



*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
Steve Vagnozzi	Vice-Chair
Jeanie Merckel	Treasurer
Larry Krieg	Secretary
Steve Vagnozzi	Gov't/Public Affairs Coordinator
Chuck Merckel	Meetings Coordinator
Robert Patterson	Detroit/Metro Region Chair
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  
Speaker, Robert West

**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

**22 October - 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**  
Keynote Speaker Tim Hoeffner  
In-Person meeting at the  
Lost Rail Museum in Grass Lake

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

## MARP Members Hear Ambitious Plans for Fixing Chicago Union Station

Derrick James, Amtrak Government Affairs Director, was the guest speaker for the 15 September “virtual” membership meeting attended by more than forty members and friends. Mr. James prefaced his remarks with an appreciation for the work of advocacy organizations such as MARP that have “gotten us on the cusp of some really good things.” He referenced “exciting things to come”, but cautioned there are challenges ahead.

Before launching into details of the plans for getting passengers and trains into and out of Chicago Union Station more comfortably and efficiently, Mr. James updated us on Amtrak operational matters as the company moves out of pandemic mode.

Ridership numbers for July 2022 came in at 81% of pre-pandemic levels. Revenue is down about 13%, ahead of projections but certainly not where Amtrak was in 2019 when revenues covered 99% of operating costs. During the pandemic, cost recovery dropped quite significantly, is now at about 72%, and is projected to rise to only 74% in 2023—“some ways to go in terms of clawing back to that 99% figure.” Among the “hiccups” on the way to full recovery are staff shortages in all departments, particularly in mechanical. Amtrak is **currently looking to fill 4,000 vacancies**.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA) requires Amtrak and the states to revisit the cost allocation methodology that has been a point of contention for Michigan and the other 16 states operating routes of less of 750 miles. It appears that Amtrak will be assuming more of the “system-generated costs”, thus reducing costs to the states. Mr. James points out that “these are real costs” that Amtrak will have to recoup from Congress.

Regarding the long-distance routes, Mr. James pointed to three challenges: (1) in FY’21, only 52% of trains arrived on time; (2) aging rolling stock—plans are to place an order for new rolling stock “in the mid-2020s”; (3) major cities served by trains only in the middle of the night or less than daily.

Mr. James hailed new services (extension of the *Ethan Allen* to Burlington VT and additional frequencies to Norfolk and Roanoke in Virginia), as well as  
(AMTRAK continues on page 3)



### MARP's 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

See page 2 for details of MARP's 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting taking place on 22 October at the *Lost Railway Museum* in Grass Lake. Election of officers will take place and a vote taken on a proposed change to the ByLaws. Only those current on their dues are eligible to vote. Dues may be paid online at [marp.org/?page\\_id=4782](http://marp.org/?page_id=4782). SEE YOU IN GRASS LAKE!



**ALL ABOARD  
MICHIGAN!**

## MARP 49<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, October 22, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

*Lost Railway Museum, 142 W Michigan Ave., Grass Lake MI 49240*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Tim Hoeffner**

*“Advocating for Passenger Trains”*

Make plans now to attend! We are pleased to have as our featured speaker Mr. Tim Hoeffner. Tim took a bit of a hiatus after retiring from the MDOT Office of Rail. He has now joined Quandel Consultants as a Senior Consultant for Rail. Chair John Guidinger will review the year’s activities and officers will be elected for the 2022-24 term.

Following the catered luncheon, we will have an opportunity to browse the Museum.

Questions? Email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com) or phone Chuck Merckel at 734-330-0281

**PRINT THIS PAGE • CLIP THE FORM • MAIL**

The cost to attend is \$25 per person and includes a catered luncheon. The registration deadline is Saturday, August 31.

Please Register \_\_\_\_\_ people at \$25 per person. Fee includes a catered lunch.

My Name \_\_\_\_\_

My guest’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

\$\_\_\_\_\_ enclosed (\$25 per person)

**SEND THIS FORM in an envelope with your personal check payable to MARP, Inc. to:**

**MARP, Inc. | c/o Jean Merckel | 33373 Hampshire Rd | Livonia MI 48154-2952**

**ONLINE REGISTRATION is available at [marp.org/?p=7489](https://marp.org/?p=7489) using Pay Pal, a major credit card or debit card**

**ACT NOW! All Registrations must be received by Wednesday, October 12.**

### Why We Do What We Do

As I was preparing for a talk I gave recently, I came across a quote that I had cited in a previous talk. To preface that quote, let me first say that I find I am often met with blank stares when I tell people that I belong to an advocacy organization that seeks improvement and expansion of our passenger train services. For many people, trains exist in a kind of romantic haze, divorced from present day reality. I have come to think that this perception is a major challenge we face as advocates.

And, that is why I was so struck with these words of a colleague—Phil Streby of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, writing in the April 2016 issue of **All Aboard Indiana**—“IPRA does not advocate for improved passenger rail service either out of a sense of nostalgia for the old days or for an antipathy to the automobile. Cutting edge, 21st Century passenger rail systems are a vital component driving the economic development of modern societies.”

—Commentary by Kay Chase

### Wolverine Trains 350 and 355 Slated to Return in Late October

A search of the Amtrak website for train reservations reveals that *Wolverine* trains #350 and #355 will not be back in service until Monday, October 24. These two trains were temporarily suspended on 29 August due to a lack of personnel and available train equipment, a situation traceable to pandemic-related issues. During the suspension, *Blue Water* trains #364 and #365 are operating on their normal schedule and, also, are serving *Wolverine* stations between Kalamazoo and Chicago.

### FUN FACT

Fifty-percent fewer frogs died from vehicle collisions at the start of the pandemic than in previous spring seasons.

--Science Daily, 13 October 2021



## Time to Renew Your MARP Membership

You may renew online at [marp.org/?page\\_id=4782](https://marp.org/?page_id=4782)

Or download a mail-in form at [tinyurl.com/marp012](https://tinyurl.com/marp012)

**You must be current on your dues in order to vote during the upcoming Annual Meeting**

*(AMTRAK continued from page 1)*

the **Amtrak Connects US** vision to expand services to 160 new destinations along 40 new corridors, a vision aided by the \$66 billion in advance appropriations for rail in the IIJA.

Moving on to Amtrak's proposal to take advantage of "MEGA Project" funding made available in the IIJA, Mr. James offered considerable detail about the **Chicago Access / Michigan East** proposal for which Amtrak, in partnership with Michigan and Illinois, has submitted a grant application to the Federal Railroad Administration.

This is a two-pronged effort involving: (1) improvements to Chicago Union Station to better serve passengers, and (2) infrastructure improvements/reconfiguration to improve train movements into and out of Chicago.

Station improvements include: opening up unused space and relocating escalators to improve traffic flow in the concourse area; improving the ventilation system; expanding platform widths; and reactivating the former mail platforms for passenger use and to allow through-running of trains between McCormick Place and O'Hare Airport.

The lynchpin of the infrastructure improvements is the construction of a ramp connecting Chicago Union Station to the St. Charles Air Line (SCAL). This would allow for more efficient movement into and out of the station for trains traveling south and east, including those headed to Michigan.

Taking trains off congested freight lines (CN Heritage line and Norfolk Southern) and putting them on more "passenger-friendly" tracks (Metra Rock Island, CN Lakefront Line, NICTD South Shore) will result in a number of benefits: shorter running times and increased reliability by eliminating time-consuming backup moves (*Illini/Saluki* and *City of New Orleans*); moving *Lincoln* service and *Texas Eagle* from CN Heritage line to Metra Rock Island; moving Michigan trains off the Norfolk Southern and onto the CN Lakefront Line and thence onto NICTD's *South Shore* Line. Also envisioned is the potential for a direct rail connection (*Metra* and perhaps *Amtrak* as well) between McCormick

*(AMTRAK continues at right)*

## MARP Seeking Nominations



*We are looking for a few good men and women to be part of MARP's leadership team.*

*MARP's 12-member Executive Committee is the budgetary, planning and policy recommending body for the organization. With two recent resignations due to family illness, there are currently four open positions. Because we feel it important to have all areas of the state represented on the Executive Committee, we are particularly interested in having a member from the central part of the state and one from northern part of the state.*

*The current members of the committee are eager to welcome you and your fresh ideas as we seek to become more effective in meeting the opportunities for improvement and expansion of passenger services in our state and region.*

*If you are interested, or if you would like to suggest someone else for consideration, please send an email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).*

**Committee members** Clark Charnetski or Larry Krieg look forward to talking with you.

*(AMTRAK continued from previous column)*

Place, Chicago Union Station and O'Hare Airport. The total project cost is pegged at \$418.5 million. Twelve to eighteen months of design work would follow awarding of the federal grant. Construction is expected to begin in 2025 and be complete by early 2027.

During Q & A, Mr. James revealed that full-length high-level platforms are in the works for both Dowagiac and Niles.

### Some Additional Information Sources

A similar presentation given by Amtrak's Joe Shacter for the High Speed Rail Alliance **may be accessed here**.

Additional details, schematics and thoughts about future possibilities opened up by the project **may be found on the High Speed Rail Alliance website** where the project is dubbed the Chicago Hub Improvement Program.

**CLICK HERE to read the project application narrative.**



### View from elsewhere . . .

*"I [am] excited to have the opportunity [to join FRA] with everything that's going on with the infrastructure bill right now. It's such an exciting time, and I really wanted to have the opportunity to take some of what I learned at Virginia Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation and advance that to a national level."*

—Jennifer Mitchell, FRA Deputy Administrator, in a recent interview. Ms. Mitchell will be the featured speaker in the next of the "virtual" Town Hall series sponsored by Virginia High Speed Rail, 04 October 2022 at Noon ET. [CLICK HERE to RSVP](#) and get the zoom link.

*"A look at the map, a survey of developments abroad and a review of the numbers leads to one conclusion: If this country is ever going to have effective passenger train service—the kind that has a major positive effect on mobility, safety, the economy and the environment—the federal government will have to fund a modern infrastructure on which American passenger trains can perform like the trains in Europe."*

—The iconoclast F.K. Plous argues in [Railway Age](#) that, contrary to the oft-heard "canard" that the U.S. lacks the "European" density to support passenger rail, many areas of the U.S. do, indeed, fit the bill.



After a two-year pandemic-induced hiatus, the Agawa Canyon Tour Train is back, albeit for a shortened season. Go to the [Algoma Country website](#) for a wealth of information for visitors to Sault Ste. Marie and a link to the tour train website to learn more and make your reservations.



### TAKE TIME FOR A RELAXING FALL FOLIAGE TOUR

**AMTRAK** has a trainload of travel packages just for you!

[CLICK HERE To Start Making Your Plans](#)



MARP, Inc.  
33373 Hampshire Road  
Livonia, MI 48154-2952

### Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard  
202-224-3121

**Sen. Debbie Stabenow**

**Sen. Gary Peters**

**Find Your Congressperson**

**Find Your State Senator**

**Find Your State Representative**