



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

**14 October - 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**  
Durand Union Station

**Executive Committee Meets**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month

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

## Congressional Subcommittee Slashes Amtrak Funding

*"At a time when Amtrak has nearly returned to pre-pandemic ridership levels and is busy generating increased revenue, creating a historic number of jobs and investing in the American economy, these proposed cuts would harm the country and take us in the wrong direction."*

--Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner

As the opening gambit in the annual federal budget process, the House Subcommittee on Appropriations Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD), on 12 July, approved its FY2024 appropriations bill, sending a clear message that passenger trains are not a high priority for 34 members of the 61 member committee. Proposed cuts include:

- 92% cut to Amtrak's Northeast Corridor operating grant;
- 68% cut to Amtrak's National Network operating grant;
- Zeroes out the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program, which is used to upgrade and expand intercity train service across the U.S.;
- 51% cut to the CRISI grant program, which funds upgrades to both freight and passenger rail infrastructure and safety systems; and
- 85% cut to Federal Transit Administration's CIG grants, used to fund transit and commuter rail infrastructure including some intercity rail projects, such as construction of Amtrak's new Hudson River rail tunnel.

In stark contrast to the House bill, which comes in at \$1.4 billion for passenger rail, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved their THUD bill on 21 July, providing \$2.45 billion for Amtrak, a slight increase over the previous year's funding levels. In addition, it provides \$100 million for the Fed-State Partnership Program zeroed out by the House and \$573 million for the CRISI grant program cut in half by the House.

Indications are that the THUD bills will not be taken up until after the  
*(THUD Bill continues on page 3)*

### MARP 2023 Meeting Schedule

MARP will meet in-person on August 5<sup>th</sup> during the annual Railfans Weekend at Crossroads Village | Huckleberry Railroad in Flint. See page 3 for meeting details. 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](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com). If you would like to sit in on a meeting, please contact MARP Chair John Guidinger at [jhguidinger1@yahoo.com](mailto:jhguidinger1@yahoo.com).

## Meet Matt Thompson New Executive Committee Member



Near the end of November last year, MARP received an inquiry about the open seat on the executive committee. The writer had recently taken the *Blue Water* to Chicago and then the commuter train to O'Hare. Arriving in New York City, he was impressed with the ease of

subway. This was when a light bulb went off in his head and he wrote to MARP saying, "The ease and efficiency of these systems left me craving more for the state of Michigan," and offering to put his enthusiasm to work in advancing the cause of passenger rail. Thus, Matt Thompson became a welcome and talented addition to MARP's policy-making body.

Matt earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science from Michigan State University and, even before graduation, began a nearly two-decades long series of jobs serving the Michigan House of Representatives in various capacities. Starting as a lowly page, running bills and communications to- and from the floor of the House, Matt now serves as a member of the Human Resources team. Does he have political ambitions of his own? "Not really," he says, adding that he finds the intensity of the legislative process intimidating but fun to be around.

Matt grew up in Chesaning, a small town for which he is finding a growing appreciation. "It was great to ride my bike across town and see people I knew all along the way." Biking, often on a motorcycle, is something he still enjoys as a resident of Lansing. He is a member of the League of Michigan Bicyclists. Matt also has bit of green thumb, cultivating a small garden in his backyard and volunteering in Lansing's Adopt-a-Spot program that maintains corner rain gardens and flower boxes along the River Walk.

Matt recently became engaged to Stephanie Newman. She, too, grew up in Chesaning but the two did not become acquainted until a mutual friend's wedding years later. Stephanie is finishing up her training as a physician's assistant and will take a job at Hurley Medical Center in Flint.

Matt's most memorable train ride was the high speed train between Barcelona and Madrid which he described as a "super nice" choice that people have that is also a factor in addressing climate change. He thinks the sorry state of our car infrastructure is the best argument for expanding the choices people have for getting around. He wants to see MARP continue working to add more frequent train service, recognizing that this will require finding new sources of funding.



**REGISTRATION FEE GOES UP AUGUST 01**

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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 16<sup>th</sup>.

**NOTE: Register before 01 August to get the lower fee.**

**REGISTER HERE NOW**

**DRAFT PROGRAM**

**CONFERENCE WEBSITE**

**LODGING**

(*THUD Bill continued from page 1*)

August recess and that a floor vote is not likely before mid-September. This means it's not too late to make your voice heard! Join your fellow Rail Passengers Association members in **asking your member of Congress to support passenger rail service for ALL Americans!**

The annual appropriations process is just that: a lengthy and complex process. Neither of the bills outlined above will end up signed into law. As a famous baseball player liked to say, "It ain't over till it's over." It is important that we, as advocates, continue to spread the message that trains improve mobility for all, help grow the economies of the communities served, and protect the environment.

Your member of Congress will be "in district" during the August recess. Look for an opportunity to talk with him or her to make sure they understand what is at stake and why this matters to you as their constituent. **CLICK HERE** if you are unsure who represents you in Congress.

Michigan's two senators are each positioned to influence the outcome of the THUD appropriation. **Sen. Debbie Stabenow** sits on the powerful Budget Committee and the Environment and Public Works subcommittee on Transportation. **Sen. Gary Peters** chairs the subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Maritime, Freight and Ports and is also a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Recommended reading is this **12 July statement** issued by Rail Passengers Association. More information may be found in Rail Passengers **Hotline #1314** and **Hotline #1315**.

Please **TAKE ACTION** today!

## 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.



PLEASE VISIT  
[marp.org/?page\\_id=4782](http://marp.org/?page_id=4782)

To Renew Your Membership for 2023

## FY 2024 THUD Rail Appropriations

(millions)

	FY23 Enacted	FY24 Authorized	FY24 House THUD	FY24 Senate THUD
Amtrak - NEC	\$1,260	\$1,200	\$99.2	\$1,141.4
Amtrak - Nat'l Network	\$1,193	\$2,450	\$776.4	\$1,313.0
FRA Operations	\$251	\$263	\$273.5	\$267.8
Fed-State Partnership for IPR/SOGR	\$100	\$1,500	\$0.0	\$100.0
CRISI Grants	\$535	\$1,000	\$258.5	\$572.9
RR Crossing Elimination Grants	\$0	\$500	\$0.0	\$0.0
Restoration & Enhancement Grants	\$0	\$50	\$0.0	\$0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,339</b>	<b>\$6,963</b>	<b>\$1,407.6</b>	<b>\$3,395.1</b>



# 2023 RAILFANS WEEKEND



## MARP Member Meeting at Crossroads Village

Make plans now to attend the 05 August meeting taking place at Crossroads Village in Flint. The meeting will take place from Noon to 2 pm, giving members an opportunity to tour the Village or visit the railroad shops prior to the start of the meeting. The meeting will convene promptly at Noon in the restored Clinton Town Hall located within the Village.

There will be no admission fee to the Village for MARP members. Let the ticket office know when you arrive that you are a member of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers.

Following the meeting, plan to finish off your visit with a ride on the Huckleberry Railroad. It is recommended that you purchase your ticket for the 3:00 pm train departure when you enter the Village. The cost for the train is \$12.

Wear comfortable shoes, a hat, and bring water to keep yourself hydrated. There is a sandwich shop within the Village if you wish to get something to eat before the meeting.

Visit [GeneseeCountyParks.org/railfans-weekend](http://GeneseeCountyParks.org/railfans-weekend) for more information about Crossroads Village and the Huckleberry Railroad. If you have questions, please send us an email at [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

ANYONE FOR A TRAIN RIDE ?



## View from elsewhere . . .

*“After we worked so hard to reopen the Adirondack Line this year, this news is absolutely unacceptable. My office is working with Amtrak, local and state elected officials, as well as the North Country Chamber of Commerce to ensure that Canadian National Railroad leadership provides a written plan to reopen the line immediately.”*

--Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, responding to Amtrak's decision to **suspend Adirondack service** north of Albany.

*“We are extremely grateful to our partners in the legislature . . . 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 2<sup>nd</sup> train between Chicago and the Twin Cities (TCMC) and the possible start of service later this year.



## Venture Business Class Car in Service

MARP member Nathan Nietering caught one of the first of the new *Venture Business Class* cars to enter revenue service on Michigan routes. Pictured here is *Wolverine* train #353 at Dearborn MI on 14 April 2023. **According to Peter Anastor**, Director of MDOT's Office of Rail, all of the new Siemens *Venture* coaches (54 cars) and business class (17 cars) have been delivered and all should be in service on state supported routes in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri by this Fall. The final delivery—17 café cars—will be made in 2024.

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