



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 2020-2022

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

2021 MEETINGS

28 January – Member Meeting
Virginia High Speed Rail

18 March – Member Meeting
Amtrak Plans for Ohio
Zoom at 5:00 PM

15 April – Member Meeting
Toledo Passenger Rail Committee
Zoom at 5:00 PM

Executive Committee
3rd Wednesday
of the Month

Fall Date TBA
48th Annual Meeting

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

COVID-Stimulus Bill Includes \$1.7 Billion for Amtrak

Within hours of passage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, **Amtrak announced in a news release** that the funding provided would allow the company to fully restore daily long-distance service, bring back 1,200 furloughed employees and continue progress on vital capital projects."

The legislation, approved by Congress on 10 March, provides \$1.7 billion in relief funding for Amtrak, which has seen ridership and revenue drop precipitously during the pandemic. It also mandates that daily service be restored within 90 days of passage of the bill. *(See page 3 for details of the roll out of daily service.)*

A provision in the bill directs a portion of the Amtrak funding to state-supported routes, such as Michigan's three services, to compensate for lost ticket revenue. MARP has learned that the MDOT Office of Rail is assessing when this aid may allow the return of full *Wolverine* service, which has been reduced to one daily round trip since last spring. The *Blue Water* has operated throughout the pandemic. *Pere Marquette* service was suspended for a short time only last spring.

Also included in the stimulus package is \$30.5 billion for public transit and commuter rail agencies across the country to mitigate major decreases in ridership and fare revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please Thank Your Member of Congress

While the COVID-relief bill passed with no Republican votes, the mandate that Amtrak resume daily long-distance train services and recall employees furloughed in response to the pandemic had strong bipartisan support. Please let your member of Congress know that you appreciate their support for passenger trains and transit. Contact your two Senators, **Sen. Debbie Stabenow** and **Sen. Gary Peters**. Then **CLICK HERE to find your U.S. Representative**. Send an email or call the Congressional switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to speak with your representative. Tell them that you are a constituent, that you vote, and why their support for passenger rail is important to you and to our state. Then let us know what response you get. Send email to marprail@yahoo.org.

MARP 2021 Meeting Schedule

Due to the continuing COVID-19 crisis, MARP has suspended in-person meetings indefinitely. We urge you to **get acquainted with Zoom** as meetings will be held using this platform. The Executive Committee will continue to meet via Zoom on the third Wednesday of each month. If you have ideas to contribute, questions or concerns, please send them to us at marprail@yahoo.com. If you would like to participate in the meetings, please contact MARP Chair John Guidinger at jhguidinger1@yahoo.com.



High Speed Rail Alliance and Rail Passengers Team Up for Special Webinar

New DATE of March 30

(If you have already registered for the original date of March 24th, you DO NOT need to re-register)

Plan to **tune in on Tuesday, March 30th at 2:00 PM Eastern Time** for a presentation and discussion of high-speed rail, on-going service and projects, and what it all means for the future of passenger rail in the United States. Special guests include Congressman Seth Moulton (MA-6); Brian Kelly, CEO of the California High-Speed Rail Authority; and Carlos Aguilar, President & CEO of Texas Central.

If you have not previously registered for this event, please **CLICK HERE to REGISTER NOW**. Registration closes Friday, March 26th. The Zoom link will be sent to you the day before the event.

You may view this and all past webinars at railpassengers.org/webinars

MDOT Accelerated Rail Project Wins Prestigious Engineering Award

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Quandel Consultants recently won the top **Engineering Eminent Conceptor Award** from the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC/M) of Michigan for their work on the Accelerated Rail Project. The ACEC/M recognizes worthy Michigan engineering and surveying projects from the past year, as well as engineering professionals who have significantly contributed to the profession. The award was announced at the organization's **annual awards gala** held virtually this year on 26 February.

The project encompassed the MDOT-owned portion of the Chicago to Detroit/Pontiac passenger rail corridor between Kalamazoo and Dearborn. Infrastructure improvements included replacing track, modifying curves for higher speeds, improving grade crossings, replacing bridges, implementing positive train control (PTC) and other safety improvements. Project management services provided by Quandel Consultants included planning, implementing, and monitoring the series of projects that went into the buildout of the corridor.

Accepting the award were Rob Lippert, MDOT rail infrastructure manager and Daniel Schulte, Quandel Consultants senior director of engineering. Lippert gave a shout out to Tim Hoeffner "for his vision to embark on this project a decade ago." Schulte added, "Michigan is a national leader in the support of passenger rail service and this project epitomizes what great leadership and a vision can achieve in a transportation mode that doesn't often grab headlines." He expressed his pleasure in working with Rob Lippert, Tim Hoeffner, Shaun Bates, Ryan Hoensheid, Mike DeBoer, Magen Cole and Ryan Weiss "through thick and thin over the past seven years."

The event was recorded and may be viewed **HERE**. The MDOT/Quandel award was the concluding event of the day at 1:10:35 on the video.

The project began in 2011 when MDOT received funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the federal stimulus program designed to reinvigorate the economy and bring passenger rail back as a prominent form of surface transportation. Neither the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) nor MDOT had ever undertaken a project like this, so the management team was starting from scratch on many aspects of delivering a project of this magnitude.

High Speed Rail Alliance



Brown Bag Lunch:
Brightline's Vision for
Train Travel

March 26, 2021
12:00 CT, 13:00 ET
REGISTER HERE



Brown Bag Lunch:
FOGTEC Fire
Protection & Monorail
Technology

APRIL 09, 2021
12:00 CT, 13:00 ET
REGISTER HERE

Have you renewed your MARP membership?

CLICK HERE to pay online

Or download a mail-in form HERE



**Peter Anastor
Named
Office of Rail
Director**

The Michigan Department of Transportation announced on 11 January 2021 **the selection of Peter Anastor** as Director of the Office of Rail. Having more than 25 years of state service, Anastor was most recently with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). He began his career at the State Budget Office in 1995 after graduating from Michigan State University's James Madison College with a B.A. in public affairs and from Syracuse University's Maxwell School with a Master of Public Administration.

Anastor later moved to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to focus on policy, community and economic development. In addition, he played a significant role in the state's logistic and supply chain strategy and creation of the Logistics and Supply Chain Commission. These efforts included working with infrastructure partners, including Class I and short line railroads, to identify and leverage Michigan's logistics and supply chain assets to further economic development opportunities. In 2015, he moved over to MDARD to focus on promoting and assisting the *(continues at right)*

growth of food and agriculture companies, including transportation issues and solutions.

On assuming the role of Director on January 25 of this year, Anastor said, "I look forward to continuing the work MDOT is doing in enhancing our passenger rail infrastructure, developing freight economic opportunities, and improving grade crossing safety."

Responsibilities of the Office of Rail include intercity passenger rail operations, grade crossing funding programs, rail grade separation, safety oversight of light rail systems, state-owned rail line management, rail-related economic development programs and international border crossings.

Tim Hoeffner stepped down as head of the Office of Rail in January of 2020. During his 39 years at MDOT he oversaw significant changes in the delivery and funding of passenger rail services in the state, perhaps most importantly the acquisition of the rail corridor between Kalamazoo and Dearborn and its development to enable higher speed operations.

Al Johnson served as interim Director until his retirement last June.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The **Rail Passengers' Annual Day on the Hill** is scheduled for April 18-20 and will be held virtually this year thus giving all of us a rare opportunity to participate at a fraction of the cost of a trip to the Capitol. Three days of activities include Board and Council business meetings, legislative updates, advocacy skills building and virtual meetings with members of Congress. Mark your calendars and **check back with RPA** for more information and to register for the event.

Amtrak Announces Resumption of Daily Service on Long Distance Trains

Funding made available in the **American Rescue Plan Act** will allow Amtrak to restore full daily service on the twelve routes that were reduced to thrice-weekly service last fall due to the pandemic. Amtrak has announced that service will be phased in beginning on May 24 with the *California Zephyr*, *Coast Starlight*, *Empire Builder* and *Texas Eagle*. The *Capitol Limited*, *City of New Orleans*, *Lake Shore Limited* and *Southwest Chief* will follow on May 31. Lastly, the *Crescent*, *Palmetto*, *Silver Meteor* and *Silver Star* will resume daily services on June 7.

May 24	May 31	June 7
<i>California Zephyr</i> (Chicago – Omaha – Denver – Salt Lake City – San Francisco)	<i>Capitol Limited</i> (Washington DC – Pittsburgh – Cleveland – Chicago)	<i>Crescent</i> (New York – Washington DC – Atlanta – New Orleans)
<i>Coast Starlight</i> (Seattle – Portland – Sacramento – Oakland – Los Angeles)	<i>City of New Orleans</i> (Chicago – Memphis – Jackson – New Orleans)	<i>Palmetto</i> (New York – Washington DC – Charleston – Savannah)
<i>Empire Builder</i> (Chicago – St. Paul – Minneapolis – Spokane – Portland/Seattle)	<i>Lake Shore Limited</i> (New York/Boston – Albany – Buffalo – Chicago)	<i>Silver Meteor</i> (New York – Savannah – Jacksonville – Orlando – Miami)
<i>Texas Eagle</i> (Chicago – St. Louis – Dallas – San Antonio – Los Angeles)	<i>Southwest Chief</i> (Chicago – Kansas City – Albuquerque – Los Angeles)	<i>Silver Star</i> (New York – Raleigh – Jacksonville – Orlando – Tampa – Miami)
Destinations listed above do not represent an exhaustive list of all route stops		

The most up-to-date schedules are available when booking your trip on **Amtrak.com** and in the **mobile app**.

Go to **amtrak.com/timetables** to find timetables for the long-distance routes now operating on tri-weekly schedules.

Trains of interest to Michiganders will continue to depart Chicago as follows until daily service is resumed:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Through May 23:
<i>California Zephyr MonWedSat</i> | Through May 30:
<i>Capitol Limited MonThuSat</i> |
| <i>Empire Builder MonThuSat</i> | <i>City of New Orleans MonThuSat</i> |
| <i>Texas Eagle TueFriSat</i> | <i>Lake Shore Limited MonThuSat</i> |
| | <i>Southwest Chief MonThuSat</i> |

View from elsewhere . . .

"This critical funding will benefit the entire Amtrak network, our state and commuter partners, customers and employees. With this support, we can restore daily long-distance service, bring back furloughed employees . . . and continue our progress on vital capital projects. We will work closely with Congress and the Biden Administration on next steps for fund-ing to support Amtrak's long-term growth . . . options include expanding the Amtrak network through new corridor routes that will create thousands of new jobs, reducing our nation's carbon footprint, and helping the economy recover and flourish in the years ahead."

--Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn in a statement released following passage of the American Rescue Plan that provides \$1.7 million COVID-related emergency funding for Amtrak. A subsequent news release [expanded on Amtrak's plans for continued investment in long distance services.](#)

"Reimagined for the twenty-first century—and funded properly—modern train and transit systems will not only transform the ways we move around. They'll transport us to a much better place."

Recommended reading is this blog by Rick Harnish [A 10-point reality check for the Cato Institute.](#) Download the pdf and share it widely.



Blooms for Jackson Depot

John Guidinger tends to these petunias in his basement through the winter. When spring arrives, he and Easton Schindler put them out to bring a cheery note to passengers arriving at the Jackson Amtrak station. John and Easton also take care of mowing the grass, keeping this beautiful, historic station looking well cared for. The Jackson depot, opened in 1873, is the oldest continuously operating train station in the country (although Martinsburg WV likes to claim the title).

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