

Michigan Association of Rail Passengers

49th Annual Meeting

October 22, 2022

MDOT Update

- **October 7 Amtrak 351 Locomotive Failure-**

On October 7, 2022, Amtrak Wolverine train 351 experienced an engine component failure on Charger locomotive 4613 that led to the locomotive being disabled and locked out from service. The nature of the failure did not allow the issue to be addressed in the field. After initial attempts to secure alternative bus transportation were unsuccessful, the decision was made to couple the disabled train to train 353 leading to 13- and 10-hour delays, respectively. Amtrak was unable to restore power to the 351 portions of the combined consist for the remainder of the trip, and the trains experienced further delays mostly related to car brake issues and crews timing out. As has been widely reported, the passengers on both trains experienced troubling conditions, and some passengers chose to exit the train in an unsafe location.

MDOT continues to work with Amtrak to investigate failures that occurred on October 7, the decisions that led to them, the treatment of passengers, and what actions will be taken moving forward. To date, Amtrak has been responsive in providing a chronology of events that occurred that date as well as an initial report of items discovered during debriefs and action items moving forward. Additionally, MDOT has met with Amtrak executive leadership to review the incident. MDOT will continue to work with Amtrak to understand lessons learned and steps that will be implemented to ensure this type of failure does not occur again.

As the sponsor of this service, MDOT was deeply disappointed to learn what occurred on these trains and the unbearable circumstances the passengers faced. We, along with Amtrak, share their frustration about what occurred that day. As we work with Amtrak to finalize the outcomes of this incident, our hope is that this event can stimulate enhanced emphasis on reliability and customer satisfaction for Amtrak services in Michigan. We appreciate MARP's attention on this issue and hope we can work together moving forward to hear and understand the groups thoughts and ideas.

NEW PRIIA Section 209 Cost Allocation Approved:

- The State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) approved an update to the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) Section 209 cost allocation methodology at the Committees Quarterly Meeting in Kansas City last month. This will allow certain elements of an updated cost allocation system to be implemented in FY24 for States nationwide that sponsor State-Supported Amtrak service. These changes will provide a more predictable and data driven cost allocation methodology.

Wolverine Service Returning

- Amtrak has notified MDOT that Wolverine trains 350 and 355 will return to service on Tuesday, October 25. The reduction in service is due to a lack of equipment availability for the Midwest routes.

Corridor Identification and Development Program:

- MDOT submitted an expression of interest to the Federal Railroad Administration request on the establishment of a Corridor Identification and Development Program, docket number: FRA-2022-0031. This letter is non-binding and provides an overview of corridors that Office of Rail (OOR) would like to potentially consider for inclusion in the Corridor ID program, once established. These include:
 - Wolverine between Detroit/Pontiac and Chicago, with possible extension of services to Toronto/Windsor and/or Cleveland/Toledo (may also be a new route)
 - Blue Water between Port Huron and Chicago
 - Pere Marquette between Grand Rapids and Chicago
 - Chicago-Porter, Indiana

Speed Increases on Michigan Line Segments

- Amtrak is planning to develop a new schedule for November will include the effect of being able to run 110 between Albion and Jackson due to the track improvements that were undertaken. This is expected to result in a few-minute reduction in the schedule. Additional time savings is expected to be reflected in the schedule after the work between Jackson and Townline is complete, which is expected to be in late November.

MDOT Project Updates

- 2018 SOGR Grant Jackson/Mechanic Street Bridge Work & Amtrak Track Work: As of October 21, 2022, the track project is now 83% complete, with over 43,200 ties installed. We are hopeful that the project will be completed this year. The Jackson and Mechanic St. bridge project is underway with structure reconstruction occurring during the 2023 construction season.
- 2019 CRISI-Battle Creek Bypass PE/NEPA: This project will complete PE and NEPA activities for a project to potentially reroute Amtrak trains around CN's tracks to separate the freight and passenger train services. MDOT is working through the process of bringing a consultant on board to complete the Preliminary Engineering and Environmental NEPA activities for track West of the Battle Creek station.
- 2019 SOGR Signal Work: MDOT received pre-award authority to procure gate mechanisms and materials for construction of the ten industry turnouts. The obligation of this grant is imminent, and construction of the improvements will begin in 2023. This grant will rehab the signal and switch components at all the control points and replace ten freight customer turnouts and 26 grade crossing gate mechanisms along the Michigan Line.
- 2020 SOGR Jackson/Ypsilanti Curve Mods: MDOT received pre-award authority to complete final design for the curve improvements. The grant is expected to be obligated within about 30 days and construction will begin in 2023. This grant includes the realignment of approximately 40 horizontal curves and installation of rail (80,000 linear feet) between Jackson and Ypsilanti. In addition, public and private at-grade crossings will be reconstructed to accommodate the associated track geometry changes where needed. At the end of the project, train speeds will increase to up to 110 MPH and one-way travel time between Jackson and Ypsilanti will be reduced by about seven minutes.
- 2020 CRISI Trespass Grant: Project to install fencing throughout the Michigan line. Currently MDOT and Quandel are working to develop maintenance agreements for the fencing. In the next month we will developing our plans and actions for our community meetings.

- 2021 RAISE Detroit New Center Intermodal Facility Grant: The project will reconstruct the current station to modern standards that better serve current needs and accommodate future rail service expansions. It will also relocate intercity bus services to the Amtrak station site. The project is currently completing Preliminary Engineering and NEPA activities. Construction is estimated to begin in 2025.
- 2021 SOGR Accelerated Rail Bridge Reconstruction Grant: The project will fund Preliminary Engineering and Environmental NEPA activities for the reconstruction/rehabilitation of five deficient bridge structures between Kalamazoo and Dearborn.
- **Additional Federal Funding Applications-**
 - Amtrak's Michigan Line Travel Time & Reliability Project (\$5.3 million): Requested PE/NEPA funds to address double-tracking between Niles and Glenwood Road, Jackson Station Platform Reconfiguration and the Pere Marquette connection in New Buffalo. (Not selected for funding)
 - Amtrak's Midwest Charger Locomotive 2023-2027 Renewal-Overhaul Program (\$16 million): Requested funds for required capital overhaul/rehabilitation work to the Midwest state-owned fleet of locomotives operating in Amtrak state-supported service through the Midwest. The major midlife overhauls are scheduled to take place between 2023 and 2027. (Not selected)
 - Amtrak's Chicago Access/Michigan East Project (\$424 million): Request included projects in Chicago Union Station and track connections in Chicago that are intended to reduce travel time and expand service. Application includes final design for double-tracking between Niles and Glenwood Road. (Selected projects not yet announced)
 - MDOT is working with the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission and Amtrak to submit a grant to fund a Midwest plan that builds on the FRA's Midwest Regional Rail Plan released in 2021. The scope of this idea is still being finalized, but it would ideally create a multi-year, shared action plan guided by the long-term vision of a robust regional passenger rail network.