



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

John Guidinger	Chair
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Todd Schultz	West Region Chair
Clark Charnetski	At-Large
Carolyn Ulstad	At-Large

Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
ON TRACK Editor & Communications, Kay Chase

2022 MEETINGS

20 January – Member Meeting
Legacy of the Pullman Porters

03 March – Member Meeting
Jim Mathews, Rail Passengers Assoc.

09 June – Member Meeting
Paul Trap, Early Michigan Railroading

15 September – Member Meeting
Derrick James, Amtrak

49th Annual Meeting
22 October 2022
Lost Railway Museum in Grass Lake

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

MDOT Launches Planning for New Train Station in Detroit

The public got its first look at plans for a new Amtrak station in Detroit during three “open houses” held on 26 and 28 July, 2022. Nearly four dozen people, including several MARP members, attended the “virtual” meeting on the 26th. Two in-person sessions were held on the 28th at the Fisher Building in the New Center area of Detroit, reportedly drawing few people.

The project, known as the **New Center Intermodal Facility (NCIF)** is intended to centralize the now widely separated intercity bus and train stations in a single location. The existing train station will be replaced with a two-level building that will house ticketing and the passenger waiting room (or rooms?). The platform will be lengthened and widened. Passengers will access intercity buses (Indian Trails, Greyhound, Miller, Baron) at street level via a tunnel from the station building on the north side of the tracks to a bus staging area south of the tracks. A parking deck will occupy the second level.

Jeromie Winsor, AECOM senior planner, facilitated the meeting. He made the point that MDOT and the City of Detroit envision the project as a catalyst for future retail and residential development in the area, adding that such development is supported by the current zoning.

In the discussion following the presentations, whether commuter rail is part of the plan was mentioned more than once. Mr. Winsor responded that commuter service is not part of the current plan, but flexibility to allow this type of service in the future is desirable. He added that if train service to Toronto were ever to happen, it would go via Michigan Central Station, adding that the Ford developers say they are “leaving space for such service.” He also said that the operator of the “tunnel bus” to Windsor is not interested in coming into the NCIF at this time. Asked about extending *Michigan Flyer* to NCIF, Mr. Winsor said connections with regional bus services are being “looked into.”

Audience member Joel Batterman, **Motor City Freedom Riders**, expressed concerns with placing a parking deck over the bus boarding area, thus creating

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MARP 2022 Meeting Schedule

Due to the ongoing pandemic, MARP will continue to meet online using Zoom. Watch your email for details of the next Member Meeting scheduled for 15 September. The Executive Committee meets via Zoom on the third Wednesday of the month. If you have ideas to contribute, questions, or concerns please send them to us at marprail@yahoo.com. If you would like to sit in on a meeting, please contact MARP Chair John Guidinger at jhguidinger1@yahoo.com.

Carolyn Ulstad Joins Executive Committee

In recent months, MARP has made two appointments to fill vacancies on the Executive Committee. Carolyn Ulstad came aboard in November of 2021 bringing her enthusiasm and unique skills to the committee.



Carolyn grew up in Holland MI, where she and her family took advantage of proximity to the *Pere Marquette* line for trips to visit family and friends in the Chicago area. Her love of trains was first ignited by her grandfather who introduced her to Thomas the Train at an early age.

When it came time for college, she chose Grand Valley State University where she studied geography and planning with an interest in environmental studies. The knowledge and skills, particularly in GIS mapping, acquired in her studies made her a perfect fit for a job with **The Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC)**** upon graduation. During her time with the MACC, she was involved with the **Westrain Collaborative**, an informal group of lakeshore communities that exists to promote and preserve passenger trains in West Michigan. Carolyn credits this involvement with teaching her things about train operations that are not readily apparent to those who simply ride trains.

In 2020, Carolyn moved to the Traverse City area, to take a job as Transportation Program Manager with the **Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities** where her major responsibilities are with Phase Two of the **Ann Arbor to Traverse City Rail Project (A2TC)** now titled the Northern Michigan Rail Project. (Read recent news of the project following this article.)

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As one of MARP's youngest members, Carolyn is interested in bringing a fresh perspective to the ways in which MARP can interface effectively with the public and what is the best way to reach younger people in particular. She has taken on the task of keeping the MARP website up to date and relevant.

Yielding to the high cost of housing in Traverse City, Carolyn and husband Bruce have chosen to live near the small community of Kingsley, which is served by the **Benzie Bus**. With frequent stops, the bus takes longer than driving, but Carolyn likes that she can get some reading or work done on those days she decides to take the bus. At home, she loves spending time in her garden that supplies many of the ingredients to feed her other passion—cooking!

The second recent appointee to the executive committee is Todd Schultz, who resides in St. Joseph. We will profile him in the next issue of ON TRACK.

***The MACC is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Holland/Zeeland Area with responsibility for both transportation and watershed matters.*

A2TC Embarks on Phase Two

Plans for a passenger train linking communities from Ann Arbor to Traverse City are heating up with recent actions that have passed largely under the radar. Great Lakes Central Railroad, which leases the state-owned track on which the passenger train would run, has been awarded a \$21 million federal grant that will be matched by MDOT and GLC, bringing the total to \$42 million. The funding will allow GLC to install four miles of new rail, upgrade about 40 miles of track, and replace or repair 11 bridges and culverts between Ann Arbor and Owosso.

(A2TC continues on page 3)



Agawa Canyon Tour Train Returns for 2022 Season

The print edition of the Kalamazoo Gazette has carried this half-page ad in recent weeks promoting the *Agawa Canyon Tour Train*. Passengers now board from a classy new station with a First Nations theme. Watco recently **acquired the line from Canadian National**. In announcing an abbreviated tour season running August 1--October 10, the company expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to continue this popular 114-mile, 10-hour "wilderness" journey. The train features a GPS triggered commentary telling the story of the region. Locomotive-mounted cameras provide an engineer's-eye view via flat screen monitors installed throughout the coaches. The **Algoma Country website** has lots of information for visitors to Sault Ste. Marie and will link you to the tour train website to make your reservations.





THANK YOU to all who have renewed their MARP Memberships

If you have yet to do so, you may visit
marp.org/?page_id=4782 to renew now

Or download a mail-in form at tinyurl.com/marp012

(A2TC continued from on page 2)

The recently approved FY 2023 state budget contains another welcome boost for the project: \$1 million to support continued planning activities. Much of the credit for this goes to Sen. Wayne Schmidt who has been a good friend of passenger rail throughout his years in the legislature and is now in his last term due to term limits.

Earlier in 2022, Groundwork Center, in partnership with Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority (WexExpress), applied for a \$1.3 million federal RAISE grant to support a Phase II Study and Service Development Plan for the Northern Michigan Rail Project as the A2TC project is more formally titled. As outlined in the grant application, the study will *"identify and prioritize the key improvements that are needed along the corridor to maximize future freight and passenger rail opportunities. The plan will outline the necessary capital infrastructure needs, including crossing signal improvements, Positive Train Control (PTC) system, track and rail upgrades, potential bridge replacements, capacity improvements, and equipment. The plan will also update the project's market and ridership forecasts for passenger rail and update industry analysis for continued freight rail development."*

James Bruckbauer, Director, Transportation & Community Design at Groundwork Center, spoke with a reporter for the *Traverse Ticker* in June and said, "Ideally, we'd like to get the next phase of study completed by 2023, so that some kind of service could be up and running within the next five years."

More about the project and the 2018 feasibility and cost estimate study may be found at www.a2tc.org.



Photo courtesy of Carl Fowler

Rutland to Burlington Passenger Service Returns After 69 Years

Capping efforts that have been going on almost from the day service shut down in 1953, Vermonters will be crowding Burlington Union Station on July 29 eager to board the inaugural run of *The Ethan Allen Express* to Rutland VT with stops at Ferrisburgh-Vergennes and Middlebury. The Rutland to Burlington train is an extension of the existing Amtrak daily round trip between New York City and Rutland.

Pictured above is the handsomely restored 171-year old Vergennes Station House that was moved 1,000 feet to this new location adjacent to an existing highway park-and-ride lot.

Carl Fowler, rail advocate extraordinaire, has written an enticing account of the interesting and beautiful scenery passengers will experience along the way that will surely inspire you to book a trip—think fall color tour! Carl's article [may be read here](#).

LATE BREAKING NEWS! Due to a warehouse fire that threatens collapse of the building near the railroad bridge at Albany, the new service to Burlington has been temporarily suspended. All are hoping for restoration of service long before it's time for that fall color trip.



Midwest Could Snag MEGA-Project Funding

Amtrak is partnering with IL-DOT, MDOT, Metra, Chicago-DOT and Cook County in seeking funding under the **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law** for a multi-pronged project dubbed **"Chicago Access/Michigan East"** designed to enhance the passenger experience and ease passenger train movements into and out of Chicago. If implemented, Michigan will clearly benefit. To learn more of the project, plan to tune in to the next High Speed Rail Alliance **webinar at 1:00 pm Eastern Time on 12 August**. There is no cost to attend, but registration is required. Please **REGISTER HERE**.

View from elsewhere . . .

“Somehow, this remarkable news passed quietly under the radar last week, but for passenger rail advocates like us, it’s another huge milestone in connecting Michigan cities with modern transportation.”

-- James Bruckbauer, Director, Transportation and Community Design for Groundwork Center, **announcing a \$21 million federal grant** that will improve track infrastructure to the benefit of both existing freight operations and proposed new passenger service.

“We have been dismayed...to see this fight drag on given the lengths to which Texas Central has tried to appease a small group of landowners. Using an endless series of lawsuits to grind the approval process...to a crawl [gives] veto power...to anyone with deep enough pockets to front the legal fees [and is] one reason why the U.S. isn’t able to build ambitious infrastructure anymore”

--Jim Mathews, Rail Passengers Association President & CEO, lauding **the recent Texas Supreme Court ruling** affirming the right of Texas Central Railroad to acquire land needed to construct a high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston.



Amtrak Resumes Service to Toronto

On 27 June, continuing a slow return to normalcy as the pandemic eases, travelers enjoyed the first opportunity since early in 2020 to ride Amtrak’s *Maple Leaf* across the Niagara River into Canada. In addition to the usual required entry documents, passengers planning a trip to Toronto should check amtrak.com/bordercrossing for additional requirements regarding vaccination and masking. Amtrak officials are continuing to work toward restoration of services to Montreal and to Vancouver in British Columbia and will make an announcement at a later date.

Marc Glucksman photo courtesy of Amtrak.

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a space lacking natural lighting and subjecting passengers to diesel fumes. He also pointed out that many cities are de-emphasizing on-site parking, in favor of encouraging use of transit and other mobility options. Also, nearby shelters for local transit buses need to be upgraded and pedestrian access made more inviting.

Other audience members spoke of amenities that should be included: bike facilities, MoGo bike docking station, car rental/car sharing, café, coffee shop.

For those unable to attend the open houses in July, a slide presentation given earlier to the Local Advisory Committee **is posted on the project website** and provides a good overview of the scope of the project.

Pierre Roberson, lead architect for the project, presented a number of design concepts that aim to draw in some of the elements that define neighborhoods surrounding the site. He characterized the main aesthetic drivers as visual arts, music culture, automotive history, technology, and historic architecture. Roberson is a Detroit native recognized for his “socially driven design approach.”

Two advisory committees have been formed: a Government Advisory Committee and a Local Advisory Committee. Initial presentations were made to the advisory groups in June, with a second round expected in September. Dwight Phillips is representing MARP on the latter committee, along with representatives of several other citizen organizations with an interest in transportation. If you have comments for Dwight, please send email to marprail@yahoo.com.

The environmental assessment phase will wind up in mid-2023 after which public comment will be invited and a firm hired to design and build the project. (*Elsewhere the project is described as design-build-operate-maintain.*) Construction will take place in 2024-2025 and the facility is expected to open in 2026. The project is expected to cost around \$57 million. A \$10 million federal RAISE grant was received last fall and the state is providing the remainder of the funds.



Project Site Plan

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