



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

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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
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

Make Plans Now to attend MARP Meeting at Chicago Union Station, Saturday, May 13

MARP is planning a special meeting for Saturday, May 13, at Chicago Union Station. The meeting will take place in the historic Barbershop that has been impressively restored as a meeting room. It is located adjacent to the new Legacy Lounge off the southwest corner of the Great Hall. To accommodate *Wolverine* passengers, the meeting will begin at 11:30 a.m. Come early for Informal socializing beginning at 11:00 a.m.

We have invited our colleagues from All Aboard Wisconsin, Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association, All Aboard Ohio, Ohio Passenger Rail Association, and All Aboard Minnesota to join us.

Martin Bloedt, Sales and Product Manager Locomotives, Siemens Industry Inc., will speak to us about next-generation passenger train equipment, including the SC-44 Charger locomotives currently being delivered for use on Michigan, Illinois, Missouri and Wisconsin routes.

Laura Kliever, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (miprc.org), will update us on the FRA-led Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study (MidwestRailPlan.org) that has recently gotten underway. A 43-member stakeholder planning group has been named and has undergone the first of four Workshops to be held throughout the 18-month study period.

Following the program, we will tour the Joseph C. Szabo Chicago Control Center. The Chicago Control Center, one of five such operation centers in the county, oversees nearly 510 daily train movements, carrying almost 130,00 people, in Chicago Union Station, on the Michigan Line and in New Orleans.

We will also have the opportunity to take **a tour of the hidden Union Station**. Some of these previous neglected spaces have undergone extensive refurbishment over the last couple of years with the goal of improving the passenger experience and creating more productive uses.

See page 4 for more on some of the hidden and not-so-hidden spaces that we will see on the tour. The transformations are impressive!



MARP Member Meeting

Saturday, May 13

11:30 am – 2:00 pm

Chicago Union Station

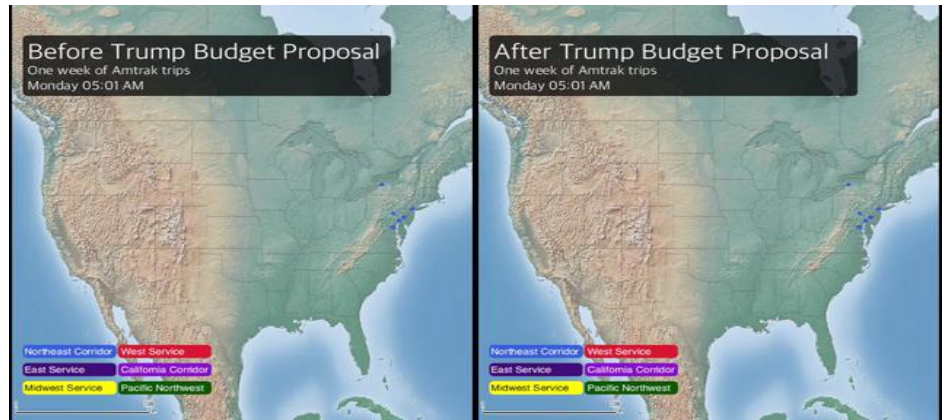
225 S Canal St, Chicago IL 60606

Map & Directions

The meeting takes place in the historic Barbershop, adjacent to the new Legacy Lounge. Speakers include Laura Kliever, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, speaking on the new FRA-led Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study, and Martin Bloedt, Siemens Industries, Inc. Meeting details above.

“We should be working towards faster, cheaper, and more frequent rail connectivity between American towns and cities, not eliminating access to our national rail system for millions of Americans.”

These are the words of Will Geary as quoted recently in [CityLab.com](#). Geary, described as “a data-science grad student at Columbia University with a bit of a transit obsession”, has created the animated maps at the right to give a stark picture of the dire consequences should Congress go along with the Administration’s proposal to eliminate funding for Amtrak’s long-distance routes.



CLICK HERE to VISUALIZE a COUNTRY WITHOUT LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS

Another of Geary’s visualizations is an interactive map showing the 220 places in 23 states on 15 Amtrak routes that stand to lose all train service. The size of the dot indicates the number of yearly passengers at each of those stations, ranging from 180,000 in New Orleans to 6,000 in Worcester MA. View the map [here](#).

Earth Day 2017 in Detroit

MARP members gathered at the Grand Trunk Pub in Detroit on April 22—forty-seven years to the day after the first **Earth Day** was observed in 1970—to hear about progress being made toward a more responsive and sustainable transportation system in the SE Michigan metro region.

Nicole Brown, Community Relations Manager for M-1 Rail, spoke about the **QLINE Streetcar** that will have its **Grand Opening Celebration** on May 12. As she spoke, the streetcar was visible out the windows as it made numerous test runs headed back up Woodward.

We also heard from Megan Owens, Executive Director of **Transit Riders United** (TRU), an organization that has been fighting the good fight for better public transportation in the region for some time now.

An eye-opening element in Ms. Brown’s presentation was the extent of the infrastructure work on Woodward not directly related to the laying of the tracks. Viewing the installation of the tracks and supporting facilities as an opportunity to accomplish “a decade’s worth of infrastructure work” in an efficient and coordinated way, MDOT, DTE Energy, Nextel, Detroit Water Department, and Detroit Thermal (the largest, and one of the oldest, steam providers in the country) became partners in rebuilding the roadway all the way to New Center, moving and upgrading utilities, and replacing century-old storm sewers.

Because the streetcar will move with traffic on the 3.3 mile-long journey up Woodward Ave., public education has been a major part of preparations for the May opening to ensure safety for automobiles, pedestrians and passengers.

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Use of designated crosswalks is urged and bicyclists are warned of the hazard of getting wheels caught in the tracks. The climate-controlled streetcars feature level boarding, Wi-Fi and places for 4 bikes. Passes, good for 3 hours, may be purchased at one of the 20 stations or on-board. Fares are \$1.50 or \$.75 for seniors. All day passes are \$3.00, live-feed cameras are located at the stations and on-board. Streetcars will arrive at the stations every 7 to 10 minutes during peak periods and 12-15 minutes off peak.

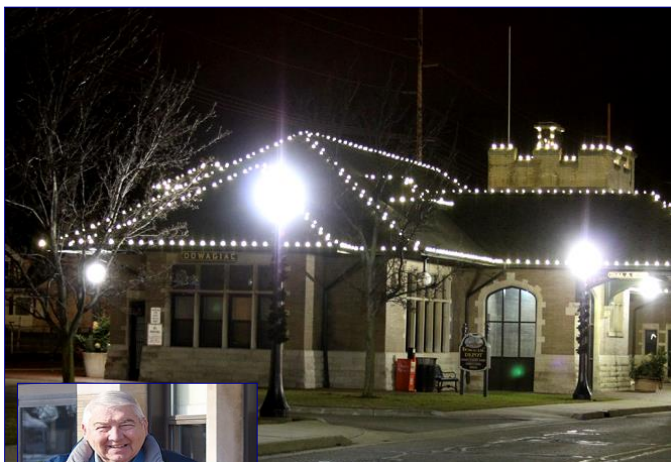
Ms. Owens echoed the disappointment many felt with the narrow defeat last November of the millage to support implementation of the regional transit **Master Plan**. With a broad base of support, the Plan sought to overcome two major barriers that have held the Detroit metro area back: lack of a coordinated, regional transit system; and lack of a dedicated source of funding to support that system.

Despite the set-back, Ms. Owens reminded us that the problems have not gone away. The RTA is still here and is working on how to better address the needs of outer edge and rural communities.

On a more optimistic note, the area has seen a major **expansion of services** in the last 2 years. **Reflex** is a new limited-stop service that offers one-seat service across DDOT, SMART and county boundaries on 2 routes: Woodward to Somerset and Wayne/Monroe to Mt. Clemens/North River. Nine routes now enjoy 24-hour service. With new services and the addition of frequencies on many routes, a total of 1,300 new trips have been added since September 2016.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Dignitaries Get the First Ride on the QLINE



Congratulations, Ron!

The outdoor lights will be back on at the Dowagiac Depot thanks to the efforts of MARP member Ron Leatz. His “Light Up the Depot” campaign saw a flurry of activity last month as businesses and residents stepped up to help him reach, and exceed, his goal of \$5,212 to complete the needed repairs.

Ron was responsible for the original campaign in 2010 to install lighting on the rooftop of the historic depot. The \$8,000 raised at that time allowed the installation of 1,700 LED lights that cheered townsfolk and train passengers throughout the dreary winter months.

The money raised in the latest campaign will go to replace the 2,200 feet of wiring that has deteriorated over the years. With the extra money raised this year, Ron will add lights, possibly on the building’s chimney.

The original bulbs are still in good shape—only one has been lost. The city now plans to keep the lights on throughout the year. Because LED lights are so energy efficient, the cost of keeping them on year round is only about \$100.

In addition to serving as a volunteer station host, Ron enlists Dowagiac High School Choir members each year to wash the 215 panes of glass in the windows and clean the wood paneling.

The Dowagiac Depot was built in 1903 by the Michigan Central and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Thanks to the persistence of Eagle Scout Joseph Weiser in raising the necessary \$3,350, a Michigan Historic Marker was placed at the Depot in 2009.

The Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce has an office in the depot and maintains a museum/gift shop. The former ticket office now serves as headquarters for Ted Yoakum, the community editor of the Dowagiac Daily News.

DUES ANYONE? 



Save the Date!

MRC

**Midwest
Rail Conference**

Aug. 15-17, 2017 • Kalamazoo, MI



Fetzer Center
Western Michigan University
2350 Business Court
Kalamazoo, MI 49008



CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

www.rail.mtu.edu/event/mrc2017

Midwest High Speed Rail Association Posts Annual Meeting Videos

The MHRSA Annual Meeting on April 1 featured a number of informative presentations which are now available for viewing at midwesthsr.org/2017-mhsra-annual-meeting.

MARP members may find the presentations by Mark Walbrun, Tim Hoeffner, Derrick James, and Gene Skoropowski particularly interesting. **Mark Walbrun**, rail and transit leader for Mott MacDonald, focused on the importance of train frequency to the success of a route, citing examples from around the globe. **Tim Hoeffner**, MDOT Office of Rail, emphasized the work of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission in moving the region forward, as well as the need to focus on increasing ridership and cutting costs. **Derrick James**, Amtrak Government Affairs, talked about new *Acela Express* equipment and re-development of major Amtrak-owned stations as strategies to meet demand and enhance revenue. **Gene Skoropowski**, recently retired from a key position with All Aboard Florida, got everyone in the room excited about planning a trip on the *Brightline*, scheduled to begin service between Miami and Fort Lauderdale this summer.

CORRECTION: The April issue should have stated that the *Acela Express* trains on the North East Corridor (NEC) account for 11% of Amtrak system ridership and 27% of Amtrak system revenues. Twenty-eight new train sets are on order to replace current equipment.

Chicago Union Station's Hidden Spaces Revealed

Pleasant surprises are in store if you have not visited Chicago Union Station lately. Ticketing and queuing to board trains now takes place in the Great Hall. As you approach the Great Hall, you will envy the business and first class passengers seen on the other side of the large windows who are enjoying the comforts and amenities of the new **Metropolitan Lounge**. The former **Ladies' Lounge**, a space unused for many years, has been meticulously restored. Now called The Burlington Room, it is available to rent for special events. Guided tours are available most weekday afternoons. The famous steps have been rebuilt with travertine from the same quarry as the original. Among the stone masons who worked on the steps are descendants of some of the original workmen.

These are some of the more obvious signs of progress in implementing the Chicago Union Station Master Plan that was announced in May of 2012. Not so obvious elements are the upgrades of mechanical and HVAC systems and the renovation of office spaces for Amtrak. To view the Master Plan and follow progress on the project, visit the project website UnionStation.com.



The Ladies' Lounge

The photo above is one of 29 taken during a **2015 tour** of spaces within Chicago Union Station that have been largely unused for decades and have remained hidden from public view. Since then, three of these spaces have been renovated and are being enjoyed by passengers and the public. Read this **Chicago Tribune article** by architect Blair Kamin and click on the "photo gallery" midway down the page for a look at the amazing transformation of one of these neglected spaces.



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