

# P *The Michigan* PASSENGER

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**Michigan Association of  
Railroad Passengers**  
www.marp.org

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## Large Federal Grants Proposed for New Rail Passenger Service

The passenger rail money contained in the Federal infrastructure bill currently pending in Congress would be transformational for intercity passenger rail in the United States. This would be, by far, the largest investment ever made in passenger service. If enacted, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) would provide \$66 billion over five years for intercity passenger rail. During the recent wrangling in Congress there has been no serious effort to reduce this amount, so these amounts appear to be well established and only await final Congressional action. A breakdown of the proposed new funding includes:

- \$22 Billion for Grants to Amtrak including:

- \$16 Billion for Amtrak's National Network for new rolling stock, bringing stations up to ADA compliance, eliminating the deferred capital backlog for Amtrak owned non-Northeast Corridor (NEC) assets, and eliminating the work backlog for obsolete Amtrak national rail assets.

- \$6 Billion for Amtrak's NEC for new rolling stock, bringing stations up to ADA compliance, eliminating the deferred capital backlog for Amtrak owned NEC assets, and providing for NEC capital renewal backlog projects.

- \$36 Billion for a new Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Federal-State partnership for intercity passenger rail grants including:

- \$12 billion for non-NEC capital projects to expand or establish new intercity passenger rail service, including high-speed, achieving or maintaining a state of good repair, or improving performance. Amtrak would be eligible to apply to FRA's new IIJA-authorized Corridor Identification and Development Program, but preference would be given to projects for which Amtrak was not the sole applicant.

- \$24 billion for NEC projects. The Grant awards would need to be consistent with the NEC Commission's C35 plan. Amtrak's NEC grant funding provided by IIJA could cover a project's non-

federal costs.

- \$8 billion for other rail and safety-focused grant programs including:

- \$5 billion for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants.
- \$3 billion for a new Railroad Grade Crossing Elimination program.
- \$250 million for operating support including:
- \$50 million per year for five years via the Federal Restoration and Enhancement program.

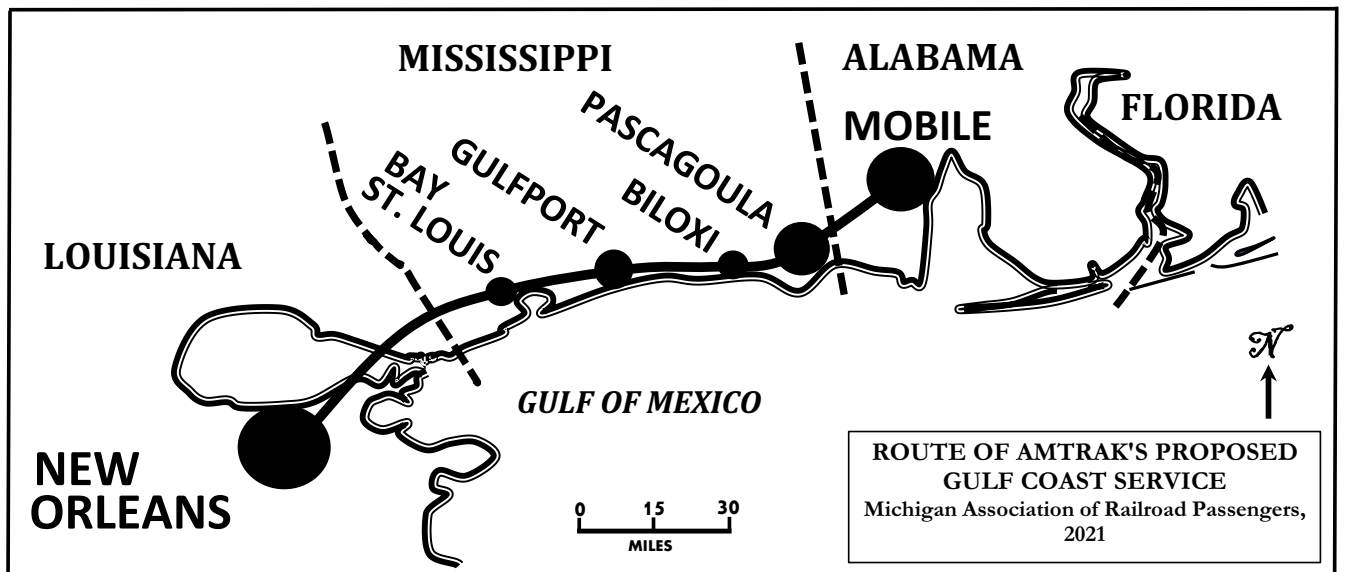
This could be set up with the Federal Government covering:

- Year 1 – 90 % (of operating costs)
- Year 2 – 80 %
- Year 3 – 70 %
- Year 4 – 60 %
- Year 5 – 50 %
- Year 6 – 30 %
- PRIIA costing would then go forward.

The *Business Insider* blog says that included in this legislation is language that targets the improvement of cross-border passenger rail services to

See *Proposed grants* page 3

## Amtrak struggles to get to Mobile



The route would be about 135 miles long and serve six towns in southern Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

The Southern Rail Commission and *Railway Age* report that after more than 5 years of struggles and studies, Amtrak's proposed Gulf Coast Service, is now before the US Surface Transportation Board. Amtrak is proposing two round trips a day over the 135-mile route. Although not outright stated, the delaying tactics adopted by CSX and their claims that \$2 billion in improvements would be needed for the lightly used line only serve to illustrate their total opposition to the proposed new passenger trains. Similar opposition is shown by the state railroad associations and by the State of Alabama. Norfolk Southern also opposes the proposed train for unexplained reasons - only about two miles of the 135-mile route would be on NS. The proposal is supported by the State of Mississippi, the USDOT, the cities to be served, and

enjoys widespread popular support among residents along the route, including those in Alabama.

On July 9, *Progressive Railroading* reported that CSX has granted Amtrak access to its property and personnel to conduct a survey for a new layover track in Mobile and to begin repairs to stations in Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, Pascagoula, and Mobile. Also granted was the process of allowing Amtrak crews to operate along the Gulf Coast corridor for the purpose of qualifying and becoming familiar with the railroad. However, *Progressive Railroading* reported on October 22nd that CSX continued to obstruct Amtrak by denying Amtrak access to the CSX Choctaw Yard for development of a new siding to store the passenger trains.

It is the opposition from the State of Alabama that is the most important

obstacle to the new trains and Alabama is the opponent that could kill the project by withholding funding. Indeed, filings by CSX claim that the opposition from the State of Alabama make Amtrak's application void. Every comment from institutional parties in Alabama opposes the new trains. Perhaps the strongest individual opponent is Jimmy Lyons, CEO of the Alabama State Port Authority, who seems to have convinced everyone that somehow the passenger trains will seriously interfere with freight movements on CSX in and out of the Port. The port's interest in the project has garnered wide attention and the attention seems to be advancing efforts of the port to obtain federally funded improvements for massive dredging work and other improvements to develop the port into a major

See *Getting to Mobile* page 3

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The Michigan Passenger welcomes your comments and submissions on passenger rail issues. Comments, articles, and other materials sent for publication should be sent by email to [jhguidinger1@yahoo.com](mailto:jhguidinger1@yahoo.com). Clippings from newspapers, magazines, and electronic sources must include the publication's name and date. Photos sent by email must be in .jpg format. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

**Contributors to this issue:**  
**Clark Charnetski and Hugh Gurney**

## Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. Executive Committee

Chair and Michigan Passenger Editor  
**John Guidinger**  
 517-918-9958  
[jhguidinger1@yahoo.com](mailto:jhguidinger1@yahoo.com)

Metro Detroit Regional Chair  
**Robert Patterson**  
 313-836-3736  
[ridethetrainmichigan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ridethetrainmichigan@sbcglobal.net)

Vice Chair and Government Affairs Coordinator  
**Steve Vagnozzi**  
 517-349-4809  
[svagnozzi@comcast.net](mailto:svagnozzi@comcast.net)

Meetings & Station Reps Coordinator  
**Chuck Merckel**  
 734-330-0281  
[crmerckel@aol.com](mailto:crmerckel@aol.com)

Secretary - **Larry Krieg**  
 734-761-3814  
[krieg45@gmail.com](mailto:krieg45@gmail.com)

Membership Coordinator  
**Warren Fritz**  
 269-998-4308  
[wfritz41@gmail.com](mailto:wfritz41@gmail.com)

Treasurer - **Jean Merckel**  
 734-717-0326  
[jcmerckel@aol.com](mailto:jcmerckel@aol.com)

**Carolyn Ulstad**  
 231-941-6584 ext. 710  
[carolyn@groundworkcenter.org](mailto:carolyn@groundworkcenter.org)

**Clark Charnetski**  
 734-761-3814  
[camcharnet@aol.com](mailto:camcharnet@aol.com)

Communication Coordinator  
**Kay M. Chase**  
[chase@wmich.edu](mailto:chase@wmich.edu) 269-388-3777

**MARP Webmaster**  
**Larry Sobczak**  
[editor@marp.org](mailto:editor@marp.org) - 586-781-6891

## About MARP

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc., (MARP) was established in 1973 as a customer advocacy group to improve intercity passenger rail and bus service, commuter rail service, and transit, and to encourage the preservation of historic railroad stations.

MARP is not affiliated with Amtrak, the railroads, governments, or any political party. MARP is incorporated as a Michigan non-profit organization and is exempt from federal income tax under the IRS code 501(c)(3) as a charitable educational organization. Donations to MARP may be tax-deductible in accordance with IRS rules.

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33373 Hampshire Road	
Livonia, Michigan 48154-2952	

## MICHIGAN SERVICES

Amtrak Train Schedules										
Effective November 1, 2021										
Chicago-Kalamazoo-Ann Arbor-Detroit-Pontiac										
Chicago-Kalamazoo-East Lansing-Port Huron										
Wolve-rine Service	Wolve-rine Service	Blue Water	Wolve-rine Service	Train Name		Wolve-rine Service	Blue Water	Wolve-rine Service	Wolve-rine Service	
350	352	364	354	Train Number		351	365	353	355	
Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Days of Operation		Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	
7:20a	1:25p	4:00p	5:50p	Dp	CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT)	Ar	10:32a	11:45a	2:50p	10:40p
7:44a					Hammond-Whiting, IN				2:05p	9:54p
8:28a			6:53p		Michigan City, IN (CT)					9:12p
9:39a	3:41p	6:10p	8:04p		New Buffalo, MI (ET)		11:24a	2:09p	10:02p	
10:04a	4:02p	6:32p	8:24p		Niles, MI		11:04a	1:49p	9:42p	
10:15a		6:43p			Dowagiac, MI		10:52a		9:29p	
10:47a	4:36p	7:11p	8:58p		Kalamazoo, MI		9:16a	10:26a	1:16p	9:00p
11:25a	5:11p	7:38p	9:33p		Battle Creek, MI		8:48a	10:00a	12:49p	8:33p
		9:00p			East Lansing, MI			8:54a		
		9:37p			Durand, MI			8:08a		
		10:08p			Flint, MI			7:35a		
		10:34p			Lapeer, MI			7:08a		
		11:31p		Ar	PORT HURON, MI	Dp		6:20a		
			10:03p		Albion, MI		8:15a			
12:26p	6:06p		10:28p		Jackson, MI		7:51a		11:46a	7:37p
1:03p	6:46p		11:08p		Ann Arbor, MI		7:14a		11:11a	7:00p
1:34p	7:22p		11:39p		Dearborn, MI		6:44a		10:41a	6:29p
2:04p	7:55p		12:14p		DETROIT, MI		6:26a		10:23a	6:11p
2:26p	8:16p		12:35p		Royal Oak, MI		6:03a		10:00a	5:48p
2:34p	8:23p		12:42p		Troy, MI		5:56a		9:52a	5:41p
2:46p	8:40p		1:01a	Ar	PONTIAC, MI	Dp	5:43a		9:38a	5:28p

## Amtrak Train Schedule

Effective September 7, 2021  
 Chicago-Grand Rapids

Pere Mar-quette	Train Name		Pere Mar-quette
370	Train Number		371
Daily	Days of Operation		Daily
6:30p	Dp	CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT)	Ar
9:14p		St. Joe-Benton Harbor, MI (ET)	8:10a
9:50p		Bangor, MI	7:32a
10:33p		Holland, MI	6:49a
11:34p	Ar	GRAND RAPIDS, MI	Dp
			6:00a

NOTE: These schedules are provided for planning purposes only and may not show recent time changes. Consult with Amtrak at [AMTRAK.COM](http://AMTRAK.COM) or 1-800-USA-RAIL when making reservations.

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MARP STATION REPRESENTATIVES		
Chuck Merckel, Coordinator		
Station	Staff	MARP Volunteer
Albion	Bus	Matthew Murawski
Ann Arbor	Amtrak	Clark Charnetski/Steve Sobel
Bangor	None	JP Descamp
Battle Creek	Amtrak	Charles Shong
Dearborn	Amtrak	Mary Jo Durivage
Detroit	Amtrak	Dwight Phillips
Dowagiac	None	Dowagiac Chbr of Commerce
Durand	None	Mary Stone
East Lansing	Caretkr	Steve Vagnozzi
Flint	Bus	Barb Westcott
Grand Rapids	Caretkr	Tim Corner
Holland	None	Nathan Nietering
Jackson	Caretkr	John Guidinger
Kalamazoo	Caretkr	Warren Fritz
Lapeer	None	Jim Slater
Michigan City, IN	None	
New Buffalo	None	Lori S. Peterson
Niles	Caretkr	Jack Kessler
Pontiac	None	Robert Tischbein
Port Huron	None	T.J. Gaffney
Royal Oak	None	David Roberts
St Joseph	None	Todd Schultz
Troy	None	Brad Socier



# FRA turns down Ann

By Clark Charnetski

On August 11, 2021, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), informed the City of Ann Arbor and MDOT that it was discontinuing funding for the development of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Ann Arbor Intermodal Station Project. Jamie Rennert, Director of the FRA Office of Infrastructure Investment said in her letter that she did not intend to complete the environmental process, which was nearly complete. This effectively terminated the new station project for Ann Arbor.

As justification for its action, the FRA cited the high projected cost and contended that the City's Preferred Site location on Fuller Road was "too constrained" and that space for the amount of required parking necessitated that the station be located above the tracks. It also criticized the City for designing a station that "exceeds intercity passenger rail needs."

MARP believes that the FRA exaggerated the full build out cost of the project compared to other Michigan stations without accounting for inflation and the much greater Amtrak passenger volume at Ann Arbor, as well for the likely potential of future commuter trains between Ann Arbor and Detroit. The FRA also did not appear to consider that this was a lower cost initial phase required to begin service at the Preferred Site, and that this site has the capacity to meet future needs for the full build out. The Preferred Site is also about as close to the downtown center of Ann Arbor as the location of the railroad allows, an important factor in selecting the site.

The letter did not give any details as to why they thought the proposal was too grandiose. The City and its consultants followed Amtrak and FRA guidelines to determine the station and parking requirements. After studying eight alternative sites, the only other site deemed suitable was an expansion at the existing station site. However, the existing station site was always considered even more constrained than the Preferred Site. And to further complicate the situation at the existing station site, a recent major real estate development on adjacent property needed for expansion of the existing station site has now made acquisition of this property impossible.

Rather than admitting that the city proposal is the only one that would

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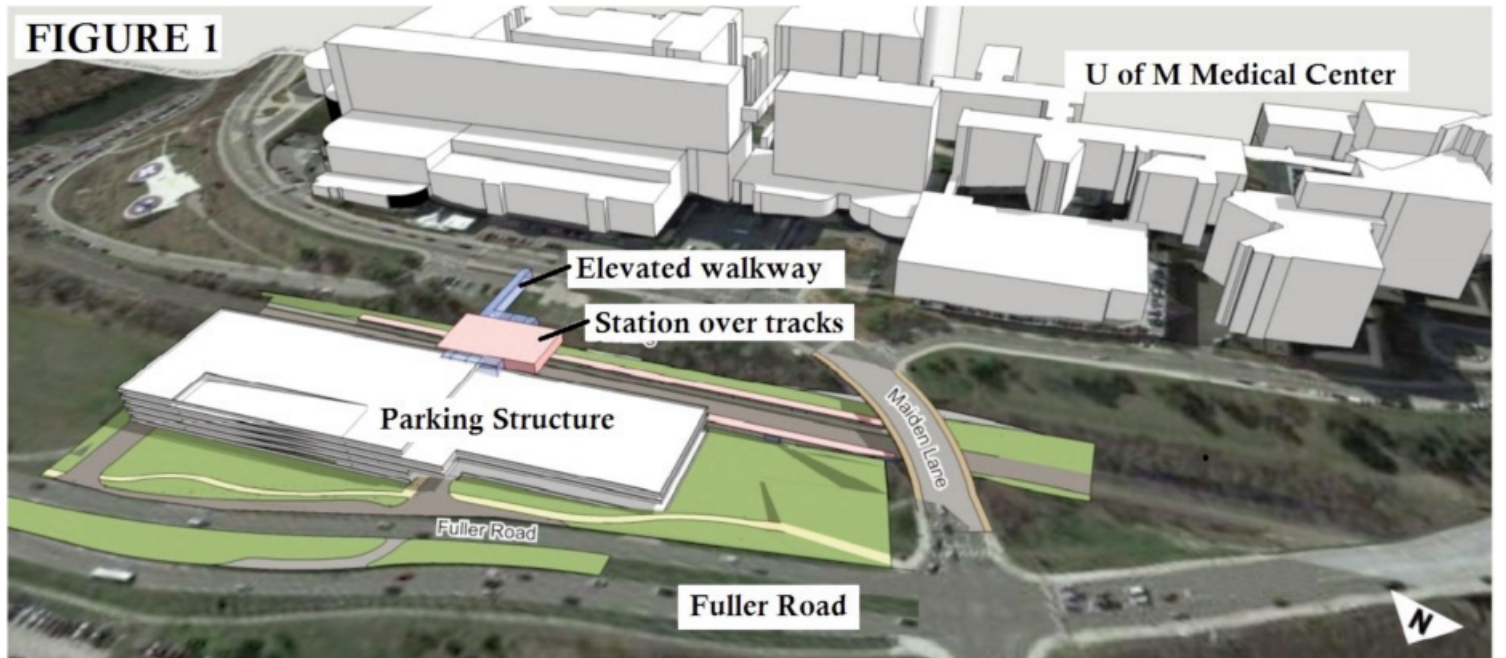


Figure 1 shows the Preferred Site on Fuller Road. The site is as close to central Ann Arbor as the railroad allows and is within walking distance of the large University of Michigan Medical Center and the North Campus. As shown in the drawing, the station is located over the tracks with an elevated walkway to the equally elevated Medical Center, where thousands of people work. (From: EA, Ann Arbor Intermodal Station, City of Ann Arbor.)

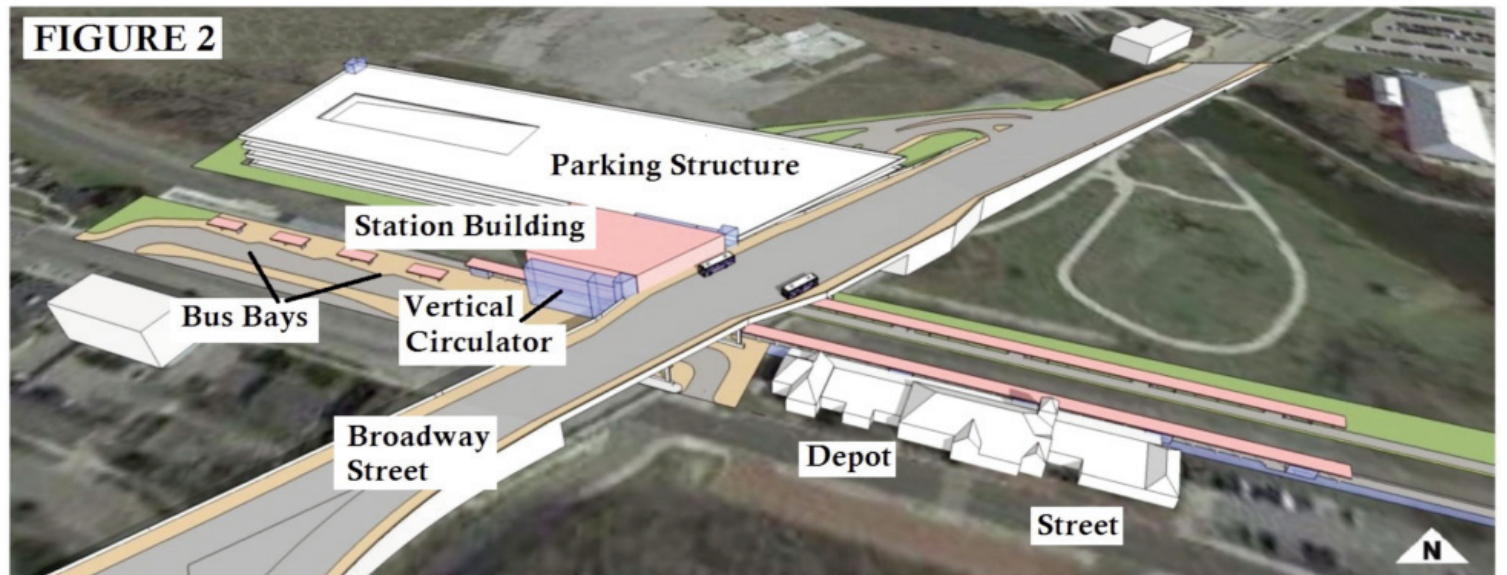


Figure 2 shows the Alternative Site (at the existing station) on Depot Street on the west side of Broadway Street. The elevated station building is over the tracks at the west side of the Broadway Street Bridge. Much of the land for the parking structure is now slated to be part of a recently announced real estate development and is no longer available for expansion of the station site. (From: EA, Ann Arbor Intermodal Station, City of Ann Arbor.)



Difficult parking conditions at the existing Ann Arbor Amtrak station in the parking lot on the north side of tracks. Lack of adequate parking adds greatly to the stress of Amtrak passengers at Ann Arbor.

# Arbor Station Project



Crowded Ann Arbor Station platform in November of 2018. Each year this single track station serves over 150,000 rail passengers and 40,000 Greyhound passengers. The long-planned Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter trains could add another 50,000 passengers a year.

meet future requirements but that it would be expensive, the FRA chose instead to belittle the ten years of planning that went into the City's proposal, even though it followed Amtrak's requirements.

Currently, Ann Arbor serves over 150,000 Amtrak train passengers annually as well as an additional 40,000 Greyhound and other intercity bus passengers. The waiting room and parking space are far too small to handle these crowds. Wolverine Line improvements and new passenger cars are projected to increase Amtrak ridership significantly. Long planned commuter rail service to Detroit could add another 50,000 passengers a year at Ann Arbor.

Mlive reports that on October 12 US Representative Debbie Dingle (D-Dearborn) sent a letter to the FRA Administrator requesting a meeting with all parties to discuss the decision by the FRA to terminate the EA process.



Crowded Ann Arbor Amtrak Station interior. The waiting area is too small for the estimated 150,000 Amtrak passengers who arrive and depart from the station each year in terms of seating and interior space. The building will be far too small to accommodate improved Amtrak service plus additional commuter train passengers when future commuter train service to Detroit is considered.

At the Annual Meeting in Jackson on October 9, 2021, MARP members unanimously adopted the following resolution to oppose the discontinuance of the funding for replacement of the greatly inadequate Ann Arbor station.

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers disagrees with the decision by the Federal Railroad Administration to not complete the Environmental Assessment for the Ann Arbor Intermodal Station Project. The proposal made by the City of Ann Arbor to meet future needs of Amtrak and intercity bus passengers is reasonable and follows guidelines issued by Amtrak for station planning. Cost evaluation must consider passenger volume and the difficulty of constructing such a facility in an urban environment. The FRA should complete its assessment and issue a Finding of No Significant Impact for the City's preferred site. This would allow planning to continue so that the project would be ready to proceed with construction when funding becomes available.



Intercity and Thruway buses lined up at Ann Arbor Amtrak station on Depot Street. The station also serves as a Greyhound Bus Station.

# Alternative Routes for Chicago-Toronto Trains

MARP identified alternative routes for the long discussed Chicago-Toronto international train as part of a discussion at the Rail Users Network (RUN) Conference on October 15, 2021. The routes were limited to those which would pass through the heavily populated area of southern Michigan and Detroit, and, of course, follow existing railroads. Because only one route met this criteria west of Detroit, Michigan, and east of London, Ontario, the study examined possible alternatives between Detroit and London.

Two basic routes were identified, both starting at a common point where the existing Conrail Shared Assets railroad used by Amtrak crosses Junction Street in Detroit.

Alternative Route 1 began at the crossing of Junction Street and followed the former Michigan Central alignment past Michigan Central Station, through the Detroit River Railroad Tunnels, now owned by Canadian Pacific (CP), to Windsor.

At Wyandotte Road in Windsor, Alternative Route 1

was divided into two variations. Route 1A would require the construction of a new station conceptually on a site near the crossing of Wyandotte Street. From this point Route 1A continues to the east about 44 miles on CP to a point 8 miles west of Chatham where the CP line crosses the Canadian National (CN)/Via route. At this point a new connection would be installed so that the international train would move off CP onto the existing Via/CN line through Chatham and on to the east to London (and then on to Toronto).

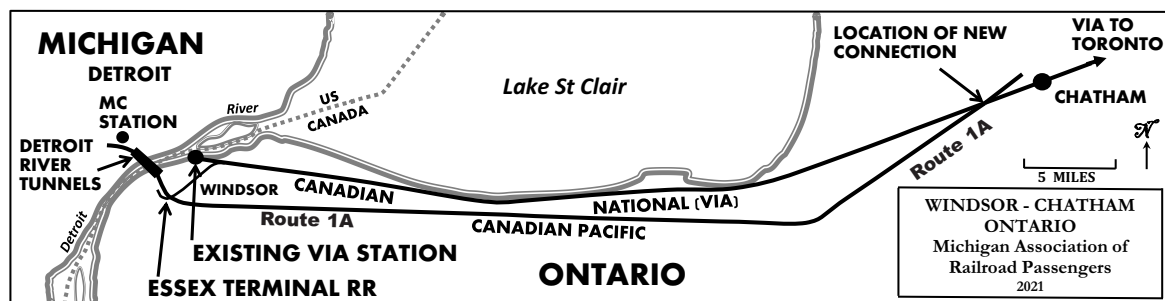


Figure 1 shows Route 1A. After passing through the Detroit River Railroad Tunnel, the international train would continue east on Canadian Pacific about 44 miles to a point about 8 miles west of Chatham where a connection would be built to allow the train to follow the existing CN/Via route to Toronto. New stations would be required in Detroit and Windsor.

Route 1B at Wyandotte Road in Windsor, would continue to the east a short distance and then divert off CP onto the Essex Terminal Railroad. The route would then continue to the north-

east on the Essex Terminal Railroad for about three miles where it would connect with the existing Via route from Windsor. Here the international train would be required to back up

about a mile to reach the existing Via Windsor Station. From the Windsor Via station the route to London would follow the existing Via route to London.

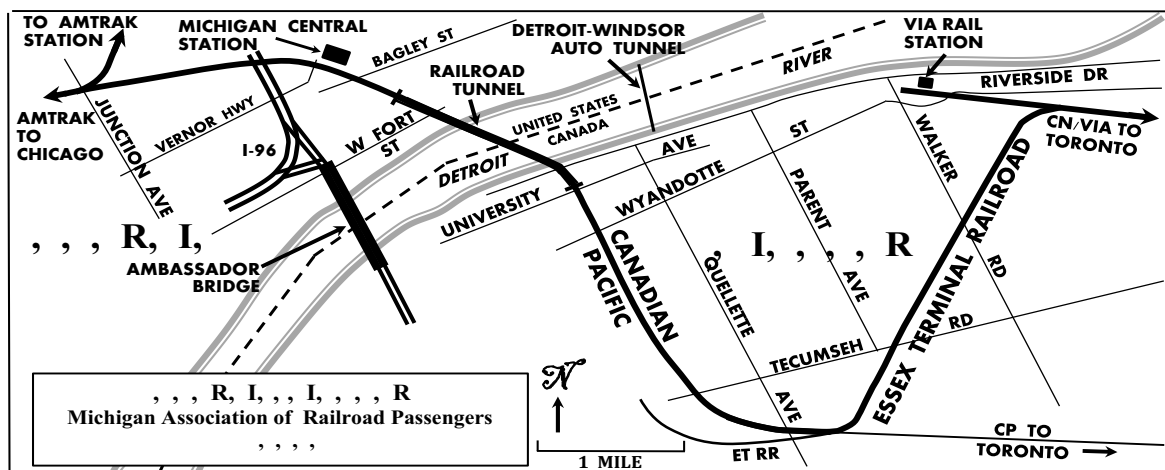


Figure 2 shows Route 1B. After passing through the Detroit River Railroad Tunnel, the international train would continue a short distance to the Essex Terminal Railroad. The train would then follow the Essex Terminal Railroad about three miles to the connection with the existing CN/Via line to Toronto. The train would have to back up about a mile to reach the existing Windsor Station. A new station would be required in Detroit.

Route 2 is entirely different from Route 1. At Junction Street, Route 2 would follow the existing Amtrak route to the northeast to the Woodward Avenue Amtrak

Station in Detroit. Here Route 2 would continue to the northeast on the CN line 54 miles to Port Huron. At Port Huron, Route 2 would turn to the east and pass

through Port Huron-Sarnia railroad tunnel to Sarnia and then on to London on the existing CN/Via route.

These routes are compared in the table at right. Between Junction Street in Detroit and the London Via Station the three routes are almost identical in approximate length, ranging from 117 to 120 miles long. A new station in Detroit would be required for both Routes 1A and 1 B, but not Route 2. Route 1A would also require a new station in Windsor. Route 2 would consolidate all Amtrak trains at the existing Detroit Amtrak Station. It would not require any new stations, connections, or back up moves. However, it would require some level of upgrading of the tracks and signals on 54 miles of CN between Detroit and Port Huron. Because the CN line between Sarnia and London has been recently single tracked, an unknown amount of upgrading on about 59 miles of CN between Sarnia and London will also be required.

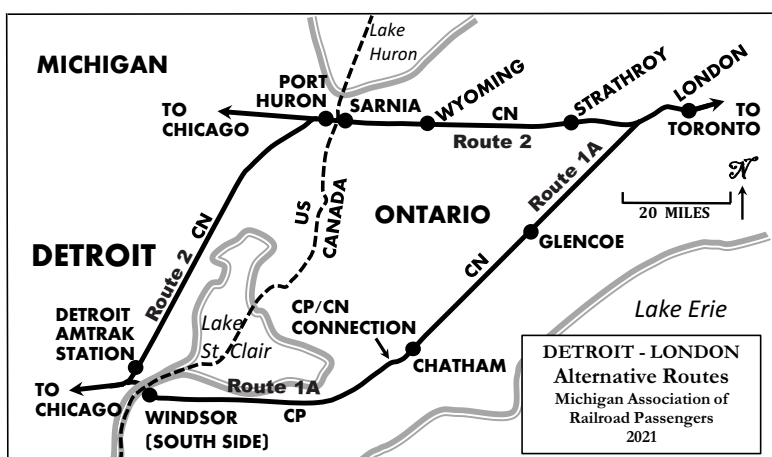


Figure 3 compares Route 2 to Route 1A. On Route 2 the international train would operate into the existing Detroit Amtrak Station on Woodward Avenue. The train would then continue to the northeast over the CN line to Port Huron. Passing through the existing Port Huron-Sarnia Rail tunnel, the international train would continue to the east to London over the existing route used by Via trains to and from Sarnia. No new stations would be required for Route 2.

## Station Host Program Restarted for East Lansing

MARP member Jerry Becker has restarted the Station Host Program at East Lansing. After being suspended twice due to the pandemic, and the resultant closure of the East Lansing Multimodal Terminal, the Amtrak Station Host program for East Lansing fully reopened in June. At present there is a loyal cadre of three volunteer hosts and the weekend depot caretaker is a former station host. Currently hosts are present for the westbound Blue Water on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings. They arrive about an hour before train time to greet passengers, answer questions, and assist them in boarding. Typically over 100 passengers are boarded, many of whom are first time Amtrak riders.

Additional volunteers are needed. To become an Amtrak Station Host, contact MARP Vice Chair Steve Vagnozzi (svagnozzi@comcast.net). MARP would like to see the return of an Amtrak agent at East Lansing, but until then, the Station Hosts are there to assist passengers for at least the three busiest trains of the 14 trains calling at East Lansing each week.

## Canadian Pacific Acquires the Detroit River Tunnel

By Hugh Gurney

In December of 2020 Canadian Pacific purchased the Detroit River Tunnel connecting Detroit with Windsor, Ontario, as reported in the December 23, 2020 issue of *Progressive Railroading*. The railroad had previously owned a 16.5% stake in the 1.6 mile tunnel, the remaining 83.5% held by OMERS, the pension plan for Ontario government employees. CP paid approximately \$312 million to purchase the OMERS stake. The purchase is one part of Canadian Pacific's plan to grow the company.

The acquisition follows closely behind the June, 2020, purchase by CP of the 481-mile Central Maine and Quebec Railway and the lease of 57 miles of track from the state of Maine, giving CP direct access to the Atlantic port of Searsport, Maine. Connections with the Eastern Maine Railway and the New Brunswick Southern Railway also provide CP with access to the important port of St. John, New Brunswick.

As Canadian Pacific President and CEO Keith Creel stated in the December 2020 issue of *Progressive Railroading*, "International intermodal business holds great promise. CP's new access to the port of St. John, New Brunswick, in connection with the Eastern Maine and New Brunswick Southern railways, extends us to the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in 20 years."

CP is now making a bid to acquire the entire Kansas City Southern Network. If successful, CPKC would become a three nation railroad serving Canada, the United States, and Mexico. CP the smallest of the major North American railroads will be able to compete more effectively with its rival Canadian National.

### Route Comparison: Detroit - London

#### Option 1A - Detroit - Windsor - London (Using CP east of Windsor)

Approximate Length: 117 miles (188 km)

#### Advantages:

- Avoids one-mile back up to get to Windsor Station
- Avoids rebuilding 3 miles of Essex Terminal Railroad

#### Disadvantages:

- Requires new station in Detroit
- Requires new station in Windsor
- Requires track connection west of Chatham

#### Option 1B - Detroit - Windsor - London (Using Essex Terminal RR)

Approximate Length: 119 miles (191 km)

#### Advantages:

- Allows use of existing Windsor Station
- Avoids need for track connection west of Chatham
- Avoids need for new station in Windsor

#### Disadvantages:

- Requires new station in Detroit
- Requires one-mile backup to reach Windsor Station
- Requires rebuilding 3 miles of Essex Terminal Railroad

#### Option 2 - Detroit - Port Huron - London

Approximate Length: 120 miles (193 km)

#### Advantages:

- Avoids need for new station in Detroit
- Avoids need for new station in Windsor
- Avoids need for track connection west of Chatham
- Avoids rebuilding 3 miles of Essex Terminal Railroad
- Avoids back up move at Windsor
- Consolidates all trains in existing Detroit Amtrak station

#### Disadvantages:

- Requires upgrading of 54 miles of CN between Detroit and Port Huron
- Requires some level of upgrading of 59 miles of CN between Sarnia and London

# SHORT LINES

**Amtrak Joe vs. The Modern Robber Barons** was the title of a widely distributed article in the on line *Washington Monthly* on August 9, 2021. According to author Phillip Longman, for any of the policies of the Biden bipartisan infrastructure bill to be implemented, the financiers in control of railroads will have to be brought on board. The financiers are not presiding over an expanding rail system, they are selling it off and permanently liquidating its assets for short-term economic gain.....**Amtrak's 30th Street Station in Philadelphia** will be transformed by a \$300 to \$400 million project to refurbish and improve the 500,000 square-foot building opened by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1933. *Railway Age* reports that the goals will be to bring the station to a good state of repair, complete renovation of the corporate space in the upper levels, modernize back-of-house facilities, and enhance the quality of the food and shopping accommodations for travelers and employees.....**Brazil announced plans to build 3,300 km (2,000 miles) of new freight railroad** worth \$US 10 billion, the biggest railroad Brazilian expansion in 100 years. According to the International Railway Journal, the project includes 10 new segments of railroad each up to 717 km (445 miles) long.....**The merger of Kansas City Southern and Canadian National was dealt a death blow** on September 1, 2021, when the US Surface Transportation Board ruled against the plan due to anti-competition concerns. Canadian Pacific returned to be the favored suitor by Kansas City Southern and begin implementing its earlier merger proposal. This would be a true end to end merger and allow the two smallest of the Class 1 North American railroads compete better with the larger systems that surround them. It would become the first railroad to serve Canada, the US and Mexico. Among the benefits cited was that CPKC would provide better benefits to Amtrak, possibly the first time passengers have been considered in such a mega merger.....**Chicago Union Station rent payments by Metra to Amtrak** for use of the station was the subject of a recent ruling by the Surface Transportation Board. According to *Railway Age*, the long running dispute between Amtrak and Metra was settled on August 16, 2021 with a ruling that Metra should pay Amtrak \$10.7 million a year for use of the station. The ruling was about midway between the \$14.7 million requested for rent by Amtrak and the \$6.7 offered by Metra. The payments cover items such as dispatching, maintenance of way, station operations, station maintenance, and policing.....**In Ontario, Metrolinx has shown interest in upgrading passenger services on the Toronto-Guelph-Stratford-London route** which normally sees only one daily round trip by Via Trains 84 and 87. To the surprise of many, several Metrolinx six-car GO Transit test trains were observed on the CP line between Toronto and London in early August. This was widely reported in the local press and no significant operating issue were found.. Many residents along the route and Transport Action Ontario have been calling for improvements to this route for decades..... **Michigan State University's Director of Railway Education, Dr. Nick Little, commented** on the *Supply Chain Brain* list of the "100 Great Supply Chain Partners of 2021." The list covered companies in about every type of logistics and shipping company known to exist, but not a single railroad. To be on the greatest list, the companies have to be nominated by their customers based on ten characteristics. Dr. Little comments in an August issue of *Railway Age* asks if the railroads are "taken for granted?".....**MARP founder John DeLora commented** that he thought the August 2021 issue of the *Michigan Passenger* was the best issue he has ever seen. Thanks John.....**Brightline is ready to reopen in November** after ceasing all operations on March 25, 2020, due to the COVID 19 pandemic. *Railway Age* says that the private intercity rail passenger operator will restart passenger service in the first half of November on its route between Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach. During this time Brightline continued construction for a new 170-mile extension north to the Orlando International Airport, scheduled to open in 2022..... **Protective fencing along the Del Mar Bluffs on of the Los Angeles-San Diego line** has been the subject of dispute between the North Coast Transit District, local residents, the California Coastal Commission, and the City of Del Mar, California. At the center of the dispute is the proposed 12,000 feet of fencing to keep trespassers off the tracks who are trying to reach the Pacific Ocean beach at the base of the bluffs. The line is used by dozens of daily Amtrak and commuter trains carrying over 8 million passengers a year. The bluffs are also subject to erosion from unrelenting wave action..... **Start of construction of the new Houston-Dallas Texas Central Railroad** will probably not occur at the beginning of 2022, the previously announce target date according to the *Texas "Y'allitics"* podcast. Texas Central CEO Carlos Aguilar said a lot was dependent on the company obtaining about half of the \$24B cost in the form of federal loans from passage of the national infrastructure legislation in Congress. He reported that the private rail venture has secured about 40 percent of the needed right of way and that the first 50 miles of the 240-mile project would be built south from Dallas....**In 2023 BNSF will construct a badly needed 2-mile section of second track** between a location north of Point Wells, Washington, and Edmonds Street to fill in a section of single track that has resulted in many delayed Amtrak and Sound Transit commuter trains on Amtrak's Cascade Route.....**US Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-Toledo) is pressing for increased Amtrak** service between Chicago and Cleveland. In an August *Cleveland.com* news release, she stated that delays along the route, particularly just east of Chicago, are legendary. She also noted that because USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg is from South Bend Indiana, a stop on the Chicago-Cleveland route, the timing for this action is immediate...**Michigan's Lake State Railway was named the** 2021 Regional Railroad of the Year by *Railway Age*. The 373-mile railroad based in Saginaw is projected to ship 65,000 carloads this year. It was the *Railway Age* 2018 Short line of the year, when it shipped 30,000 carloads a year. Lakes State Railroad has taken fragments of deteriorated lines cast off from Grand Trunk, Penn Central, and other short lines, and patiently merged them into a viable rail system ..... **Greyhound Canada** previously shutdown all bus service in Western Canada in 2018. After the COVID 19 Pandemic caused the loss of 95 percent of their passengers in Eastern Canada, Greyhound ended all of their remaining service on May 13, 2021. Other bus companies have shown interest in perhaps taking up some routes.... **Detroit's Q Line streetcar returned** to service on September 21, 2021 according to an article in the *Detroit free Press* on September 19.....**The Heartland Fliers may be extended** north 190 miles north to a Newton, Kansas, connection in both directions with the *Southwest Chief* after the Kansas Senate and House voted for a resolution of support for the change. Amtrak supports the extension and will provide federal funding for the first 3 to 5 years....**The D2A2 bus service resumed service** on October 18th according to the RTA of Southeast Michigan. The express bus runs 16 round trips each week day (4 on weekend days) between Detroit Grand Circus Park and the Ann Arbor Blake Transit Center.

## Via To Develop New Routes Between Toronto And Quebec City

By Hugh Gurney

In 2000, a VIA Rail Canada passenger train could make the run from Toronto to Montreal in just under four hours. Despite the investment of over C\$300 million to improve service, the same trip now takes almost five hours due to freight interference on the busy Canadian National route. As a result, VIA and the Canadian government are devising new routes between Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City to avoid the CN system.

At a press conference at the VIA Rail station in Quebec City on July 6, 2021, Canadian Federal Transport Minister Omar Alghabra announced the new initiative, dubbed "High Frequency Rail," according to the July 7 issue of *National Post*. Bids for at least portions of the new route will be issued during the fall of 2021. Commenting that his own trip from Ottawa to Quebec City was slowed by freight interference, Alghabra explained that with High Frequency Rail, freight interference would be eliminated because passenger trains would be traveling on both upgraded and dedicated tracks. Using little used or abandoned routes north of the CN main line, trains would

pass through Peterborough and Smith Falls on their way to Ottawa, thence to Montreal, and through Laval and Trois-Rivieres to Ottawa.

With the goal of reaching speeds of 200 kilometers per hour (124 mph), Alghabra predicted that at least 90% of the route will be electrified. Having a price tag of up to C\$12 billion, the Transport Minister noted, "The high-frequency rail project will be one of the largest infrastructure projects in Canada in decades, and will transform travel in a very busy transportation corridor."

Explaining that "High Frequency" is not "High Speed" where trains operate at 300 kilometers per hour, Alghabra stated, "Having studied high-frequency and high-speed, we concluded that high-frequency offers the best option for Canadians. The high-speed rail would cost significantly more, and would take a lot more time to build."

While not stated in the press conference, it is assumed that VIA Rail would still serve communities on the existing CN line such as Kingston and Drummondville.

## Siemens Charger locomotive for VIA Rail



Above, the first new Siemens Charger locomotive for Via Rail. The first Venture train set was received by Via in September. According to *Railway Pro*, the train is undergoing testing and will enter service in early 2022 as the first of 32 bi-directional train sets ordered by Via for the Quebec City – Windsor corridor. (Via Photo)

## Huron Central Railway avoids shutdown

By Hugh Gurney

On June 1, 2021 Genesee and Wyoming Canada, owner of the 173-mile Huron Central Railway connecting Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, with Sudbury, Ontario, announced it had dropped plans to suspend operations on the critical link between Sault Ste. Marie and the east. *Progressive Railroading* reported the welcome news on June 1, 2021, and stated that Huron Central currently hauls about 12,000 carloads of freight annually, primarily steel and forestry products which would tax provincial highways if service was discontinued.

Fortunately, the recent Canadian federal

budget includes renewal of the National Trade Corridors Fund, and Genesee and Wyoming has been assured that new program criteria eliminate barriers denying eligibility for short line railroads.

"We applaud the government of Canada for listening to the concerns of stakeholders, in particular the short line rail sector and the natural resources and other industries that depend on Canada's regional transportation corridors," said Rick McLellan, president of G&W. "Renewing the National Trade Corridors Fund with more inclusive program eligibility will be critical for our sector and the communities we support."

## Canadian Pacific to develop Hydrogen Powered Locomotive

By Hugh Gurney

Two years ago, in November, 2019, Dr. Andres Hoffrichter, Director, Rail Education and Research at Michigan State University, astounded members of the MARP with his explanation of how hydrogen fuel cells could power locomotives, emitting little or no greenhouse gases. To those present, the technology seemed something for the far distant future.

But just thirteen months later, in December, 2020, Canadian Pacific announced that it would develop North America's first hydrogen powered freight locomotive. CP's plan is to retrofit an existing diesel-electric locomotive using both fuel cell and battery technology to drive the locomotive's electric traction motors. On March 11, CP announced that it would purchase

the fuel cell modules from Ballard Power Systems, according to the March 11 issue of *Railway Age*.

Ballard agreed to deliver six 200 kilowatt fuel cell modules to CP during 2021 and to support installation. The modules will provide a total of 1.2 megawatts of power to the locomotive. CP President and CEO Keith Creel noted, "With this purchase from Ballard, a leader in the hydrogen fuel industry, CP further demonstrates its commitment to the next generation locomotive, one that produces zero emissions."

On October 4, 2021, *Railway Age* published a photo of the prototype locomotive, H20EL. The blue and green paint scheme symbolizes "sustainability, water and technology."

# Trains to northern Michigan are on track



Tie replacement project on the railroad which is owned by MDOT and leased to Great Lakes Central Railroad.

The effort to connect northern lower Michigan to southeast Michigan with a passenger line is still on track, according to our September special guest speaker Carolyn Ulstad of the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities (Groundwork). Carolyn said Groundwork, a nonprofit based in Traverse City, is working hard to move the project forward for those who want to live and thrive in Michigan without depending on a car to get around.

The idea for a passenger line between Ann Arbor and the Traverse City and Petoskey areas came out of visioning and planning processes around 2010, where communities all over the state said they would like a passenger rail connection to popular cities in northern Michigan. In 2017, Groundwork began exploring the possibility of future passenger service and worked with community partners along the existing line to initiate an initial cost and feasibility study, which showed that service was promising due to the track's good condition, and that line between Ann Arbor and Traverse City is primarily owned by the State of Michigan.

The study also predicted high ridership potential due to the significant number of college students living along the line in places like Ann Arbor,

Alma, Mt. Pleasant and Cadillac, and the six million annual visitors to the Traverse City region. Since the study was completed, the state has invested nearly \$2.5 million to improve the line for freight and passenger service, including track repairs in the Traverse City region.

Now that the feasibility study is complete, Carolyn said the team is ready to advance a Service Development Plan (SDP), which is a more detailed plan for the actual train service, operating structure, time tables, and overall costs and revenues and is seeking funding for additional track improvements along the line. Carolyn also said Groundwork is looking into the potential for demonstration trains for 2022. She noted that the project team wanted to start excursion trains in 2020 but the pandemic put a hold on those plans.

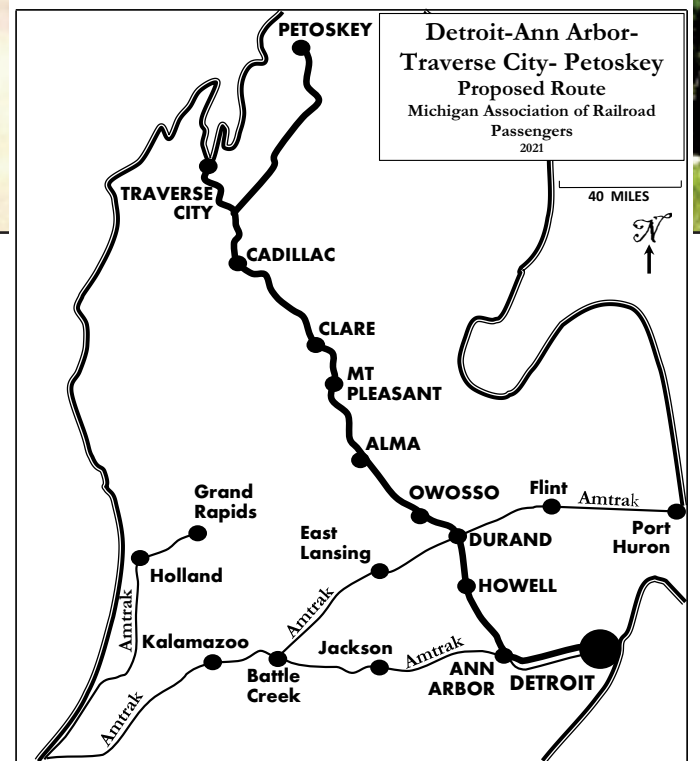
The Great Lakes Central Railroad operates approximately 220 miles of railroad between Ann Arbor and Traverse City and the 65-mile branch to Petoskey and has expressed interest in passenger operations. Originating the trains in Detroit would add about 35 miles to the route.

Stay tuned to Groundwork and MARP for future updates on the northern Michigan passenger rail project.



Above, a recent photo of the railroad passing through Mt. Pleasant where a lighted concrete platform is in place.

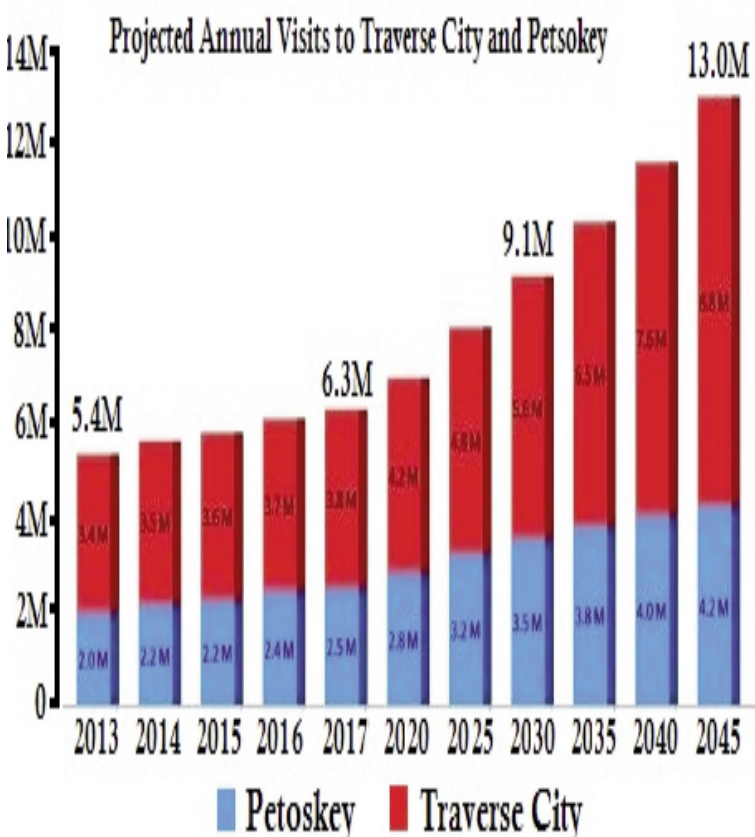
At right, the route of the proposed train to northern Michigan would start from the existing Detroit Amtrak Station and follow the existing Amtrak route to Ann Arbor. Just west of the Ann Arbor station, the proposed train would connect to the Great Lakes Central Railroad to the north and follow this railroad to Traverse City and Petoskey.



## Annual meeting held in Jackson



Derrick James (foreground), Amtrak's Midwest Governmental Affairs Manager, presents Amtrak's vision of an expanded national rail system at the MARP Annual Meeting in Jackson.



On October 9, 2021, MARP held its corporate Annual Meeting in Jackson at the historic First Congregational Church. The first in-person MARP meeting since 2019 was attended by about 25 people, who wore masks and adhered to other COVID19 virus safety protocols.

Amtrak's Senior Government Affairs Manager for the Midwest, Derrick James, reviewed the status of various Federal funding proposals to improve intercity passenger service. (Summarized on page 1.) He discussed the current Amtrak regional and national passenger train network and how it must be expanded to serve new population growth. This expansion

must include many new rail routes and increased frequencies on existing routes to provide rail passenger transportation services for future population growth. He described funding already provided by the Biden Administration to Amtrak and legislation pending in Congress that would provide a large amount of additional funding to finance improvements and expansion of the current Amtrak system. He asked for MARP support by meeting with and writing to our congressional representatives. MARP members pressed Mr. James on the need for Amtrak to restart the issuance of timetables for all trains (at least on line) to assist passengers in planning

rail trips. MARP Chair John Guidinger, reviewed changes in MARP over the past year. One change was the establishment of a Station Representative program in which selected MARP members would keep an eye on their hometown Amtrak station. They report to MARP on station happenings, local news articles, and the general conditions at the station. The representatives are passive observers and serve as the eyes and ears of MARP. Within 2 months MARP was able to successfully recruit 22 volunteers to cover all of the stations in Michigan.