



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*
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 - Jeanie Merckel *Treasurer*
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 - 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
- 21 May** – Jackson
- 11 June** – Amtrak Station, Dearborn
- July** – Executive Committee
- August** – Marquette, in conjunction with 4th Annual 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

Students Say “YES” to Trains Part II

While passenger trains currently hold a modest share of transportation modes used by students to get from their homes to their colleges and universities, there is a clear potential for growth. That is the message of a recent survey of students at seven of Michigan’s four-year schools.

Analysis of **survey results** concludes that there is a small but dedicated group who ride trains regularly to and from school and a wider group who would likely take the train if a number of challenges could be overcome.

There is a clear message here for those of us who advocate for expanded and improved passenger train services in our state.

For the students who have used the train, over a quarter say they depend on it to get to school. Significantly, those students who have never taken the train cite reasons that reflect convenience rather than indifference or hostility. Although the schools these students attend are located near Amtrak stations, in many cases their homes are not. (*Are they aware of the Thruway bus services that connect 25 far-flung Michigan communities to Amtrak stations?*) The infamous “last mile” is a hurdle. (*Might the schools provide shuttle services? Could the local transit better serve the stations?*) Three-quarters of the respondents are interested in more frequent service. (*How soon can the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac corridor plans be implemented? What about second daily round trips on the Blue Water and the Pere Marquette routes?*) Nearly a quarter of the respondents said they don’t know where or how to catch a train near their school. (*Is there an opportunity here for outreach and marketing?*) A surprising 74% of students who had recently taken the train said they had never used a discount code or card when purchasing their ticket. (*How might they learn about the **Student Advantage Card** or the current **15% Student Discount**?*)

Nearly three-quarters of the students feel that passenger train service is “very important” to our transportation future and a large majority indicated an interest in helping to advocate for better train service (*An untapped resource for MARP?*)

(SURVEY continues on page 2)



MARP Member Meeting

Saturday, May 21

10:0 am – Noon

Carnegie Library

244 W Michigan Ave, Jackson MI 49201

Map & Directions

MARP member Gerald Callison will demonstrate the Google Earth map he has created of Michigan train routes. Meeting discussion will focus on MARP’s goals for expansion of Michigan’s passenger train services. Bring your ideas! Details on the website www.marp.org Or send email to marprail@yahoo.com.

MARP Goes to the Beach

Notes on April 21 Meeting

The New Buffalo Township Library provided the very pleasant meeting space for 33 members and guests on a warm and sunny spring day on the shores of Lake Michigan. Two of our speakers arrived on the eastbound #350 from Chicago. MDOT and Amtrak OK'ed a special stop at New Buffalo for westbound #351 and nearly two score of our Michigan members took advantage of the arrangement to ride the train from Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Jackson, and Kalamazoo.

The meeting was designed as an opportunity to hear about the activities of fellow advocates in Indiana and Wisconsin and, in turn, to share with them some of the encouraging developments in Michigan passenger train services.

Leading off the discussion was Steve Coxhead, President of the **Indiana Passenger Rail Coalition (IPRA)**. A major interest of IPRA is the progress of the unique public-private collaboration of Iowa Pacific Holdings, Amtrak, INDOT and CSX Transportation in operating the 4-day a week **Hoosier State** service between Chicago and Indianapolis. Ed Ellis, who heads Iowa Pacific Holdings, believes that enhanced customer service and increased train frequencies can make money. A business class fare has been introduced and though total ridership is down (as it is on many routes), revenues are up for the *Hoosier State*. For the first six months, on-time-performance was 86%. In February, OTP was a remarkable 93.9%. Coxhead feels it will be advantageous to have firm estimates of capital costs and necessary contractual arrangements in hand before going to the legislature to seek funding for expanding to daily service and adding frequencies. In the meantime, efforts are ongoing to improve track conditions and signals. Don Yehle, IPRA's newsletter editor, added that he envisions developing a "dog and pony show" to take to chambers and community groups in order to generate support and enthusiasm for service expansion.

IPRA is the successor to the Indiana High Speed Rail Association and retains use of the website www.indianahighspeedrail.org. Go to the website to access the excellent monthly newsletter edited by Don Yehle.

Eldeen Carpenter, an **All Aboard Wisconsin** board member and also a member of MARP, spoke about collaborative efforts among Wisconsin and Minnesota groups to develop a region-wide transportation network and to seek permanent, stable, dedicated funding for passenger trains. The **West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition**, at a recent meeting in Eau Claire, highlighted strong business interest in that community for a train to the Twin Cities utilizing a lightly used freight route. Eau Claire is looking to a public-

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Michigan schools participating in the **MIPRC Universities & Colleges Passenger Rail Survey** included Eastern Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, Lawrence Technological University, Spring Arbor University, University of Michigan-Dearborn, Wayne State University, and Western Michigan University.

The survey was conducted between November 2015 and February 2016 by the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission. Survey results and analysis are available [HERE](#) or find the information under the News tab on the website www.miprc.org.

Transportation Plan Update



Michigan will be updating both the **State Long Range Plan (SLRP)** and the **Michigan State Rail Plan** in

2016. On May 9, the Draft 2040 State Long Range Plan (SLRP) will be released. Public comment will be taken at a **series of 21 public meetings** to be held at locations throughout the state from May 9 – June 8.

Members are urged to attend a **meeting** in their area. The open-house-style meetings will run from 5-7 pm with formal presentations at 5:15 and 6:15 followed by discussion periods.

Several **White Papers** are available for background on "Intercity Passenger Rail Service", "Transit", "Land Use" and "Policy Initiatives", among other topics.

Information and all materials are available on the website michigan.gov/slrp.

Michigan Amtrak Trains Summer Schedule

Modified *Wolverine* schedules are in effect through Sept. 23 to allow work crews to improve state-owned railroad infrastructure as part of Michigan's Accelerated Rail Program. When complete, this track and signal work will result in improved reliability, a smoother ride and an expansion of the Midwest's first 110 mph Amtrak service. Click [HERE](#) to find the Amtrak/MDOT news release and the complete revised schedule.

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private partnership to build a new station. A preliminary study is favorable for a second *Empire Builder* between Milwaukee and the Twin Cities, projecting up to 100,000 passengers annually. Funding is being sought for the Environmental Impact Study. The eagerly awaited new Milwaukee train shed is 2/3 complete. You can find information about Wisconsin advocacy at www.allboardwisconsin.com.

Clark Charnetski reviewed progress on the **Indiana Gateway** project. Slated for completion in the next few months, the work involved 8 projects, primarily to benefit freight movements (90 trains per day), but one of which was an Amtrak project to allow Michigan trains (14 per day) to pass near Porter with less interference in this busy freight corridor. The project involved construction of new passing sidings and crossovers in addition to 6.5 miles of new main track in the Hammond-Whiting to Porter corridor.

MARP Chair Larry Krieg updated the group on current Michigan train and connecting intercity bus services as well as the several passenger train projects underway on the Chicago-Detroit corridor, including the **South-of-the-Lake** reroute and **Michigan's Accelerated Rail Program** which is making improvements to the Kalamazoo-Detroit sector of the corridor. The recently completed **Coast-to-Coast** study found that restoring service linking Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids and Holland could be profitable with frequent trains operating at 110-mph. A grant is being sought to assess the feasibility of train service between **Ann Arbor and Traverse City**. Construction of the Detroit streetcar line will be completed in late 2017 with equipment arriving in early 2018. Formerly known as **M-1 RAIL**, it is now called the Q-Line. Planning is moving forward on two SE Michigan commuter lines. The **WALLY** between Howell and Ann Arbor has a strong **Friends** group behind it. The proposed **Detroit and Ann Arbor commuter** line is being considered for a minimum of 8 trips per day, 6AM to 11:30PM. Consideration is being given to extending the route as far as Chelsea.

A short business meeting followed. Treasurer Jeanie Merckel reported March income and donations from 21 new and renewing members for a total of \$456.00. Expenditures of \$1,116.09 included government affairs events, member meeting expenses and printing of new MARP brochures, leaving \$13,086.48 available for operations. The Pratt Fund (invested in Vanguard Index Fund VTSAX) was valued at \$18,335.05 as of 16 March 2016. Members voted to add MARP's name to a list of supporters of **A Coalition for Transit (ACT)**, a group formed to promote regional transportation goals in SE Michigan,

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Volunteers Needed for Outreach

Outreach Chair Chuck Merkel reports great attendance at the MI Earth Day event in Rochester and thanks Hugh Gurney, Bob Tischbein and Doug Wilson for their help. Three upcoming events are being coordinated with the Friends of Wally.

- Saturday May 7 from 8:00 AM-1:00 PM at the **Brighton Farmers Market**
- Saturday May 14 from 10:00 AM-5:00 PM at **Durand Railroad Days**
- Saturday June 11 from 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM at **Marion Township Heritage Days**

If you can help with any of these events, please email Chuck at crmerckel@aol.com or phone 734 -522-7329.

Toledo Train Day

Saturday, May 7, 9:30 AM - 4 PM
Opening event at 9:30 AM
415 Emerald Ave. and MLK Plaza
(Toledo Amtrak Station Building)

[See Flyer Here](#)

If you would like to help with MARP display table, contact john-langdon@sbcglobal.net 616-218-9009

RTA Regional Master Plan

The Regional Transportation Authority of SE Michigan plans to release the **Regional Master Plan** on May 31. MARP members may be most interested in the plans for the **Michigan Avenue Corridor** linking Detroit and Ann Arbor and including Metro Airport. The **Draft-Detailed Definition of Alternatives Report**, released in January this year, considered Rapid Bus Transit (BRT) and both commuter and regional rail alternatives. You can join the conversation and vote for your preferences on mode and station location [HERE](#).

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including possible train service between Detroit and parts of Washtenaw County. Membership Coordinator Chuck Merckel would like to place MARP brochures in Train Hobby shops. Members may email him at crmerckel@aol.com with suggestions for locations. The next MARP meeting will be held at 10AM, Saturday, May 21, at the Carnegie Library, 244 W Michigan Ave in Jackson.

SAVE THE DATE



AUGUST 17TH Conference

\$100 Early Bird Registration

AUGUST 18TH Field Visit

\$35 Early Bird Registration

[CLICK HERE for Information and Registration](#)

View from elsewhere . . .

“It is interesting to compare this provincial budget with that in 2000, a mere 16 years ago. Back then [...] annual provincial highway expenditures were \$1.05B and transit expenditures were \$62M, for a ratio of 17:1. In this [2017] budget, the comparable numbers are \$2.1B and \$5.4B, for a ratio of 1:2.6. A factor of 44 turnaround! The encouraging trend is that higher ratios of transit spending has been steady for 15 years.”

— Peter Miasek, President of Transport Action Ontario, commenting on provincial budget presented in February

I don't live near a rail line -- closest station is Englewood's light rail -- but I am going to use the train for every airport trip because of the predictability of the travel time. Been caught in too many nail-biting rush hours, snow storms, construction zones and accident slowdowns [...] I'll just have the kids drop me off at the train station, or take a bus there.”

— Al Cummings, commenting on opening day of the A-line train service to Denver airport



Fast Track to Denver Airport

An estimated 35,000 people lined up on Earth Day for a free ride from Union Station to the airport on the first day of service for **Denver's new A-line**. The 23.5 mile ride takes 37 minutes and costs \$9. Average weekday ridership of 18,600 is anticipated. The \$1.4B project is one of the first transit projects in the U.S. to be built by a public-private partnership. The consortium **Denver Transit Partners** has been awarded a \$2.2 billion 34-year design-build-operate-maintain concession by the Denver Regional Transportation District. Technical specifications for the rolling stock can be viewed [HERE](#).



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