



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.

Member 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
Todd Schultz	Elected Member
Matthew Thompson	Elected Member
Thaddeus Wojcik, Jr.	Elected Member
Open	Elected Member

Gov't Affairs Coordinator, Steve Vagnozzi
ON TRACK Editor & Communications,
Kay Chase

2023 MEETINGS

11 February – In-Person Meeting
Dearborn Amtrak Station

03 June – In-Person Meeting
Niles District Library

05 August – In-Person Meeting
Crossroads Village | Huckleberry RR
Flint

Date TBA - 50th Annual Meeting
Durand Union Station

Executive Committee Meets
3rd Wednesday of the month

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

MARP Members Hear of Plans to Improve Food Service on Trains

“The Amtrak Food & Beverage Working Group has included nearly two dozen recommendations in its report to Congress – ranging from simple steps like clear ingredients lists and new efforts around waste control to comprehensive technology improvements such as using satellite-based internet connectivity to keep food items appropriately stocked and provide menu and ingredients information to passengers.”

–Rail Passengers news release, 12 May 2023

Meeting on Saturday, 03 June, at the Niles District Library, some 30 MARP members enjoyed an encouraging presentation via Zoom from a key player in Amtrak’s Food and Beverage Working Group (FBWG). Madison Butler, Communications Manager at Rail Passengers Association (RPA), detailed the work of the 15 member panel that has spent the last year fulfilling a Congressional directive—Sec. 222208 of the **2021 bipartisan infrastructure law**—to provide recommendations to improve Amtrak’s on-board food and beverage service on its Long Distance, State-Supported, and Northeast Corridor service lines. Comprised of Amtrak front-line employees and management, travel and hospitality experts, and partners from state-supported services, the group was charged specifically with addressing ways to “improve the quality of food and beverage services, improve financial performance, and increase ridership.”

Ms. Butler is uniquely qualified for her role in this effort, having demonstrated her talents as an Escoffier-trained chef, an enthusiastic advocate for trains and transit, and a talented communicator while participating in RPA’s **Summer by Rail** in 2019. In addition, she and RPA CEO Jim Mathews were instrumental in getting language written into the 2021 infrastructure bill that eliminates the “Mica requirement” that on-board food and beverage services must at least break even. (Former Florida Senator John Mica was not a big supporter of Amtrak.)

The Food and Beverage Working Group (FBWG) focused its deliberations

(FBWG continues on page 3)

MARP 2023 Meeting Schedule

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Plans are afoot to meet on August 5 during the annual Railfans Weekend at Crossroads Village | Huckleberry Railroad in Flint. Details will follow in the July issue as plans are finalized. In the meantime, remember that 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.

Meet Thaddeus “Ted” Wojcik New Executive Committee Member



Ted Wojcik was selected at MARP’s annual meeting last fall to fill one of the open positions on the executive committee. He joins Todd Schultz and Bob Lovell (profiled in the August 2022 & May 2023 issues), along with Matt Thompson and

Tom Fletcher who will be profiled in upcoming issues.

Ted traces his love of trains to growing up next to the tracks in Bay City, hearing and watching the trains going in and out of the busy train yard. Memorable trips by train include a honeymoon trip on the *Empire Builder* back when there were flowers on the table and wine with dinner. He experienced the faded luxury of the Pacific Parlour Car on the *Coast Starlight* not long before they were removed from service.

Ted attended Michigan Technological University, relishing the great North Country “where they know how to handle the snow” and where outdoor activities are abundant. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering and spent the next 41 years as an engineer with Consumers Energy, first, building power plants and, later, working in the high pressure gas side of the business.

It was while working on a project in the Evert area that Ted found he very much liked the area and, in 1985, he bought property several miles from town. With easy access to fishing in the Muskegon River, biking and snowmobiling on the 55-mile long Pere Marquette trail, and the opportunity to stop in for a meal at Chase Creek Smokehouse in the community of Chase MI, this has been an ideal place for Ted and his wife, Cheryl, to put down roots.

Ted and Cheryl belong to NARCOA, the North American Rail Car Operators Association, and are the owners of two “speeders”. In addition, Ted has restored a caboose that Cheryl found at an auction and made the winning bid. Ted is active in his church and recently became interested in the work of the Muskegon River Watershed Council. Cheryl is involved with fiber arts, immersing herself in the complete process from shearing the sheep she raises to cleaning, carding, and spinning the wool for her weaving and knitting projects.

Ted is looking forward to progress in Midwest rail development, saying, “The highways are too congested. We need to be more like Europe.” He would like MARP to continue its work to build strong relationships with legislators and Amtrak. “We need to help policy and decision makers understand the benefits of fast, frequent, on-time passenger trains in Michigan, including Northern Michigan.”

(*FBWG continued from page 1*)

not only on the importance of food service in enhancing the passenger experience, but also on the critical role on-board personnel play in the preparation and delivery of that food, as well as the responsibility of management to create a framework in which these things can happen. Major recommendations of the FBWG include:

- provide healthy and fresh foods to passengers, along with use of technology to provide ingredients lists, ease of ordering, and logistics of getting supplies to trains
- give all passengers access to the dining car
- provide on-board service personnel with the equipment and encouragement they need to perform well
- upgrade training of on-board staff to include Customer Experience and Food Service training
- re-establish the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee

The findings and recommendations of the FBWG, all 96 pages of them, have been submitted to the relevant Congressional committees. Amtrak has 180 days to respond to the report and develop a plan for implementing the recommendations. Ms. Butler suggests that we, as advocates, work to build support for adoption and implementation of these recommendations. In this regard, it is worth noting that Michigan’s Sen. Gary Peters chairs the transportation subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee that received the FBWG report last month. On the House side, Rep. John James (R-10th District) and Rep. Hillary Scholten (D-3rd District) are members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that will be considering the FBWG report.

In the [12 May RPA news release](#), Ms. Butler describes the work of the FBWG this way: “*We want to empower the team at Amtrak to make smart choices that lead to more frequent ridership and better experiences on-board. After our advocates worked diligently to remove the amendment to service dictating F&B must be profitable, we’ve opened up the potential to make meals an amenity that people will once again look forward to as they hop onboard.*”

You can view a two-page summary highlighting the major recommendations of the FBWG [HERE](#). The full report has not been released to the public as of mid-June 2023.



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



EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

The 2023 edition of the **Midwest Rail Conference** will take place August 14-16, 2023, in Toledo, OH. The program features a full array of speakers focusing on strategies for **“Optimizing Rail Investment”**

Amit Bose, FRA Administrator, will be the keynote speaker. Ray Lang, Amtrak State Supported Services, and Tony Hatch, ABH Consultant/Analyst, will open the conference with an overview of the industry. Topics to be covered throughout the day include: a discussion among state DOT leaders, including MDOT Office of Rail Director, Peter Anastor; passenger projects current and future (Joe Shacter, Amtrak project manager for the Chicago Hub Project); freight projects underway or planned (Nikkie Johnson, Passenger & Freight Dev. Mgr., MDOT Office of Rail); Midwest passenger equipment (Jeff Martin, MDOT Office of Rail); decarbonization of rail transportation (Andreas Hoffrichter, formerly with MSU Rail Program, now principal consultant, Deutsche Bahn E.C.O.); planning for the Midwest passenger rail network (Derrick James, Amtrak, and Laura Kliewer, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission).

Events kick off on Monday, August 14th with a Student Scholarship Golf Outing Fundraiser followed by small group meetings and the opening reception at the **University of Toledo - Student Union**.

The technical program on Tuesday, August 15th, also at the University of Toledo Student Union, will be followed with an evening of fun, networking, food and baseball taking place in the **Roost at Fifth Third Field**. The conference winds up with field visits during the morning of Wednesday, August 16th.

Individuals and businesses are invited to **CLICK HERE** to learn of sponsor opportunities.

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Wolverine Trains 350 and 353 Service Disruption

Track work planned by Amtrak and the Michigan Department of Transportation will result in the temporary suspension of some *Wolverine* trains between 31 July and 05 October.

During the period, *Wolverine* trains 350 and 353 will operate only on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. However, both trains will operate on Labor Day, 04 September.

The track work will not affect the operation of *Wolverine* trains 351, 352, 354, and 355.

The *Blue Water* trains 364 and 365 between Chicago and Port Huron will stop at stations in southwestern Michigan served by trains 350 and 353 on days that those trains do not operate.

MDOT Office of Rail Director Gives Overview of Work on the Michigan Line

Peter Anastor, Director of MDOT’s Office of Rail, was the guest speaker on a 09 June webinar sponsored by the High Speed Rail Alliance. He focused almost entirely on work done or planned for the “Michigan Line”, the route plied by 3 daily round trips of the *Wolverine* trains. To learn details of this work, [watch the recording here](#).

Mr. Anastor mentioned only briefly the Ann Arbor to Traverse City proposal (initiated by Traverse City area interests); the Coast-to-Coast proposal (as something MDOT could put “on the list” in the future); and, the interest in extending passenger service to Toronto (has had discussions). Mr. Anastor mentioned the challenges posed by congestion “South of the Lake”, saying he had recently had conversations with Amtrak and the FRA. Michigan endorsed **Ohio’s submission**—to the new FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program—of an “expression interest” in connecting Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit. **MDOT’s submission** to the Corridor ID Program proposes to increase reliability and frequencies for the three existing Michigan routes. He said Amtrak continues to seek funding for the double-track project in the Niles-Dowagiac area. Freight interference is the main culprit in on-time performance, but PTC issues are acknowledged. **Full recording is here**. Presentation begins at 10:50.

FAST FACT

Three commuter rail lines in SE Pennsylvania reported a 14% jump in riders following the collapse of an I-95 overpass due to a tanker truck crash on June 9th.

View from elsewhere . . .

“For Amtrak to become more efficient, we must grow ridership and increase service. It’s a very simple equation: investments in intercity passenger rail that improve service and increase ridership make the service more efficient and enable it to produce more economic and public benefits for each dollar of public investment.”

--Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner in **written testimony** presented to Congressional hearing on 06 June 2023. View the complete hearing **here**.

“We are extremely grateful to our partners in the legislature, especially Rep. Frank Hornstein and Sen. Scott Dibble who have strongly supported our project. Now we are waiting to join Amtrak and the Minnesota Department of Transportation in announcing the start of the service. We are so close to doubling the opportunity for passenger rail transportation between the Twin Cities and Chicago.”

—Great River Rail Commission Chair Trista MatasCastillo in a **news release** announcing funding for the 2nd daily train between Chicago and the Twin Cities (dubbed the TCMC) and the possible start of service later this year.



Michigan Flyer VP Takes Aid to Ukraine

Pictured above near Kyiv, Ody Norkin, founder of *Indian Trails, Inc.* and VP of *Michigan Flyer*, was spurred to action when he learned of the need for ambulances and medical supplies in Ukraine. Not only has he personally delivered vehicles and supplies to the people of Ukraine, he has inspired numerous people and organizations in Michigan to **get involved**. Norkin describes himself as “just a transportation guy” who felt the need to help in some way. **Read more here**.

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MARP, Inc.
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