



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

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Issue # 87

January 2019

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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2019 MEETINGS

- 26 January** – Member Meeting
St. Johns
- 12 February** – Executive Committee
- 12 March** – Executive Committee
- 6 April** – Member Meeting
Detroit Metro Region Location TBA
- 14 May** – Executive Committee
- 22 June** – Member Meeting
Central Region Location TBA
- 9 July** – Executive Committee
- 7-9 August** – Michigan Rail Conference
Michigan State University
- 14 September** – 46th Annual Meeting
- 8 October** – Executive Committee
- 9 November** – Member Meeting
West Region Location TBA
- 10 December** – Executive Committee

Visit www.marp.org
Email 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.



photo by Elaine Twichell

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 (MRRRI) 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!

Take the survey
[CLICK HERE TO BEGIN](#)

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.

The State of
Detroit Transit:
TRU's 2019
Annual Meeting

January 31, 2019 • 6 PM
TechTown Detroit



[Details Here!](#)

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/Carl 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) 10-Year Growth at 9 Percent

Route	Daily Round Trips	10-Year Growth (FY08 to FY18)*	One-Year Growth (FY17 to FY18)	Average Annual Growth (FY08 to FY18)*	Ridership FY18	Ridership FY17	Ridership FY08
Chicago-St. Louis <i>Lincoln</i> service	4 daily	23%	-0.7%	2%	586,166	590,497	476,427
Kansas City-St. Louis <i>Missouri River Runner</i>	2 daily	12%	-2.5%	1%	169,471	173,840	151,690
Chicago-Milwaukee <i>Hiawatha</i> service	7 daily	13%	1.8%	1%	844,396	829,109	749,659
Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac, MI <i>Wolverine</i> service	3 daily	2%	5.4%	0%	483,670	459,106	472,393
Chicago-Grand Rapids, MI <i>Pere Marquette</i> service	1 daily	-14%	2.2%	-1%	95,540	93,449	111,716
Chicago-Port Huron, MI <i>Blue Water</i> service	1 daily	36%	-0.7%	4%	185,020	186,282	136,538
Chicago-Carbondale IL <i>Illini & Saluki</i> services	2 daily	-9%	-2.2%	-1%	245,876	251,384	271,082
Chicago-Quincy, IL <i>Illinois Zephyr & Carl Sandburg</i>	2 daily	-6%	-6.1%	-1%	191,612	204,148	202,814
Chicago-Indianapolis <i>Hoosier State</i> service	4/week	-12%	-5.5%	-1%	27,876	29,504	31,774
Midwest Corridor Service Ridership Totals*	n/a	9%	0.4%	1%	2,829,627	2,817,319	2,604,093

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 10-Year Growth at 33 Percent

Route	10-Year Growth FY 08 to FY18*	One-Year Growth FY 17 to FY 18	Ticket Revenue FY 18	Ticket Revenue FY 17	Ticket Revenue FY 08
Chicago-St. Louis <i>Lincoln</i>	41%	3.8%	\$15,955,169	\$15,364,005	\$11,288,034
Kansas City-St. Louis <i>Missouri River Runner</i>	69%	3.0%	\$5,603,684	\$5,441,926	\$3,311,182
Chicago-Milwaukee <i>Hiawatha</i>	47%	3.8%	\$19,311,543	\$18,604,160	\$13,138,765
Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac, MI <i>Wolverine</i>	37%	8.9%	\$22,222,989	\$20,408,654	\$16,243,510
Chicago-Grand Rapids, MI <i>Pere Marquette</i>	11%	3.7%	\$3,297,327	\$3,178,965	\$2,975,391
Chicago-Port Huron, MI <i>Blue Water</i>	58%	0.5%	\$6,574,007	\$6,541,018	\$4,158,742
Chicago-Carbondale, IL <i>Illini & Saluki</i>	-13%	-5.5%	\$6,742,827	\$7,138,003	\$7,732,413
Chicago-Quincy, IL <i>IL Zephyr & Carl Sandburg</i>	1%	-5.0%	\$5,024,948	\$5,288,390	\$4,979,726
Chicago-Indianapolis <i>Hoosier State</i>	34%	-6.0%	\$914,344	\$973,216	\$681,685
Midwest Corridor Service Revenue Totals*	33%	3.3%	\$85,646,838	\$82,938,336	\$64,509,448

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?

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS](#)



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