



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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Issue # 71

August 2017

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** – 1<sup>st</sup> Methodist Church, Kalamazoo
- 18 March** – Clinton Northern Railway Museum, St. Johns
- 22 April** – Grand Trunk Pub, Detroit
- 13 May** – Chicago Union Station
- 10 June** – Executive Committee
- 15 July** – Traverse City
- 19 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](http://www.marp.org)  
Email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

## A Promising Regional Plan

Earlier this year, the FRA began a **Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study**. This effort is exciting because it breaks free of the narrow route-based or corridor-based planning models we're used to. Instead, this study is taking a big-picture, network-based approach. With Chicago as a hub, this study is evaluating the thousands of variations of a network that will connect the entire Midwest.

Using a model called CONNECT, it evaluates what trip times and frequency of service are needed to shift a significant portion of travel from driving and flying. With this high-level, comprehensive plan, individual projects can then be identified and prioritized. This is what we're calling for with our **Phased Network Approach**, and we plan on doing additional, more specific research to complement the FRA's study.

This new study largely aligns with our assumptions about what is necessary for **true high-speed rail**: high speeds and high frequencies on dedicated passenger tracks. The FRA's effort defines a "core express" level of service on dedicated tracks with top speeds in excess of 150 mph, and average speeds of at least 110 mph.

The next notch down is "regional" service on existing freight tracks, with average speeds from 75 to 110 mph. This is an overly optimistic assumption about what is possible on freight tracks, at least given current conditions. Even with our recommendations about how to **sweeten the deal for freight railroads**, top speeds on shared track cannot reliably exceed 90 mph, which implies an average of 65 or 70 mph.

Finally, the study is also tackling the **governance problem we've identified**: railroad planning today must go through a snarl of disconnected committees and agencies. The study aims to produce a 40-year strategic framework to streamline planning, construction and operation across the various states and other levels of government.

Those attending the **Midwest Rail Conference August 16 in Kalamazoo** can look forward to an update on the study and a preview of the group's next workshop. There's also an option to **call in to the technical session**, but an advance RSVP is required.

Reprinted from *Midwest High Speed Rail Newsletter*, August 1, 2017.



### MARP Member Meeting

Saturday, August 19

10:00 am – Noon

Odd Fellows Hall

235 W Monroe St, Bangor MI 49013

**Map & Directions**

Ron Pesch, author of "Big Wheels Turning: Greyhound in Michigan", will treat us to the surprisingly interesting story of the 1914 Hupmobile that became a fleet of inter-city buses and the forgotten role played by West Michigan. Details on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) Or send email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

## Trains, Buses and Beers in Traverse City

MARP members and friends gathered at the Traverse Area District Library on 15 July to learn about local transit services as well as the plans to return passenger trains to this rapidly expanding northwest corner of the Lower Peninsula. Lunch and libations ensued at the former railroad station, now repurposed as **The Filling Station**, a popular local watering hole just across the tracks from the library.

MARP's Northern Region covers the Upper Peninsula and the upper half of the Lower Peninsula. Despite the huge geographical area, we have only a couple dozen members, among them our newest member, Kendal Taylor in Petoskey, and one who has been with MARP almost since its beginnings in the early 70's, Ron Cady, in Alpena.

It's been a long time since people in the far reaches of our state have experienced the eager anticipation of a train trip to visit far away relatives—an experience captured so memorably by historian and Benzonia native, Bruce Catton, in his memoir *Waiting for the Morning Train*. Now, a project spread headed by the **Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities** is aiming to change that. The **A2TC Project** will soon kick off a grant-funded study to gauge the feasibility of restoring passenger train service between Ann Arbor and Traverse City. Hans Voss, Ground Work's executive director, spoke of "overwhelming support" up and down the line, pointing out that 90,000 college students would have access. He emphasized the role MARP can play in the vitally important public engagement process, saying "This kind of process works only with strong grass roots involvement." He also saluted the enthusiastic support of the Traverse Area Realtors, whose executive vice-president, Kim Pontius, spoke briefly of his organization's commitment to building transportation "connectivity" and praised the involvement of BATA, the Bay Area Transportation Authority. *(continues at right)*



**Michigan Operation Lifesaver  
Quarterly Meeting  
Friday, August 11  
Ann Arbor, MI**

Sam Crowl, Michigan coordinator for Operation Lifesaver, again extends an invitation to interested MARP members to attend the upcoming quarterly meeting.

Always featuring interesting speakers, the meeting will focus on education, engineering, and enforcement initiatives, OL presenter training activities and initiatives, updates from Michigan's railroad companies, and information on Michigan's incident data. There will be an update on the new Operation Lifesaver Authorized Volunteer (OLAV) Program.

You will be the guest of Jon Cool, President of the Michigan Railroads Association, for lunch following the meeting.

The meeting begins at 9:30am, Friday, August 11, in the Learning Resource Center building, which is part of the Washtenaw County Sheriffs' Complex, 4135 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor MI 48107, near Hogback Road. Exit U.S. route 23 at Exit # 37-A (Washtenaw Avenue, Rt. 17). The location is a quarter mile east of the freeway and sits behind St. Luke Church. Map & Directions [here](#).

If you plan to attend, please RSVP by Monday, August 7 to [samcrowl@comcast.net](mailto:samcrowl@comcast.net) or phone him at 248-823-7037.

*(continued)*

Tyler Bevier, BATA transportation planner, also spoke to us, outlining a number of innovative things BATA is doing to serve the region. He recounted how his decision to leave his car at home for a month and ride the bus, gave him important insights into how vital the bus system is to people who need to get to jobs, shop for groceries, or visit their doctors.

**[CLICK HERE NOW TO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP](#)**



## Enjoy \$5 Fares to Detroit

Head to Detroit on the *Wolverine* line from Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Pontiac, Royal Oak, or Troy to experience the brand-new QLINE — a 6.6-mile streetcar line with 12 stops along Woodward Avenue. Whether you're heading to a baseball game, dining in Greektown or seeing a show at the Fox Theatre, it will make your travel to and from your favorite places the easiest it's ever been.

FREE FARES on the QLINE have been extended through Labor Day.

**\$5 Amtrak Fare Valid for Sale and Travel**

July 1 - September 4, 2017

**BOOK TODAY**

## Michigan Routes Show Ridership Gains

Ridership on the *Wolverine* is showing a year over year increase for June of 31.6%. Revenue is up 45.7% over June of 2016. This is gratifying news, following the significant declines over the last four years of low gasoline prices and severe service interruptions due to track work on the line.

In the first 9 months of FY17, overall ridership on Michigan routes is up 3.8% and revenue is up 7.5%. Both the *Blue Water* and *Pere Marquette* are showing healthy increases.

The latest on-time performance reports also show some bright spots:

#364	June 93.3%	last 12 months 95.6%
#370	June 80%	last 12 months 85.6%
#371	June 93.3%	last 12 months 82.9%

Visit MDOT's [Passenger Rail Statistics](#) to take a deeper dive into these facts and figures.

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## How I Spent My Summer

Remember when you were a kid returning to school after a lazy summer of doing not much of anything? And the first thing your teacher wanted you to do was write an essay about that?

Well, *The Michigan Passenger* (remember . . . MARP's occasional print newspaper?) would like to know how you spent your summer, especially if it involved traveling by train.

Cheryl Tenbrink, who lives with her husband, Burt, in Kalamazoo, took advantage of proximity to the *Wolverine* line to get to the American Library Association meeting in Chicago. She enjoyed the speakers and exhibits, dined at one of Chicago's great restaurants and, at the end of the second day, boarded the train to return home. "Truly a great way to travel!"

Your editor, who does not own a car, made an extended trip to the Pacific Northwest and Glacier Park in May, enjoying rides on 2 bus systems, 6 Amtrak trains, 1 light rail system, 1 commuter train and 1 water-taxi, along the way visiting 3 wildlife refuges, and witnessing spectacular scenery over Marias Pass where lingering heavy snows from the winter made glimpses of the sunlit "matter horn" peaks of Glacier Park truly awe-inspiring.

**Now, we want to hear from you!** We are collecting your stories for publication in the next issue of *The Michigan Passenger*. Long or short, just let us know what was new, fun, surprising or unexpected. If you have reasonably high-quality photos, include one or two of those. Send by September 7 to: [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

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**READ ABOUT VICTORIA'S AND CAITLIN'S  
SUMMER BY RAIL ADVENTURE ON PAGE 4**

## Midwest Rail Plan Announces Next Stakeholder Workshop



The forty-three member Stakeholder Planning Group will convene in Detroit for the third of four planned workshops. The workshop will take place on Wednesday, September 13, from 8AM to 4PM EDT.

You are invited once again to listen in remotely to the workshop. If you are interested in doing so, please **RSVP by August 30** by emailing [kate.beazley@quetica.com](mailto:kate.beazley@quetica.com).

We have also learned that members of the consultant team will hold a special technical session during the upcoming Midwest Rail Conference in Kalamazoo. They will review the technical analysis efforts to-date as well as preview materials to be shared at September workshop in Detroit. If you would like to listen in at 4:00 pm, Tuesday, August 15, send your RSVP to [kate.beazley@quetica.com](mailto:kate.beazley@quetica.com). Indicate you are interested in tuning in to the August 15 **technical session at the Midwest Rail Conference** in Kalamazoo.

**ON TRACK is asking for your thoughts and comments** on this important process. Are you understanding the process? What outcomes would you like to see? What do you see as Michigan's place in the regional network? Send your thoughts to us at [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

All of the slide presentations from the Stakeholders' Workshop #2 **may be viewed here**. You will find it helpful to familiarize yourself with these materials in preparation for listening to the upcoming sessions.

One of the most thought provoking portions of these presentations is the "Building Block Analysis" (**slides 65-69**). Here, the Midwest is divided into five sub-regions and a set of "key questions" is presented for each, e.g., "What is the relative demand of Michigan markets (Lansing, Flint, Port Huron) for travel to the west (Chicago) vs. to the east (Detroit/Toronto)?"

There is food for thought in another set of slides (**slides 103-112**) which show an intriguing number of possible route configurations within each of the five sub-regions. Of the nine possible route configurations in Michigan, only one includes the current *Pere Marquette* route. Michigan also figures in the East sub-region, where a number of surprising possibilities are shown.

Throughout the study process, you may use the "Contact" button on the website to submit your questions and comments. **Sign up here** to register as an "interested party" to receive the newsletter and notice of meetings.

**Visit the Website  
to view the newsletter and workshop presentations  
[MidwestRailPlan.org](http://MidwestRailPlan.org)**



## View from elsewhere . . .

*“In respect to the favorable action by both houses of Congress, perhaps Amtrak’s Board of Directors might seize the opportunity to evidence a vision to grow Amtrak? The Board should now request management to delve into proformas [sic] requesting Congress to authorize funding for acquiring new power and equipment, as well as to rehabilitate current units and cars.”*

—Mark E. Singer, Principal at Marketing Rail Ltd., commenting on recent Congressional action to increase Amtrak funding for FY2018

*“If Congress wants better results from Amtrak why don’t they give it adequate capital and get...out of the way? ...As for ‘profitability’, the media, Congress, etc., never examine the true cost of suburban sprawl with all its ‘free’ parking, traffic accidents, drive through obesity, land waste, climate changing heat retention, etc.”*

—Malcolm Cunningham, architectural design consultant and frequent contributor to the comments section of *Progressive Railroading*



## Summer By Rail 2017 Edition

Victoria Principato and Caitlin Boyle (and their bicycles) launched their 27-day train odyssey at Penn Station on July 31. The two are interns in a program initiated by NARP to involve young people in a hands-on exploration of how people across the country get around by public transportation and bicycles. Victoria and Cate will be **blogging** and **tweeting** their experiences as they visit 22 cities from Montreal to Los Angeles to Hattiesburg MS and perhaps even to Kalamazoo—the **map** shows a side trip to experience the 110-mph *Wolverine* line.



Visit “Discover Pure Michigan”  
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202-224-3121

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