ON TRACK
The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
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marprail@yahoo.com

New Year’s Resolutions

By many measures, Michigan is poised to make significant improvements in passenger train services in the year ahead and beyond. The State and Amtrak own and control virtually all of the Michigan Line from the Indiana border to Detroit. Three seasons of extensive track and signal work have improved reliability and speeds on the route. The new cleaner, more energy efficient and reliable Charger SC-44 locomotives (see page 4) will be operating on all three Michigan routes in the next few months. New coaches, modeled on Florida’s Brightline equipment, are under construction at Siemens’ plant in Sacramento with delivery expected to begin in 2020 and be completed by 2023. While a dedicated route for passenger trains south-of-the-lake has yet to be identified (at MARP’s November meeting, Tim Hoeffner said he expects this early in 2019), Michigan is able to use the data developed by the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor study when seeking funding for projects. The FRA-led Midwest Regional Rail Plan Study has identified the Chicago-Detroit route as one of four “pillar corridors” that will realize a positive operating recovery ratio.

That said, there are challenges. We have yet to see any expansion of services. Where is the early eastbound train to the Detroit Metro area? Where is the second frequency for the Pere Marquette that would draw more Chicago-land visitors and commuters to our sunset coast? For that matter, where is the second daily round trip for the Blue Water? New and upgraded stations throughout the state have enhanced the image of train travel, but the installation of station caretakers, while extending lobby open hours, will in no way make up for the elimination of ticket agents. A robust program of working with towns and cities to establish station volunteer programs is needed. MARP must monitor the pilot program that has started in Niles and be ready and willing to work with Amtrak, MDOT and Rail Passengers Association (RPA) to expand the program statewide.

Michigan has a new Governor and a number of new faces representing us in the state legislature and in Washington DC. This is the year in which the multi-year Surface Transportation bill is up for renegotiation and renewal. As always, it is up to us, as citizens and advocates, to help our decision-makers find the will to invest in a strong, balanced, energy efficient and safe transportation system that meets the needs of all citizens.

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

MARP Member Meeting
Saturday, January 26
10:00 am – Noon
Historic Grand Trunk Depot
(Clinton Northern Railway Museum)
107 East Railroad St., St. Johns MI 48879
Map & Directions

Nick Little, Director of the Center for Railway Research and Education at Michigan State University will talk about the future of passenger trains in our state and the nation. Questions? Check the website marp.org. Or email marprail@yahoo.com.
The Pere Marquette is Alive and Well

Passenger train advocates in Michigan were alarmed to read in the recent Rail Passengers Association Hotline #1098 of a study that proposes termination of the Pere Marquette. Nothing could be further from the truth.

RPA’s first error was to identify the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study as a Minnesota organization. In reality the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study, referred to as TwinCATS, is a Southwest Michigan planning body.

The Hotline piece was based on an article that appeared in The Herald-Palladium (South Bend IN) on December 27 reporting on actions being taken by TwinCATS to reaffirm support for service on the Pere Marquette route.

The Herald Palladium article makes reference to the 2004 Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRRI) and the recent FRA-led Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study (MRRPS)—the final report is still pending—neither of which includes the Pere Marquette route on maps envisioning a future Midwest regional system. But—this is important—neither is any reference made to “decommissioning” or “mothballing” the service as the reporter states. (A little reportorial hyperbole, perhaps?)

While the Pere Marquette may not appear as a line on a regional system map, the MRRPS process clearly recognizes that other “corridors of interest” will be identified and advanced by the individual states. To the best of anyone’s knowledge, the state of Michigan remains committed to the Pere Marquette whose operation, since its inception in 1984, has been funded by the state and seen as integral to our state’s passenger system.

At the same time, Ryan Fellows, an associate planner with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, cautions that “in the competition for funding the Pere Marquette could lose if existing stakeholders do not lead the Pere Marquette into a more efficient, reliable and safe future… Pere Marquette stakeholders need to clearly state that passenger rail is important.”

To that end, resolutions of support are being sought from communities and organizations in SW Michigan. MARP’s executive committee has endorsed a resolution of support for continued operation of the Pere Marquette as well as a resolution supporting a study to gauge the feasibility of connecting the CSX tracks, on which the Pere Marquette runs, to the Amtrak-owned Michigan Line at New Buffalo. This would give the Pere Marquette access to the 110-mph segment between New Buffalo and Porter IN.

Last year the Pere Marquette served 95,540 passengers in Grand Rapids, Holland, Bangor and St. Joseph. Ridership has risen 4.4% and 2.2% in the 2017 and 2018, respectively, with ticket revenues of $3.2 million in 2017 and $3.3 million in 2018. See the next page for analysis of Midwest ridership 2008-2018.

MARP January Membership Meeting

You won’t want to miss MARP’s first meeting of 2019. Nick Little, Director of the Center for Railway Research and Education at MSU, will present Dream with Me: The future of passenger rail in Michigan. There will be ample time for discussion and exchange of ideas. The meeting will be held on Saturday, January 26, 10 AM to Noon, at the former Grand Trunk Depot, 107 E. Railroad Street, St. Johns MI 48879. We will also have a tour of the depot and the vintage rail cars being restored by volunteers led by Jenny and Gary McCampbell. Visit clintonnorthernrailway.org.

Tell MDOT You Want More Trains

The Michigan Department of Transportation has begun a 24-month process to develop the new State Long-Range Transportation Plan (SLRTP). The plan, dubbed Michigan Mobility 2045, will be a comprehensive plan incorporating all modes, including freight and passenger rail, which were previously considered separately.

The previously released Public Participation Plan indicates that much of the public input will be gathered through telephone town halls, online surveys and targeted outreach to stakeholder groups. MARP is specifically mentioned as one of the numerous stakeholder groups scheduled to be contacted “directly and more than once”—see page 11(9).

It is important that MARP members chime in early in the process to make their views known. PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES NOW to complete this interactive survey. It is user-friendly and fun to do!

MDOT has committed to making staff available for presentations to community groups and attendance at standing meetings. A “meeting-in-a-box” has been developed to help in setting up such gatherings. Perhaps your church, school, or community group would like to host a presentation. Contact MDOT’s Public Involvement Officer, Anita Richardson at richardsona13@michigan.gov.
State-Supported Routes in the Midwest Show Healthy Growth Over Ten Years

An analysis by the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) shows that ridership on the nine state-supported routes in the region increased by 9% over the last decade while revenues rose by a whopping 33%. Leading the pack in passenger numbers was the Blue Water route with an increase of 36%, outpacing the Chicago to St. Louis Lincoln service (up 23%), the Chicago to Milwaukee Hiawatha (up 13%) and the Missouri River Runner (up 12%). Michigan's Wolverine was up by 2% despite the disruption of 3 seasons of extensive track work, while the other routes (Pere Marquette, Illini/Saluki, Illinois Zephyr/Cur Sandburg and Hoosier State) experienced declines of 6% to 14%. After losing riders in the period 2013-2016, the Pere Marquette showed an increase of 4.4% in 2017 (not shown on the chart below) and 2.2% in 2018.

Year-over-year, the Wolverine posted a ridership gain of 5.4% in 2018. Overall, Michigan had the highest growth rate among the Midwest state-supported services at 3.4% (as per Amtrak's Joe Shacter speaking at MARP’s annual meeting last November).

On the revenue side, the Blue Water (up 58%) was second only to the Missouri River Runner (up 69%) over the decade. Year-over-year, the Wolverine led with an 8.9% increase in 2018. The Pere Marquette (up 3.7%) matched the pace of the Illinois routes and the Hiawatha in 2018. The Blue Water slowed to 0.5%, while the remaining Midwest routes showed declines of 5%-6%.

### Ridership on Corridor (State-Supported Passenger Rail Service in the Midwest F\'Y 08 to FY 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Daily Round Trips</th>
<th>10-Year Growth (FY08 to FY18)*</th>
<th>One-Year Growth (FY17 to FY18)</th>
<th>Average Annual Growth (FY08 to FY18)*</th>
<th>Ridership FY18</th>
<th>Ridership FY17</th>
<th>Ridership FY08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-St. Louis  Lincoln service</td>
<td>4 daily</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>586,166</td>
<td>590,497</td>
<td>476,427</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas City-St. Louis  Missouri River Runner</td>
<td>2 daily</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>169,471</td>
<td>173,840</td>
<td>151,690</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Milwaukee  Hiawatha service</td>
<td>7 daily</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>844,396</td>
<td>829,109</td>
<td>749,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac, MI  Wolverine service</td>
<td>3 daily</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>483,670</td>
<td>459,106</td>
<td>472,393</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Grand Rapids, MI  Pere Marquette service</td>
<td>1 daily</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>95,540</td>
<td>93,449</td>
<td>111,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Port Huron, MI  Blue Water service</td>
<td>1 daily</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>185,020</td>
<td>186,282</td>
<td>136,538</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Carbondale IL  Illini &amp; Saluki services</td>
<td>2 daily</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td>-2.2%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>245,876</td>
<td>251,384</td>
<td>271,082</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Quincy, IL  Illinois Zephyr &amp; Carl Sandburg</td>
<td>2 daily</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>-6.1%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>191,612</td>
<td>204,148</td>
<td>202,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Indianapolis  Hoosier State service</td>
<td>4/week</td>
<td>-12%</td>
<td>-5.5%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>27,876</td>
<td>29,504</td>
<td>31,774</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Amtrak
*Ridership totals, average annual growth and ten-year growth compiled by Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission

### Ticket Revenue on Corridor (State-Supported) Passenger Rail Service in the Midwest FY 08 to FY 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>10-Year Growth FY 08 to FY18*</th>
<th>One-Year Growth FY 17 to FY18</th>
<th>Ticket Revenue FY 18</th>
<th>Ticket Revenue FY 17</th>
<th>Ticket Revenue FY 08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-St. Louis  Lincoln</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>$15,955,169</td>
<td>$15,364,005</td>
<td>$11,288,034</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas City-St. Louis  Missouri River Runner</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>$5,603,684</td>
<td>$5,441,926</td>
<td>$3,311,182</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Milwaukee  Hiawatha</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>$19,311,543</td>
<td>$18,604,160</td>
<td>$13,138,765</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac, MI  Wolverine</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>$22,222,989</td>
<td>$20,408,654</td>
<td>$16,243,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Grand Rapids, MI  Pere Marquette</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>$3,297,327</td>
<td>$3,178,965</td>
<td>$2,975,391</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Port Huron, MI  Blue Water</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>$6,574,007</td>
<td>$6,541,018</td>
<td>$4,158,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Carbondale, IL  Illini &amp; Saluki</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-5.5%</td>
<td>$6,742,827</td>
<td>$7,138,003</td>
<td>$7,732,413</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago-Quincy, IL  IL Zephyr &amp; Carl Sandburg</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
<td>$5,024,948</td>
<td>$5,288,390</td>
<td>$4,979,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Indianapolis  Hoosier State</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>-6.0%</td>
<td>$914,344</td>
<td>$973,216</td>
<td>$681,685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Amtrak
*Revenue totals and ten-year growth compiled by Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission
Some states make a big deal about new equipment . . .

With assorted dignitaries on hand, a flurry of biodegradable confetti and a pair of oversized scissors, the state of California cut the ribbon on October 1, 2018, to celebrate the arrival of the new Siemens Charger SC-44 locomotives. Fourteen Chargers are being put into service on the Pacific Surfliner route in Southern California, replacing 20-year old F59-400 series locomotives that will be acquired for service on Chicago’s Metra. The 351-mile Surfliner route hugs the coastline, serving 27 stations between San Diego and San Luis Obispo with 24 daily trains. Carrying nearly 3 million passengers annually, this is the busiest state-supported route in the country.

Photographer Carl Morrison was on hand for the festivities and was given an exclusive tour of the new locomotive. If you’ve ever wondered just how big the 16-cylinder, 4,400 hp Cummins engine—built in Seymour IN—that powers the locomotive is, you’ll enjoy Mr. Morrison’s photo essay. Included in the essay are a set of fact sheets produced by Siemens, one of which touts the fact that the Siemens locomotive is Buy-America compliant. A Michigan firm is supplying cooling units for the new locomotives—one of several firms across the country providing various components. Also noteworthy is that the Siemens factory, located in Sacramento CA, is powered by 80% renewable energy. The Charger SC-44 is 16% more fuel efficient than current locomotives in use on the Surfliner, consuming three times less fuel than comparable gallons per passenger in an automobile with two occupants. It is also quieter and cleaner.

If you missed the 2019 edition of Beer Week Kalamazoo, no need for despair. The Kalamazoo Public Library has brewed another limited-edition release of Overdue Brew, with activities continuing until the end of February. What better excuse to hop on the train for a visit to Kalamazoo where there’s always lots to do?

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