



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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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

2018-2020

Adam Tauno Williams	Chair
Open	Vice-Chair
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Mark Miller	Northern Region Chair
Warren Fritz	West Region Chair
Joshua Hamilton	East/Central Region Chair

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

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
Sanford Centennial Museum

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

MARP Meeting in Dearborn a Collaborative Affair

On April 6, MARP hosted a successful public meeting at the John D. Dingell Transit Center aka the Dearborn Amtrak Station. With the help of the City of Dearborn, the Dearborn Area League of Women Voters, Healthy Dearborn, Warriors on Wheels, and Transit Riders United, some 50 people showed up to hear about, and comment on, planning for our state's transportation network over the next three decades. Speakers included Brad Sharlow, Project Manager for the Michigan State Long-Range Transportation Plan (SLRTP) and Tim Hoeffner, Director MDOT Office of Rail.

A feature of this early stage in the planning process was an online survey (now closed) designed to gauge public perceptions and priorities. Meeting attendees were given the opportunity to complete a hard copy version of the survey and a lively discussion followed, sparked by ideas presented in the survey.

Not surprisingly, given the interests of the groups in attendance, there was broad agreement that the potholes need to be fixed, but the priority should be on expanding transportation options—transit, trains, better accommodations for bicyclists, wheelchair users, and pedestrians—and not on expanding the road system. Mr. Sharlow commented that the 6,000 surveys completed so far are sending the same message.

The need for better transit in SE Michigan was mentioned several times. MARP member Ren Farley cited the importance of transportation options for keeping young people in the state and for attracting talent to our urban areas.

Answering a question about near term plans for rail, Hoeffner responded, "Get PTC implemented and get the new locomotives operating on the *Blue Water* and *Wolverine* routes." He anticipates this "will resolve" in the next few months. Trains will be operating at higher speeds by the end of the year at which time discussion can begin on increasing frequencies. He sees the arrival of the new coaches as a game changer, but notes that Illinois, as the lead agency in the multi-state procurement, will get the first deliveries starting in 2020, and that we will still have a capacity problem.

(DEARBORN continues on page 3)

MARP Member Meetings in 2019

See inside for information about the June 22 meeting in Sanford MI. The 46th Annual Meeting is scheduled for September 14 and the final member meeting of the year will take place on November 9. Meeting details are posted on the [website](#) as plans are finalized.

Executive Committee conference calls take place at 7:00 pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. If you have issues for discussion or would like to join the conversation, send email to marprail@yahoo.com.



Dwight Phillips Named to MARP Executive Committee

In executive committee action on March 12, 2019, Dwight Phillips was appointed an At-Large Executive Committee member with responsibilities as coordinator of the Governmental/Public Affairs Committee. He fills the vacancy created by the resignation of John Langdon.

Although business responsibilities have kept Dwight away from MARP meetings over the last several years, he has been a member in good standing for many years. Since 2006, Dwight has represented Michigan on the Rail Passengers Association (aka NARP) Council of Representatives. As such, he serves as Great Lakes East Division Leader, responsible for coordinating the activities of the Council members from Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Michigan.

Dwight is a life-long resident of Detroit and traces his interest in trains to a childhood train trip to visit relatives in Georgia. He relates having been somewhat disinterested in the model train set he had received one Christmas. But he “was bitten” with a love of all things train

after the trip to Georgia. Not only did he get the train set out again, but he has become an ardent advocate for passenger trains as an important component of a balanced transportation system. He has traveled throughout the country by train, but has yet to add the *Adirondack* to Montreal and the *Sunset, Ltd.* to his collection of long distance trips.

Dwight retired recently as a partner in the law firm Phifer, Phillips & White, P.C., where he worked mostly with workman’s compensation cases. He earned his undergraduate degree in Political Science at the University of San Francisco and his law degree from the University of Michigan.

Dwight is on the board of directors of BIZ—Downtown Detroit Business Improvement Zone—a partnership among downtown property owners focused on keeping downtown clean, safe and beautiful. The “Ambassadors” program, in operation for about 5 years, is one of his favorite projects. The “Ambassadors”, attired in identifying jackets, are a visible presence on the street, greeting visitors and answering questions, as well as keeping the public space trash free. BIZ partners contribute funds to, among other things, plant and maintain flowers and greenery, thus making the downtown attractive and welcoming.

In his new role with MARP, Dwight looks forward to getting acquainted with officials at Amtrak and MDOT, as well as Michigan’s lawmakers in Lansing and Washington, D.C. During RPA’s recent “Day on the Hill” in D.C., he was gratified to find the Michigan Congressional delegation very receptive to the message of more and better trains. He learned that Rep. Jack Bergman, whose district encompasses all of the Upper Peninsula and the “tip of the mitt”, is very interested in the proposed Ann Arbor to Traverse City (A2TC) train service. Dwight will be having face-to-face meetings soon with Amtrak’s Derrick James and MDOT’s Al Johnson. He wants to encourage MARP members to get acquainted with their local lawmakers as an important strategy in influencing decision-making. Dwight would like to develop a focus on particular projects

(continued from previous column)

where our MARP advocacy might assist in moving them forward.

Asked what he likes to do in his leisure time, Dwight was reminded of his most recent train trip. Soon after his retirement, he and his wife, Julie, visited their daughter, Lauren, in Redwood City CA, after which Dwight boarded the train in Emeryville to travel all the way to Florida where he joined friends to enjoy spring training with the Tigers.

So . . . baseball in the warm months, model trains in the basement in the colder months. What could be better?

Heads Up for June Membership Meeting

On Saturday, June 22, MARP members will gather at the **Sanford Centennial Museum** in the village of Sanford, off U.S. Hwy 10 about nine miles northwest of Midland.

The **Sanford Centennial Museum** houses an extensive local history collection. There are nine historic buildings, including two schools, a general store, log cabin, township hall, church, train depot and train, all authentically restored and furnished. Inside the buildings, collections include vintage tools, implements from the logging days, political memorabilia, a dentist’s office, a saloon, toys, household goods, and much more. **The Museum Complex Map** gives a good idea of the richness of the site.

Located on the Tittabawassee River one mile off U.S. Hwy 10, near Sanford Lake and its beaches, and across from the **Pere Marquette Rail Trail**, Sanford offers enticements to making this an early season weekend getaway.

The meeting itself will be an opportunity for members to engage in brainstorming about MARP’s role in advancing rail projects in Michigan and actions that we may undertake.

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(DEARBORN continued from page 1)

Robert Patterson, chair of MARP's Detroit/Metro region made an important point concerning the 2020 census, a point that has a bearing on how and when the future transportation system gets built: Congress holds the purse strings. Michigan lost a Congressional seat in the 2010 census due to declining population, so it is important that everyone be counted in the upcoming census.

In June, MDOT and the consultants will be meeting with stakeholder groups. MARP is identified as one of the interest groups targeted for engagement throughout the process. To date, no one at MARP has received any communications regarding this process. See **Public and Stakeholder Participation Plan**, section 2.3.6.

You can find more information on the STLRP, more felicitously dubbed **Michigan Mobility 2045**, at the **website** where you will find information about how to submit comments and how to get on the mailing list to receive updates. A second round of public meetings will be held in the fall of this year, with a final round set for the fall of 2020 when the draft plan is out for comment.

A Day on the Hill

Larry Krieg and Dwight Phillips traveled to Washington, D.C. in April to attend the annual "Day on the Hill" organized each spring by the Rail Passengers' Association (aka NARP). During a very busy day, Larry and Dwight spoke with staff in nine of Michigan's fourteen Congressional offices and had face-to-face meetings with Senators Stabenow and Peters. They were encouraged by the favorable reception their message received.

Their message to our lawmakers focused on three main points: *(continues in next column)*

- long term, sustainable funding to enable strategic planning to meet growing demand;
- improvement in on-time-performance by reducing freight interference; and
- maintaining Amtrak's national network, an idea that appears to have support among the Michigan delegation and the Congress in general.

To make their case, RPA prepared several fact sheets that MARP members may find useful in their own advocacy:

- **Day on the Hill Handouts** (set of infographics on the benefits of passenger trains)
- **Ridership Statistics** (by route, state, and station)

RPA has also put online most of the **Meeting Presentations & Videos** delegates heard during the two-day event.

Members Urged to Promote RPA Travel Review

RPA's **Travel Review** may be completed via your cell phone at the end of your journey and will provide valuable feedback for Amtrak's use to "improve the customer experience".

During the recent "Day on the Hill" event, RPA's Carolyn Cokley presented an analysis of the 380 surveys completed in the first seven weeks. Her presentation can be viewed **here**.

To help in spreading the word, Ms. Cokley has created a "business card" to hand to fellow passengers. Click **here** to download and print cards to take with you on your next train trip.



www.rail.mtu.edu/MRC2019

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Early Registration Rates through May 31
Information & Registration at rail.mtu.edu/MRC2019

View from elsewhere . . .

“Public policy that supports growth, expansion, and modernization of the national rail network, which is basically the same now as it was when Amtrak was created in 1971. While much remains the same, Amtrak state-supported ridership has grown nearly 70% in the last 15 years. We need to modernize and expand to increase ridership and serve more customers, including underserved communities and major city pairs between 400 miles or less, and increase frequencies and/or improve schedules for existing routes.”

--Amtrak's **Fiscal Year 2020 Grant Request**. Creating quite a buzz were two items listed on page 41 under “New & Improved Corridors”: (1) Restoration of Detroit-Toronto Service, and (2) Heartland Flyer Extension to Newton, KS and Additional Frequency. While these are “aspirational” projects with no attached timeline or cost estimates, they are an indication of a focus on longer term planning.

“It will be different than the repetitive things we’ve done building on the Eisenhower legacy, which was a great legacy but it’s time to move on to more progressive things.”

--Chairman Peter DeFazio during a **March 13 hearing** of the House Committee on Transportation Infrastructure.



“Charger” on the Michigan Line

Clark Charnetski was on the scene when this Siemens SC-44 Charger came ‘round the bend just west of the Ann Arbor station on April 25 at 7:00pm. This was a first run to test the train control system recently installed along the line. Clark tells us the train makeup was Locomotive 4616 / Amcafe / three Viewliner baggage cars / Amcoach / Amcafe / Locomotive 4604. There will be more testing, but we should be seeing the new locomotives leading trains across Michigan in the not too distant future.



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