



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 2016-2018

Steve Vagnozzi	Chair
Tom Purmort	Vice-Chair
Steve Vagnozzi	Treasurer
Open	Secretary
John Langdon	Gov'l/Public Affairs Coordinator
Robert Tischbein	Membership Coordinator
Kay Chase	Communications Coordinator
Adam Tauno Williams	Meetings Coordinator
Robert Patterson	Detroit/Metro Region Chair
Mark Miller	Northern Region Chair
Charles Shong	West Region Chair
Joshua Hamilton	East/Central Region Chair

*The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase*

2018 MEETINGS

- 27 January** – Member Meeting
Okemos Public Library
- 20 February** – Executive Committee
- 20 March** – Executive Committee
- 21 April** – Member Meeting
MSU Detroit Center
- 29 May** – Executive Committee
- June** – Meeting Cancelled
- 14 July** – Executive Committee
Durand Union Station
- 7-9 August** – Michigan Rail Conference
Saginaw State University
- September** – Outreach Event
Grand Rapids Art Prize
- 27 October** – Member Meeting
Location TBA
- November** – Annual Meeting
- December** – Executive Committee

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

MARP Names New Officers

Meeting at Durand Union Station on 28 July, the executive committee appointed Tom Purmort and Joshua Hamilton to fill vacancies in the offices of Vice-Chair and East/Central Regional Chair, respectively.

Mr. Purmort, who lives in Holland, has extensive experience in business development and sales, and project and operations management, much of it in rail-related industries.

Mr. Hamilton resides in East Lansing where he founded The Catholic Media Project. He serves as Director of Youth Ministry at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in East Lansing. He is a strong supporter of public transportation.

The executive committee welcomes the energy, experience and dedication that Mr. Purmort and Mr. Hamilton bring to the organization.

Stewart Bolinger has submitted his resignation due to family responsibilities that take him out of state frequently. With the agreement of the executive committee, Chair Steve Vagnozzi will assume the duties of Treasurer. He will continue as Chair until the new officers are selected in the fall.

MARP is still looking for a person to fill the position of Secretary. If you are interested, or would like to suggest someone, please send an email to acting secretary, Kay Chase, via marprail@yahoo.com.

Election of officers for the period 2018-2020 will be held during MARP's 45th Annual Meeting, tentatively scheduled for early November at O'Kelly Banquet Hall in Dearborn. The nominating committee will be soliciting candidates in the next few weeks. If you are interested in taking a more active role in your organization, or, if you would like to suggest someone for office, please let the committee know. You can send your suggestions or inquiries to marprail@yahoo.com.

Chair Vagnozzi announced that MARP has received another \$5,000 grant from the Michigan Environmental Council to aid work in supporting and expanding passenger train services in Michigan. In other action, the executive committee agreed to send a letter to Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson

(MARP continues on page 3)

NO MEMBER MEETING IN AUGUST

Plans are being finalized for a MARP meeting/event in Grand Rapids during the annual **Art Prize** competition and festival, which takes place between 19 September and 07 October. Meetings coordinator, Adam Tauno Williams, has invited Elaine S. Wilson to speak on her project "Charting the Wolverine", a series of paintings inspired by views from the train. Plans are to promote the MARP event widely in the community, particularly among the student population.

League of Michigan Bicyclists Proves that Persistence Wins the Day

With a route-spanning media event on 25 July, the **League of Michigan Bicyclists** (LMB) saw several years of effort bear fruit as bikes were rolled on to *Wolverine* Train #353 for the first time.

The campaign to persuade Amtrak and MDOT to accommodate bikes on Michigan trains began with the development of a **backgrounder and fact sheet** detailing the many good reasons to institute such a policy. In 2011, the Michigan House passed **House Concurrent Resolution 41** sponsored by Rep. Sean McCann and 16 others. Next, LMB advocated for language in the **Michigan State Rail Plan** (adopted in January 2012) to make clear that bicycles and trains are not mutually exclusive: *“Special accommodations need to be made both to the train equipment and to stations to make rail service more accessible to people who are traveling with bicycles.”*

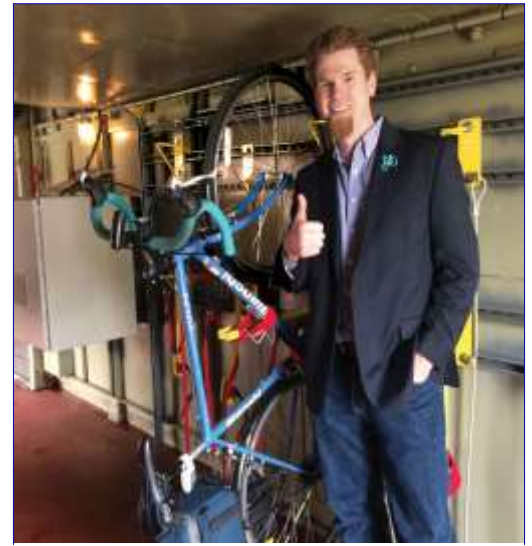


Visiting Michigan from Waterloo, Ontario, Ildemaro & Canmanie Ponnambalam were pleased that they could roll their bikes onto the *Blue Water* train after riding in the Thumb area. They were on their way to meet up with friends to do some more riding in the Chicago area and took advantage of the train ride to catch up on their sleep.

“Special accommodations need to be made both to the train equipment and to stations to make rail service more accessible to people who are traveling with bicycles.”

An online petition that eventually garnered more than 3,500 signatures and 350 comments was delivered in March of 2012 to then Amtrak Chairman, Thomas Carper, who indicated that Amtrak would consider the request. Success came on September 6, 2013, when bikes began to be accepted on *Blue Water* trains, secured in floor-mounted racks installed in the café cars. It took another three years, but on May 11, 2016, bikes were welcomed aboard the *Pere Marquette*, utilizing space in a “cabbage car”. The final piece fell into place last week when it was announced that bikes would now be accommodated on all *Wolverine* trains.

John Lindenmayer, Executive Director of the Michigan League of Bicyclists gives a “thumbs up” to bikes on trains.



John Lindenmayer, Executive Director of the Michigan League of Bicyclists gives a “thumbs up” to bikes on trains.

Well done, League of Michigan Bicyclists! Enjoy the Ride

Flint Ticket Office Closes

Effective 5 July 2018, Flint has joined the ranks of Michigan stations that no longer have ticket agents. This continues cost-cutting moves that are leaving passengers at stations in Michigan and around the country without the valuable assistance of knowledgeable Amtrak employees in making travel arrangements and boarding trains.

In a service advisory, Amtrak said passengers waiting to board the Chicago-Port Huron *Blue Water* trains will continue to have access to the station waiting area and restrooms for all train arrivals and departures. Station hours will be 6am - 5pm and 9pm - midnight.

Earlier this year, ticket agents were eliminated at Niles and at Jackson. Interestingly, both stations are now open longer hours than previously. The Niles depot is open 9am - 10pm and Jackson station is open 7:30am - 10:30pm. Caretakers are on hand to provide limited assistance to waiting passengers.

Only the Detroit and Ann Arbor stations remain staffed full-time. Flint, East Lansing, Dearborn, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo are staffed 8:00am - 4:00pm, with caretakers present until the station closes.

Wolverine Service Changes Announced

Amtrak recently initiated **schedule changes** that allow passengers using *Wolverine* route services to make new connections **to** or **from** certain Wisconsin and Illinois trains.

Eastbound *Wolverine* Train #352 now departs Chicago **45 minutes later**, at 1:25pm, with minor adjustments en route. The change allows new connections **from** *Lincoln* Train #302, which arrives in Chicago at 12:20pm, and *Hiawatha* Train #334, which arrives in Chicago at 12:29pm. Formerly, the *Wolverine* left Chicago at 12:40pm.

Westbound *Wolverine* Train #353 now departs Pontiac **45 minutes earlier**, at 10:00am, with minor adjustments en route. Arriving in Chicago at 3:05pm, the change assures a connection **to** *Illini* Train #393 departing Chicago at 4:05pm.

Also, minor changes are in effect for *Wolverine* Train #354, now departing Ann Arbor and Dearborn 2 minutes later, at 10:57pm, and *Wolverine* Train #355, now departing Pontiac 15 minutes later, at 5:35pm, with minor adjustments en route.

FIND ALL SCHEDULES HERE

www.amtrak.com/timetables

(MARP continued from page 1)

protesting his proposal to truncate the *Southwest Chief* route, substituting with bus transportation between Dodge City KS and Albuquerque NM. [Note: Congressional action since the meeting may have forestalled this action, but the ultimate outcome is still uncertain. [See update here.](#)]

Other Opportunities to Serve

There are many opportunities for MARP members to become more involved in building a vital and effective organization. Volunteering to serve on one of the four Committees established by Resolution in 2008, will add immeasurably to the success of the organization. And, you'll feel good about it!

The **Membership Committee** is tasked with recruitment, activation and retention of members. Robert Tischbein coordinates this committee. Contact him at rptischbein@juno.com.

The **Communications Committee** oversees MARP's print and online communications. Do you like to write or know someone who does? Ideas and submissions for publication in ON TRACK or the print Michigan Passenger are always welcome. Maybe you are interested in helping to keep the MARP website updated? Kay Chase coordinates this committee. Contact her at chase@wmich.edu.

The **Governmental Affairs Committee** provides liaison with governmental agencies and allied groups and carries out educational efforts. John Langdon co-ordinates this committee. Contact him at john-langdon@sbcglobal.net.

The **Meetings Committee** makes arrangements for meeting venues and programs. Adam Tauno Williams coordinates this committee. Contact him at awilliams@whitemice.org.

Or maybe you would like to work with one of the four **Regional Chairs** to build a part of the organization closer to home. Your Regional Chair would like to hear from you.

Robert Patterson (Detroit/Metro)
ridethetrainmich@sbcglobal.net.

Mark Milller (North) trains@mrmiller.us

Charles Shong (West) charles.shong@gmail.com

Joshua Hamilton (East/Central) christ.hami@gmail.com



We're waiting to hear from you
(And you know who you are!)

Go to [PayPal](#) to renew your membership

Or download a mail-in form [HERE](#)



MARP WANTS YOU

We are looking for a few, well, actually one, good man or woman to fill the position of Secretary.

If you would like to be part of MARP's leadership team, this one's for you!

Send email to marprail@yahoo.com

*Acting Secretary Kay Chase
looks forward to hearing from you!*

Thank Our Senators for Supporting Trains

Demonstrating, once again, that citizen action does get results, the U.S. Senate, on August 1, overwhelmingly approved legislation that demonstrates strong support for the national passenger train network and clearly rebuffs both the Trump Administration and Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson. With only 6 "nay" votes, the Senate passed a "minibus" appropriations package that includes \$1.4B for Amtrak's national network in FY2019.

Successfully attached to the bill is an amendment offered by a bi-partisan group of Senators from affected states that would appropriate \$50 million to "provide resources for maintenance and safety improvements along the *Southwest Chief* route."

Both Michigan Senators, Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, are longstanding supporters of trains and transit and deserve a hearty "thank you" for continuing to do so. Please call 202-224-4822 (Stabenow) or 202-224-6221 (Peters) and ask to speak to the transportation aide. Talking points include:

- Thank the Senator for supporting robust funding for Amtrak in the "minibus" spending package approved on August 1
- Thank the Senator for supporting preservation of the entire route of the *Southwest Chief*
- Let them know that our strong Michigan and Midwest passenger train network depends on the continued existence of a strong national network

If you are not comfortable with making a phone call, the Rail Passengers Association (aka NARP) has set up **an easy way to send a message**. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "Write to Your Senator". Fill in the second set of boxes and click "submit". The letter will have greater impact if you personalize it. Use the above talking points and tell why the national train network is important to you.

View from elsewhere . . .

“Amtrak, America’s national passenger rail service, was created to do what freight railroads could not: provide reliable and efficient passenger rail services to communities and people across this country. Yet, since it was created nearly half a century ago, Amtrak has never received full funding from Congress. Data from four years of polling show that regardless of political affiliation or geographic location, Americans want more Amtrak service and are willing to pay for it. While those in the DMV may see Amtrak as just another transportation choice in a wide portfolio of options, in small and rural communities across the country, Amtrak is often the only public transportation option available. In places like Montana, Kansas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas, Amtrak’s long distance routes act as a critical link to city centers, educational opportunities, friends, family, and other segments of our transportation system. What’s more, the jobs this carrier and its long-distance routes provide are reliable, pay living wages, and support families and local communities.”

—**Op-Ed in The Hill**, by Larry Willis, president of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO



Photo courtesy of Kevin Burkholder

The Great Dome Car on Two Routes This Fall

Amtrak's Great Dome Car, built in 1955 by the Budd Company for the Great Northern Railway, is the only one of its kind in Amtrak service. It has been a fixture on the *Adirondack* each fall, this year traveling on Trains #69 (northbound) and #68 (southbound) between New York City and Montreal, Sep 27-Nov 2. "**Take the Dome Car to Montreal**" includes schedule details and ideas for your visit. Also this year, riders on the *Downeaster* will have the opportunity to experience the scenic ride aboard the dome car traveling between Boston MA and Brunswick ME, Aug 11- Sep 23. Visit [this Downeaster page](#) for more information on the New England route.



15% Student Discount Returns

for travel on Midwest routes in
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri & Wisconsin

www.amtrak.com/midwest-student-discount



MARP, INC
PO BOX 1368

Okemos, MI 48805-1368

Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard

202-224-3121

Sen. Debbie Stabenow

Sen. Gary Peters

Find Your Congressperson

Find Your State Senator

Find Your State Representative