



*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

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Joshua Hamilton	Vice-Chair
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Open	Gov't/Public Affairs Coordinator
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Open	Northern Region Chair
Open	West Region Chair
Open	East/Central Region Chair

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

### 2020 MEETINGS

**22 February** – Member Meeting  
Dearborn Amtrak Station

**14 March** – Member Meeting  
TechTown in Detroit  
*(Cancelled due to COVID-19)*

**09 May** – Kalamazoo  
*(Cancelled due to COVID-19)*

**09 July**– Virtual Member Meeting  
via Zoom

**18 July** – Executive Committee  
Planning Session

**10 September** – Virtual Member Meeting  
Guest: Clark Harder  
Michigan Public Transit Assoc.

**17 October** – 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
via Zoom

**19 November** – Virtual Member Meeting  
Guest: TMACOG Passenger Rail Cmte.

**12 December** – Executive Committee  
Location TBA

Visit [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)  
Email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

## Is It the Beginning of the End for Long Distance Trains?

Spurred on by passenger train users nationwide, Congress included in the CARES Act \$1.02B in relief funding to keep trains running, albeit on reduced schedules, through September 30, the end of the fiscal year. As it became clear that the pandemic was not going away any time soon and that ridership levels may well remain 50% below last year's totals, Amtrak CEO William Flynn returned to Congress, requesting an additional \$1.475B for FY2021. At the same time, he announced plans to lay off 1 in 5 Amtrak workers and reduce service on most long-distance routes from daily to 3 times a week. This strategy is viewed by most observers as a grave threat to the continued existence of the National Network, despite Flynn's assurances—**during a recent interview with the Washington Post**—that “the long-distance network is an essential part of Amtrak's national network and it's a service we're fully committed to.”

The FY2021 transportation bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives substantially increases funding for Amtrak. Significantly, it also includes protections for workers and daily service. It is unclear whether the Senate will act, thus creating a situation with serious consequences for Amtrak services.

It is important to recognize that the threat to the long-distance trains is a threat to the entire system, a fact that may not be obvious to elected officials in areas not directly affected. This is where you, as an advocate, come in.

Rail Passengers Association (RPA, aka NARP) is asking for urgent action. Please contact Michigan **Sen. Gary Peters** and—if you live in an Amtrak-served community—ask your mayor and state legislators to do the same. Use the links on page 4 to find contact information for your state officials. You can also go to the **Rail Passengers' Action Center**, but consider personalizing the letter you find there—it will have greater impact.

Tell your story of how these cuts would affect you, but please also request that any increase in funding for Amtrak—while sorely needed to meet the challenges of the pandemic—only be granted contingent on:

- >> protecting workers from lay-offs, and
- >> preserving daily long-distance train service where it exists today

### MARP In-Person Meetings on Hold

Due to continued uncertainties regarding the COVID-19 crisis, your executive committee has decided to suspend face-to-face meetings for the remainder of 2020. Watch your email for details of the planned September 10 “virtual” meeting. In the meantime, we will do our best to keep you informed of passenger train news and events.

***Please stay safe and stay healthy!***



### Afternoon Snack Break: Congressman Seth Moulton on HSR

September 03, 2020  
4:00pm to 5:00pm ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)



### Brown Bag Lunch: Integrating ACE, Amtrak San Joaquins and HSR in the Central Valley

September 11, 2020  
2:00pm to 3:00pm ET

## Congressman Seth Moulton Proposes High Speed Rail to Rebuild the Economy

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA) has put forth a visionary plan to invest more than \$1 trillion over the next five years to build a high-speed rail network that would create more than 2.6 million jobs and make high-speed rail a competitive option for travel. Since arriving in Congress five years ago, Moulton has advocated for high-speed and commuter rail and recently helped secure more than \$1 billion for rail transportation in the coronavirus relief CARES Act.

In his 30-page [White Paper](#), Moulton calls for: investing \$41 billion annually in high-speed and higher-speed rail through federal grants, with incentives for \$38 billion or more in nonfederal funding; including economic benefits in the metrics used for transportation planning; creating funding flexibility and transit-oriented development incentives for nonfederal partners; and developing more comprehensive safety regulations and standards for high-speed rail to reduce costs and expedite development.

You will have a chance to hear Rep. Moulton talk about his plan during an "Afternoon Snack Break" sponsored by the High Speed Rail Alliance on September 3. *To register see the box at the upper left on this page.*

## Amtrak's Derrick James Answers Your Question

During MARP's July 9 Zoom meeting, several members asked why *Wolverine Train #352* rather than #354 was designated for the east bound return during this time when there is only a single daily round trip. Mr. James looked into the matter and supplied this information: "Prior demand for travel from the Chicago hub to Michigan destinations was strongest on #352. Granted, several connections from other trains were severed, but the connecting revenue was relatively small compared to direct travel demand from Chicago. A driving factor is likely travelers' desire to arrive on the east end at more reasonable times."

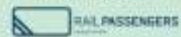
## Your Organization Needs You

MARP will be electing officers at the Annual Meeting in October. We are seeking candidates for the offices of Secretary, North Region Chair and West Region Chair. For more information about these positions or to put your hat in the ring, please email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com). Or, if you would like to recommend someone for one of these positions, please let us know at [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

Developing New Amtrak Corridors:  
Expanding the US Passenger Market

**SEPT 23RD**

2:30pm Eastern



### Rail Passengers Association Presents Webinar #5 | Developing New Corridors Wednesday, September 23, 2020 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm ET

Registration closes on Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER NOW!](#)

Ray Lang, Amtrak's Senior Director for National State Relations, will speak on plans for building out the National Network into underserved markets, providing an inside look at the conversations Amtrak is having with individual states hoping to bring passenger rail service to their region.

You'll also hear from Rail Passengers' Sean Jeans-Gail about the work done by the states and the Federal Railroad Administration to map out network expansions in the Southwest, the Southeast and the Midwest.

**You may submit your questions** about federal and state programs to expand passenger rail and the grassroots campaigns needed to make it happen. Please email Madi Butler at [mbutler@narprail.org](mailto:mbutler@narprail.org) by Fri, Sep 18<sup>th</sup>.

*Have you renewed your MARP membership?*

[CLICK HERE to pay online](#)

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



**VIRTUAL Midwest  
Rail Conference 2020**  
“Sustaining Midwest Rail”  
August 11-12, 2020

## 2020 Edition of the Michigan Rail Conference A Resounding Success

With 270 registrants and a stellar line-up of speakers representing a broad swath of the rail industry, the 2020 MRC | Midwest Virtual Rail Conference got off to a fast start with a plenary panel featuring Jim Mathews, President and CEO of Rail Passengers Association (aka NARP). Mathews was joined by Hilary Konczal (Chicago METRA) and Naryana Sundaram (American Public Transportation Association) in discussing how their agencies are coping with the coronavirus pandemic and how they plan for recovery. While the challenges are daunting and recovery will be slow, all three are optimistic about the future. Mathews, in particular, emphasized moving forward and “making things better for the traveling public as we have always done.” He made the important point that federal relief funding is “not just papering over a loss, it’s protecting an investment and preserving a national asset.” Sundaram mentioned a clever innovation to help “strap hangers” avoid touching surfaces: a loop they carry in their bag or brief case and hook on to the overhead rail while riding.

Challenges posed by the pandemic ran through many presentations, but the first breakout session featured three speakers who laid out service expansion projects currently moving forward. Arun Rao, Passenger Rail Mgr. at WisDOT, spoke of “planning for rebound” and outlined projects underway in his state: new equipment and **additional frequency for the Hiawatha**; a new station

platform at Milwaukee’s Mitchell Airport Station to allow boarding on either track; the **Muskego Yard Project** to route freight trains away from the Milwaukee Amtrak station; receipt of a grant to continue planning for a second *Empire Builder* to serve Twin Cities, Milwaukee and Chicago (**TCMC Project**). Scott Rogers, Chair of the **West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition**, spoke of efforts to establish a privately operated passenger rail service between Eau Claire WS and St. Paul MN. Michael Noland, President of the Northern Indiana Commuter Rail District, spoke of two projects—**West Lake extension** and **Double-Track Project**—underway as part of NICTD’s 20-year strategic plan to increase capacity, speed and frequency of South Shore Line service.

Joe McHugh, Amtrak VP for State-Supported Services Business Development, gave the keynote address to round out the first half-day session. He was introduced by Al Johnson, MDOT Office of Rail, who revealed that McHugh is retiring soon and looking forward to delving into the hundreds of books he has collected when visiting bookstores in his travels around the country. McHugh joined Amtrak in July of 1994 and said he has “seen some good times and some . . . ‘eerie’ times” over the years, musing that this is the last public address of his career. He likens the current situation to 911, which brought fundamental changes affecting everything we do today and “reshaping how we communicate, interact and protect one another.” He wonders if migration to cities may have less appeal in the future. He feels people will continue to value trains for leisure travel, but worries what the decline in business travel will mean for the *Capitol Corridor* and the *Acela* (for which new train sets are on order in anticipation of increased demand). McHugh’s concluding comments stressed the importance of citizen advocacy and said it is imperative that we “retain what we have and work to grow the service.” Watch for the September issue of ON TRACK for more on McHugh’s address.

On a panel addressing improvements in the passenger experience, MARP member Joshua Hamilton related his initiative to develop the volunteer station host program at the East Lansing station. The program has drawn praise from passengers—who appreciate the helpfulness of the volunteers—and has raised awareness of train service in the community and created a sense of ownership.

Hewing to a theme running throughout the conference, Mike McClellan, VP for Strategic Planning at Norfolk Southern, concluded the second half-day of the conference on an optimistic note. He views the industry as “well positioned for shared growth” and anticipates productivity gains through implementation of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR), automation, and next-generation railcar technology, all of which will allow the industry to remain competitive in the face of the potential threat of automated trucks. In response to a question about handling passenger trains, McClellan seeks a mechanism to find agreement on scheduling and stated, “We have an interest in running passenger trains on time.” Having previously mentioned “new found capacity,” he illustrated the point with the example of new passenger service in Virginia and added, “If you want to bring passenger trains, you need to bring money.”

Eighteen current and former MARP members attended the Conference. In addition to Joshua Hamilton’s presentation, active roles were assumed by Larry Kreig, who moderated one of the sessions, and Kay Chase, who served on the planning committee. As a sponsor, MARP had a visible presence on printed materials and the website. **CLICK HERE** to view the conference program. Scroll to the bottom of the page for the Sponsor Brochure and Speakers’ Bios. All sessions were recorded and will be posted at <https://rail-learning.mtu.edu>. The site requires you to create an account, but there is no fee to view the Rail Conference materials.

### View from elsewhere . . .

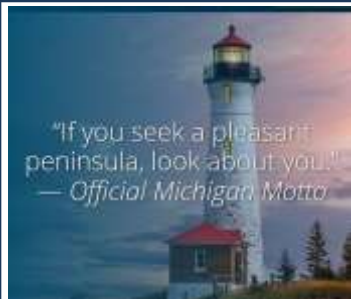
*“There is a pent-up demand yet to be realized because passenger trains, outside of major metropolitan areas, are so rare as to be essentially [invisible]. The perceived “freedom” of the highway has become less so, and the former “luxury” of air travel has been reduced to long security lines and cramped spaces. The time to add rail travel back into national transportation planning is now. How do we do that? First, let’s dispel a pernicious myth [that] ‘Passenger rail needs to be profitable.’ Why? We have no such expectation for highways! If airports were not built with local funding, air traffic control federally funded, and waterways provided by the Army Corps of Engineers, those modes would collapse as well! Passenger rail needs funding—not to compete with, but to augment and enhance highway and air travel. It is not fair to require passenger rail to be profitable while lavishing huge sums of public money on those other modes [and] having no such expectations of them.”*

--Richard Rudolph, **Rail Users Network (RUN)**, in a letter to Rep. Peter DeFazio, Chair of U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. [Read the letter here](#) for a reminder of why we advocate for passenger trains.



### New Coaches Arrive in the Midwest

The first of the 88 Siemens passenger coaches destined for use on state-supported routes in Michigan, Illinois, and Missouri arrived in the Midwest, as expected, in August. Testing will be carried out before the equipment is put into revenue service. Deliveries will continue through March 2023. Michigan anticipates that new coaches will be in service on all three routes by the end of 2023. The new coaches will accommodate bikes, have both coach and business class seating and a café car. Passengers can expect bright, modern interiors with large windows, wide aisles, restrooms with touchless controls, and full ADA accessibility throughout.



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**Sen. Gary Peters**

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**Find Your State Representative**