

MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
Saturday, November 21, 2015
Okemos Public Library, 4321 Okemos Road, Okemos MI

Members Present

Larry Krieg, Steve Sobel, Warren Fritz, Chuck Merckel, Jeanie Merckel, Jim Wallington, Dan Platz, Doug Wilson, Robert Patterson, Clark Charnetski, Adam Tauno Williams, Steve Vagnozzi, John Langdon, Kim Powell, Eric Schertzing, Charles Shong, David Williams, Larry Swartz, Kay Chase

Guests Present

Kathleen O'Reilly Farhat (Chief of Staff, State Senator Curtis Hertel, Jr.), Dixie Westcar, Ken Westcar, State Representative Tom Cochran

General Business Meeting

Chair Larry Krieg opened the meeting at 10 a.m. with a safety briefing. He introduced Kathleen O'Reilly Farhat who serves as Chief of Staff for State Senator Curtis Hertel, Jr., whose Senate District 23 includes Lansing, East Lansing, Mason, Williamston and Leslie. Members and guests introduced themselves, including Dixie and Ken Westcar, members of Transport Action Ontario visiting from Woodstock, Ontario. Members approved the day's order of business and the minutes of the June and October meetings. Jeanie Merckel summarized the October treasury report. Membership dues received included 5 adult, 3 senior, 2 family and 1 recurring monthly donation. There were 55 paid reservations for the Annual Meeting. Income for the month totaled \$317.00, expenditures \$557.96. Currently, \$14,090.78 remains available for operations. The Pratt Fund rebounded from the recent stock market downturn, ending the month at \$18,431.74. Because expenses for John Robert Smith, who will speak at the 2016 Annual Meeting, will be paid in the current calendar year, it was moved by Langdon, seconded by Adam Williams and approved by a show of hands to increase the 2015 Annual Meeting budget line to \$1500.

The executive committee members present (a quorum) agreed to grant a membership hardship request that has been received. This waives the dues of \$25 for one year.

Adam Tauno Williams, Meetings Coordinator, reported that the following meetings have been confirmed: (1) Executive Committee meeting for 5 December at the main Capitol Area District Library in downtown Lansing; (2) Membership Meeting 16 January, REO Town Depot (former GTW depot) in Lansing with MDOT Office of Rail Director Tim Hoeffner speaking on 2015 projects and looking ahead to 2016; (3) MARP's 43rd Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station on 24 September with John Robert Smith, Transportation for America, as keynote speaker. Adam would like to hear ideas from members for other venues and programs. Contact him at awilliam@whitemice.org.

Steve Vagnozzi, East/Central Chair, is still seeking volunteers for his Station Care project. A primary concern is the absence of signage to guide people to the stations. Amtrak supplies signs, but it is up to the local governmental entity to install them. Steve asks that members let him know of any concerns about stations. He and John Langdon will then determine how and when to work with Amtrak or MDOT to address the issues. Another function of the Station Care volunteers will be to keep unstaffed stations supplied with Amtrak time tables and schedules. Longer term, MARP, working with Amtrak and MDOT, could institute a system of station hosts to assist passengers at unstaffed stations. Contact Steve at svagnozzi@comcast.net.

New Business

Moved by David Williams, seconded by John Langdon, to approve the amendments to the Bylaws of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers as proposed by the Executive Committee and published to the members on or about November 1, 2015. In advance of taking a vote on the Bylaws revisions. Krieg reviewed sections where substantive changes are recommended: (1) expand the Statement of Purpose (Article II) to make clear that MARP seeks to represent the interests of the traveling public to, and maintain relations with, the various transportation providers (MDOT, Amtrak, bus companies, transit agencies); (2) a new article outlining criteria and guidelines for expulsion of members (Section 3.4); (3) more clearly defining the duties of the officers, regional chairs, and at-large executive committee members (Article V); (4) addition of Section 7.4 to allow designation of other agents (MARP's webmaster is considered an agent); (5) establish procedures for adopting an annual budget and dispersing funds (Article XII). Other less substantive changes were made to clarify language or procedural matters.

A copy of the Bylaws revisions as recommended by the Executive Committee was emailed on 10/31 and 11/01 to each of the 240 members for whom we have email addresses and sent by postal mail on 10/31 and 11/05 to the remaining 62 members in good standing. The members present agreed to a show of hands to approve the Bylaws revisions. Nineteen members voted to accept the bylaws revisions as recommended by the Executive Committee. This number was sufficient as required by the Bylaws, i.e., 2/3 of the average attendance at the previous two meetings. The September Annual Meeting in Durand had 40 members in good standing in attendance. There were 17 in attendance at the October meeting in Mt. Pleasant.

Chase asked that the members commend Hugh Gurney who served as Chair of the Bylaws Committee through what turned out to be a lengthy process. Unfortunately, Gurney was not able to attend today's meeting.

Reports

Warren Fritz, West Region Chair, announced that the first of three planned *Wolverine* route stakeholders meetings will be held at the Niles District Library, 7:00 PM, Wednesday, December 2. Rick Harnish, Midwest High Speed Rail Association, will present information on the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program (GreatLakesRail.org) currently underway, a project designed to increase train frequency and reliability and to decrease travel times on the *Wolverine* route. Calling this "an essential piece of advocacy", Warren wants MARP members to participate in this effort to provide information and build support for future improvements to the route. Similar meetings will be scheduled later for Battle Creek and Dearborn.

John Langdon, Governmental Affairs Coordinator, reported that the public engagement meetings on the Coast-to-Coast route have wrapped up and the final report by the consultants, TEMS, Inc., will be out in January. Three media events are planned to announce the results of the study. John commented that support has grown throughout the process. The proposal is no longer "pie-in-the-sky" but a project that is seen as having merit.

Larry Krieg reported that the Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority appears to be leaning toward support for the Detroit to Ann Arbor commuter rail proposal. There are active discussions of a *Wolverine* train stop at Ypsilanti. For reasons that are not clear, the WALLY commuter rail project and the Ann Arbor station study are not moving at this time.

State Representative Tom Cochran was introduced. His House District 67 includes part of Lansing as well as East Lansing, Mason, Williamston, and Leslie. He serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Stating that he voted against the recent package of transportation funding bills passed by the legislature and now signed by the Governor, he pointed out that the need for the \$1.2 billion dollar boost in funding was identified 5 years ago and won't be fully realized for another 5 years. He echoed the opinion that had the federal funding come through for the proposed commuter lines (Detroit-Ann Arbor and Howell-Ann Arbor), MDOT would have been hailed for its foresight in leasing and refurbishing 23 commuter cars rather than suffering the bad press it received earlier this year. Rep. Cochran supports the expansion of train services, saying "If you build it, they will come." He also said that reliability is absolutely key to future success. Robert Patterson urged Rep. Cochran and his colleagues to take advantage of the experience and knowledge that MARP has to offer. Rep. Cochran, in turn, asked that MARP show up at committee hearings, saying that legislators do pay attention to their constituents.

The meeting finished up with an interesting slide show prepared by MARP's official photographer, Steve Sobel, showing the progress of track work stretching from West Detroit to the new station in Dearborn.

Kay Chase

Meeting Notes taken by Kay Chase

Larry Krieg

Larry Krieg, Chair