



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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2021 MEETINGS

28 January – Member Meeting
Virginia High Speed Rail

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

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

13 May – Join HSRail.org to hear
Derrick James Amtrak's Vision 2035

10 June – Member Meeting
Empire State Passengers
Zoom at 5:00 PM

15 July – Invitation to attend
VHSR Town Hall on-line

16 September – Member Meeting
Traverse City Rail Proposal
Zoom at 5:00 PM

48th Annual Meeting
October 9

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

Michigan Mobility 2045 State Long Range Transportation Plan Nears the Finish Line

After more than two years of effort involving ordinary citizens, stakeholder groups (including MARP), MDOT personnel and consultants, a draft of the state's long-range transportation plan is out for comment. Titled **Michigan Mobility 2045**, or MM 2045 for short, the plan will establish the policies that will guide the development of Michigan's transportation network over the next two decades. **Comments will be accepted here** through the end of the month.

Under a first time ever strategy, the plan unites all transportation modes—car, train, bus, bike, foot, plane and boat—under one umbrella. Early polling found that the people of Michigan want their roads fixed, but want to see greater emphasis on trains and transit, biking and walking (active transportation), and less on expansion of the highway system. Early in the process, a collaborative effort of the various stakeholder groups established a **Vision and a set of Goals and Objectives** that reflect this focus on a broadly multi-modal network that provides options for all users of the system regardless of age, ability or income level.

The main body of the document provides a survey of existing conditions and trends, identifies funding challenges in meeting the needs and lays out, in broad terms, **strategies for implementation** of the goals and objectives identified in the plan. How the rail program supports the plan's goals and objectives is detailed on ([pages 111-112](#)) of the Rail Supplement.

Table 12. Rail Service Improvement Program (begins on page 133) lays out 101 proposed freight rail projects (14 are said to also benefit passenger trains), along with 18 passenger rail improvement and expansion projects that the state would like to implement over the next 25 years. A number of these projects have been on MARP's wish list for many years and were, in fact, brought to the attention of MDOT when members of the executive committee meet last February with MDOT personnel and the consultants.

Most of these projects are "aspirational" in nature, meaning there are no

(MM2045 continues on page 2)

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.

(MM 2045 continued from page 1)

clear funding sources identified at this time. Whether these projects go forward in the future depends on how willing the state legislature is to find/create funding streams and whether the ambitious infrastructure bill currently before Congress become law. (See page 3 for more on the infrastructure package.)

The real meat of the plan for passenger rail advocates is found in the **MM 2045 State Rail Plan Supplement** that is required by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) as a prerequisite for procuring federal funding for project implementation.

Section 4. Michigan Passenger Rail System (begins on page 59) of the rail supplement gives a reasonably complete picture of Michigan’s passenger rail system as it exists today.

Section 6. Passenger Rail Issues, Opportunities, and Improvements (pages 90-98) warrants special attention as it details several of the projects on the Office of Rail’s to-do list. Most, if not all, are on MARP’s wish list. In fact, the recommendations submitted by MARP in a **February letter to MDOT** are included on **pages 99-101** of the Rail Supplement.

Overall, the Rail Service Investment Program (**page 135**) and the projects in the Rail Supplement (**page 108**) deliver most of the things for which MARP has long advocated. The proof of the pudding will come in how aggressively the Office of Rail pursues the necessary funding, how willing the legislature and the Congress are to make the investments, and how serious the State is in actually creating the more balanced, multi-modal transportation network envisioned in this plan.

Some have expressed disappointment that the plan fails to address climate change. The word “climate” occurs only (MM 2045 continues at right)

eleven times and, then, only in terms of weather impacts on the infrastructure. Given the fact that cars and trucks are the largest source of Michigan’s greenhouse gas emissions, it seems prudence would dictate a major shift in how people and freight are moved around the state.

One of the promising developments to come out of this planning process has been articulated by MDOT’s Brad Sharlow who has coordinated the public outreach efforts throughout the last two years. In making presentations to various groups in the past month, he has repeatedly referenced the contributions and insights brought by the public and has stated a desire to continue to meet with stakeholder groups as the state moves into the implementation phase of the plan.

This, in fact, was suggested in a letter MARP sent to MDOT in February in which the request was made to “Establish an advisory committee within the MDOT Office of Rail” consisting of MARP (representing passengers’ interests), rail unions, freight interests, shippers, transit, urban planners, equipment suppliers, and Thruway bus operators. The letter also asked that MDOT keep the public informed of Office of Rail projects and progress. The letter, detailing MARP’s hopes for future passenger train development, is posted on the MARP website at: www.marp.org/?cat=39.

Please let MDOT **know your thoughts**. What do you like? What isn’t there that should be? Remember it never hurts to send compliments as well as brickbats.

LINKS

MM 2045 Website

Michigan Mobility 2045 Draft Plan
MM2045 State Rail Plan Supplement
Submit Your Comments Here

Table 23. Proposed Passenger Rail Projects (**page 108**)

Category	Project	Cost
Infrastructure Projects to Improve Existing Services on Existing Routes	Battle Creek Connector Bypassing Canadian National	\$39,000,000
	CSX/Michigan Line Connector east of New Buffalo	\$27,500,000
	Jackson Station Reconfiguration	\$33,300,000
	Detroit New Center Station	\$50,000,000
	Niles-Glenwood Road Double Tracking	\$100,500,000
	TOTAL	\$250,300,000
Service Expansion - Amtrak Proposed	Cleveland - Detroit Service	\$300,000,000
	Michigan Central Station	TBD
	Reroute Lake Shore Limited to Michigan Line	TBD
	Service to Ontario	TBD
Service Expansion - Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Other Proposed	Additional frequencies - all routes	TBD
	Ann Arbor - Detroit Commuter Rail	\$329,000,000
	Ann Arbor - Traverse City	\$650,000,000
	Chicago - Grand Rapids via Kalamazoo	TBD
	Daily service to Bay City - Blue Water Route	TBD
	Detroit - Ann Arbor - Lansing - Grand Rapids/Holland/Muskegon	TBD
Holland/Grand Rapids Commuter Rail	TBD	

Source: Amtrak, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Other

To compete in the 21st century, America needs high-speed rail.

The infrastructure debate in Washington provides a historic opportunity for us to catch up with the rest of the industrialized world and build the transportation infrastructure of the future.

-- Former Secretaries of Transportation LaHood, Foxx, and Mineta in their recent op-ed in the [Chicago Tribune](#)

Rail Passengers Virtual RailNation : DC 2021

Washington DC
September 19-21

The cherry blossoms that festooned the nation's capital in April when RPA held its annual Day on the Hill are long since gone. However, Covid-19 is still with us, so the annual fall meeting will be another "virtual" meeting, again affording many of us the chance to take part without the expense of travel and lodging. **Registration is now open.**

The event opens on Sunday at 5:00pm with the opportunity for all participants to listen in on the Board of Directors meeting.

Monday begins with briefings by RPA staff to get us up to speed on the ins and outs of the infrastructure and budget bills being debated in Congress. Afternoon sessions will feature appearances by Amtrak and Federal officials. Jim Mathews, RPA President and CEO, will be featured with a presentation on the economic benefits studies RPA has conducted showing the importance of passenger trains to the communities they serve.

The event will wind up on Tuesday afternoon with a workshop designed to help build the skills to advocate and work effectively with elected leaders, at all levels, to advance passenger rail priorities.

MARP members Dwight Phillips and Larry Krieg sit on the RPA Council of Representatives that will spend the morning of day three in virtual meetings with members of Congress or their staffs, before meeting in closed session to take care of Council business.

**[CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL
AGENDA + REGISTRATION](#)**

It's Time to Have a Talk With Your Member of Congress

The month of September will be critical for the future of passenger trains in this country. Congress will be voting on the ambitious infrastructure bill, which includes billions in "new" money for rail. Also pending are budget and surface transportation funding bills, each proposing substantial increases for Amtrak and the rail grant programs that will help states implement the **Amtrak Connects US** vision for passenger rail expansion. Not incidentally, the outcome of these Congressional actions will determine whether our state can fund the passenger rail improvement and expansion projects outlined in Michigan's **MM 2045 State Rail Plan**.

Your member of Congress may be in district during this

(TALK continues at right)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Member Meeting on 16 September

Remember A2TC? The proposal to restore passenger train service between Ann Arbor and Traverse City?

A safe and efficient way to get from southeast Michigan to one of Michigan's premier vacation destinations was identified as a top priority when MARP joined with the Michigan Environmental Council to conduct a series of public forums across the state in 2010-11. One result of these forums was to start a process that resulted in the 2018 publication of the **Northern Michigan Rail Ridership Feasibility & Cost Estimate Study**. The study was commissioned by the **Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities** in Traverse City.

With the Traverse City area now identified in the 2020 census as one of the fastest growing areas of the state, interest in moving this project forward is ramping up and, once again, Groundwork Center is taking the lead.

Carolyn Ulstad, Transportation Program Manager at Groundwork Center, will be our guest for the 16 September member meeting. She will review what has happened so far with the A2TC project and what the plans are for moving forward.

**Please join us, via Zoom
Thursday, 16 September, at 5:00 PM**

[ZOOM LINK](#)

Meeting ID: 853 3140 4318

Passcode: 359845

Dial in: +1 312 626 6799

We'll send a reminder closer to the meeting date.

If you are unfamiliar with using Zoom, **[CLICK HERE](#)** for a short tutorial you will find helpful.

Labor Day break, perhaps giving you an opportunity to meet with them or a staff member. Take a look at the projects listed on page 2 above and let them know why it is important to you that one or more of these be completed. Tell them you want to build on the investment Michigan has already made to give people a safe, low cost and climate-friendly way to get where they need to go.

If you are not sure who your member of Congress is, go to **[house.gov/representatives/find](https://www.house.gov/representatives/find)**. Link to their website to find where their district office is located. Some will schedule in-district coffee hours. Otherwise, you always have an opportunity to meet with staff. That can pay dividends over the long term.

View from elsewhere . . .

“Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic wiping out much of America’s passenger rail ridership, Union Pacific carried approximately 130,000 passengers across its network daily. In fact, UP has 106 Amtrak schedules and 225 other commuter partner schedules across its 23-state network.”

— In this [thought-provoking article](#), Wes Lujan, AVP-External Relations for Union Pacific, suggests federal largesse could make Amtrak a better partner in supporting the shared infrastructure.

“The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will work to remedy the largest flaws of the Senate’s bipartisan infrastructure bill. I intend to focus on programs that reduce carbon emissions from surface transportation, aviation and ports, restore transit funding, reconnect neighborhoods, robustly fund high-speed rail, and ensure climate-resilient and affordable investments in our wastewater infrastructure.”

— House Transportation Chair Peter DeFazio, on his [strategy for improving](#) on the infrastructure/authorization bill sent over by the Senate.



Big Boy Learns to Speak PTC

Before No. 4014 could embark on the [2021 Steam Tour](#) of the country’s midsection, someone had to figure out how to make it PTC-compliant. You can read all about how the Union Pacific’s clever employees and software suppliers surmounted the challenge in [UP’s Inside Track newsletter](#). UP boasted on July 19 of more than 1,500 miles of flawless execution with PTC during the tour, which ends on September 9 at Denver CO.

Photo courtesy of William Borg. Taken at West Chicago IL, July 2019.



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