

THE MICHIGAN PASSENGER

Your source for passenger rail news since 1973

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Michigan Association
of Railroad Passengers

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Detroit streetcar project underway

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

The talk is over and the work has begun July 28 on the 3.5 mile-long Woodward Avenue Streetcar line connecting Detroit's Amtrak station to its central business district, medical centers, Wayne State University, cultural institutions and professional sporting venues.

The first chunk of Woodward Avenue asphalt was removed shortly after 8 a.m. with Detroit

Mayor Mike Duggan, M-1 Rail CEO Matt Cullen and businessman Roger Penske and a small cadre of reporters and curious pedestrians watching.

"If you're going to build a true city with real density, you've got to have light rail," Duggan said.

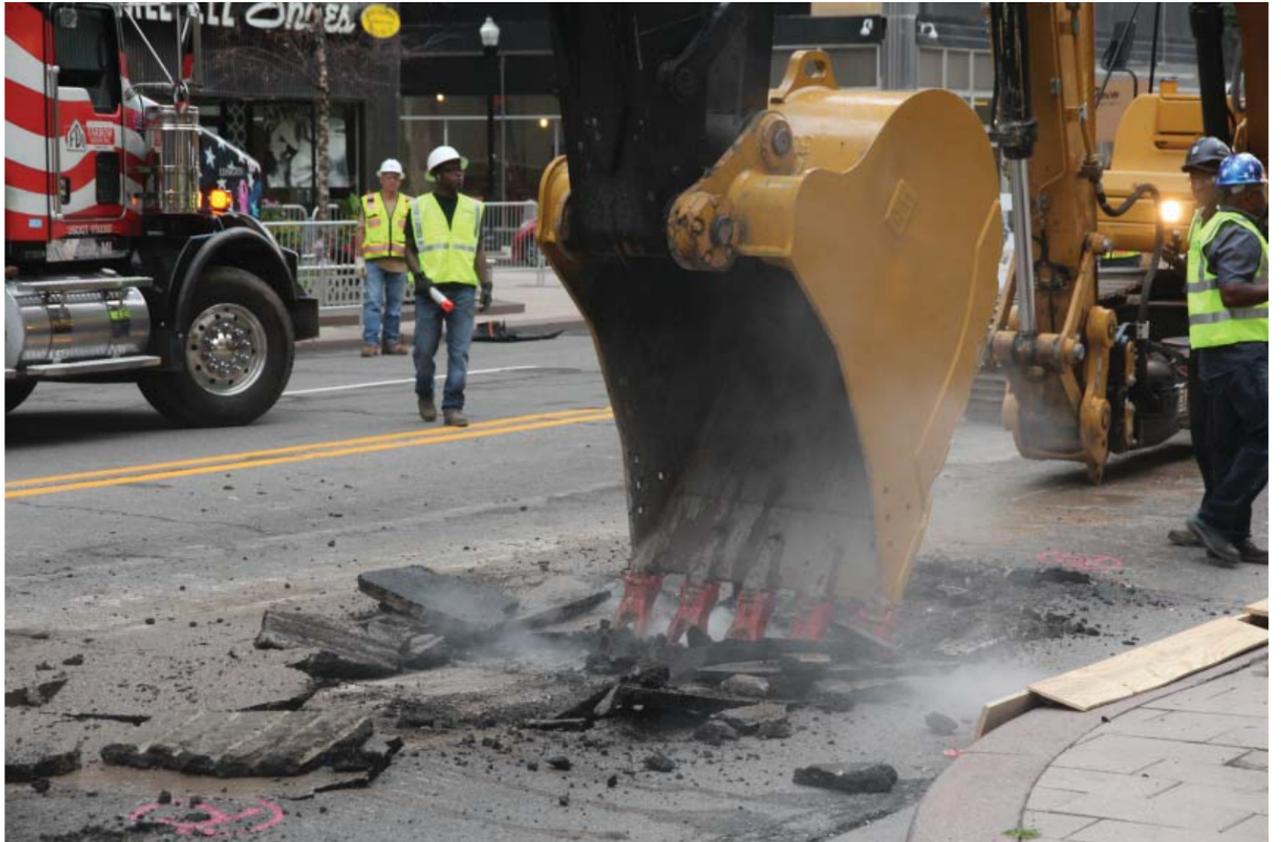
The system is the first step in alleviating three problems that have plagued downtown development since the last streetcar system was ripped out in 1956,

namely, inadequate automobile parking and inadequate transit frequency and capacity.

The streetcar system is estimated to cost \$137 million, including six street cars, and will run from Grand Boulevard at the north end to Congress Ave. at the south end.

There will be 20 different stations serving 12 stops, with most of the stations being curbside on

(See M-1 RAIL, page 5)



GROUNDBREAKING. Above, the first cut of asphalt on Woodward Ave. in Detroit was removed on July 28 for the M-1 Rail project. It is a 3.5 mile long light rail line that will link Detroit's Amtrak station to the downtown. The photo on the left shows, from left to right, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, M-1 Rail CEO Matt Cullen and auto magnate Roger Penske briefing the press at the groundbreaking. (Photos by Steve Sobel)

Court will get input from rail passengers

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

Rail passengers will have their voices heard late 2014 or early 2015 at the U.S. Supreme Court in a case involving the Association of American Railroads (AAR), the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration.

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) and the Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) will be fil-

ing an "Amicus Curiae" (Friend of the Court) brief in the lawsuit arguing the performance metrics and standards developed by the Surface Transportation Board are constitutional.

ELPC is working on the legal research and will file the brief on NARP's behalf on a pro bono basis. Amicus briefs are not usually argued in person.

"This is the first time either a state or national ARP (Asso-

ciation of Railroad Passengers) has been before the Supreme Court because (briefs) are expensive to file, usually costing at least \$25,000 in legal fees," said NARP Vice Chair John DeLora.

The court case challenges whether Amtrak can be involved in deciding and judging on time standards for passenger rail.

Turn to page 7 for DeLora's column, The National Limited, for more about this issue.

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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!

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Steam train visits southern Michigan and Indiana

BY JOHN DeLORA

Early in the morning on Saturday, July 12, a special steam train sponsored by the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society and the Norfolk Southern Railway rolled up behind the Thunderbowl Lanes bowling alley in Allen Park.

The train was led by the Nickel Plate Road no. 765 Berkshire-class locomotive, a tender and an eye-popping consist of 23 cars, including three dome cars, a parlor car and an observation car.

Many of the cars had been leased for the occasion from the Mid-America Rail Co.

The train was part of Norfolk Southern's 21st Century Steam heritage image campaign and it was marketed as "The Detroit Arrow."

Considering that they had standard coaches, deluxe coaches, a parlor car, an observation car and dome cars, boarding was a bit confused.

However, everyone was on board by 8 a.m. and the train left precisely as advertised.

The train was about 95 percent occupied.

My older son and I were in a deluxe coach which still had Amtrak upholstery.



The Fort Wayne Steam Special steams into Allen Park on July 12. (Photo by John DeLora)

It had been several decades since the two of us had gone on a train trip together and he seemed to thoroughly enjoy it.

He was stunned by the sheer number of onlookers along the tracks, from rural farm crossings to several small towns.

In Milan and Adrian, it looked like the entire town turned out to watch it go by.

We arrived in Fort Wayne on time, and had a chance to sam-

ple some of the city's "Three Rivers Festival."

I was particularly interested in seeing the Fort Wayne Wash station.

If you drive through downtown Fort Wayne, it is easy to see the elevated platforms and canopies of the station, but that's all.

I soon found out that the platforms, stairs and baggage elevators still existed but the

station building had been torn down many years ago.

The Fort Wayne station group rigged the stairs and platforms with temporary electric lights, making access easy.

On the return trip, crowds along the way were, if anything, even larger.

We got back to Allen Park about dusk, just time enough to get a few quick photo shots, then head for home.

Rail shuttle proposed for Traverse City area

A new report by the Michigan Land Use Institute describes the potential for running a train on an 11-mile stretch of railroad tracks between Traverse City and Williamsburg.

Getting Back on Track: Uncovering the Potential for Trains in Traverse City describes how rail travel could boost tourism and development in the area; the upgrades needed to run passenger trains along the tracks; and

how comparable towns around the country restored old train lines.

"It's a low-cost way to add capacity to our existing transportation network while supporting development along the track at the same time," said James Bruckbauer, MLUI transportation policy specialist and author of the report.

Some key findings from

the report:

- The estimated cost to improve the tracks—less than \$2 million—is modest when compared to the \$9 million cost to reconstruct just 1.5 miles of U.S.-31.

- While year-round daily commuter trains might be too expensive for now, a seasonal tourist-shuttle could be a low-cost, achievable first step.

- A Traverse City train could spur interest in reviving the rest of the line, which connects Traverse City to the southern part of the state.

The National Association of

Realtors and the Traverse Area Association of Realtors provided funding for the report.

"We've got plenty of evidence that rail projects can have a very positive impact on neighborhood development," said Kim Pontius, Executive Director of the Traverse Area Association of Realtors. "In our region the Grand Vision identified that we need to think of transportation solutions other than the automobile. This project, if realized, may prove to be a great way to test the thesis."

To read the full report, check out www.mlui.org/backontrack.

WALLY passenger car rides at Howell Melon Festival

Visitors to the Howell Melon Festival Aug. 15-17 will have the opportunity to see and to ride the bi-level "MiTrain" passenger cars that could be either used for commuter service between Ann Arbor and Howell (known as the WALLY line) or Ann Arbor and Detroit.

A display will be available for free public tours on Friday, Aug. 15 after 4 p.m.

Hour-long rides will be giv-

en on the cars from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 16 and Sunday, Aug. 17. The cost is \$20 per adult and \$15 per child.

Motive power for the train rides is provided by the Steam Railroading Institute and the Great Lakes Central Railroad.

Both the display car and boarding of the tour train will be adjacent to the Howell Historic Train Museum at 128 Wetmore St, Howell, MI 48843.

Amtrak ticket revenue by route

Service name	FY 2012	FY 2013	Change
Wolverine:	\$17,704,897	\$19,398,853	+9.6%
Blue Water :	\$6,094,659	\$6,228,730	+2.2%
Pere Marquette:	\$3,276,210	\$3,152,828	-3.8%
Michigan Services total:	\$27,075,766	\$28,780,411	+6.3%
Amtrak national total:	\$2,020,004,751	\$2,105,007,664	+4.2%

Source: Amtrak

Correction: In the Spring Edition of The Michigan Passenger, the total numbers of riders using the Jackson station was incorrect. The correct number is 30,913 for fiscal year 2013 according to the Michigan Department of Transportation. That is a 4.8% increase in riders from the 2012 fiscal year.

Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission Convenes at Kansas City Union Station

Commissioners pass resolution to honor late congressman

BY KAY CHASE

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) approved a resolution at its June 12 meeting at Union Station in Kansas City supporting the renaming of buildings occupied by the U.S. Department of Transportation as the James L. Oberstar United State Department of Transportation Complex.

Oberstar, who represented northeastern Minnesota in congress for 36 years and rose to the chairmanship of the House Transportation Committee, died in his sleep early May 3.

“Intercity passenger rail in the Midwest, indeed the Nation, had no greater champion,” David Ewing, MIPRC Federal Affairs Consultant, said.

Oberstar recognized the need for increased federal spending on transportation infrastructure.

He has been lauded for his unwavering support for alternative transportation modes: trains, transit and cycling. He received NARP’s Golden Spike Award in 2005.

The MIPRC resolution asks the congressional delegations of Midwest states for their support for House Bill 4644, introduced by Rep. Daniel Lipinski

(IL-D) with 43 co-sponsors (13 from Midwest states), and Senate Bill .2376, co-sponsored by Minnesota senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken which will rename the complex.

In other business, MIPRC has sent a letter to Speaker Boehner and the House leadership enumerating funding priorities for trains and transit.

MIPRC has also signed on to the recent letter submitted by the Environmental Law and Policy Center calling for urgent action to deal with the shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund and prompt reauthorization of both Moving Ahead for the Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA.)

David Ewing, who keeps an eye on Washington for MIPRC, is not optimistic that the U.S. Congress will deal in a substantive way with these issues until after the fall elections.

In particular, he pointed out that the Grow America Act, put forward by the Obama Administration and proposing to allocate \$19 billion over four years for passenger rail and \$70 billion for transit, faces an uphill battle with a fractious Congress in an election year.

A major item of business was approval of a letter to the congressional delegations of the 10 MIPRC member states expressing strong support for Amtrak’s national system, noting that 8 of the 13 long-distance routes originate in Chicago and serve numerous intermediate points throughout the Midwest.

“People really want trains and transit,” Michelle Teel, Missouri Department of Transportation Multimodal Director said as she welcomed the group to Kansas City.

She said that the public in Missouri expressed approval for rail-based transportation in her state’s recently completed state transportation plan.

Minnesota State Sen. Melissa Franzen said that residents in her state “have a huge appetite for extending transit and passenger rail,” a statement later confirmed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation director in his presentation to the commission.

The Commission received reports from the two new committees formed at the 2013 MIPRC annual meeting.

The Committee on University Partnerships is preparing a survey as a first step in exploring ways to help students become

more vocal advocates for passenger train service and development.

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has created maps showing more than 150 colleges and universities along Midwest Amtrak routes.

Amtrak has compiled data on the numbers of students using the trains under the Student Advantage program.

A comparison of student ridership over the last decade shows increases of as much as 200 percent for East Lansing (Michigan State), 223 percent for Bloomington-Normal (Illinois State), and 250 percent for Lafayette (Purdue).

The other MIPRC committee is focusing on the importance of rail suppliers to the Midwest’s economy.

MDOT has prepared maps showing current suppliers of passenger rail projects and services – in Michigan alone, 93 vendors with an economic impact of \$31.7 million.

The data gathered will also show how Nippon Sharyo – building the new bi-level cars for Michigan, Illinois, and California – and the Milwaukee station project have economic benefits for their entire regions.

Commission summarizes progress on passenger rail

BY KAY CHASE

When members of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) met June 11, perhaps the most interesting portions of the meeting were the updates on projects in each of the states.

The Midwest states received substantial amounts of stimulus funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This has resulted in significant progress in expanding and improving passenger rail infrastructure throughout the Midwest.

Illinois

Joe Shacter, Illinois Department of Transportation Director of Public and Intermodal Transportation, said that 30 minutes will be shaved from the Chicago to St. Louis route by the end of 2015 and that by 2017, 4 ½ hours will be cut from the route

as speeds approach 110 m.ph. along the entire route.

Shacter said the new Chicago to Rockford route will use Union Pacific tracks rather than the Canadian National tracks as originally proposed.

The Chicago to Rockford route construction is funded by the Illinois “Jobs Now” capital projects initiative.

Shacter also said the Chicago to Quad Cities service is slated to begin in 2016.

Indiana

Bob Zier, Indiana Department of Transportation (InDot) Passenger Rail Director, said that while his state has been “last to the dance”, it has been the first to take advantage of a provision of Passenger Rail Improvement Act of 2008 allowing states to seek a service provider other than Amtrak.

InDOT has selected Corri-

dor Capital LLC as its preferred vendor to operate the Hoosier State trains.

Zier explained that Amtrak has failed to meet improvements in its service sought by the seven communities along the route who, under a deal set to expire in October, are contributing 50 percent of the cost of running the train. Future state funding is predicated on continued contributions from these local partners.

Zier reported the Indiana Gateway Project started on May 29.

The \$71.4 million project, designed to relieve congestion on the busy passenger and freight corridor between Porter IN and the Illinois state line, will be a significant factor in increasing reliability for the seven daily trains bound for Michigan, New York and Massachusetts.

Taking a next step in development of the Chicago-Fort

Wayne-Columbus corridor, Indiana has issued an RFP for a Tier I Environmental Impact Study.

Kansas

Kansas state Sen. Carolyn McGinn expressed concern over who will be making the decision – due by December of this year – on continuation of the current route of the Southwest Chief.

The Amtrak-Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) agreement to keep the Southwest Chief running on its current route expires in January 2016.

Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico are working to secure a one-time capital investment of \$100 million and \$10 million annually for maintenance.

The remaining costs will be shared by Amtrak, BNSF, and the three states.

(See COMMISSION, page 5)

M-1 RAIL

(Continued from page 1)

either side of Woodward Avenue going uptown or downtown, but changing to center road stations at the north and south ends of the system. The streetcar line is expected to be operational in late 2016.

A majority of the funding to build and to operate the system for ten years came from contributions from major businesses and institutions along the route which formed a non-profit organization called M-1 Rail.

The Michigan Department of Transportation, which owns the right-of-way and maintains the roadway as a major state highway called M-1, calls the project the Woodward Avenue Streetcar line.

After operating for 10 years, M-1 Rail plans on handing the

system over to a public transit agency, likely the recently formed Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority.

There has been talk of extending the streetcar line to 8 Mile Road but no solid plans have surfaced.

At the same time that M-1 Rail officials began plans for their system in 2007, the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) began simultaneous plans to build a \$500 million light rail system from downtown to 8 Mile Road.

The DDOT light rail plan failed to gain support from the U.S. Department of Transportation and when the Michigan legislature created the Southeast Michigan Regional Transportation Authority it strongly discouraged rail options and favored bus rapid transit instead.

During construction of the streetcar line, Woodward will be closed from Campus Martius to

Adams Street. Cross street traffic will remain open as well as sidewalks to all of the businesses.

Cullen said that the contractor will operate during normal business hours and will not leave any debris lying on Woodward during the non-work hours.

The construction contract was awarded to Stacy and Witbeck who have built streetcars

systems in Seattle, San Francisco, Dallas, Salt Lake City and Portland, Oregon.

Modern streetcar systems in other North American cities have been responsible for real estate booms valued collectively in the tens of billions of dollars.

As of press time, M-1 Rail has not announced who will build the system's six streetcars.



CONSTRUCTION BEGINS. M-1 Rail, the non-profit that is building the streetcar line in Detroit promised no debris would be left on the street during construction. (Photo by Steve Sobel)

COMMISSION

(Continued from page 4)

The states are awaiting a decision on a \$15 million federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant to rehab 55 miles of track from Hutchinson KS to Las Animas CO.

McGinn pointed out that although Kansas cut its income tax, the economy has not rebounded as hoped and transportation funds could be diverted to other purposes.

Kansas Department of Transportation Bureau Chief Dennis Slimmer reported that Wichita has applied for a TIGER grant to advance the proposed northward extension of the Fort Worth-Oklahoma City Heartland Flyer to connect in Kansas with the Southwest Chief.

Michigan

Tim Hoeffner, Director of Michigan Department of Transportation's Office of Rail, highlighted advances being made on a number of fronts including new and refurbished stations, next generation passenger train equipment, planning for commuter rail from Ann Arbor to Detroit and Ann Arbor to Howell, and construction beginning this summer on M-1 Rail (the Woodward Avenue streetcar project in Detroit).

Work is continuing on the Pontiac/Detroit-Chicago Corridor Study to develop a plan for service improvements on the line, primarily involving iden-

tification of alternative routes to ease congestion and increase reliability in the "south-of-the-lake" area.

Indiana Department of Transportation's Shacter had earlier said that, as part of the study, the St. Charles Airline/Grand Crossing is being looked at for a second means of access into/out of Chicago.

On the funding side, Hoeffner reported that Michigan's fiscal year 2015 budget appropriation for rail was not contested and that \$10 million was allocated to advance the Continental Rail Gateway, a proposed high-clearance rail tunnel under the Detroit River linking Detroit and Windsor, Ontario.

In addition, the 2015 budget directs MDOT to conduct a passenger rail feasibility study of the Detroit-Lansing-Grand Rapids-Holland rail corridor.

Minnesota

Minnesota Department of Transportation Co-Project Manager for Passenger Rail, Dan Krom, reported that his state is in year five of their rail plan.

With \$26 million in bond funding and a number of federal and local grants, plans are moving forward, Krom said.

The Twin Cities-Rochester ZipRail Project begins the scoping process with a series of public meetings in July.

The Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance, a joint powers board made possible by 2013 legislation enabling creation of regional rail authori-

ties, is moving forward rapidly to identify options for renewing passenger rail service on existing tracks in the 155 mile corridor between Minneapolis and Duluth.

Designated the Northern Lights Express, 8 daily round trips are envisioned, with 110-mph service on portions of the route.

The Tier 1 Environmental Impact Study on a Minneapolis-Chicago HSR route is to be completed by 2015. A feasibility study for a second daily Twin Cities-Chicago train on the Empire Builder route will be completed this year.

Authority to levy a "wheelage tax" for transit has been extended to all counties in Minnesota. In addition, counties are now able to levy a 1/2-cent sales tax to support transit.

Missouri

Missouri Sen. David Pierce prefaced his remarks with "boring is good."

Funding mandated by PRIA for operation of the state-supported Missouri River Runner passed easily. "We have a good story to tell," Pierce said.

In the fifth year of operation and with a 90 percent on-time-performance, the twice daily round trips between Kansas City and St. Louis carried 600 passengers each day in 2013.

During the last six years, ridership has increased by 78 percent and revenue has increased by 129 percent.

On the November ballot is a proposal to increase the sales

tax by 3/4-cent and thus establish for the first time a dedicated funding source for public transportation in Missouri.

Food, medicine, and gasoline would be exempted from the tax.

Nebraska

Nebraska Senators Jim Smith and Jeremy Nordquist expressed satisfaction that their state legislature overrode the governor's veto of payment of the state's MIPRC dues.

The two senators are awaiting confirmation of their appointments to the Commission.

ProRail Nebraska had made reinstatement of MIPRC membership a top priority.

Wisconsin and Ohio

Although Wisconsin has dropped out of MIPRC membership, the state is cooperating in efforts to expand Hiawatha service by three daily round trips.

Work has begun on improvements to the Milwaukee Intermodal terminal to better serve passengers on the Hiawatha corridor and to provide better transit connections.

Ediotr's note: Kay Chase, MARP's Communications Coordinator, attended the June meeting. She serves on the Commission's Committee on University Partnerships, chaired by Missouri State Sen. David Pierce, which is analyzing the use of Amtrak trains by college and university students. The committee will be recommending initiatives to involve students in advocacy efforts.

From the boardroom: Regional passenger rail service can make a difference

BY LARRY KRIEG

Several significant developments in Michigan's passenger rail service have been under way for the last few years:

- The state of Michigan purchased the historic Michigan Central line, Dearborn to Kalamazoo, from Norfolk Southern Railway in 2012 with lots of help from the federal government;
- The tracks are being upgraded on the Michigan Central line to allow speeds up to 110 m.p.h. on most segments;
- Orders have been placed for new bi-level rail cars for Michigan and Midwest service;
- There is the possible purchase of two Talgo passenger train sets by the state of Michigan that were spurned by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker;
- The Michigan Department of Transportation refurbished 23 bi-level commuter cars for service between Ann Arbor and two other cities in Southeast Michigan;
- New stations are about to open in Dearborn, Grand Rapids,

and Troy; station construction is beginning in East Lansing; and a new station is being studied in Ann Arbor; Battle Creek's station was refurbished and it's open for business;

- A streetcar system will soon be under construction in Detroit; streetcar systems are being studied in Grand Rapids and possibly in Ann Arbor;
- Studies are under way for new intercity rail service from Ann Arbor to Traverse City areas, plus another study is about to get started for a Detroit to Holland route.

So what? What difference will all that make? In short, healthy, sustainable, economically productive transportation options we didn't have before.

Let me explain.

Trains are a healthier option for regional travel. People who travel by train tend to walk more to and from the end-points of their trip. They are less stressed on the way, not having to contend with traffic or transportation security. They can get up and walk around as they travel. And

they're much safer than they would be on the road.

Trains are sustainable transportation. You use 2709 British Thermal Units (BTUs) to travel one mile by train, compared to 3264 BTUs traveling by air, and 3445 BTUs if you drive by yourself – that cuts more than 20 percent off the energy and pollution, according to the Passenger Rail Working Group's 2007 study.

Trains also have the potential of carrying far more people in the same space. A rail line and a lane of traffic is roughly the same width, but you need fewer rails lines to carry the same number of people. In fact, Freakonomics recently gave us a rough estimate: a lane of traffic can carry about 2,000 people per hour, while a train track maximally utilized can handle about 40,000 people.

Trains also take fewer parking spaces than cars when people are commuting. If you figure the cost of building parking decks and the amount of space they occupy (but mostly don't pay taxes on), you can see why successful large cities like New York, Chicago, and

(gasp!) even Los Angeles rely so heavily on trains to get people in and out.

Trains make people more economically productive, too. A friend of mine is the head of a very successful high-tech company in Ann Arbor. He told me one constraint on the growth of his business is that he can't afford to get to the west side of Michigan to meet clients. Oh yes, he has a car and could drive, but the five-hour round trip is too much unproductive time for him. And yes, he has the cash to fly from Detroit to Grand Rapids, but by the time he gets to and from the airports, goes through security, and is not allowed to use electronic devices while under 10,000 feet, he's wasted just about as much time as it would take to drive.

But on a train? The station is just a brisk walk from his company's headquarters, and when Ann Arbor gets a new station, there will be Wi-Fi and space to use the laptop both there and on the train. Time is money, not only for high-powered business people, but for anyone who wants to be successful. Whether your hours are billable or relaxed, a train can make them worthwhile and pleasant.

Let's put those factors all together now: less pollution, less stress and less wasted land as well as more efficient use of energy, better use of time and growth that's sustainable. It all adds up to a better life, a better state and a better planet.

We can thank Governor Rick Snyder, MDOT, and many of Michigan's state legislators for seeing beyond business as usual in the "Automobile Capitol of the World" and for being smarter than their counterparts in some neighboring states. We can thank the Michigan residents and visitors who have flooded our trains to capacity. If you're reading this in a station or on a train, here's a big THANK YOU to you, personally!

But not everyone understands this. We need to keep reminding people in business and government why passenger trains make so much sense, even if they don't make a lot of money.

That's a big part of our job at the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers. You can be part of the effort too. You'll find an application on page two of this newspaper.

Larry Krieg is the Vice-Chair of MARP.

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

41st Annual Meeting

Saturday, September 13, 10:30 am – 2:30 pm

Durand Union Station

200 Railroad St, Durand MI 48429

(former Grand Trunk Western and Ann Arbor RR Depot)



Keynote Speaker

Thomas C. Carper

Chairman, Amtrak Board of Directors

Other invited speakers will discuss Detroit's M-1 Rail Project, prospects for expansion of Michigan passenger train service, and regulatory issues affecting rail.



Registration forms will be mailed to members in August. The public is welcome to attend.
Questions? E-mail marprail@yahoo.com or leave a message at 269-388-3777

MARP 2014 Annual Meeting Registration Form (Please Print)

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Your registration fee includes lunch. Please mail your check for \$25 per person to:
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Court cases could impact on Amtrak's service

There are two lawsuits winding their way through the court system which could change the Amtrak we've known for more than 40 years.

The two cases are known as National Passenger Railroad Corporation (Amtrak) vs. Canadian National Railway (CN), which is now in the U.S. District Court in Washington D.C., and the American Association of Railroads (AAR) vs. the National Passenger Railroad Corporation (Amtrak), which the U.S. Supreme Court just agreed in June to hear for this fall's session.

In order to understand the issues the courts are contemplating, we need to look at the history of Amtrak's formation.

The railroads accepted the 1971 formation of Amtrak in order to rid themselves of very large and growing losses on passenger service.

In exchange, they agreed to give Amtrak trackage rights while charging only "avoidable costs" and to give Amtrak priority over freight "except in emergencies."

Emergencies would normally mean cases in which there was a threat to life, severe property damage, acts of God and derailments rendering track impassable.

The railroads did this because they believed that pas-

senger trains would soon be extinct except on the Northeast Corridor. The railroads made a business decision and they were wrong.

The railroads make a big deal out of track access fees, which are based on actual "avoidable costs."

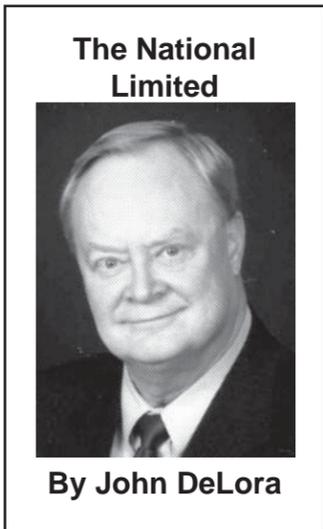
What no one seems to remember is that as part of the original deal, they were allowed to get rid of money-losing passenger routes and that absence of annual passenger losses is a benefit which flows to their bottom line to this very day.

I spoke about this to John Burdakin, then-President of Grand Trunk, and he admitted that they weren't losing money on providing Amtrak service, but he felt they were incurring an "opportunity cost" of not being able to grow their freight business as fast as opportunities emerged.

In Amtrak vs. CN, which actually started before the AAR vs. Amtrak case, the passenger railroad is suing CN for substandard on-time performance (OTP.)

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008 requires 80 percent OTP, (which was not invalidated when it was heard by the D.C. Court of Appeals in the AAR vs. Amtrak case.)

Other parking options around the station will be removed. MSU will temporarily allow for overflow parking through Aug. 24 in Lot 83, just east of the RHS Information Services building. After that date, travelers are urged to use public transportation or arrange for someone to pick them up and drop them off at the station.



The National Limited

By John DeLora

In the Amtrak vs. CN case, the parties are still in the "discovery" phase, and have subpoenaed each other's email records to show that the other guy was cooking the books about OTP.

The case will probably run for at least another year and my guess is that Amtrak will prevail. I think we can all live with 80 percent OTP.

In AAR vs. Amtrak, the railroads are arguing that Amtrak, as a private company, cannot be given the authority to regulate other private companies such as the OTP provision of the PRIIA Act.

Amtrak argues that it is a government body because its Board of Directors is appointed by the President and it receives annual appropriations from Congress.

Amtrak lost in the D.C. Court of Appeals because the 1970 statute creating Amtrak specifically says that Amtrak is not a government department, bureau or entity.

If Amtrak continues to make their main argument on the grounds that it is a government entity, I fear they will lose.

If Amtrak argues that it is working jointly with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to develop the metrics and standards mandated in PRIIA Sec. 207n, they will have a better chance of winning.

Under this line of reasoning, the FRA, as a government regulator, has a duty to protect the public interest, and would therefore prevent Amtrak from aggregating too much power to itself.

In both of the above cases, the government needs to stress that in their contracts with Amtrak, the railroads agreed in writing that they could operate Amtrak trains on the agreed upon schedules, and that in effect, they are seeking court permission to violate their existing contracts.

My take on this is that if Amtrak wins either case, passengers win.

If Amtrak loses both cases, Amtrak ridership and revenues will collapse as trains run so poorly that they are seen by the public as being too unreliable to use.

In that case, I would recommend that we do a leafleting campaign similar to what we did in 1982, asking riders to contact Congress. In that campaign, Sen. James Exon of Nebraska, said he received more complaints about proposed Amtrak cuts than on any other subject, including Social Security.

The AAR has a lot of clout in Congress because they spread around a lot of money. But tank cars don't vote--people do. The only thing members of Congress love more than campaign money is getting re-elected. Aware that Congressmen need votes, members of the National Association Railroad Passengers, MARP and other transportation-friendly consumer organizations need to take advantage of that fact.

John DeLora is Vice-Chair at the National Association of Railroad Passengers and a founding member of MARP.

Work begins on East Lansing station renovation

Work is underway to replace the East Lansing Amtrak Station with the Capital Area Multi Modal Station, operated by Capitol Area Transit Authority (CATA.)

"We are excited to get started," CATA Executive Director Sandy Draggoo said. "The gateway will enhance bus, bicycle, pedestrian and rail transportation for thousands of people who travel each day through the Greater Lansing region."

According to Draggoo, the first order of business is to raze the old Surplus Store and Printing Services buildings.

Passengers will continue to use the existing Amtrak station

during all phases of the project until the new station is completed.

Parking during the project will be limited to fewer than 30 spaces. The existing parking lot will remain open and operational but may be relocated as site development progresses.

Other parking options around the station will be removed. MSU will temporarily allow for overflow parking through Aug. 24 in Lot 83, just east of the RHS Information Services building. After that date, travelers are urged to use public transportation or arrange for someone to pick them up and drop them off at the station.

In July 2012 the U.S. Department of Transportation gave a \$6.28 million grant to CATA for construction of the new station. The Michigan Department of Transportation contributed an additional \$500,000. MSU

provided a soft match valued at \$3.2 million via a long-term land lease of the property.

In June 2014 CATA's board of directors awarded Laux Construction of Holt the project contract with a July 1 effective date.

MARP Meeting Schedule

August – Executive committee only

September 13 – Durand Union Station for the annual meeting.

See registration information on page 6.

October 18 –Grand Rapids-The Rapid local and inter-city

bus station offices adjacent to new Amtrak station – station tour scheduled.

November 15 – Port Huron to discuss new station sites.

Check www.marp.org for additions and changes to this schedule and for directions to meeting sites.

Ann Arbor narrows new station choices to three

BY CLARK CHARNETSKI

The study to find a suitable site for a new or expanded Amtrak multimodal station in Ann Arbor is now at the halfway mark.

A preferred location and preliminary design is anticipated by participants by the end of the year from the city-funded study.

A new station is needed because present annual ridership (total of passengers getting on and off the trains) at Ann Arbor last year was 155,000 and growing.

In 25 years, the Michigan Department of Transportation projects that Ann Arbor will host a ten-fold increase in travelers with nearly one million intercity passengers and 500,000 commuter train riders.

The Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, the University of Michigan Transportation Service and private intercity bus operators have each asked for two bus bays for a total of six bus loading spaces at the station.

That number of bus spaces does not include Amtrak Thruway buses. The present Thruway buses must use the taxi stand spaces in front of the station to allow passengers to board and disembark.

Three advisory committee and public meetings were held in late June to evaluate eight potential sites within the city limits. All locations considered had at least one thousand feet of straight (tangent) track.

URS Corporation, the consultant hired by the city to conduct this study, rated these sites based upon factors such as proximity to downtown businesses, activity and event locations and employment concentrations as well as transit services, accessibility and sufficient size to meet future needs.

Using the criteria, the committee was able to narrow the sites down to three locations.

The site rated the highest by URS was the one just north of the University of Michigan Medical Center along Fuller Road, 3500 feet east of the present station.

It is located along one of the busiest transit corridors in Michigan and would also be a major stop for the planned Ann Arbor Connector, a future light rail or bus rapid transit system.

With a location near the medical center, future commuter rail users could easily walk from the station directly into one of the highest concentrations of employment in southeast Michigan.

Unfortunately the Fuller Road location would displace four to 10 acres of city parkland, a situation that has led to opposition from the local chapter of the Sierra Club and some city residents.

Federal regulations about building a transit on designated parkland place restraints on using it if a reasonable alternative exists.

The second highest rated site was the current station location.

Space constraints at the site were seen as limits to feasibly and economically expanding the station to meet all of the projected



future needs.

The third site is an industrial area on North Main Street also known as Business US-23. This location is not served by any transit line and is far from downtown and the University of Michigan. Its use would require the relocation of several businesses.

An extensive amount of information about this study, including Power Point presentations from the meetings and background items can be found on the website of the City of Ann Arbor at www.a2gov.org/annarborstation.

Above, passengers wait for Amtrak's Wolverine train to arrive at the station. The station is easily one of the busiest in the state. There are plans to add more daily Amtrak trains to the route along with commuter rail which could lead to a ten-fold increase in the number of passengers using the station. Below, Ann Arbor city officials identified eight stretches of track that were straight enough for Amtrak to stop a passenger train. Each of those sites were rated on various criteria for station suitability based on a scale from -2 to +2. (Photo by Steve Sobel. Graphics courtesy the city of Ann Arbor.)



Segment #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Name	W. Huron River Drive	Barton Shore Drive	N. Main Street	Depot Street (Exist. Amtrak Station)	Fuller Road (West)	Fuller Road (East)	Geddes Avenue (West)	Geddes Avenue (East)
Convenient Access to Downtown Ann Arbor and Major Activity Centers	-2	-2	0	2	2	0	-2	-2
Suitable Land for Station Facilities	-2	-1	0	1	1	0	-2	0
Accessed by Existing Roadways	-1	-1	1	1	2	-1	-2	0
Public Transit Connection Potential	-1	-2	0	1	2	-1	-2	-1
Environmental Impacts	-2	-2	-1	1	1	-1	-2	-2
DRAFT SCORE	-8	-8	0	6	8	-3	-10	-5