



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 2022-2024

John Guidinger	Chair
Carolyn Ulstad	Vice-Chair
Jeanie Merckel	Treasurer
Todd Schultz	Secretary
Clark Charnetski	Elected Member
Robert Lovell	Elected Member
Chuck Merckel	Elected Member
Robert Patterson	Elected Member
Mathew Thompson	Elected Member
Thaddeus Wojcik, Jr.	Elected Member
Open	Elected Member
Open	Elected Member
Gov't Affairs Coordinator, Steve Vagnozzi	
ON TRACK Ed. & Communications, Kay Chase	
Webmaster, Larry Sobczak	

2023 MEETINGS

11 February – In-Person Meeting

Dearborn Amtrak Station

Spring General Membership

Meeting TBA

03 June – In-Person Meeting

Niles District Library

Fall - 50th Annual Meeting

Location to be determined

Executive Committee Meets

2nd Wednesday of the month

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

“INVEST Midwest” Initiative Launched

A major item on the agenda when the **Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC)** met in Indianapolis last November was discussion of an initiative titled **Invest Midwest : The Future of Midwest Rail**. Viewed as the next big step in development of the Midwest passenger rail network, the initiative has been boosted by the vision and funding available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), more often referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (“The “BIL”), approved by Congress and signed by President Biden in November, 2021.

A vitally important part of “The BIL” is a provision to encourage and provide funding for interstate rail compacts, such as MIPRC, that wish to advance cooperative efforts to improve and expand regional passenger train networks. Thus, “The BIL” seems tailor-made for MIPRC, which has been working since the late 1990s to do just that.

Eyeing resources available under this transformative legislation—sixty-six billion in guaranteed advanced funding over the next five years—MIPRC immediately went to work to launch the next chapter in the development of the Midwest network. In December 2022, MIPRC **applied for a \$5 million CRISI planning grant** to “begin the work of refining and prioritizing corridor development envisioned by the **Midwest Regional Rail Plan (MWRRP)** to ensure that the region does indeed build on current plans to create a robust Midwest passenger rail network, serving all the states, and both urban and rural communities.”

The *Invest Midwest* proposal was developed with the help of the Chicago-based firm Quandel Consultants. Not incidentally, Tim Hoeffner, retired MDOT Office of Rail Director, had an important role in developing the proposal. The grant requires a 20% match. Amtrak has committed to providing half of the matching funds. MIPRC will contribute \$55,555 as will each of the eight member states, partially through increased membership dues beginning in FY 2024.

The CRISI grant proposal as submitted to the Federal Railroad is **posted on the MARP website**, along with **MARP's letter of support**.

(INVEST MIDWEST continues on page 2)

Face-to-Face Membership Meeting Saturday, 03 June 2023



2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Niles District Library
620 E Main St, Niles MI 49120

See page 3 for details.

Bob Lovell Has Joined MARP's Executive Committee



Bob Lovell, a MARP member since 2014, joined MARP's Executive Committee in November of 2022 following the annual meeting. In taking on the responsibilities of a leadership role in our organization, Bob is furthering his commitment to making a difference in the communities of which he is a part.

Bob has been active in the bicycling community for many years where, among other things, he coordinates informal family rides for members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing of which he is a member. As an advocate for public transit and safety for cyclists and pedestrians, he is a member of the Meridian Township Transportation Commission, currently serving as vice-chair.

Bob was born in Denver, Colorado, but having a career Air Force officer as a father meant he spent much of his childhood in other places. He returned to Denver for his final years of high school and then attended Colorado College in Colorado Springs. He later studied probability and statistics at Michigan State and completed a doctorate in Public Administration at Western Michigan University. Bob worked for the Michigan Department of Social Services as a manager and statistician for 25 years, after which he taught math statistics, physics, computer science and public administration at Lansing Community College, MSU and WMU. He has kept busy in retirement with volunteer work, reading (ask him about Stoic philosophy!) and spending time with family and friends.

Trains have been part of Bob's life since childhood, having received an electric train set for Christmas at age 5. His family enjoyed train travel and Bob recently checked off a bucket list item with a memorable Via Rail journey in Prestige Class from Vancouver to Toronto.

On the subject of trains in Michigan, Bob is happy to see the old, shabby equipment being replaced by the *Venture* cars. He laments our unstaffed stations, the intermittently unreliable and too-infrequent schedules, and the lack of a north-south route. He sees the need for MARP to grow its membership and to actively build partnerships to get things done. Bob feels that MARP has a vital role to play in educating Michigan lawmakers and community leaders on the value of trains. He suggests that when visits with legislators are made, a member, or members, from that legislative district be asked to participate.

Bob and his wife, Kathy, live in Okemos. Their daughter,
(continues at right)

MDOT Office of Rail Director Featured on June 9th Webinar

Peter Anastor, Director of MDOT's Office of Rail, will be the featured speaker for a June 9th webinar sponsored by the High Speed Rail Alliance. Mr. Anastor will highlight the substantial investments made in Michigan services, explore the potential for increased or expanded services, and speak of opportunities for partnering with other Midwest states and Amtrak, particularly as regards improving the infrastructure South of the Lake to allow for better passenger rail operations and reliability.

Mr. Anastor earned a Bachelor's degree from MSU's James Madison College and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University.

The event is free but requires advance registration.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

(INVEST MIDWEST continued from page 1)

What is MIPRC?

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, formed by a multi-state compact agreement in 2000, brings together leaders from across the Midwest on a bipartisan basis to advocate for passenger rail improvements. Compact members include Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Indiana, Minnesota, Kansas, and North Dakota. Also eligible for membership are Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Ohio. Peter Anastor, MDOT Office of Rail, serves as MIPRC Vice-Chair. Tim Hoeffner, retired director of the Office of Rail, played a key role in founding MIPRC and served various leadership positions over the last two decades.

MIPRC accomplishments include the **Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI)** completed in 1996 to kick start modernization of the Midwest network; a comprehensive **2004 update** of the MWRRI study; the FRA-led **Midwest Regional Rail Plan (MWRRP)** completed October 2021; and the joint acquisition of new Siemens *Venture* cars for service on the state-supported routes in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri. More recently, MIPRC has submitted a number of letters of support for member states', **including Michigan's**, expressions of interest for inclusion in **FRA's Corridor Identification & Development Program**. The Corridor ID Program is characterized by the FRA as creating "*a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for Implementation.*"

(continued from previous column)

Jennifer, lives in Lansing with her husband Kent. When Bob is not busy with his volunteer activities, he enjoys model trains, wood working, graphic novels, and—of course—any excuse to pursue another train travel adventure, especially if he can enjoy a beer flight at the end of the journey!

MARP Membership Meeting
Saturday, 03 June 2023
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Niles District Library
620 E. Main St., Niles MI 49120

MARP members will meet in-person on June 3rd at the District Library in Niles. Our special guest speaker will be Madison Butler, Communications Manager for the Rail Passengers Association, who will update us on Amtrak's current efforts to improve dining car services on Amtrak's Western trains and on the *Silver Star* in the East.

We can expect, also, to hear of the work of the **Food and Beverage Working Group (FBWG)** that recently submitted its report to Congress detailing nearly two dozen **recommendations** for how Amtrak can improve its food and beverage offerings. Butler was a member of the FBWG — made up of passenger advocates, state partners and Amtrak employees and management — created as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in late 2021. Amtrak now has 180 days to respond to the report and develop a plan to enact the recommendations.

Derrick James, Amtrak's Government Affairs Director, has been invited to update us on plans for a high-level platform at the Niles Depot, a second track at Glenwood to enhance train movements in the Niles area, and a grant request to upgrade track between Indianapolis and Dyer, Indiana, to allow faster speeds for the *Cardinal* service.

The meeting is scheduled for the afternoon to allow members to travel by train. It is advisable to make your reservation soon.

Amtrak #353 arrives Niles at 1:00 pm
 Amtrak # 352 leaves Niles at 4:52 pm
 Amtrak #365 arrives Niles at 11:01 am
 Amtrak #364 leaves Niles at 6:32 pm

The Library is located in downtown Niles and is a 15 minute walk from the train station. Uber and Lyft services are available.

If you plan to drive to the meeting, please let Chuck Merckel know if you are available to meet the train and transport folks to the Library. Contact him at crmerckel@aol.com or phone 734-330-0281.

Required Disclaimer

The Niles District Library does not endorse or sponsor this event.

Fun Fact

In Spring 2020, Midwestern states had almost **30 intercity passenger rail projects**, totaling more than \$2 billion, ready for federal funding



Thank you to all who
 have renewed their
 membership for 2023!

Annual dues are payable in January of each year.

You may renew online at marp.org/?page_id=4782

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

BLET marks 160 years

First union to contract with railroads

Marshall, Michigan has the distinction of being the birthplace of the oldest labor union in North America.

Founded on 08 May 1863 as the Brotherhood of the Footboard, the union soon changed its name to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), a name it retained for 140 years. In January of 2004, the union merged with the Teamsters, becoming the **Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen** (BLET). BLET was the first labor organization to obtain contracts with railroads. Among the earliest was an agreement with the former New York Central Railroad in 1875. Today, the BLET represents nearly all locomotive engineers throughout the United States.

—Source www.ble-t.org



Durand Union Station Invites You
 to join Durand's annual festival celebrating railroading and its culture. The station will have exhibits, special guests, and concessions!

Admission is FREE!

Donations always welcome

May 19 at Noon - May 21 at 5:00 PM
 200 S Railroad St, Durand, MI 48429

[Details of Citywide Events Here](#)

View from elsewhere . . .

“I ask that you take action to solve this issue and bring the slate of nominees into compliance with the IIJA requirements. I believe the board will be well-served by adding a qualified candidate who has greater familiarity with the operations and customer base for Amtrak’s long-distance and regional routes.”

--Montana Senator Jon Tester, in a [letter to President Biden](#) seeking to block the current slate of nominees to the Amtrak Board. The IIJA, aka The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, has specific geographic requirements for the Amtrak Board and Senator Tester is insisting that those requirements be followed.

“Congress was crystal clear in the IIJA that it expects the Amtrak Board ... to understand the needs of communities from all across the nation—a provision we fought hard to include in the final Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. We look forward to working with the U.S. Senate and the Biden Administration to ensure quality candidates from middle America and the West Coast are appointed to Amtrak’s Board.”

--Rail Passengers Association President and CEO Jim Mathews, stating [RPA’s position](#) that Amtrak Board nominees must represent all Americans as set forth in the infrastructure bill passed by Congress in November 2021.



Battle Creek Glimpses New VIA Train Set on Its Way to Toronto

MARP member and photographer Ken Borg caught this scene in Battle Creek on 23 January 2023 when one of Via Rail’s new *Venture* train sets came through Michigan on its way to delivery in Toronto. Siemens is building 32 of these train sets for service on the Quebec to Windsor corridor. The first of the new fleet was publicly introduced in November of 2021 with the expectation that the new equipment would begin entering service in late 2022. That has not become a reality, thus casting doubt on whether all the new trainsets will be in service by 2025 as originally envisioned.

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