

# THE MICHIGAN PASSENGER

Your source for passenger rail news since 1973

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Michigan Association  
of Railroad Passengers

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## Troy forced to condemn station land

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

The city of Troy began condemnation proceedings to gain ownership of the land occupied by the recently completed \$6.3 million Intermodal Transit Center along Doyle Drive near Maple Road and Coolidge Highway.

“We initiated condemnation

in early January,” City Manager Brian Kischnick said. “We will follow the letter of the law over condemnation proceedings to gain clear and continuous ownership of the property.”

The city found itself in this position beginning with a long protracted legal dispute with

the adjacent property owner and ending with the Michigan Supreme Court refusing to hear a case involving ownership of the land on which the building and parking lot sit.

Developer Grand Sakwa Properties gave the 2.3 acre par-  
(See CONDEMN, page 3)



**SANTA'S IRON SLEIGH.** The Steam Railroading Institute's Pere Marquette 1225 locomotive brought Santa and passengers to the village of Ashley on special excursions this holiday season. It's the first time this locomotive, which served as a physical model for the animated movie "The Polar Express," has been on the rails in nearly five years. (Photo by Rosemary Horvath)

## 1225 steams again!

### Historic locomotive brought thousands to Ashley

Breathing fire and steam for one of the first times in nearly five years, the historic Pere Marquette 1225 locomotive brought life back to the central Michigan village of Ashley this past Christmas season.

Costumed elves and hobos as well as locals greeted 19 trains carrying more than 500 passengers each trip to the tiny town of 563 residents along the Great Lakes Central Railroad, a line more familiar with hauling freight for small rural industries.

Sold-out passenger lists boarded on weekends throughout the holiday season at the Steam Railroading Institute in

Owosso (Pere Marquette 1225's home) to make the hour-long journey to the town named in honor of John M. Ashley, described as promoter and builder of the Ann Arbor Railroad.

The steam locomotive has been out of service since 2009 when the Federal Railroad Administration mandated a rebuild and inspection of its boiler. In November the Steam Railroading Institute completed the arduous physical and fundraising tasks to return the locomotive to service.

The 1225 is a 2-8-4 (Berkshire) steam locomotive built for Pere Marquette Railway (PM) by Lima Locomotive Works

in Lima, Ohio in 1941. It was taken out of service in 1951 and became part of a static display at Michigan State University in 1957. A group of students began restoring the locomotive in 1969. By 1988, the students had evolved into the Steam Railroading Institute and the locomotive was ready to begin its second career as an excursion locomotive.

Around the time the 1225 began running under its own power again in the mid-1980s, children's author and illustrator Chris Van Allsburg wrote an award-winning book, "The Polar Express," about the locomotive he used to climb on as child when his family attended home  
(See 1225, page 3)

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## The Michigan Passenger

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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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## CONDEMN (Continued from page 1)

cel to the city in 2000 with the stipulation that a transit center be built within 10 years. The donation was part of an agreement between the city and Grand Sakwa that allowed for the construction of the adjacent shopping center and condominium complex.

Grand Sakwa filed a lawsuit in Oakland County Circuit Court to regain the property in 2012 after construction of the transit

center was delayed.

The Oakland County Circuit Court agreed with the city's argument that the 2000 agreement was still in effect because the center had full funding for construction and it was in the process of engineering and architectural designs.

In May 2013, the Michigan Court of Appeals had overturned the Circuit Court decision and it said that Grand Sakwa owned the property. By that time, the transit center was more than half way completed.

The city appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court which

refused to hear the case in November.

In December, the city had the land appraised and offered Grand Sakwa \$550,000.

The city has approximately \$2 million in unused funds from the original Federal grant to build the center to tap into.

Kischnick said the city was forced to file for condemnation of the property because Grand Sawka had not responded to its offer.

He said that the appraisal and the waiting period followed condemnation laws and that the city

will be able to demonstrate other parts of the law in court.

"We are confident that it will be found this meets a public need," he said.

In a separate issue, the city is negotiating with Amtrak and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) over moving the current Amtrak stop a few hundred yards south in Birmingham to the new transit center.

Kischnick said that negotiations with Amtrak and MDOT are ongoing and could be influenced by the timing of condemnation proceedings.

# Jumper wires blamed for Niles Amtrak derailment

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has determined that the probable cause of the derailment of an Amtrak train on Oct. 21, 2012 in Niles was from the improper use of jumper wires on a signal system.

The jumper wires which were attached by a signal supervisor caused the signals to show it was clear for the train to proceed when in reality the switch was lined to send trains from the mainline into the yard. The signal supervisor was called to the switch earlier in the day after

remote sensors had detected a problem with the equipment.

The result was eastbound Amtrak train 350, The Wolverine, entered the Niles Yard from the main track at Control Point (CP) 190 while traveling 61 mph. The train derailed about 291 feet after diverging from the main track and traveled 1,148 additional feet before coming to a stop on a yard track.

The train was composed of two locomotives, one on each end, and four passenger cars. All four cars and both locomotives derailed upright and in line with

the track.

On board the train were 165 passengers and 4 crewmembers. Emergency responders reported that 13 people were injured; 8 of those were transported to area hospitals. None of the injuries were reported to be life-threatening.

Amtrak estimated the damage at \$400,000.

The NSTB made the determination after investigating recorders on board the train and interviewing witnesses to the derailment.

The NTSB said the use of the jumper wire was inconsistent with Amtrak procedures for using jumper wires to override signal and train control safety-critical circuits.

The NTSB said inadequate oversight by Amtrak management to ensure that proper jumper wire safeguards were employed contributed to the accident.

The finding was published by the NTSB on Nov. 20.

The complete report is available at: <http://www.ntsb.gov/doclib/reports/2013/RAB1306.pdf>

## 1225

(Continued from  
page 1)

football games at Michigan State. In 2004, film animators used the locomotive as a model for the movie of the same name.

The book and movie firmly cemented the locomotive into the hearts of the public and people by the thousands wait to ride or watch the locomotive steam through central Lower Michigan around Christmas time.

The townspeople of Ashley and their neighbors in Elba Township turned the drab downtown streets and storefronts (some forever empty) into colorful festive shops selling homemade merchandise and delicacies geared to entertain hundreds of children accompanied by unselfish adults. The Village of Ashley Country Christmas is designed around a 1940's theme that, as one local put it, "isn't a stretch for us."

At the community hall a barbershop quartet sang standards to a crowded room dining on sloppy Joes and hot dogs. Over

at the hobo kitchen, homemade bread and soup were served by costumed hobos straight out of Central Casting. Across the way were live reindeer, a film giving the town's railroad history, a lively bluegrass band at the local pub serving up a turkey dinner buffet and a shop selling Czech pastries and chocolates hand prepared from nearby towns.

Oh yes, besides the 1225, the other feature of the day was Santa Claus himself listening to I-Want lists. It's only a guess, but from the number of hands waving from the passengers as the train coaches pulled away, one could say contentment abounded.

As a footnote, we are told it was sheer coincidence that Pere Marquette Railway assigned the road number "1225," the date of Christmas, to the locomotive that now brings so much joy each year.

*Thanks to MARP Board Member and journalist Rosemary Horvath for this report. Much of it was adapted from an email she circulated after experiencing the 1225 in Ashley in early December.*

## Volunteer presenters needed

Michigan Operation Lifesaver is looking for volunteers to give presentations about safety near railroads in the volunteers' communities around the state.

Volunteers attend an online course and an in-person class to become a presenter. They can be any concerned member of the community, from public safety officials to ordinary citizens.

An example of a recent safety activity included a series of presentations given at Charlotte High School and Middle School on Oct 22 prompted by the death of a student who was trespassing on railroad tracks in April.

The 45 minute sessions were presented by Curtis Stewart, a retired captain of the Lansing Fire Department, and George Tolliver, a special agent from the CN

Railroad Police Department. The Charlotte Police also assisted.

The presentations emphasized the potential hazards of trespassing on railroad property and at rail intersections. The high school presentations included tips for drivers as well as pedestrians.

In addition, a seminar was held by retired NS Railroad Police Officer David Cornelius for the Charlotte school bus drivers. The Charlotte school district will be scheduling a series of presentations for the elementary school students soon.

For more information about becoming a Michigan Operation Lifesaver volunteer, visit their website at [mi-ol.org](http://mi-ol.org). More information about volunteer training can be found at the national Operation Lifesaver website at [oli.org](http://oli.org).

## Amtrak Ridership statistics

Service name	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	Change
Wolverine:	503,290	484,138	509,100	+5.1%
Blue Water :	187,065	189,193	191,106	+1.0%
Pere Marquete:	106,662	109,321	104,491	-4.6%
Michigan Services total:	797,017	782,652	804,697	+2.8%
Amtrak national total:	30,186,733	31,240,565	31,559,945	+1.0%

Percent change is between fiscal years 2012 and 2013. Fiscal years begin on Oct. 1 and end on Sept. 30.



The Algoma Central Railway train passes by a lake in rustic Ontario. The trains brings thousands of tourists to the province each summer and fall and provides a valuable service to local residents. (Photo by Cathy Hart)

## Wilderness experienced by train

BY CATHY HART

A few years ago I was mulling the possibility of a vacation combining my husband's interest in fishing with my interest in trains. No small order that, especially with only two rail-ways within a reasonable distance. I had looked into taking the Amtrak train to Devil's Lake ND. However, the logistics of getting to and from the train and lake with gear presented some challenges. The other rail line within distance was the Algoma Central Railway (ACR), now owned by Canadian National Railway, which operates between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst, Ontario.

I was on the ACR website when I noticed a button for "Lodges along the Line". Hmm... Sure enough, there was a list of outfitters accessible directly from the passenger train, which is separate from the Agawa Canyon tourist train. The ACR passenger train is one of only a few flag stop trains in

North America where you can get on and off the train anywhere. Interest piqued, I started researching the lodges and their offerings. Each boasted numerous pictures of fishermen/women holding trophy fish.

Before booking the trip, we made a road trip to Canada to check out whether we would take the train from Sault Ste. Marie or Hawk Junction. The Canadian customs officer gave us quite a hard time, not believing that anyone would drive that far for just the weekend. He obviously didn't know me! We planned to check out the depot at Hawk Junction and then drive the short distance back to Lake Superior Provincial Park to set up camp. The Highway 17 drive along Lake Superior is one of the most beautiful drives in the Midwest with cliffs, rivers, waterfalls, and stunning views of Lake Superior.

Through no planning on our part, we arrived at the Hawk Junction depot just before the

northbound passenger train's arrival. Quite a few people were waiting for the train, their gear loaded on wagons at the track's edge. We chatted with a couple who were making their ninth trip to Errington's Wilderness Island Resort, the lodge we considering. They gave us advice and relieved our fears about booking a trip.

Since there are few towns along the line, destinations are designated by mile marker. Errington's, for example, is mile marker 206. The fare structure for the ACR passenger train is complicated, with pricing by zones. And tickets are not purchased in advance, you just show up at the depot. The train that arrived consisted of a locomotive, one coach, and a baggage car. We watched the passengers board the train, the gear get loaded, and then watched the train till it was out of sight.

We drove back to Lake Superior Provincial Park and set up our tent on a site directly on the Lake Superior beach. The Park is large and quiet – quite different than the sparsely wooded U.S. parks with noisy visitors. We had a pleasant weekend listening to the lapping waves, cooking on the fire pit and enjoying the peace and quiet.

South through the Canadian and U.S. border, we got an equally hard time from the U.S. customs officer. Why were you there such a short time? Did you buy anything? (Yes, ketchup chips for the kids.) Oh, you have kids, where are they? (Home playing video games.) Why didn't they come with you? (They're teenagers.) Etc. Finally, they handed back

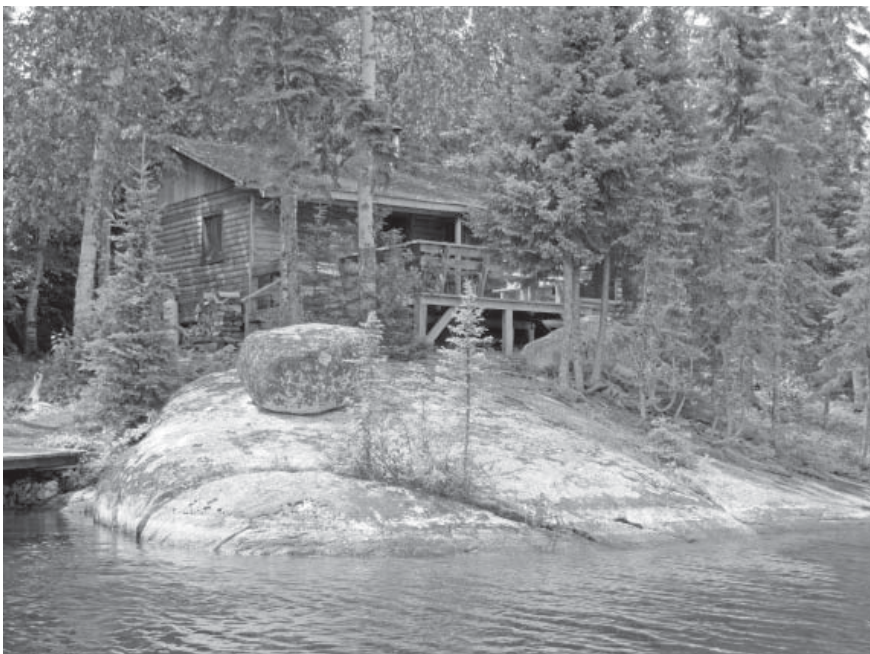


Ken Hart travelled by train to remote Canada for the fishing. (Photo by Cathy Hart)

passports and welcomed us back to Michigan.

Fast forward one year and we were on our way to Errington's Lodge. We chose to take the train from Sault Ste. Marie (more time on the train for me). Interestingly, you pick up the passenger train from the train yard, not the depot. My first impression was how clean the passenger coach was. This is a train for wilderness adventurers with fishing gear, coolers, and other outdoor stuff. I did not expect freshly washed windows and a coach so spotless you could eat off the floor. Along the way, people left the train at a highway and at lake cabins along the tracks; others joined us along the route. A large number of people boarded at Hawk Junction, considered a major departure point for wilderness trips. The couple we had talked to a year earlier boarded for year number ten.

(See WILDERNESS, page 5)



Here's an example of a rustic cabin that many Canadians and Americans can only easily access by using the Agawa Canyon Train. (Photo by Cathy Hart)

# Agawa Canyon Snow Train cancelled

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

Canadian National Railroad (CN) announced Nov. 19 that it is terminating operation of the Agawa Canyon Snow Train.

“Since 2011 when we launched our new train, we have actively promoted the Snow Train and its newly refurbished equipment. Unfortunately, ridership has stagnated and the service is not economically sustainable,” said John Orr, CN Vice President for Eastern Region. “CN remains committed to Sault tourism and will focus its resources on promoting and growing ridership on the summer and fall tours where we have seen success.”

The Snow Train typically operated six Saturday excursions each winter north of Sault Ste. Marie Ontario to the Agawa Canyon.

CN said it promoted the winter service but passenger counts have failed to grow, remaining at approximately 1,500 per season.

CN said it will still continue operation of its successful summer and fall Agawa Canyon excursion trains.

“CN is very pleased by the success of the summer and fall excursion trains,” Orr said. “Working with our partner Tourism Sault Ste Marie, we will continue to invest in the promotion and delivery of this featured excursion train service”.

Orr said the canyon tour, along with the newly-refurbished train cars, has attracted an increasing number of passengers. In the last two years, ridership on the summer and fall ex-



Steve Sobel took this slide photo of the Agawa Canyon Snow Train near Searchmont, Ontario in March 2001. Canadian National Railway decided to stop running the train beginning this season.

cursions has increased by more than 10 percent.

Tourism Sault Ste. Marie and its industry partners are very disappointed at the announcement by CN.

“That is why it is so disappointing to hear of the cancellation”, said Tourism Sault Ste. Marie (TSSM) Executive Director Ian McMillan. “It just seemed we were making inroads in growing the passenger levels, and thought collectively we were in for the long haul, in restoring these tour trains to the historic levels of passengers they experienced as recently as 2002”.

Kevin Wyer, Chairman of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie and the General Manager of the Delta Waterfront Hotel and Convention Centre echoed the sentiments, saying “the Sault Ste.

Marie accommodation sector experienced a very challenging year in 2013, and the cancellation of the Snow Train is going to hit us hard when we don’t have those visitor levels on the weekends for the balance of the winter”.

While TSSM looks at this as a definite set back, the organization said it is determined to work with CN Rail to look at alternatives to operating a winter train, so that consideration will be given to bringing the Snow Train back in 2015.

TSSM was instrumental in working with the CN Rail, as well as the Provincial and Federal Governments, to secure the \$11.2 million for the purchase of upgraded coach equipment and the onboard audio/video technology.

Snow train promoters have a difficult task ahead of them.

During the winters before Sept. 11, 2001, the snow train had 25 coaches, two dining cars, two dome cars and five or six engines according to passenger descriptions. Trains used to be up to a mile long carrying 1,600 to 1,800 passengers a day.

Sept. 11th made it difficult to cross the border and the price of gasoline skyrocketed after Hurricane Katrina and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, making the Sault Ste. Marie out of reach for many travelers.

Last year, the Snow Train ran just six coaches, one dining car and two engines.

In addition, passengers have reported fares steadily increasing since CN Rail bought the railroad.

## WILDERNESS (Continued from page 4)

About an hour and a half more and we arrived at our destination. The train stopped right at the northern most point of Lake Wabatonogushi, a 22 mile long lake within the Chapleau Game Preserve, one of the largest wildlife sanctuaries in the world. Al Errington and staff were waiting trackside to welcome guests. We took a cedar boat to our cabin on Heritage Island where we enjoyed a cozy cabin with a wood stove (it was the second week of September). We saw a mother bear and cub within an hour of arriving.

It took me a couple of days

to do a technology detox – no phones, laptop, TV, etc. We fished, explored, viewed wildlife, stargazed and enjoyed a peaceful, soul-healing week with more loons than I had ever seen. We caught walleye and pike and had a couple fish fries in our cabin. The train comes north Saturday, Monday, and Thursday and south on Sunday, Tuesday, and Friday. I admit that I made my husband, more than once, leave his fishing and head over to the tracks prior to train arrivals.

We did not see northern lights or a moose, but there’s always next time. Our week went by much too quickly and on our final morning we packed up in the rain, vowing to return the following year. The return to

Sault Ste. Marie was a long day for my husband, though there is not such a thing as too long a train trip for me.

We returned this past July, bringing the boys this time and boarding the train from Hawk Junction. The fishing was fabulous, with large perch (12”) in addition to walleye and pike.

Still there was no moose.

It was cool and rainy which gave us ample opportunities to catch up on card playing. Additional excitement was caused by flooding that derailed a freight train and caused lodge guests to come in and out of the resort by float plane instead of train.

The dinners at the lodge were just as amazing, and our hostess, Doris, outdid herself

on the desserts. The white cake, lemon filling, cream cheese frosting dessert – gluten free of course – was the best dessert I think I have ever had, gluten free or not.

The minnow races were fun.

But the most memorable thing was the silence. You can go almost anywhere on the lake and hear nothing but birds and breezes. It’s almost as if you can feel the whole of the vastness of the Canadian wilderness. It was exactly what we needed to counteract the stress in our lives. And we have started our own tradition, having already booked year three.

*Cathy Hart is a MARP member residing in Leslie with her husband Ken and two sons.*

# Amtrak commits to end food and beverage losses

Amtrak is moving forward with a plan to eliminate its food and beverage losses over five years. It builds on successful initiatives implemented since FY 2006 that have increased the cost recovery rate from 49 percent to 65 percent.

“We have made steady and consistent progress, but it is time we commit ourselves to end food and beverage losses once and for all,” said President and CEO Joe Boardman. “Our plan will expand initiatives that have worked, add new elements and evolve as updated information and opportunities lead us to better solutions.”

Amtrak Inspector General Ted Alves agrees improvements have been achieved and testified before Congress that “over the last several years, Amtrak has taken action to reduce food and beverage losses and improve program management controls and these efforts have yielded benefits. We believe opportunities remain for further improvement.”

In inflation adjusted dollars, the Amtrak food and beverage loss is down \$31 million, from \$105 million in FY 2006 to a projected \$74 million in FY 2013—or about a 30 percent move in the right direction.

Boardman explained that approximately 99 percent of the food and beverage loss is reported from the long-distance trains that Congress requires Amtrak to operate, specifically costs associated with the dining car service. Cafe car services across the system, on the other hand, essentially break even or make a positive contribution to the bottom line.

The centerpiece of the plan is an improved management structure that consolidates operations and accountability for food and



The dining car is full aboard Amtrak's Southwest Chief. Dining service is a necessity for most passengers because most trips extend past meal times for many passengers. (Photo by Steve Sobel)

beverage into a single department. This new organization also establishes a long-distance services general manager and route directors responsible for profit and loss of specific trains who will identify opportunities for further cost savings and efficiencies.

Some of those opportunities include: aligning dining car staffing with seasonal changes in customer demand; establishing metrics to assess service attendants' onboard sales performance; reducing spoilage; closely tracking onboard stock levels; regularly refreshing menus; and exploring new pricing and revenue management options to align with customer needs and enhance cost recovery.

Further, Amtrak is using technology on board trains aimed at improving customer service, automating financial and other reporting, and eliminating the error prone and time consuming method of manual data entry.

Just this week, for example, Amtrak began a pilot on the Silver Meteor (New York-Miami) long-distance train to test a new touchscreen tablet-based solution that dining car service attendants use to take passenger orders and print customer receipts.

In 2014 Amtrak will roll out its Point of Sale (POS) system across its national network. Currently in operation on Acela Express and California trains, POS technology improves the customer experience by streamlining the check-out and receipt printing process in café and lounge cars, and allows onboard employees more time to focus on sales and customer service. It also provides real-time inventory status, better decision support and more flexibility to introduce targeted pricing and discounts, including value and combo meals.

Also in 2014 Amtrak plans to test “cashless” sales for food and beverage on certain routes. The elimination of cash reduces

transaction time and significantly reduces accounting expenses and the risk of fraud or abuse. In addition, many venues that have pursued similar initiatives have seen increased sales. This model is very popular in the airline industry and has been seen as a favorable change by travelers.

“I am confident Amtrak will succeed in this effort just as we have in other areas and across a wide range of financial and operating performance metrics,” Boardman said, noting records for ridership, ticket revenues, and on-time performance as well as significant reductions in corporate debt and the amount of federal operating support.

If Amtrak were to eliminate food and beverage services as some observers recommend, the railroad would actually lose more money because of the loss in associated ridership and ticket revenue, and thereby increase its dependence on federal support, he stated.

## Amtrak Wi-Fi service expanding to the Midwest

Amtrak will be offering free Wi-Fi on eight corridors in the Midwest in early 2014.

Amtrak is now installing the equipment on railcars under contracts with the states of Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The Wi-Fi service will be provided on these routes:

- Wolverine Service: Chicago-Ann Arbor-Detroit-Pontiac
- Blue Water: Chicago-East Lansing-Port Huron
- Pere Marquette: Chicago-

Holland-Grand Rapids

- Lincoln Service: Chicago-Springfield-St. Louis (expanding to all four round-trips)

- Illini/Saluki: Chicago-Champaign-Carbondale

- Illinois Zephyr/Carl Sandburg: Chicago-Galesburg-Quincy

- Missouri River Runner: St. Louis-Jefferson City-Kansas City

- Hiawatha Service: Chicago-Milwaukee

Passengers on these trains

will start seeing the availability of the service as the rail cars are deployed.

About 75 percent of Amtrak passengers nationwide already have access to AmtrakConnect Wi-Fi. The addition of Chicago short-haul routes will increase the coverage percentage to about 85 percent.

The Michigan Department of Transportation is spending about \$1 million to install Wi-Fi. MDOT anticipates the service

will lead to increased ridership and revenues that should more than offset the cost.

“The installation of Wi-Fi service on Amtrak trains in Michigan makes passenger rail travel more attractive, efficient and productive throughout the state,” Tim Hoeffner, director of the Michigan's rail office, said in a statement. “We are proud Michigan is the first Midwestern state to offer Wi-Fi service on all its Amtrak lines.”

## From the Board Room:

# Looking back at 2013 and looking forward to 2014

BY KAY CHASE

2013 was a good year for passenger trains in Michigan.

In February, MDOT completed acquisition of 135 miles of Norfolk Southern track between Dearborn and Kalamazoo and began an aggressive program to upgrade track and modernize signals with the goal of providing 110-mph service on much of the Detroit-Chicago route within the next few years.

The new Troy/Birmingham multi-modal station was completed and the continuing dispute with the former property owner appears to be on the way to a resolution. Work on the new stations in Dearborn and Grand Rapids is nearing completion and both will be open for business in 2014.

In June, the legislature rose to the challenge posed by the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) and agreed to

fund operation of the Wolverine route. (The state already funds the Blue Water and Pere Marquette routes.) While some continue to dispute that PRIIA mandated state support of Amtrak routes of less than 750 miles, in actuality this may prove to be a boon. Michigan is in the position of controlling its own destiny as it continues its commitment to improve and expand passenger train services.

The coming year will present opportunities to continue this momentum, but not without significant challenges at both the state and the national levels.

Lansing lawmakers finished the 2013 session without finding a solution to Michigan's ongoing transportation funding crisis. Generally characterized as a "fix the roads" issue, in reality this is a problem affecting funding for train and transit service as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities. MARP marp.org and

the Transportation for Michigan coalition trans4M.org will monitor this issue closely to ensure continued funding for Michigan passenger trains.

In D.C., Congress continues to dither over the very real and imminent bankruptcy of the Highway Trust Fund, which has needed infusions of \$55 billion in general fund revenues since 2008 to stay afloat. (This is more than Amtrak has received over its 42 year history!) Congressional leaders have warned that solving the crisis by spending cuts only will eliminate the Mass Transit Fund and jeopardize as many as 3 million jobs. The current surface transportation spending bill expires in September and PRIIA is up for renewal. Transportation for America t4america.org will be following developments at the national level.

What can you do? This is an election year. While MARP as

a non-profit corporation cannot support or oppose political candidates, you as an individual can vow to talk early and often with candidates. Let them know why trains are important to you and seek their views. Then get out and work to help put in office those men and women who recognize that transportation, energy use, and economics are inextricably intertwined and vital to a healthy citizenry, economy, and environment.

New Year's Resolution: Join with 300 other MARP members in actively working toward the goal of a modern, efficient, and reliable passenger train system across our state and nation.

*Kay Chase is MARP's Communications Coordinator. In a previous life, she worked as a music librarian at Western Michigan University. In addition to train travel, she enjoys working with the local land conservancy and watching birds.*

## 2014 Tentative MARP Meeting Schedule

**February 19– 10 a.m.**, University of Detroit – Mercy, Room 131, Engineering Building (#8 on campus maps), 4001 McNichols Rd W, Detroit, Michigan 48221.

**March 8** – Herrick District Library, 300 S. River Ave., Holland, Michigan, Hazel Hayes Auditorium, Lower Level of Main Library

**April 5** – Wayne County Community College, Down-

town Campus, 1001 W Fort St., Detroit, MI 48226

**May** – National Train Day activities pre-empt regular monthly meeting

**June 14** – Lansing, Former GTW Depot, now the REO Town Depot, Lansing

**July 19** – Traverse City Depot (The Filling Station Microbrewery)

**August** – Executive commit-

tee only — final planning for Blue Water 40th anniversary

**September 20** – Durand Union Station for the annual meeting

**October 18** – Grand Rapids-The Rapid local and inter-city bus station offices adjacent to new Amtrak station – station tour scheduled.

**November 15** – To be announced

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. Meeting announcements are posted on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) and include program information and driving directions. Meeting minutes are archived on the website so you can review past topics discussed.

## States narrow choice for new locomotive manufacturer

Siemens has been put on notice it is the likely winner of a contract to build the next generation of locomotives for passenger service up to 125 mph for a consortium of five states.

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has issued a "Notice of Intent to Award" to Siemens USA to design, build and deliver 35 new diesel-electric locomotives on behalf of state transportation departments in Illinois, California, Michigan, Wisconsin and Missouri, IDOT officials announced Dec. 19, 2013.

The announcement means that Illinois, which is leading the multi-state locomotive procurement, has taken the next step to purchase the locomotives, which will be built to

travel up to 125 mph and meet new federal Tier 4 emissions standards, IDOT officials said in a press release.

The notice of intent means a potential vendor has been identified. A contract still needs to be awarded before the purchase can proceed, they said.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) allocated \$808 million to fund the manufacturing of the next generation of passenger-rail equipment, including 35 new locomotives and 130 bi-level rail cars. The locomotives will meet standards developed by Amtrak, states, FRA and rail industry experts under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. The locomotives and all component parts will be

built in the United States, likely in Sacramento, Calif.

"This award creates jobs, spurs economic growth and further lays the foundation for a sustainable, long-term passenger rail network in the United States," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

Amtrak debuted the first 110-mph service segment outside of the Northeast Corridor on the Chicago to Detroit Corridor in early 2012. Today, the corridor features an 80-mile segment of track where trains are running up to 110 mph and by 2015, nearly 80 percent of the corridor will see sustained speeds of 110 mph – all with new high performance equipment.

The consortium of state de-

partment of transportation solicited offers from locomotive manufacturers to build 32 to 35 new passenger locomotives.

Together Illinois, Michigan, and Missouri will purchase 21 locomotives, California will purchase six locomotives and Wisconsin will purchase between 5 and 8 locomotives.

The procurement includes options for 225 additional locomotives, including a long-distance variant of the base locomotive. The proposed contract requires that the last locomotive of the base order be delivered, accepted and paid for no later than June 2017.

EMD, Siemens and MotivePower, Inc. were the three companies that submitted bids.



**HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY!** There was little fanfare marking the 100th anniversary of the Michigan Central Station in Detroit which was opened for service on Dec. 26, 1913. The beaux arts station closed in 1988 and Amtrak continued using the train platform until 1994. It has since sat vacant and it has been stripped of most of its wiring, plumbing, windows and other fixtures by vandals and scrappers. Current station owner Matty Moroun has promised a restoration plan for the station but has yet to deliver. To see links to a series articles and photos that the Detroit Free Press recently ran to mark the anniversary, go to [www. marq.org? p=5062](http://www.marq.org? p=5062) (Photo by Steve Sobel)

## Indian Trails increases frequency to Metro

### Other changes include moving and adding bus stops; cancelling flag stops

BY LARRY SOBCZAK

Indian Trails has made a number of changes to its inter-city motor coach service this past fall and the biggest one is increasing the number of trips for its Michigan Flyer Air-Ride shuttle service between Lansing and Ann Arbor from eight to 12.

The increase in frequency allows travelers in the Lansing area to use Indian Trails to connect to more flights at Detroit Metro Airport—150 more arrivals and departures per day for a total of 700 per day.

“The improved schedule makes public transportation a more attractive option for travel,” Michael Ford, CEO of the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority said. Ford had worked with the bus service in changing its service.

The expanded schedule is a big plus for the Greater Lansing and Ann Arbor economies, noted Indian Trails and Michigan Flyer President Gordon Mackay.

“One-third of Michigan Flyer-Air Ride passengers—about 30,000 a year—come from out of state and spend millions locally,” Mackay said. “Also, for many passengers who either don’t or can’t drive, this is a critical improvement in public transportation.”

On the segment of the Michigan Flyer-Air Ride service between Ann Arbor and Metro Airport, there are now earlier and later runs to and from the airport and the number of daily round trips has increased from 12 to 13. The new schedule gives passengers along the eastern end of the route access to a wider range of flights than the previous schedule.

Indian Trails said that it was discontinuing the stop at the U-M Central Campus Transit Center at a savings of about \$407,000 in operating costs.

In other changes to its service across the state, Indian Trails announced that it was adding another stop in Alma and moving its bus stop in Petoskey.

The new bus stop in Alma is on Superior Street at the Alma College bookstore “College Corner Coffee and Books” in the downtown business district and it will offer passenger pick-up and drop-off service only. Passengers can buy tickets in advance online for travel to or from Alma on all of Indian Trails’ scheduled routes or in person at the DART Center on Willow Run Drive just off Begole Road in Alma.

“Adding this stop should greatly benefit Alma College students, since it’s located right

on the edge of campus,” said Indian Trails Vice President of Operations Ken Henry. “The convenience of the new stop may also appeal to residents of the region who are looking to connect with Michigan airports and Amtrak train service.”

In Petoskey, Indian Trails has relocated its Petoskey stop to the North Central Michigan College (NCMC) store at 1545 S. Howard Street.

The College Store, inside NCMC’s Student and Community Resource Center, will provide Indian Trails ticketing services Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This includes tickets for travel on Amtrak’s national rail network, with which Indian Trails connects in Grand Rapids, Mich., and other cities.

“We’re very grateful to Petoskey Regional Chamber of Commerce President Carlin Smith, Petoskey City Manager Dan Ralley, the City Council, and North Central for helping to arrange our new stop at NCMC’s College Store,” Henry said. “After circumstances forced us to move from our previous location on Mitchell Street, where we had been for 20 years, we made four attempts to relocate that didn’t work out. Thanks to everyone involved, we’ve finally settled on a great location for continuing to

provide the community with essential transportation services.”

With expansions and moves this past fall also came cuts to services.

Indian Trails said that it would no longer stop at the following flag stops in order to streamline service along its routes in Michigan: Gould City, Blaney Park, Thompson, Rapid River, Bark River, Wilson, Norway, Marenisco, Bessemer, Chassel, Keweenaw Bay, Three Lakes, Michigamme and Negaunee.

Cancelled flag stops in Wisconsin include Spread Eagle and Florence.

Henry said changes in stops and stations aren’t unusual.

Stops at businesses or properties not owned by Indian Trails may change when a business closes or the property changes hands, when routes are reconfigured, or in order to improve customer service.

Contact Indian Trails at 800-292-3831 or visit their website at [www.indiantrails.com](http://www.indiantrails.com) to find bus stops nearby your location.

Indian Trails operates 34 scheduled routes throughout Michigan and beyond that serves 115 communities and travels over 2.5 million miles annually.