



The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.

MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2014-2016

Larry Krieg	Chair
Steve Vagnozzi	Vice-Chair
Jeanie Merckel	Treasurer
Kay Chase	Acting Secretary
John Langdon	Governmental/Public Affairs Coordinator
Chuck Merckel	Membership Coordinator
Kay Chase	Communications Coordinator
Adam Tauno Williams	Meetings Coordinator
Don Monteith	Northern Region Chair
Robert Patterson	Detroit/Metro Region Chair
Warren Fritz	West Region Chair
Steve Vagnozzi	East/Central Region Chair

*The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase*

2016 MEETINGS

- 16 January** – REO Town Depot (former Grand Trunk Depot), Lansing
- February** – Cancelled
- 12 March** – Howell
- 16 April** – New Buffalo Library
- May** – Amtrak Train Days
- 11 June** – Amtrak Station, Dearborn
- July** – Executive Committee
- August** – tentative Marquette, in conjunction with 4th MI Rail Conference
- 24 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 8 October** – Dowagiac
- November** – TBA
- December** – Executive Committee

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

STB Taking Comment On On-Time Performance Standards

At long last, the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) has taken action to formally define what constitutes on-time performance for Amtrak trains. The board is seeking public comment on the **proposed rule** that would consider a train on-time “if it arrives at its final terminus no more than five minutes after its scheduled arrival time for each 100 miles the train operated, or 30 minutes after its scheduled arrival time, whichever is less.” Additionally, Amtrak or other eligible party may file a complaint with the STB if the on-time performance of an intercity passenger train averages less than 80% for any two consecutive calendar quarters.

The STB’s **proposed rule** for on-time performance will be a topic of discussion at the MARP member meeting on 16 January at the REO Town Depot, 1203 S. Washington Ave., Lansing 48910. Members are asked to do their homework in advance of the meeting and come prepared with their ideas on how the STB should proceed. This will aid the executive committee in formulating MARP’s formal submission to the STB.

In addition, you, as an interested party, are urged to submit your own comments to the STB. John DeLora, former MARP Chair and currently on the Board of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, points out that it is rare for the STB to accept comments from individuals. He feels that an outpouring of comments will impress the Board with the seriousness of this issue for the traveling public. (see next page for instructions on filing your comment)

Comments from lawmakers (mayors, council members, legislators) and higher-education and community leaders, as well as businesses that benefit from Amtrak service, carry special weight. Please encourage such decision makers in your community to submit comments as well.

The STB has also issued a **Proposed Policy Statement** to “provide guidance regarding the evidence that may be most useful in proceedings related to the issue of ‘preference’ afforded passenger trains on freight rails.”

(STB rulemaking continues on page 2)



MARP Member Meeting

Saturday, January 16

10:00 am – Noon

REO Town Depot (former GTW Depot)
1203 S Washington Ave, Lansing MI 48910

Map & Directions

Tim Hoeffner, Director of MDOT’s Office of Rail, will provide an update on the Wolverine corridor project as well as what to expect for Michigan passenger trains in the coming year. More information about the meeting can be found at marp.org/?p=6325. Or email marprail@yahoo.com.

MARP Appoints New Committee Members

Three new appointments were made by the Executive Committee at its day-long retreat on 5 December. Steve Vagnozzi was appointed Vice-Chair, filling the vacancy created by the resignation of Jim Wallington. Chuck Merckel was appointed to the at-large committee position responsible for membership following the resignation of Kathleen Newell. Kay Chase has agreed to assume the duties of secretary until a permanent replacement can be found. Rosemary Horvath has been filling in as secretary since March when Hugh Gurney stepped down from the position he has filled for several years.

Wallington has served MARP in various capacities for several years, but has found it increasingly challenging due to his responsibilities with America By Rail. Newell has accepted additional professional responsibilities for law organizations in which she is active. The resignations of both were accepted with regret.

In other business, the Executive Committee approved the 2016 budget as recommended by the Finance Committee. Changes from the 2015 budget reflect changes in responsibilities or procedures or the fact that actual 2015 spending was less than budgeted.

- Gov't Affairs down from \$8,500 to \$2,750 due to winding down of Coast-to-Coast project (funded by a grant from MEC)
- Outreach down from \$2,725 to \$2,250.
- In-house printing down from \$795 to \$500
- Monthly meetings up from \$525 to \$600
- Membership down from \$1,100 to \$900 due to reduced mailing costs with use of Pay Pal
- Chicago Union Station Passenger Action Taskforce (CUSPAT) down from \$500 to \$0
- Dues paid to other organizations down from \$700 to \$600 due to elimination of donation to TRU
- Total expenditures are anticipated to be \$15,480 as compared to actual 2015 spending of \$14,834.65
- Total income from 2015 carryover plus 2016 dues, donations and annual meeting is anticipated to be \$15,480 compared with actual 2015 income of \$14,385

Langdon reported that the final round of 16 **Coast-to-Coast** public engagement events has been completed. The final report from the consultants, TEMS, Inc., will be out early in 2016. There are tentative plans for a series of media events to announce the study findings. Until the final recommendations are made public, there is uncertainty about next steps on this proposal to restore passenger train service linking Detroit to Grand Rapids/Holland via Lansing.

The first of a planned series of meetings to build support for

(MEETING continues on page 3)

(STB rulemaking continued from page 1)

To file your comment, first prepare your document. Include the Docket No. EP_726_0 and your name and address.

Some talking points to consider:

- How often, and the reasons, you travel by train
- How poor on-time performance affects your travel (missed appointments or family events, missed connections with other trains or airlines)
- If you have limited mobility, describe how that affects your travel plans
- If the city where you board the train doesn't have scheduled air service, say so

When you have saved your document in PDF format, go to www.STB.DOT.gov and click on E-filing (top left). Then "Request a Login Account". Fill in the required fields and click "Submit". You will be returned to the STB homepage.

- Click on "Formal Filing Recordations" from the menu on the right side and enter your login
- Review the instructions on the page
- SKIP the box "Did you serve all parties" (this is not a requirement for this particular filing)
- Click "Continue"
- Fill out all required fields. The Docket No. is EP_726_0 and the Subject is "On Time Performance under Section 213"
- SKIP the box "Group/Affiliation"
- Attach your document and click "Submit"

The deadline for Comments is 8 February 2016.

Homework suggested by MARP Chair Larry Krieg includes:

- Read the **STB document** (at least the important parts)
- Look over **The Proposed Rule**
- Read (but don't plagiarize) **John DeLora's filing**

Also informative is **editor William C Vantuono's article** in the 28 Dec 2015 issue of Railway Age.



MIDWEST
Winter Warm Up
SALE

20% off Michigan Amtrak Travel
Good for travel through March 31
Click here to purchase your train ticket

For a list of winter events in
Michigan cities along Amtrak routes
Click Here

(*MEETING continued from page 2*)

long range improvements along the *Wolverine* corridor was held at the Niles Public Library on 2 December. Similar meetings are planned for Battle Creek on 28 January and later in Dearborn and a location in Oakland County.

Meetings Coordinator Adam Tauno Williams outlined the tentative meeting schedule for 2016:

- **16 January** – REO Town Depot (former GTW Depot), Lansing with speaker Tim Hoeffner, Director MDOT Office of Rail
- **February** – no meeting
- **12 March** – Cleary's Pub in Howell with speaker Michael Benham on WALLY commuter rail progress
- **16 April** – New Buffalo Township Library, possibly a joint meeting with Indiana rail groups
- **May** – Amtrak Train Days events
- **11 June** – Amtrak Station, Dearborn, with program by Radford Jones on "Presidential Travel by Train"
- **July** – Executive Committee
- **August** – tentative, in conjunction with 4th Annual Michigan Rail Conference at Northern Michigan University, Marquette MI
- **24 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station with keynote speaker John Robert Smith, Transportation for America
- **8 October** – Dowagiac City Hall, with a visit to the Dowagiac Area History Museum
- **November** – TBA

It's Time to Renew Your MARP Membership

MARP memberships come due on the 1st of January each year. Only if you are a NEW member who joined in the last quarter of 2015 are you considered as paid through the calendar year 2016.

Click here NOW to go to the MARP website and use Pay Pal to renew your membership. It is quick and easy. When you have finished your renewal, you may **click the Donate button** if you would like to make an addition contribution.

Please let us know if you are not receiving your quarterly print issues of *The Michigan Passenger*. Also, if you are not receiving announcements of the monthly meetings or the monthly on-line bulletin ON TRACK, it is because we don't have your email address. You may send that information to us at marprail@yahoo.com. Or, if you are **mailing in a membership form**, please include your email address on the form.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT

Wolverine Corridor Coalition

The idea of a **Wolverine Corridor Coalition** modeled on the **Westrain** group was first proposed by Larry Krieg and Kay Chase two years ago. The first formal event for this effort was held at the Niles Public Library on 2 December, with about 25 people (elected officials and interested citizens) in attendance. Rick Harnish, Midwest High Speed Rail Association, gave a presentation highlighting the goals of the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program, a study currently in progress under the auspices of GreatLakesRail.org and led by MDOT's Office of Rail. The study envisions increasing frequency to 10 round trips per day and completing track and signal work to improve on-time performance and reliability. Two tracks dedicated to Amtrak trains are proposed for the South-of-the Lake section of the route through northwest Indiana. The support of business, elected and community leaders will be key to implementation of these plans in coming years.

Plans are underway for a similar meeting in Battle Creek on 28 January and later in Dearborn and a location in Oakland County. MARP members and other supporters of passenger trains are invited to attend. Send email to marprail@yahoo.com for more information.

Help Make WALLY part of Master Plan

Friends of WALLY is asking supporters to let Livingston County planners know that they want the WALLY commuter rail project included in the **master plan** currently being updated. Friends of Wally has a **sample letter here** that you can use as a guide. Your letter will be automatically sent to Kathleen Kline-Hudson Director, Livingston County Department of Planning, the Livingston County Planning Commission, and Carol S. Griffith, Chair of Livingston County Board of Commissioners. Information about the master plan can be found **HERE**.

The **Friends of WALLY** will meet at the **Howell Carnegie District Library** Conference Room, 30 January, 1 – 3 PM, to plan for the coming year. Your input and ideas are invited. If you are unable to attend in person, phone conferencing will be set up for the meeting. For details, email friendsofwally@gmail.com or phone Michael Lamb at 517-896-5275

DOES THE GAS TAX PAY FOR ROADS?

Congress has spent \$140 Billion in taxpayer funds shoring up the Highway Trust Fund since 2008 alone — three times the federal funding Amtrak has received over its entire 44-year history.

View from elsewhere . . .

“Most railroad industry observers and historians are quick to point out that Amtrak was not created to preserve passenger rail services, but to help preserve freight railroads, many of which (particularly in the Northeast) were struggling at the time to survive in a business climate constrained by stifling regulation, a common-carrier obligation to provide unprofitable passenger services and that favored competitive modes (trucking and airlines) benefitting from government-subsidized infrastructure.”

— William C. Vantuono, in **Railway Age**, 28 Dec 2015

“Amtrak was created to relieve the freight railroads of the continued burden of deficit passenger operations and ‘to revitalize rail transportation service in the expectation that the rendering of such service along certain corridors can be made a profitable commercial undertaking...”

— Frank Wilner, *Railway Age* Capitol Hill Contributing Editor, quoted in the **article cited above**.



1225 North Pole Express in the Snow

Casey Anderson captured the Steam Railroading Institute’s North Pole Express on November 21, the day of the season’s first real snowfall in Lower Michigan. Five *MiTrain* cars were among the three cabooses, six coaches and one boxcar making up this sold out holiday excursion. Casey, a 7th grader at Mason Middle School, is MARP’s youngest member. Besides his interest in trains and photography, Casey also likes insects and freighters. You can view his video **[HERE](#)**.



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