



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 – No Member Meeting

10 November – Annual Meeting
Dearborn

8 December – Executive Committee
East Lansing

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

MARP Elects Officers at 45th Annual Meeting

Forty-six MARP members and guests gathered at O'Kelly's Banquet Hall in Dearborn on 10 November to celebrate 45 years of advocacy work to improve and expand passenger train service in Michigan and to set the stage for challenges ahead. The slate of officers presented by the nominating committee for the 2018-20 term was approved by voice vote. Filling the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, are Tom Purmort (Holland MI) and Adam Tauno Williams (Grand Rapids MI). The four At-Large Executive positions are Kay Chase (Kalamazoo MI), John Langdon (Holland MI), Chuck Merckel (Livonia MI) and Jeanie Merckel (Livonia MI). The North, Detroit Metro, East Central, and West regional chair positions are Mark Miller (Oscoda MI), Robert Patterson (Detroit MI), Joshua Hamilton (East Lansing MI) and Warren Fritz (Kalamazoo MI), respectively. The Executive Committee reaffirmed their appointment of Steve Vagnozzi as Treasurer. The position of Secretary remains open. Clark Charnetski, who served on the nominating committee, along with Hugh Gurney and Steve Sobel, thanked the new officers for their willingness to accept leadership roles.

Preceding the business portion of the meeting, members enjoyed a program featuring speakers on the topics of Amtrak in the Midwest, what's happening with Michigan trains, and insight into rail manufacturing by a Canadian colleague with decades of experience in the industry.

Joe Shacter is responsible for handling Amtrak's contracts with the departments of transportation that manage the state passenger rail corridors in the Midwest. Prior to joining Amtrak in 2015, Shacter served as rail-transit director at Illinois-DOT, giving him experience on both sides of contract negotiations. The state-supported routes in the Midwest and elsewhere are viewed by Amtrak management as having the greatest potential for growth. Already they account for nearly half of Amtrak's total ridership and have seen impressive increases in revenue. Ridership on the *Wolverine* line was up 5.4% with 484,000 riders in FY2018. Overall, Michigan had the highest growth rate among the Midwest state-supported services at 3.4% with 764,000 passengers. In 2019 Michigan can expect: the new Siemens *Charger*

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Executive Committee Meets December 8

The Executive Committee will hold its semi-annual planning retreat from 10 AM – 4PM, Saturday, December 8. Discussions will include strengthening MARP membership, expanding outreach activities to reach a broader audience and strategizing how to influence decisions on improving and expanding passenger train service in Michigan. Member input is always welcome. Please contact Chair Tom Purmort with your ideas and concerns. Email to Tom at twpurmort@gmail.com or send a message to marprail@yahoo.com.

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locomotives on all three routes, greater reliability and faster schedules as PTC implementation is completed, and the extension of 110-mph territory to segments east of Kalamazoo. On time performance remains a concern. Much of the passenger train benefit from the Indiana Gateway project has been lost due an increase in freight traffic. Finding a solution to congestion south of the lake between Porter IN and Chicago is urgent. Reducing Chicago to Detroit trip time to 6 hours would eliminate the need for a crew change in Battle Creek. The new single-level coaches, modeled on the *Brightline* equipment, are in production by Siemens with delivery expected to begin in the spring of 2020 and be complete in 2023. These will be deployed on state-supported routes in Michigan, Illinois and Missouri.

Speaking at the end of the week that held the 2018 mid-term elections, **Tim Hoeffner, Director of the MDOT Office of Rail**, marveled that he has served under 6 Governors and 9 MDOT Directors, noting that Kirk Steudle retired as MDOT director at the end of October. Dr. Joe Schwarz, a former Congressman and long-time advocate for passenger rail is on Governor-elect Gretchen Whitmer's transition team. Hoeffner brought greetings from Scott Hercik, remembered by many MARP members for his 19 years with MDOT in the early years of Amtrak.

The Ford Company's purchase of the Michigan Central station holds possibilities for development of the Detroit-Ann Arbor transportation corridor, though Hoeffner is not predicting light rail coming any time soon. He admits that the transition from ticket agents to station caretakers in Michigan stations has not been smooth, but sees an advantage in having stations open longer hours.

The Office of Rail has taken the approach of growing revenue at a more rapid pace than ridership and is seeing this pay off. Farebox receipts in 2017 totaled \$32 million. Along with decreased costs attributable to the fuel-efficient *Charger* locomotives, costs for Michigan's three routes are significantly lower than originally projected when PRIAA Sec.209 took effect.

Because Illinois has managed the procurement for both the new locomotives and coaches, that state likely will be first to receive the coaches when delivery begins in 2020. Hoeffner admits the new coaches will not solve our capacity problem.

Referring to the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program, he said the FRA does not plan to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), but Michigan will be able to use the data developed during the study when seeking funding for projects. Expected early next year is identification of the preferred south-of-the-lake routing and development of a strategy for releasing the study.

During Q&A, Hoeffner said that the new head of Office of Passenger Transportation, Jean Ruestman, will be having

conversations about the new Detroit station in the coming week. Asked about the MiTrain commuter cars, he stated they present logistical problems and are not appropriate for use on Michigan intercity routes.

Paul Larouche, our keynote speaker, was introduced by Tom Pumort. The two were colleagues when both worked for Bombardier Transportation and have maintained their friendship in retirement. Larouche noted he would speak about the process of producing new equipment, in contrast to the two previous speakers who spoke of the exigencies of dealing with existing equipment.

He stepped us through the process of developing a new product from identifying a need and assessing what the company's product portfolio can offer, to choosing the right technology, working with consultants, assessing the appropriateness of various coach and consist designs, and seeking FRA approval for alternative designs. Some of the pitfalls to be avoided: pseudo experts, builders that can't actually deliver, ignoring the time required for R&D, failure to think long term, or adopting a technology that is not scalable.

As a guide to making informed procurement decisions, Larouche spoke of a study by Stephen Richardson and published by the Transportation Research Board: *Economics of Commuter Rail Alternatives: Comparative Cost Perspective* trrjournalonline.trb.org/doi/pdf/10.3141/1887-12.

As an example, multiple-unit equipment, which can accelerate faster and go up steeper hills, is appropriate in situations requiring fewer than 400 seats and greater frequencies. Locomotive-hauled equipment offers greater flexibility (can add cars to increase capacity) and is simpler to maintain.

Larouche cites a breakthrough with the 2011 publication by the Federal Railroad Administration of *Technical Criteria and Procedures for Evaluating the Crashworthiness and Occupant Protection Performance of Alternately Designed Passenger Rail Equipment for Use in Tier I Service*, available at fra.dot.gov/Elib/Document/90. With this publication, FRA acknowledged that crash energy management standards

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On the day before Thanksgiving in 2017, 4,652 Michiganders rode Michigan trains "over the river and through the woods . . ."



It would have taken thirty-one 149-passenger Boeing 737s to carry these people — and those planes weren't flying to most of the places those people wanted to go!



Support Michigan Association
of Railroad Passengers.
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AmazonSmile, 0.5% of your
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from Europe showed that alternative design standards can assure safety in shared rights-of-way, thus opening a “breach in the wall” that has stymied use of lighter weight equipment in the U.S. [See story to the right]

Larouche closed with thoughts on the current interest, in both the U.S. and Canada, with High-Speed Rail (HSR), remarking that (1) the business case for HSR can be enhanced by finding and developing synergies with competing modes, and (2) when crossing international borders, significant trip time reductions require establishment of pre-clearance procedures such as used by the airlines. In conclusion, he quipped that he has worked on three projects based on the Alstom model (think French TGV), but “My record is unblemished by success”, as none of the three gained the franchises needed to proceed.

In other business, MARP’s financial report through 31 October shows receipts approximately \$1,000 ahead of expenditures. The checking account balance is \$11,445. Proceeds of the Michigan Environmental Council grant are held in a savings account. That balance is \$6,738. The Vanguard investment fund currently stands at \$25,778.

A moment of silence was observed for long-time member James E. “Jim” Hinkins who passed away on 26 September.

MARP’s current membership stands at 218, with 16 new members in 2018. Plans are to have five membership meetings in different areas of the state in 2019 in addition to the annual meeting.

MARP’s Facebook page has over 1,100 followers. A recent post about a study to look at restoring train service between Toledo and Detroit drew 500 viewers within 24 hours!

Hometown Christmas at Historic Niles Depot

The Four Flags Garden Club will host its 27th Annual Hometown Christmas celebration at the **Historic Niles Depot** on Saturday, December 1, from 5-6 p.m. The depot has been decorated inside and out by club members to welcome train passengers during the holiday season. Everyone is invited to this free event. Visit the Depot to enjoy the beautiful holiday decorations, visit with Santa,

(NILES continues at right)

The Wall Comes Down

MARP members attending the recent Annual Meeting in Dearborn heard Paul Larouche, the keynote speaker, refer to a **2011 FRA document** that opened a “breach in the wall” of federal regulations that have stymied the introduction in the U.S. of modern train designs in use around the world.

That “wall” has now come down. On 20 November, the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) issued a final rule “establishing modern, performance-based safety standards for railroad passenger equipment”. The news release states that this action “reinforces FRA’s commitment to safety while representing one of the most significant enhancements to the nation’s passenger rail design standards in a century”.

The rule paves the way for U.S. high-speed passenger trains to safely travel as fast as 220 miles per hour (mph). The final rule defines a new category of high-speed rail operations and makes it possible for high-speed rail to utilize existing infrastructure. The new **Tier III passenger trains** will operate over shared track at conventional speeds, and as fast as 220 mph in areas with exclusive rights-of-way and without grade crossings.

The final rule continues to define **Tier I trains** as those operating in shared rights-of-way at speeds up to 125 mph. It also allows “state-of-the-art” alternative designs for equipment operating at those conventional speeds. **Tier II trains** are defined as those traveling 125-160 mph, an increase from the previous 150 mph limit.

Passenger train manufacturers across the globe have utilized innovative design and testing techniques for years, incorporating features such as crash energy management.

Under FRA’s previous passenger equipment regulations, **TEXRail**, as an example, had to petition FRA for a waiver to use the Fast Light Intercity- and Regional Train (FLIRT) diesel multiple-unit train, developed by Stadler, on the 27-mile line **scheduled to open in January 2019** between downtown Fort Worth and DFW International Airport.

(NILES continued)

join in the caroling and indulge in some homemade cookies and candy. Two lucky people will win round trip tickets from Niles to Chicago, compliments of Amtrak. At 6 p.m., the Depot Christmas lights will be turned on.



Amtrak is listed among the top ten **2019 Military Friendly® Employers** in the government/non-profit sector as determined by *G.I. Jobs* magazine in its most recent survey.

View from elsewhere . . .

"Here's some great news to kick off the holiday season: The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has finalized new regulations that will make it easier and more affordable to bring modern train designs to the United States. They also make it possible for high-speed trains to use conventional tracks for part of their journey, which is critical to launching and expanding a high-speed network."

—Midwest High Speed Rail Association Blog, reacting to FRA announcement of new regulations designed to allow stronger, lighter and safer modern train design.

"These new regulations were made possible by a wealth of FRA research, reinforcing our unwavering commitment to safety. FRA's safety experts solicited input from industry stakeholders at numerous levels and took those ideas to develop standards supporting a new era in public transportation."

—Ronald Batory, Federal Railroad Administration, on 20 November announcing **final rule on high-speed rail equipment** standards.



"Our Hearts Are Filled With Joy"

An entire town was smiling when Halloween trick-or-treating was interrupted by the sound of a train horn—a sound the people of Churchill, Manitoba, had not heard in over a year. "It's so exciting, awesome feeling, that I could just cry, you know, joy," said resident Georgina Oman. "It means we're alive. We'll be able to go on a train, take our grandkids to see their other grandparents, which they haven't seen in 2½ years." New ownership of the line has brought hope to this isolated Hudson Bay community. Read more [here](#) and [here](#) and be sure to scroll down both pages to watch the videos.



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MARP, INC
PO BOX 1368
Okemos, MI 48805-1368

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