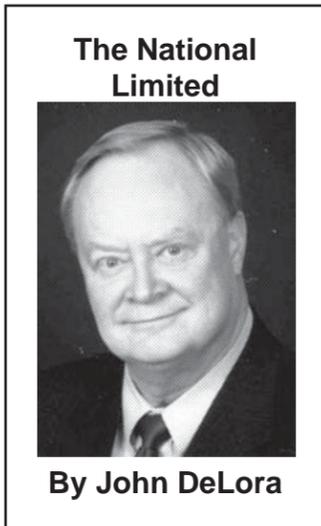
According to MARP by-laws, ballots will not be issued if nominees run unopposed.

# We're on a roll!

When I first got involved in train travel (before Amtrak), I joined NARP, which had about 3,000 members at the time. I was naïve enough to believe that when Railpax was established to put together Amtrak, I actually thought there would be an expansion of passenger trains. The huge train-offs that accompanied the start-up of Amtrak were a shock. Couldn't anyone look ahead and see that highways and aviation weren't economically efficient without massive government subsidies?

Fortunately, Governor Milliken realized the value of trains, and supported expansion of the Michigan services. First to come on line was the Blue Water, followed by the long-delayed Pere Marquette. A day train to New

York City and a commuter train to Ann Arbor and Jackson soon followed. Everything seemed to be falling into place. When MARP was started in 1973, I thought our work would be over within five years. Naïve, indeed.



The National Limited

By John DeLora

When Jimmy Carter was elected, rail advocates took heart because after all, he had his campaign headquarters in a train station, right? Instead, we watched in horror as he supported massive train-offs. It couldn't get any worse, could it? Then

we watched as Reagan and the 1st George Bush zeroed Amtrak out of their budgets for the next 12 years.

The intervening years have

largely been a battle for survival. However, here and there, capital dollars made operations more efficient, and we had a product which was attractive to the public. Now, a serious and ongoing effort has been made by the Obama administration to bring our nation's infrastructure up to modern standards.

The highway-supported think tanks can huff and puff all they want, but the ridership is proof that people will ride trains that are clean, on-time and comfortable. Relatively small amounts of money have made a huge difference. Unfortunately the Obama administration sold these investments as "stimulus" projects, when it would have been much more accurate to call them infrastructure investments. Anyone remotely familiar with government knew there was no such thing as a "shovel-ready" project.

Nonetheless, the money was appropriated, and began its prog-

ress through state planning and procurement processes, environmental studies, etc. Now, the money is actually going to work. Just think- money has been committed so that in about three years, ownership of the line from Dearborn to Porter will be in passenger-friendly hands; tracks have been repaired and are ready for further upgrading; PTC installation is on the near horizon; new bi-level equipment is on order, new stations are underway in Dearborn and Troy, and the FRA has just commissioned a study of needed improvements to ease congestion between Porter and Chicago.

In short, we're on a roll, and the results will make our case for us in the future.

*John DeLora is a MARP founder and currently serves as vice-chairman at the National Association of Railroad Passengers.*

## FROM THE BOARD ROOM:

# Building a coalition

By Kay Chase

In the fall of 2010, MARP embarked on a new venture unique in our 39-year history. At that time we were invited to join with fourteen other advocacy and quasi-governmental organizations in a bold venture to change the way transportation is thought about in our state.

The Transportation for Michigan coalition – otherwise known as Trans4M – seeks to do just what the name says: transform transportation policy and funding in Michigan to create a more efficient and balanced system to meet the mobility needs of all ages, abilities, income levels, and lifestyle choices.

Over the last two years, John Langdon and I have represented MARP on the functional teams set up to advance Trans4M's agenda and have contributed time and effort to Trans4M's major campaigns to establish a Regional Transit Authority in Southeast Michigan and to address transportation funding issues.

Working collaboratively with groups that focus on issues quite different, seemingly, from MARP's has been an interesting learning experience – and a mu-



T R A N S 4 M  
TRANSPORTATION FOR MICHIGAN

tually beneficial one.

We have had the opportunity to raise awareness of passenger train service in Michigan and the importance of the Indian Trails intercity bus service. We have learned why the Michigan Fitness Council is interested in transportation issues and that the League of Michigan Bicyclists is passionate about getting bikes on trains. We have learned of the yeoman work being done by organizations such as Disability Advocates of Kent County to assure access to public transportation as essential to people who want to live independently and with dignity.

MARP's experience with the successful Michigan By Rail public forums, has given us a major role in Trans4M's current action project.

Over the next two months a series of community forums will give people from Escanaba to Detroit and points in between an opportunity to "Help Decide

How Michigan Rolls".

Participants will be asked what kinds of transportation investments they would like to see in their communities.

Results will be compiled in a report that will be provided to Governor Snyder. You may recall the Governor's special message last October in which he proposed changes in the way transportation projects are funded and delivered. In that speech he said, "I fully recognize that solving this decades-long challenge will not be easy, but I am convinced that starting the conversation and debate now is absolutely necessary for the future of our economy and our quality of life. I look forward to working with the legislature, our local communities and our citizens over the next several months to develop a plan and the political will to implement it." Trans4M has risen to the challenge and is making sure these conversations happen and that what people are

saying is conveyed to the Governor.

I hope all my fellow members of MARP will plan to attend a forum in their area. It would be helpful, also, to send an email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com) if there are community leaders or interest groups in your community that you think would like to participate. Trans4M maintains a website at [www.trans4m.org](http://www.trans4m.org) with complete information about events and activities. A free online newsletter is available to you if you wish to keep abreast of news and information about transportation issues.

*"From The Boardroom" will be a regular feature of the Michigan Passenger written by a member of MARP's Executive Committee. This issue's contributor is Kay Chase who is an at-large executive committee member. She handles communications for the organization and is editor of ON TRACK. Kay retired after 25 years on the staff of Western Michigan University Libraries and resides in Kalamazoo. In her spare time she likes to take train trips to places where she can "botanize" and study birds.*

# Battle Creek station renovation complete

A ceremony was held at the newly renovated Battle Creek Intermodal Terminal on June 10.

“The number of Amtrak passengers using this station each day is roughly equal to our city’s entire population,” Battle Creek Mayor Susan Baldwin said at the ceremony.

The renovations were funded through a \$3.8 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) which was awarded in January 2010. The award was part of \$40 million awarded for Michigan projects including new passenger stations in Troy and Dearborn.

The city used another stimulus award to relocate the local bus transfer center from next to the train station to across McCamly Street at a cost of \$230,262.

The station is used by Amtrak, Indian Trails, Greyhound and Battle Creek Transit.

The enlarged facility is a light tan, with new, expanded seating and a much more open and inviting interior. A snack area includes food and beverage vending machines and small tables. A fenced smoking area outside the station includes seating at small tables and pleasant landscaping.

Passengers who wish to leave their cars at the station while traveling will be pleased with the fenced and secure parking area.

One notable change is that the bus ticket counter has been moved down a hallway to the west, and is now more conveniently located to the intercity bus boarding dock.

Indian Trails President Gordon Mackay said that the new layout is much more appropriate to for their operations.

- John DeLora and Kay Chase



Pictured above is the new bus dock at the Battle Creek Intermodal Terminal. The renovated waiting and ticket area is pictured below. (Photos by John DeLora)



## Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Membership Meeting

Saturday, September 22, 2012 10:30am – 2:30 pm

Durand Union Station

200 Railroad St, Durand MI 48429

(former Grand Trunk Western and Ann Arbor RR Depot)



*Featured Speaker*

**Bob Johnston**

**TRAINS Magazine**

Registration forms will be mailed to members in August. The public is welcome to attend.

For more information:

Send an email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

Or leave a message at 269-388-3777

