



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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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.

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2017 MEETINGS

- 14 January** – REO Town Depot (former Grand Trunk Depot), Lansing
- 18 February** – 1st Methodist Church, Kalamazoo
- 18 March** – Clinton Northern Railway Museum, St. Johns
- 22 April** – Grand Trunk Pub, Detroit
- 13 May** – Chicago Union Station
- June** – Executive Committee
- 15 July** – Traverse City
- August** – Bangor
- 23 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- October** – tentative Grand Rapids
- November** – tentative SE Michigan
- December** – Executive Committee

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

A Good Time to Get Acquainted

With a new administration in Washington, D.C., and many new faces in the Michigan House of Representatives, advocates (that's you!) have an opportunity to be in on the ground floor in helping to shape policy and decide how our tax dollars will be spent.

In Michigan, cautious optimism regarding funding for intercity passenger transportation (trains and buses) and local transit seems appropriate at this early stage in the budget process. The Governor's 2017-18 budget proposal reflects the new revenue coming in to the state transportation fund as a result of legislation signed into law at the end of the 2015 legislative session. Some uncertainty remains regarding payments to Amtrak for operation of the three state passenger train routes and the legislature has only begun its budget deliberations.

At the federal level, the buzz is on the need for massive new spending on infrastructure including roads, bridges, airports, trains, and harbors, as well as less glamorous, but vitally important, things like local water and sewer systems. Congress is just beginning to grapple with how to pay for these critically needed upgrades. Some of the ideas that emerged in recent Senate hearings include: increase fuel taxes for the first time in more than two decades (or at least index to inflation), provide tax credits to encourage private investment (criticized for failing to benefit projects that "don't come with a built-in revenue stream"), impose fees on drivers based on miles traveled, raise the \$4.50 cap on the passenger facility charge at airports, spend funds already collected for the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.

What can you do? Find out if your **State Senator** and **Representative** have local office hours. Does your **Congressperson** have a district office near you? Visit the websites of **Sen. Stabenow** and **Sen. Peters**. You may not be able to talk directly with the elected official, but establishing a working relationship with a staff person can make a difference when critical issues arise. Check out the **the toolkit** developed by NARP.

Citizens often wonder if their calls and letters make a difference. Lawmakers tell us that they do listen to their constituents. But remember, your voice will be heard only if you take the initiative.



photo by Elaine Twichell

MARP Member Meeting

Saturday, March 18

10:00 am – Noon

Historic Grand Trunk Depot
(Clinton Northern Railway Museum)

107 East Railroad St., St. Johns MI 48879

[Map & Directions](#)

Jenny and Gary McCampbell will be our hosts as they recount the joys and heartaches of restoring four unique and historically important rail cars. Meeting details on the website www.marp.org. Or send email to marprail@yahoo.com.

Riding the Rails in 1917

Mark Tomlonson, rail historian extraordinaire, was the featured speaker for the 18 February MARP member meeting at the First Methodist Church in Kalamazoo.

Asking us to imagine boarding one of the 64 daily trains (not counting interurbans!) serving Kalamazoo a hundred years ago for a journey to visit *Mardi Gras* celebrations in New Orleans, Tomlonson evoked a keen sense of what it was like to travel during the heyday of train travel in the United States. The three-inch thick time table he held up was testament to the extent of the passenger rail network a century ago. Because each segment of journey would be ticketed separately, a long journey could mean an impressive handful of tickets—the record was 87-feet long. The first leg of our imaginary trip would have been on the Michigan Central to Chicago where we would transfer by automobile to board the southbound all-Pullman-car *Panama Ltd.* We would have dined in “Edwardian” splendor, although I think some of us were a bit skeptical of the ox tongue featured at lunchtime!

Tomlonson drew much of his material and many photos from the collection of 1800 items held by the **Kalamazoo Model Railroad History Society** located at 9336 North Riverview in Kalamazoo. The collection is open during the group’s regular meetings or by appointment. Visit www.kmrhs.org or [click here](#) for contact information.

In the business portion of the meeting, Treasurer Stewart Bolinger presented the budget for 2017. Expected receipts include Membership Dues and Donations of \$9,000, Annual Meeting receipts of \$1,000, the balance of \$3,500 remaining on the grant from the Michigan Environmental Council, along with \$2,075 carried over from 2016 and a cash balance drawdown of \$1,375. **Total Receipts \$16,950.** Anticipated disbursements include Communications \$3,500, Government Affairs \$2,500, Outreach \$1,250, Annual Meeting \$2,000, Hospitality \$500, Membership \$1,500, Monthly Meetings \$1,500, Dues Paid to NARP, MEC, TRU, Midwest HSR \$500, In-House Printing \$500, Grant to Durand Union Station \$500, Administration \$500, Treasurer \$200. A new budget category redirects \$2,000 from publications and membership in order to expand MARP’s exposure using social media. **Total Disbursements \$16,950.**

Meetings coordinator Adam Williams announced that MARP will meet in Chicago Union Station on May 13. It is hoped we will be able to get a close-up look at one of the new Siemens SC-44 Charger locomotives being delivered for service on state-supported routes in Michigan, Illinois, and Missouri. Government affairs coordinator John Langdon reported that Amtrak *Thruway Bus* service has recently been expanded to several more Michigan communities served by *Indian Trails* (see story in next column).

Indian Trails Entire Network Now Connects With Amtrak

Buses operated by *Indian Trails* are now providing *Thruway Bus* service that allows students at Alma College and Central Michigan University, as well as all those living along the center of the Lower Peninsula south from the Straits, to make connections with *Wolverine* trains at Battle Creek or Kalamazoo.

MARP has long sought this expansion of service—service enjoyed by other areas of the state for some time—and commends *Indian Trails* for working diligently to make it happen. MARP members John Langdon, Hugh Gurney and Jim Wallington played important roles in encouraging *Amtrak* to bring this to fruition.

Thruway Bus service means that passengers in any of 32 Michigan towns served by *Indian Trails* can purchase a single ticket on the Amtrak.com website that includes travel on both the train and bus segments of their trip. Tickets may also be booked by calling 800-USA-RAIL.

With the new service, passengers aboard eastbound *Wolverine* train #350 will connect to the northbound *Thruway Bus* in Battle Creek bound for Alma, Mt. Pleasant, Clare, Houghton Lake, Grayling, Gaylord, Petoskey, St. Ignace, and Sault Sainte Marie. Those traveling on the *Thruway Bus* southbound from the Straits will connect to *Wolverine* train #355 in Kalamazoo. To view the schedule of new *Thruway* connections, [click here](#)

Indian Trails’ entire network of daily scheduled routes is now linked with the national railroad as a result of these new connections between *Amtrak* and *Indian Trails*. More than 500 destinations in 46 states, the District of Columbia and three Canadian Provinces are served by *Amtrak*. In addition, existing *Amtrak* and *Indian Trails* routes connect towns throughout Michigan. To explore your travel options, visit IndianTrails.com.



Renew Your Membership!

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WALLY Public Meetings Scheduled

A third and final set of public meetings is scheduled to provide an update on the status of the **North-South Commuter Rail Project** (a.k.a WALLY),



including a summary of service options evaluated, cost and ridership projections, and information on governance and funding strategies. Each of the three meetings will begin with a brief presentation followed by discussion to answer questions and obtain public input on the proposed service and the process.

The North-South Commuter Rail is a proposed 27-mile long commuter rail service on existing tracks that would connect Ann Arbor and Howell, with intermediate stops along the way. It is being evaluated as a cost-effective alternative to ease traffic congestion along US-23 and to promote economic development and job creation in the region. The results of the study, initiated by the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA), will be used to determine if the project is feasible and, if so, as part of the documentation to prepare the project for future federal funding

Monday, March 20, 6:30-8:30 PM
Howell Area Chamber of Commerce
 123 E. Washington St.
 Howell, MI 48843

Tuesday, March 21, 6:30-8:30 PM
Northfield Township Offices
 8350 Main St.
 Whitmore Lake, MI 48189

Wednesday, March 22, 6:30-8:30 PM
Eberwhite Elementary School Auditorium
 800 Soule Blvd.
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Note: Parking at Eberwhite is located off Soule Blvd. with additional parking off Park Dr. at Mt Vernon.

For information, please contact Michael Benham at AAATA at (734) 794-1851 or mberham@theride.org.

Click below to learn more about the North-South (WALLY) Commuter Study

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

2017 Annual Meeting
Midwest High Speed Rail Association
Saturday April 1, 2017 - 9:00am to 3:00pm
Maggiano's Little Italy
516 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60654

An exciting group of speakers will share ideas, innovations and progress related to passenger rail in the U.S. and high-speed rail around the world:

- Eugene Skoropowski, Former Senior Vice President of Passenger Rail Development, All Aboard Florida (*Brightline* service)
- Derrick James, Director of Government Affairs, Amtrak
- Tim Hoeffner, Director - Office of Rail, Michigan Department of Transportation
- Katie England, Director of Multimodal Planning & Programs, Indiana Department of Transportation
- Mark Walbrun, Vice President, Practice Leader – Rail & Transit, US East, Mott MacDonald

Cost: Single Ticket: \$60.00 Student Ticket: \$20.00
 *Cost includes lunch. [Click Here to Register.](#)

Midwest Regional Rail Plan Study Kicks Off

The Stakeholder Working Group that will provide public input into the Midwest Regional Rail Plan Study held the first of four day-long workshops in Chicago on 8 March.

This FRA-led study will build on current rail planning efforts within the twelve states of Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Indiana, and Minnesota and will explore the potential for a fully integrated high performance rail network linking rail passengers and freight with intermodal transit and ports across the region.

If you would like to be kept updated throughout the process, register as an “interested party” with Alicia.Hanlon@quetica.com.

The website should be up and running soon.

www.MidWestRailPlan.org

CORRECTION: MARP member Yuri Popov has pointed out an error in last month’s ON TRACK regarding the number of SC-44 “Charger” locomotives ordered from Siemens for use in the Midwest. The Midwest (i.e., IDOT-Illinois, the lead agency for the Midwest procurement) is getting 33 locomotives--21 from the original 2014 order and 12 more from the 2015 options). ON TRACK has been unable to determine how many of these locomotives will be deployed on Michigan routes. **CLICK HERE** for more information on the new locomotives.

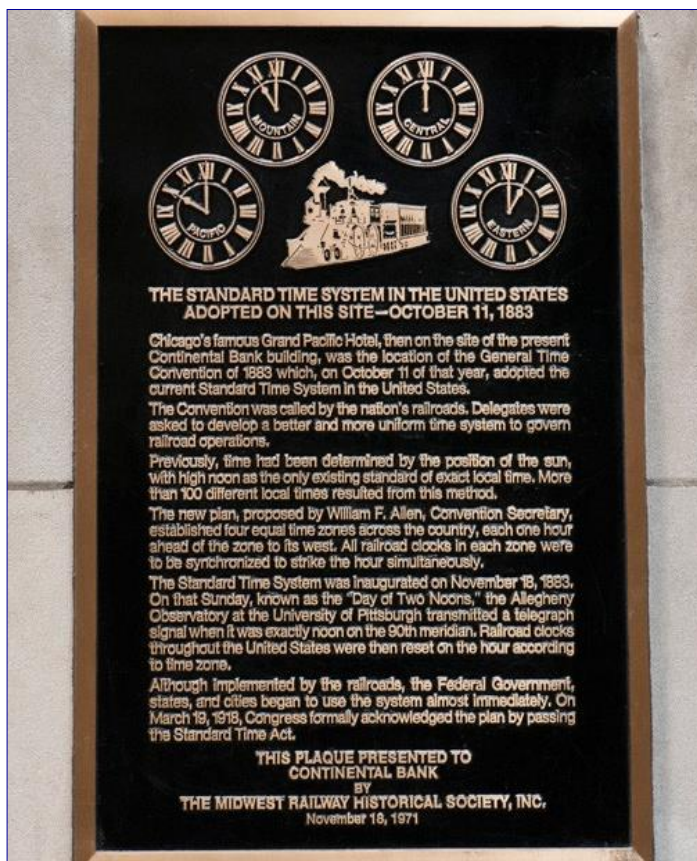
The Day of Two Noons

The plaque shown here is affixed to the Jackson Ave. side of the bank building at 231 LaSalle St in the heart of Chicago's Financial District. In 1883, this corner was occupied by the **Grand Pacific Hotel** and was the site of the General Time Convention convened by the nation's railroads to bring some order to chaotic time-keeping across the country.

At the time, the position of the sun at high noon was the only standard of exact local time, resulting in more than 100 different local times. Upon agreement to establish four equal time zones across the U.S., the Standard Time System was inaugurated by the railroads on November 18, 1883. On that Sunday, known as the "Day of Two Noons," the Allegheny Observatory at the University of Pittsburgh transmitted a **telegraph signal** when it was exactly noon on the 90th meridian. Railroad clocks throughout the United States were then reset on the hour according to time zone. Although implemented by the railroads, the entire country began to use the system almost immediately. But it was not until 19 March 1918 that Congress formally acknowledged the plan by passing the Standard Time Act.

Next time you're in Chicago, seek out this handsome plaque. See if the **Chicago Architecture Foundation** has a tour that day of the **classic building** on which it rests, now leased to Wintrust Bank.

--Photo by Andrea Bauer used with permission.



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