

# THE MICHIGAN PASSENGER

Your source for passenger rail news since 1973

Winter 2013  
Volume 40, Number 1



Michigan Association  
of Railroad Passengers

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

## WHAT'S INSIDE...

**Amtrak sets records  
during Thanksgiving**

**See Page 4**

**Learn about service  
cuts in Canada**

**See Page 5**

**Kalamazoo gets  
status boards**

**See Page 6**

**Purchase clears way  
for 110 mph trains**

**See Page 8**

PRESORT STD.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 10  
SANDUSKEY, OH  
44870

MARP  
PO Box 180076  
Utica, MI 48318-0076

## Legislature approves regional transit

By Larry Sobczak

On Dec. 19 Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed legislation that created the first regional transit authority (RTA) for southeast Michigan.

The historic legislation, more than 40 years in the making, was approved by the slimmest of legislative margins, 57-50 in the

State House of Representatives. Bills need 56 votes to pass.

The new authority will serve as an umbrella layer over the existing transit agencies in Wayne, Macomb, Oakland and Washtenaw counties and most significantly the Detroit Department of Transportation, SMART, and the Ann Arbor Transportation Au-

thority.

The authority is tasked with:

- Coordinating the transit agencies at the points they overlap, whether that's geographic (why do you have to switch buses at 8 Mile to get from Royal Oak to Wayne State?) or operational (why do you need to carry three

(See RTA, page 3)



**FIRST SCOOP.** The Troy City Council and other dignitaries take a ceremonial scoop of dirt from the Troy Intermodal Transit Center on Nov. 27. The center faced 12 years of political, legal and planning challenges. It will replace the Amtrak station in Birmingham and serve as a SMART bus stop. (Photos by Steve Sobel)

## Transit moves forward in Troy

By Larry Sobczak

Ground was broken Nov. 27 at the Troy Transit Center marking the end of 13 years of planning that often left the transit center advocates wondering if it would ever become a reality.

Construction of the station is expected to be completed later this year on the 28,000 square foot facility that includes a 2,000-square-foot building with a waiting area and public restrooms, a pedestrian bridge to the Amtrak platform, bus docks, taxi stands and parking.

It is being built on a 2.4 acre parcel behind a shopping center located on Doyle Drive near Maple Road and Coolidge Road at a cost of \$6.3 million.

One of the biggest proponents of the transit center was Troy Chamber of Commerce Director Michele Hodges who saw it as a vital direct link from her city to other major Michigan cities and Chicago.

"There are so many people supporting Troy's future," she said at the groundbreaking ceremony. "I have to pinch myself."



Here's an artist's rendition of the Troy Intermodal Transit Center.

The transit center has had many near-death experiences since its conception in 1999 during a lawsuit between the city and the developer of the adjacent shopping center and townhouses. In a legal consent agreement ending the lawsuit, the developer agreed to give the city the parcel for a transit center in exchange for approval of its development.

The city spent nearly a decade going over plans for the center and seeking funding.

"About a year ago, our project nearly died," Troy Mayor Dave Slater said. "We were able to get together and work to get a compromise."

In December 2011, the Troy City Council failed to approve architectural and construction contracts necessary for the project to advance according to the terms of the original \$8.4 million

Federal Railroad Administration grant given to the project.

Former Troy Mayor Janice Daniels led opposition to the transit center and convinced three other city council members to join her in opposition.

Hodges had worked on a compromise deal that would convince one of the council members to reverse his vote in January 2012 by lowering the construction cost by nearly \$2 million by stripping away several environmental-friendly features of the center despite the project is funded entirely by federal grants. The savings was not returned to Troy; it was appropriated towards other federal rail projects elsewhere in the country.

It was Daniels' opposition to the transit center that launched a

(See TROY, page 3)

Michigan Association of Railroad  
Passengers, Inc.

OFFICERS

Chair  
Robert Tischbein  
586-726-9737  
rptischbein@juno.com

Vice Chair  
Larry Kreig  
734-347-2179  
larry@wakeupwashtenaw.org

Secretary  
Hugh Gurney  
517-545-2979  
hgurney@hsmichigan.org

Treasurer  
David Randall  
248-924-4078  
boksul@yahoo.com

REGIONAL CHAIRS

Metro Detroit  
Jim Hinkins  
313-881-6258  
jimhinkins@yahoo.com

East/Central Michigan  
Rosemary Horvath  
989-506-9539  
rosemaryhorvath@hotmail.com

West Michigan  
Vacant  
Contact MARP if you  
interested in this position.  
marprail@yahoo.com

Northern Michigan  
Don Monteith  
231-547-6854  
da@chartermi.net

AT-LARGE EXECUTIVES

John D. Langdon  
616-218-9009  
john-langdon@sbcglobal.net

Jim Wallington  
517-303-6038  
jwallington@msn.com

Kay M. Chase  
269-388-3777  
kay.chase@wmich.edu

Kathleen Newell  
310-740-0421  
knewell1187@comcast.net

The Michigan Passenger

is published four times annually by the  
Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc.  
Copyright © 2013 Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc.

All articles not originated by MARP are copyrighted by their  
respective originators. All rights reserved. Articles used in  
accordance with the Fair Use Clause of the United States  
Constitution.

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.

Michigan Passenger Editor & MARP Webmaster:

Larry Sobczak, editor@marp.org  
586-781-6891

Contributors:

Kenneth Borg  
Kay Chase  
Hugh Gurney  
Jim Hinkins  
Robert Patterson  
Steve Sobel

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

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

http://twitter.com/michrailpass

MARP Membership Application 2013

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Apt/Unit# \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \* \_\_\_\_\_

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

Send check or money order payable to:

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS, Inc.  
P.O. Box 180076  
Utica, Mi. 48318-0076

MEMBERSHIP DUES

- |                                             |       |
|---------------------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 21) | \$15  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors (65+)      | \$15  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual         | \$25  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family             | \$30  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate           | \$50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Class        | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life               | \$500 |

- ☐ **Contact me** - I want to be **ACTIVE!**  
☐ Please send me info on the *National Association of RR Passengers*

- ☐ I want to be notified by phone or email not  
more than 4 times per year when critical  
issues arise

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

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_





## RTA (Continued from page 1)

different bus passes to transfer among the three bus systems?)

- Developing a network of regional rapid transit corridors. The legislation states this "may" include the Woodward and Gratiot Avenue corridors, a western cross-county line to operate between the downtown Detroit station and the Ann Arbor Blake transit center for a distance of approximately 47 miles and a line that roughly follows either M-59 or Big Beaver Road/Metropolitan Parkway in Macomb and Oakland counties. The authority shall determine the exact route.

- Establishing a source of funding, either a property tax or vehicle registration fee, through a voter referendum. The funding source would be approved by a majority of voters in the combined four-county region.

The RTA will have a 10 member board. The county executives of Oakland, Macomb, Wayne and Washtenaw counties will appoint two members each. One of the

Wayne county board members must be from Detroit and the city of Detroit will appoint one additional member. The governor will appoint one non-voting member. Board members cannot hold elected office, or be the paid staff of a city, county, transit agency or the state.

Once the RTA board is appointed, it will hire staff, adopt a regional transit plan and develop a funding plan to put before the voters.

At press time, Washtenaw County had appointed Richard Murphy and Elizabeth Gerber to the board. The rest of the counties and Detroit have until March 19 to appoint the rest of the members.

Funding plans will require a super-majority of 7/9 of the board to set the rate of any tax or fee it will put before voters. The funding ballot will cover the entire four-county area and it will be an all-up or all-down vote.

Additionally, a unanimous vote of the RTA board would be required to acquire or construct any form of rail passenger service or to absorb any existing transit provider.

**TEST DRIVE.** In November, the Michigan Department of Transportation tested passenger cars acquired for future commuter service. The test was conducted between Pontiac and Jackson. These shots were taken in Pontiac by Steve Sobel while the train was parked.



It is unclear what effect the unanimous vote requirement for passenger rail service will have on the future Detroit to Ann Arbor commuter service which presumably will be overseen by the RTA and in which millions have already been invested in rail upgrades and passenger equipment.

Passage of the RTA prompted the U.S. Department of Transportation to begin injecting millions into mass transit in metro Detroit, starting with \$25 million for a light-rail line from down-

town Detroit to the New Center neighborhood referred to as the M-1 Rail project. (See story on page 8.)

During a visit to Detroit in January, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood said that the federal government is in favor of rail options for the new RTA.

Metro Detroit was one of the last major metropolitan areas in the nation without an RTA to coordinate regional mass transit and to distribute federal funds towards mass transit projects.

## TROY (Continued from page 1)

recall effort against her. By a vote of 52 percent, she was recalled from office on Nov. 6.

Another setback for the Troy Transit Center was the city of Birmingham pulling out of the project in 2011 because it could not reach agreement to purchase property on the Birmingham side of the tracks.

The Birmingham property was near a school bus depot and the tracks. The owner wanted more than the roughly \$500,000 the city had to offer.

"We could have used eminent domain," said Robert Bruner, Birmingham city manager,

"but it would have been expensive. Eminent domain doesn't solve our problem of time and money."

In 2009, the developer of the shopping center filed a lawsuit in Oakland County Circuit Court seeking return of the transit center parcel.

Developer Grand Sakwa claimed the original consent agreement stipulated the transit center must be constructed by 2009 or the property reverts back to it. The city argued that the funding and the plans were in place to begin construction. The Circuit Court agreed and the city retained the parcel.

The Troy Transit Center will replace the Birmingham Station for Amtrak's Wolverine passenger train service which is located

a couple hundred yards north of the new site.

The current Birmingham Amtrak Station consists of a Plexiglas bus shelter and two handicap parking spots. There is

no short term or long term parking at the station and there are several "no standing or Amtrak parking" signs posted along the side streets near the station although it is rarely enforced.

## MARP's postal address has changed:



**P.O. Box 180076  
Utica, MI 48318-0076**

Please take note when sending your new membership form or your membership renewal.

We can also be contacted at [marpail@yahoo.com](mailto:marpail@yahoo.com).

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



## Boosters start Spartan Line charter trips

By Larry Sobczak

The charter train trip known as the Spartan Line made its inaugural journey on Nov. 16 and included nearly 60 participants from the Chicago area in a graphically wrapped green and white train car to East Lansing via Amtrak's Blue Water Line.

The charter trip was organized by East Lansing-based Prima Civitas Foundation, Michigan State University (MSU), the MSU Alumni Association, the MSU Alumni Club of Metro Chicago, MSU Athletics, the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau (GLCVB), the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP), and the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum.

The Spartan Line was started as an initiative that provides a unique travel experience for Chicago-area MSU alumni and showcases economic growth in



A car on Amtrak's Blue Water train in East Lansing is wrapped with a special decal. (Photo by Kenneth Borg.)

the Greater Lansing area.

In addition to transportation, the participants also received tickets to that Saturday's MSU vs. Northwestern football game and an exclusive after-hours tour of the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum.

Tremaine Phillips of the Pri-

ma Civitas Foundation told the East Lansing publication Capital Gains that they were pleased with the turnout and they are planning future events to commence in spring of 2013.

"For a first event, we thought that was a success," he said. "We got great feedback from those

who participated. They said they would love to do it again and bring friends and family. We know that we have struck a nerve."

The Spartan Line wrapped car has been spotted in Naperville, St. Louis and Milwaukee.

## Amtrak sets records during Thanksgiving week

Amtrak ridership and ticket revenue both set records for the Thanksgiving period.

Amtrak carried a record 737,537 passengers during Thanksgiving 2012, up 1.9 percent over the previous year and the prior record set in 2011.

In addition, Nov. 21, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, was the single busiest day in the history of Amtrak with 140,691 passengers. Ticket revenues were a best ever \$56.1 million, up 8.4 percent versus 2011.

Thanksgiving ridership on the Amtrak's Wolverine service in Michigan was 15,361, up nearly 17 percent from the year

before, in large part due to extra holiday four round-trip trains operated between Kalamazoo/Ann Arbor and Chicago.

The increase in ridership during Thanksgiving on the Wolverine prompted Amtrak to add two extra round-trip Wolverine trains over the Christmas holiday. Statistics for those trains were not available as of press time.

Amtrak reported that it recovered quickly from Hurricane Sandy and served the same number of Northeast Corridor holiday passengers as the year before. Ridership was up 3.4 percent on state-supported and other short distance routes and

up 0.8 percent on the long-distance services. The Thanksgiving 2012 travel period extended from Nov. 20 – 26.

"Amtrak is a key element of the regional response to Sandy and it was critical for us to restore service and operate our full and expanded schedule to connect families for the holiday—and with the help of our commuter partners we did it," said President and CEO Joe Boardman.

When compared with Thanksgiving 2010, the two-year increase is even more impressive, 737,537 vs. 704,446 passengers, up 4.7 percent and \$56.1 million vs. \$47.6 million in ticket rev-

enues, up 17.9 percent.

Amtrak said that lines at ticket windows and Quik-Trak kiosks were reduced over the holidays with this year's nationwide implementation of eTicketing, enabling passengers to print their own boarding documents or have their smartphones scanned by Amtrak conductors.

Amtrak accommodated additional passengers with extra trains scheduled in the Northeast Corridor, the Chicago Hub, the Pacific Northwest and in California. In addition, Amtrak added capacity to many other trains in the 46-state national network.

This was the first Thanksgiving for the new extended Downeaster service to Freeport and Brunswick, Maine, and for Amtrak Thruway bus service in Eastern North Carolina that provides rail connections for eight communities to the Palmetto service.

Also, Amtrak partnered with VIA Rail Canada, which provided several passenger railcars to help make additional seats available on Northeast Corridor trains and on the Albany – Montreal segment of the Adirondack service.

## Save 20 percent on Amtrak fares in Michigan

Cure yourself of cabin fever and save 20% on select routes in Michigan with The Midwest Winter Warm Up Sale.

Save when you ride the following routes; the Blue Water, the Pere Marquette and the Wolverine.

Just book your travel now through March 30, 2013 for travel January 3 – March 31, 2013 to save.

Your trip could take you to shimmering Lake Michigan, beautiful Chicago or bring you

as far as Grand Rapids or Detroit.

Staying cooped up is no way to spend your winter. So make the most of The Midwest Winter Warm Up Sale and enjoy traveling in comfort with less stress and great amenities.

Discounts are also available on Amtrak routes between Chicago and downstate Illinois, including on Lincoln Service, Illinois Zephyr/Carl Sandburg, and Illini/Saluki.

The discount also applies to the Missouri River Runner be-

tween Kansas City and St. Louis.

Booking your trip, changing your reservation and boarding the train are easier than ever thanks to eTicketing.

With e-Ticketing, say goodbye to waiting in ticket lines at the station and say hello to even more convenience. eTicketing is now available on all routes and you can print your eTicket anytime, anyplace.

Book your tickets at [amtrak.com/deals](http://amtrak.com/deals).



# Visit to Ontario educates MARP about cutbacks

By Hugh Gurney

MARP held its first-ever regular members and executive committee meetings in Essex, Ontario on Nov. 10 to hear first-hand about passenger train service cut backs immediately to Michigan's east and north.

Harry Gow, founder of Transport 2000, the predecessor of Transport Action Canada, addressed the MARP membership and gave an extensive update.

MARP membership has expressed concerns about service in Canada because many members use the country's passenger rail service, VIA Rail, and hope to someday reestablish direct connections between Ontario and Michigan.

Gow reported that the proposed new Detroit-Windsor rail tunnel accommodating double stack rail loads is still on the books. Funding may come from the Building Canada Fund. CP and Borealis, which holds a major stake in the project, will make a joint application. The new tunnel can accommodate passenger rail. Unfortunately, the new VIA station in Walkerville is nowhere near the proposed tunnel portal, which complicates matters considerably.

Gow noted that he had spent a good part of his life and much of his own money to get what was first known as Transport 2000 underway. The organization supports all forms of public transportation, particularly rail and interurban buses. Many recognize the name Transport Action 2000 but have not assimilated the new name of Transport Action Canada.

With a cut in its subsidy by the Canadian Federal Govern-

ment, VIA has cut service to Sarnia to one train a day, the Ocean Limited to Halifax from six times a week to three times a week, and in the winter will cut the cross country Canadian from three times a week to twice a week. At the present time, the company has no fleet renewal strategy.

VIA's current CEO comes from a freight rail background, and the organization has little accountability to the public, reporting to the Cabinet, not Parliament. The VIA Board of Directors is made up mainly of political appointees.

To combat these unfortunate circumstances, Transport Action Canada has developed its National Dream Renewed, calling for a renewed commitment to passenger rail. Starting with a town hall meeting in Sarnia, Transport Action has held public forums throughout Eastern Canada. The hope is that the squeaky wheel will alert enough of the public to bring about a change in attitude by the government. Many in Eastern Quebec and New Brunswick are outraged, as cuts in the Ocean Limited service will now require an overnight stay in Quebec City or Moncton when they go there for medical appointments. In Ontario, reductions in service are affecting employment opportunities in Kitchener and on the Niagara Peninsula. Even where commuter rail or bus service is available; people with disabilities find it harder to get around.

The last of the Eastern National Dream Renewed forums was scheduled for mid-November, with more planned for Western Canada in the new year, after which a report will be made



Above, MARP members sadly learned that the tracks outside the Essex Ontario depot, where they met on Nov. 10, were slated for removal. Below, Harry Gow of Transport Action Canada addresses the MARP membership about passenger rail challenges. (Photos by Steve Sobel)

to all Members of Parliament and to the federal government, including a specific proposal to Parliament. Taking a leaf from NARP's and MARP's book, Transport Action will work very closely with the legislators to bring about desired changes.

Gow attributed the demise of the Northlander connecting Toronto with Cochrane to feuding within the Ontario Parliament between the dominant Liberal party which is stronger in the heavily populated southern part of the province with the less numerous New Democratic Party which is stronger in the sparsely settled north. Premier Dalton McGinty, who ordered the cuts, resigned his post recently, but the bloodletting continues.

Gow is hopeful that the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT) will take the lead in fighting for the restoration of the Northlander as well as reestablishment of rail service between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury, Ontario. Greyhound has reduced service to Sault Ste. Marie to one or two frequencies a day. CAPT has the support of the northern municipalities and



played a part in bringing Indian Trails bus service into Sault Ste. Marie, from Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Gow takes heart in the fact that young workers in northern Ontario are very supportive of passenger rail as a way to get to and from population centers.

From VIA Rail's nascent interest in better bus-rail connections in Eastern Canada, Gow sees hope for a Thruway bus system similar to that existing in the United States. He would love to see Indian Trails expand its service into Ontario.

## Windsor opens new station

By Larry Sobczak

VIA Rail dedicated its new \$5.4 million Windsor station on Nov. 16.

The new station is located at 298 Walker Road, near the Hiram Walkers Distillery on Riverside Drive, and replaces an older station which facility is slated to be razed and converted into a parking lot.

The fully-staffed station sells tickets, accommodates up to 300 people and meets accessibility standards for people with reduced mobility.

The new station boasts a

more efficient layout, wider platforms and more spacious waiting areas than the old station. It has recharging stations for electronic devices such as laptop computers and cell phones. There are more parking spaces and a passenger drop-off area outside.

"Our government is committed to quality and efficient passenger rail for Canadian," said Minister of State (Transport) Steven Fletcher at the dedication ceremony.

Since 2007 VIA Rail reports that it has spent \$1 billion Canadian dollars to improve its stations and infrastructure.



Pictured cutting the ribbon at the new Windsor VIA Rail station are, left to right, Deanna Brown, Via Rail station attendant, Steven John Fletcher, Minister of State, Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, VIA Rail Chief Legal & Corporate Affairs Officer, and Marc Fassette, station attendant.





Kalamazoo Transit Center									
ARRIVALS									
It's 3:29 PM on Wednesday, January 30, 2013									
Key: Amtrak Greyhound Indian Trails Metro Transit									
Center	Route #	Service	Arriving From	Scheduled Arrival Time	Arrival By	Status			
Indian Trails	24		Chicago	3:30	-				
Metro Transit	1	Westnedge	Meijer's	3:38	11				
Metro Transit	11	Stadium/KVCC	KVCC	3:38	1				
Metro Transit	13	S. Burdick	Meijer's	3:38	7				
Metro Transit	14	West Main	Meijer's	3:38	3				
Metro Transit	15	Peterson	Interfaith Homes	3:38	8				
Metro Transit	16	Lovell	Campus Loading Zone	3:38	5				
Metro Transit	7	Alamo	West Main Mall	3:38	9				
Metro Transit	8	Egleston	Industrial Park	3:38	6				
Metro Transit	9	Gull	Wal-Mart	3:38	12				
Metro Transit	5	East Main	Eastwood Plaza	3:42	13				
Metro Transit	1	Westnedge	Meijer's	4:08	11				
Metro Transit	10	Comstock	Meijer's	4:08	19				
Metro Transit	11	Stadium/KVCC	KVCC	4:08	1				
Metro Transit	13	S. Burdick	Meijer's	4:08	7				
Metro Transit	14	West Main	Meijer's	4:08	3				
Metro Transit	15	Peterson	Interfaith Homes	4:08	8				
Metro Transit	16	Lovell	Campus Loading Zone	4:08	5				
Metro Transit	2	Portage	Meijer's	4:08	4				
Amtrak	352	Wolverine	Chicago	4:08	Trackside	33 minutes late.			
Metro Transit	4	Oakland	Rosewood Complex	4:08	2				
Metro Transit	7	Alamo	West Main Mall	4:08	9				
Metro Transit	9	Gull	Wal-Mart	4:08	12				
Metro Transit	12	Duke	Airport	4:10	20				
Metro Transit	6	Parchment	Wal-Mart	4:10	14				
Metro Transit	5	East Main	Eastwood Plaza	4:12	13				

Trains and buses often make up time en route. In many cases, recovery time that is built into the schedule may result in the train or bus arriving at or departing from the station on time. Status is an estimate only.

This display is funded by a grant through the

NARP is the largest national membership advocacy organization for train and rail transit passengers. We have worked since 1967 to expand the quality and quantity of passenger rail in the United States. Our work is supported more than 25,000 individual members. NARP members get a 10% discount on Amtrak rail fares.

Kalamazoo Transit Center									
DEPARTURES									
It's 3:54 PM on Wednesday, January 30, 2013									
Key: Amtrak Greyhound Indian Trails Metro Transit									
Center	Route #	Service	Destination	Scheduled Departure Time	Departure By	Status			
Amtrak	352	Wolverine	Detroit, Pontiac	4:08 pm	Trackside	35 minutes late.			
Metro Transit	1	Westnedge	Meijer's	4:15 pm	11				
Metro Transit	10	Comstock	Meijer's	4:15 pm	19				
Metro Transit	11	Stadium/KVCC	KVCC	4:15 pm	1				
Metro Transit	12	Duke	Meijer's	4:15 pm	20				
Metro Transit	13	S. Burdick	Meijer's	4:15 pm	7				
Metro Transit	14	West Main	Meijer's	4:15 pm	3				
Metro Transit	15	Peterson	Interfaith Homes	4:15 pm	8				
Metro Transit	16	Lovell	The Pointe	4:15 pm	5				
Metro Transit	17	Douglas	Westnedge & G	4:15 pm	10				
Metro Transit	2	Portage	Portage & Miller	4:15 pm	4				
Metro Transit	4	Oakland	Rosewood Complex	4:15 pm	2				
Metro Transit	5	East Main	Eastwood Plaza	4:15 pm	13				
Metro Transit	6	Parchment	Wal-Mart	4:15 pm	14				
Metro Transit	7	Alamo	West Main Mall	4:15 pm	9				
Metro Transit	9	Gull	Wal-Mart	4:15 pm	12				
Metro Transit	1	Westnedge	Meijer's	4:45 pm	11				
Metro Transit	11	Stadium/KVCC	KVCC	4:45 pm	1				
Metro Transit	13	S. Burdick	Meijer's	4:45 pm	7				
Metro Transit	14	West Main	Meijer's	4:45 pm	3				
Metro Transit	15	Peterson	Interfaith Homes	4:45 pm	8				
Metro Transit	16	Lovell	The Pointe	4:45 pm	5				
Metro Transit	17	Douglas	Westnedge & G	4:45 pm	10				
Metro Transit	7	Alamo	West Main Mall	4:45 pm	9				
Metro Transit	8	Egleston	Industrial Park	4:45 pm	6				
Metro Transit	9	Gull	Wal-Mart	4:45 pm	12				

Trains and buses often make up time en route. In many cases, recovery time that is built into the schedule may result in the train or bus arriving at or departing from the station on time. Status is an estimate only.

This display is funded by a grant through the

NARP is the largest national membership advocacy organization for train and rail transit passengers. We have worked since 1967 to expand the quality and quantity of passenger rail in the United States. Our work is supported more than 25,000 individual members. NARP members get a 10% discount on Amtrak rail fares.

Membership information at: [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org)

On the left, Larry Sobczak activates the arrival boards as Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell looks on. Screen shots above show the boards. (Photo by Kay Chase)

# Electronic arrival and departure signs debut at Kalamazoo Transit Center

Electronic arrival and departure boards were installed at the Kalamazoo Transit Center in January.

The status boards are two 60-inch LED television screens that display bus and train arrival departures within an hour time span; 55 minutes before the current time and five minutes after the current time.

Times displayed are for Amtrak, Greyhound, Indian Trails and Kalamazoo Metro Transit, which all serve the station with more than 760 arrivals and departures per day. It is estimated that more than one million people use the station each year.

The status board project is sponsored by the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) through a grant from the Sally Mead Foundation. The Sally Mead Foundation funds projects that encourage green transit.

The Sally Mead Foundation granted NARP \$25,000 for the project. A portion of the grant was used to develop the software and hardware for the project. The remaining funds will be used to install status boards in stations in Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois.

The status boards did not cost the city of Kalamazoo anything with all costs covered by the grant.

Kalamazoo was chosen for the status boards because of the number of transit carriers it serves, the number of annual passengers and the number of departure and arrivals.

“The status boards are intended to give passengers information about other forms of transit available at the station and to encourage people to use multiple forms of transit to get to their destination,” NARP Vice Chairman John DeLora said.

The status boards at the Kalamazoo Transit Center are the first status boards in the country that show all modes of public transport served by the station.

The status boards show the status of a transit mode (on time or number of minutes late) when possible.

According to DeLora, Amtrak provides times to the status boards through its website. There are future plans to provide status times for Kalamazoo Metro Transit which is in the middle of a major upgrade of its dispatch and vehicle tracking software.

Greyhound and Indian Trails told DeLora that they do not have the capability to provide vehicle status at this time; however their schedules are posted on the boards at the appropriate times during the day.

Besides arrival and departure information, the status boards give connection information to major destinations within the city, weather and tourism information.

The status boards were warmly received at a dedication ceremony on Jan. 28 by the public and city officials.

Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell, Metro Transit Director Bill Schomisch and DeLora spoke briefly about the status boards before Larry Sobczak, who edits The Michigan Passenger and also designed the boards, threw the switch to activate the boards.

*This report was prepared by Larry Sobczak who also designed and installed the status boards for NARP.*

## Tentative MARP meeting schedule 2013

- January 12** – Williamston Depot Museum, 369 W. Grand River.

**February 09** – Capac Depot Museum, old M-21

**March 09** – St. Johns Depot Museum, downtown St. Johns at the RR tracks

**April 20** – Niles Amtrak Station; will need #351 to stop to deboard Detroit area members
- May** – National Train Day activities pre-empt monthly meeting

**June 15** – Vicksburg Depot Museum

**July 20** – Flushing Depot Museum

**August 9-10-11**–Historic Train ferry City of Milwaukee berthed and open in Manistee; possible overnight stays

**September 14** – Durand
- Union Station for the annual meeting –Kevin Keefe of Trains magazine is the speaker

**October 12** –Grand Haven Depot Museum

**November 2 or 9** – Albion Amtrak Depot

**December** – executive meeting only

Check [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) for additions and changes to this schedule.
- MARP meetings are held in various places around the state in order to give everyone a chance to participate.

We post meetings announcements on the web with agenda information and travel information. We have archived meeting minutes so you can have a look at past topics covered.



# Observations from the Woodward Avenue Rapid Transit Alternative Analysis meetings

By Robert Patterson

During December, I attended several meetings of the Woodward Avenue Rapid Transit Alternative Analysis Meetings, presented by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). These public forum meetings in Oakland and Wayne counties were aimed at looking at what SEMCOG calls "Alternative Analysis - AA." As one SEMCOG speaker stated, AA "does not start with a solution, but ends with one".

There were three modal variations presented: light rail, bus rapid transit mixed in traffic, and bus rapid transit structured within a fixed guideway.

I attended three sessions, Berkley, Birmingham, and Ferndale. I missed the Detroit and Pontiac meetings wherein a more diverse demographic might have added more input.

The Berkley presentation was well attended by gender.

The Birmingham presentation was crowded, due to a small, tight meeting room, but did have much more active discussion. Here the demographic was far and away to the middle and senior age ranges.

The Ferndale presentation was attended by a more diverse group, with what appeared to be more student and college age participants.

Carmine Palombo, Transportation Planning at SEMCOG, was at the Ferndale presentation and his description of the event or

events was, in answer to a question, "we are not close to any decision on any of the options and characteristics involved, speed, right of way, etc. We aren't even close."

He did seem to lean toward the bus rapid transit or the "hybrid" bus rapid transit approach. It would appear what SEMCOG may be close to is an attempt to steal the thunder from the M-1 Woodward development for the 3 miles of New Center to Downtown Detroit. The main impression is that, despite the desire of many to push for a true regional rail solution to 21st Century urban living, this is still Oakland County's transit AA, as unfocused and unfunded as it is, with plenty of mileage separating the New Center area and Oakland County's 8 Mile Road line in the sand.

Mr. Palombo referred to the M-1 as a "streetcar", which it more probably is, but pushed an implied legitimacy to the Oakland County bus rapid transit format for SEMCOG's version, while displaying some personal ownership of a Woodward Avenue version of Light or Bus Rapid Transit.

One of my questions focused on how many stops and where? Answer: at the one mile roads. Then I asked, how does a person move between the half mile roads? Answer: by other transit means. It appears this system may be intended as an over lay to bus routes.

Then the question is do we

need it?

A few people drilled deeper to the core of the problem when asking "why the Detroit area always has plans and plans, but nothing ever comes from it?" Their question went unanswered, covered over by a bureaucratic form of tap-dancing.

A real answer may begin with a focus on the entitlement nature of planning agencies that insures there is always enough money for the first phase of initial planning, but no movement to real world political commitment and

completion.

After years of attending meetings like this I am reminded of the mythical character, Keyser Soze, in the 1995 movie "The Usual Suspects." Soze is a boogeyman legend among the criminals in the film that has the effect of keeping the status quo. When it comes to mass transit in Metro Detroit, maybe we need to define who or what the real Keyser Soze is.

*This report was presented at the MARP member meeting on Jan. 12 in Williamston.*



Light rail along Woodward Ave. as envisioned by the M-1 Light Rail Group.



## Commuter Rail? Event Rail? Both?

By Jim Hinkins

The future for commuter rail looks very good in southeast Michigan. Seventeen passenger cars, with MI-Train paint jobs, have been renovated and completed by Michigan Department of Transportation. Engines and cab cars have been acquired and testing at 79 mph was completed by Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG.)

The recent establishment of a regional transit authority to administer existing and proposed transit options such as light rail, rapid transit buses, Detroit and suburban buses and commuter rail seems promising. So what are we waiting for?



In a MARP-supported study in the 90's, eight existing heavy rail corridors were identified as potential commuter rail lines. One of those, the east-west Ann Arbor to Detroit, and another, running north-south Ann Arbor to Howell, are on SEMCOG's project list. Both of these services would be MI-TRAINS, with AA to Detroit commuter run-

ning on the same line as Amtrak.

We can start commuter rail service now, even though track improvements and stations have not yet been completed. Coordination between Amtrak and freight lines is a necessity. Simple morning and afternoon runs could be put into service. Temporary storage and lay over facilities could be used in Jackson and

Pontiac.

It is time to let the public know that these services will soon be available, with the possibility of expanded service in the future. At best, let them know the progress that has taken place. With public support of event rail for sporting events and Downtown/New Center Detroit activities, there is even more reason to get started. MARP, partnering with state and local level transit agencies, is ready and willing to help promote Commuter Rail in the Southeast Michigan Region. Again, what are we waiting for?

*Jim Hinkins is MARP's Metro Detroit Chairman.*



# MDOT purchases railroad for 110 mph service

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Norfolk Southern Railway Co. (NS) signed a sale agreement that transfers ownership of 135 miles of NS railroad to MDOT for \$140 million on Dec. 7.

The line is part of Amtrak's Wolverine and Blue Water passenger rail services between Kalamazoo and Dearborn.

After ownership transfers to MDOT, the line also will continue to provide freight rail services to major Michigan companies.

Although it will have no immediate effect on the traveling passenger, transfer of title to the line is one step in a multi-step

process that will pave the way for track improvements designed to accommodate passenger train speeds up to 110 mph.

This will knock about 30 minutes off the travel time between Detroit and Chicago, reducing the overall trip time between the two cities to about five hours.

Once the transition to MDOT ownership is final, which is expected to occur by spring 2013, Amtrak will handle upcoming track and crossing upgrades that must be in place before accelerated passenger service can go into effect.

Expected to take two to four years to complete, the upgrades will include new,

continuously welded rail and ties, improvements to highway-rail grade crossings, fiber-optic lines for train and signal control systems, and gates and flashers at highway-rail grade crossings.

NS will retain an exclusive freight easement to preserve and grow its freight business.

The \$140 million used to purchase the line included FRA High-speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program grant funds, plus a state match of \$37.5 million.

The FRA also awarded \$196.5 million to MDOT for the major track and signal improvements on this corridor.

## Ann Arbor Railroad sale may help bring WALLY into city

Watco has applied for regulatory permission to buy the 50 mile-long Ann Arbor Railroad that links Ann Arbor and Toledo.

Ed McKechnie, a Watco executive vice president and chief commercial officer, said his company expects to receive regulatory approval for the acquisition by early February.

The company owns and operates several short-line railroads across the country including a lease to operate the Norfolk Southern Railway between Grand Rapids and Elkhart.

News of the changing ownership in January sparked questions about whether Watco will be more amenable to talking with local officials about the proposed WALLY commuter rail line from Howell to Ann Arbor.

WALLY supporters have met staunch opposition from the current owners of the Ann Arbor Railroad to bring WALLY near downtown Ann Arbor and Michigan Stadium using Ann Arbor Railroad's bridge and tracks at the Huron River

McKechnie told AnnArbor.com he hasn't yet had talks with anyone from the Michigan Department of Transportation or the city about his company's acquisition of the railroad and what it could mean, but he's hopeful there will be a good conversation.

McKechnie said when he came to Ann Arbor to look at the railroad and saw how close it comes to Michigan Stadium, he knew there'd be a desire to add some type of passenger rail.

"We're not saying yes, we're not saying no," he said, suggesting Watco doesn't want to be associated with any type of passenger rail unless it can meet people's expectations for performance.

"Passenger rail business is vastly different than freight rail," he said. "We're not going to get into something where we can't exceed people's expectations. It's gotta be a real deal.

"The good news is MDOT is one of the premiere transit agencies in the country," he added. "We're hopeful there will be a good conversation."



**SPECIAL TRAIN.** Canadian National Railway brought its finest vintage equipment from its subsidiary, the Illinois Central Railroad, to take Santa Claus to see employees and their families at its various Michigan facilities in early December. This shot was taken on Dec. 1 as the train made its way past the New Haven depot and grain elevator. (Photo by Larry Sobczak)

## Streetcars returning to Woodward

The M-1 Rail streetcar project in Detroit can move forward "immediately" using a \$25 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant previously awarded for transit in the city, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced on Jan. 18.

The grant will be used to help pay for construction of a planned 3.3-mile streetcar line designed to help revitalize Detroit's historic Woodward Avenue corridor, U.S. Department of Transportation officials said in a prepared statement.

"What I have seen happen in Detroit is a transformation," U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood told a gathering of top civic and political leaders at Wayne State University, which is on the \$140-million M-1 Rail streetcar line's planned 3-mile route from downtown to New Center. "This is a day of celebration for this city."

M-1 Rail backers said construction on the largely private-sector effort -- funded by Detroit's business titans, major employers, the city's Downtown Development Authority and the Troy-based Kresge Foundation -- could begin as early as this summer, with the system operating by late 2015.

The nonprofit M-1 Rail Corp. -- a coali-

tion of private businesses, foundations, and public and private institutions -- has committed more than \$100 million toward construction and operation of the \$137 million project. The remainder will be funded by state and local sources. M-1 Rail Corp. initially will operate the streetcar line.

Backers raised \$35 million from Kresge, \$9 million from the Downtown Development Authority and smaller but significant pledges from Detroit's major automakers, WSU, the Detroit Medical Center, Henry Ford Health System and others. The effort was buoyed by the support of Roger Penske of Penske Corp., Quicken Loans' Dan Gilbert, the Ilitch organization and Compuware founder Peter Karmanos.

The funding announcement comes weeks after Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed into law legislation creating a Regional Transportation Authority to develop and operate public transportation projects in Detroit and across the state.

The line will include 11 stations, with connections to Campus Martius; Comerica Park, home of the Detroit Tigers baseball team; Detroit Medical Center; and Wayne State University.

Streetcars last ran on Woodward in 1956.