

P The Michigan PASSENGER

YOUR SOURCE FOR PASSENGER RAIL NEWS • SINCE 1973



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Railroad Passengers
www.marp.org

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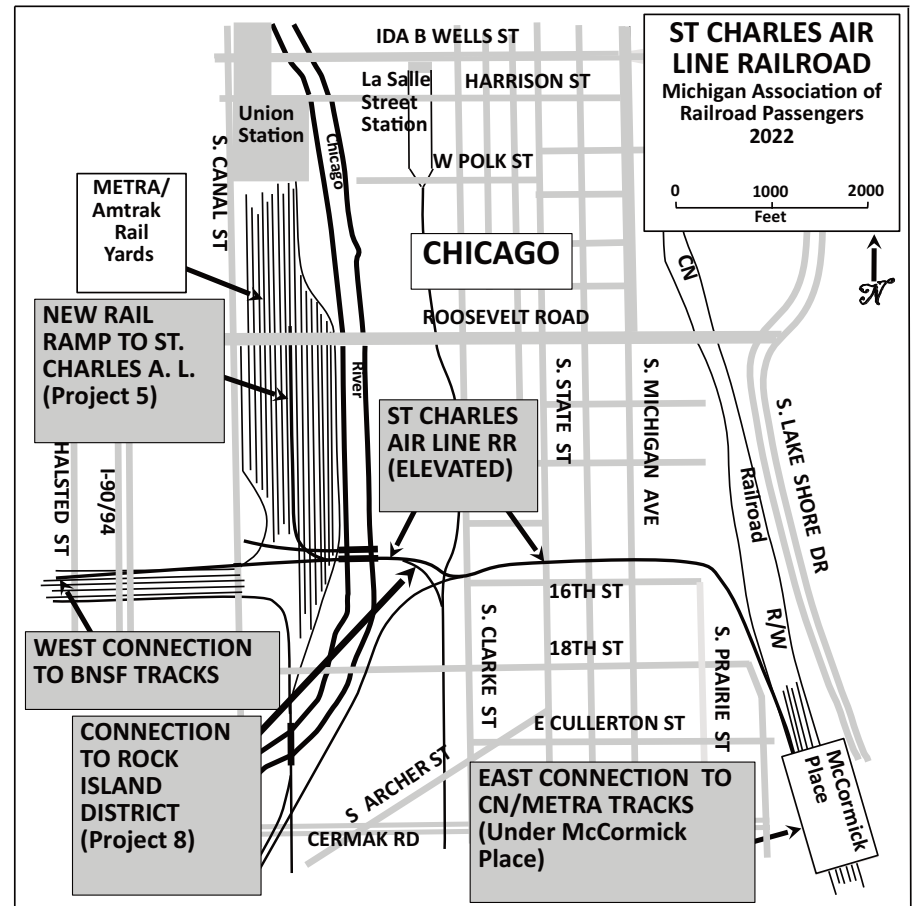
Amtrak Chicago Access Project Positive Implications for Michigan

Amtrak has applied for federal funding for several important projects to improve rail and passenger access to Chicago Union Station (CUS). Several of these projects are underway at an initial level, while others are projects long sought by Amtrak for improving station access. The projects have been rolled up into a consolidated mega project application to the Feds called the "Chicago Access Project."

Chicago has grown to become the most important rail hub in the United States, not only for Amtrak, but also for freight and commuter railroads. Chicago has more trackage radiating in more directions than any other city in North America. CUS is Amtrak's most important station facility outside of the Northeast Corridor. Today, over 90% of Amtrak's State-supported service outside of the east and west coasts, and more than 50% of long-distance trains begin or end at CUS. Every year CUS hosts almost 20,000 trains and serves over 3.3 million Amtrak customers.

However, none of this growth has been accompanied by increasing the capacity of CUS and this has become a significant constraint on further growth. The problem will be greatly exacerbated by the upcoming service expansions to Minneapolis/St. Paul, the Quad Cities, and Rockford, as well as increasing frequencies on several existing routes, including those to Michigan. Amtrak has partnered with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Metra, and Cook County, Illinois, to build on the investments of previous years at CUS.

Mass Transit reports that on July 8th a broad coalition of political, state, local, and transportation leaders was formed to promote the Chicago Access Project. The group recently gathered at CUS to raise awareness of the project. Attendees were: Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Illinois US Representative Jesus Garcia, Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner, IDOT



Secretary Omer Osman, Cook County DOT Superintendent Sis Killen, and Metra CEO Jim Derwinski.

The Chicago Access Project includes the following nine component projects.

1. Reactivate the CUS Mail Platforms for Passenger Use

The idea is to convert the unused high-level mail platforms at CUS for passenger use. Combined, the mail platforms are more than 1,800 ft long and over 95 ft wide with two through running tracks and three stub tracks. The project is pursuing funds to:

- Provide a level-boarding platform meeting ADA accessibility for those trains with equipment compatible with high-level boarding
- Improve passenger and luggage flows through the station
- Increase the long-term capacity of CUS to accommodate anticipated growth in existing intercity and

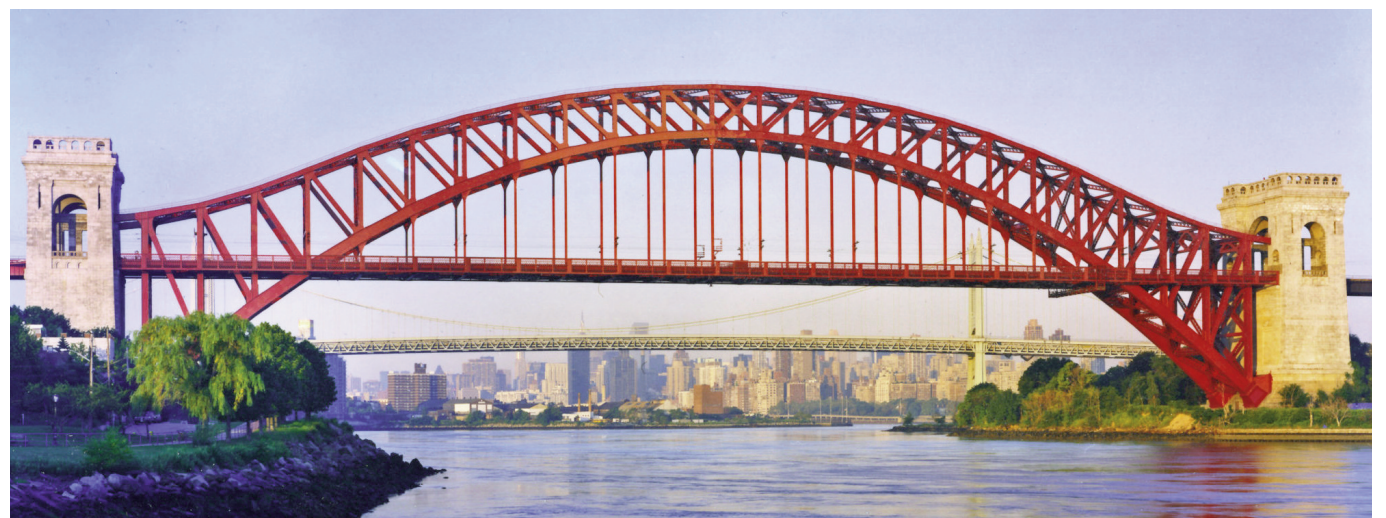
commuter rail service

- Create interim capacity and operational flexibility to enable reconstruction of other station platforms
- Support future rail service expansion in the Chicago area and Midwest region.

This project is considered a critical piece of the CUS Master Plan, which identifies ideas for upgrading tracks and platforms to maintain the economic competitiveness of a region that relies heavily on commuter and intercity passenger rail service. A preliminary design has been completed and NEPA permitting requirements are expected to be satisfied by the Fall of 2022. In FY21 a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) application for funding was submitted to the Federal

See *Chicago access project* page 3

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Amtrak's Hell Gate Bridge over the East River in New York City is part of the all-rail route between Boston, New York, and Washington, DC. It was the longest steel arch bridge in the world when completed by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1916, as a component of improvements that included Pennsylvania Station in 1910. The bridge contains 20,000 tons of steel, spans 1,107 feet between Queens and Randall's Island, and provides a clearance of 135 feet above the water. The elevated approach on each side totals 17,000 feet in length. The bridge was designed by engineer Gustav Lindenthal and the masonry abutments were designed by architect Henry Hornbostel. Amtrak Deputy Chief Engineer of Structures, Jim Richter, says that the bridge was designed to last hundreds of years and is a real masterpiece. The Hell Gate name comes from either the treacherous currents in the East River under the bridge or from an early Dutch name for brightness. (Amtrak/Dave Frieder Photo)

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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. 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.

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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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c/o Jean Merckel, Treasurer
33373 Hampshire Road
Livonia, Michigan 48154-2952

MICHIGAN SERVICES

Amtrak Train Schedules										
Effective May, 2022										
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	
6:45a	2:15p	4:00p	5:50p	Dp	CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT)	Ar	10:49a	12:00p	2:19p	10:57p
7:11a	↓	↓	↓		Hammond-Whiting, IN (CT)	↑	↑	↑	1:17p	9:56p
9:04a	4:31p	6:10p	8:04p		New Buffalo, MI (ET)			11:24a	1:23p	10:04p
9:29a	4:52p	6:32p	8:24p		Niles, MI			11:04a	1:03p	9:44p
9:40a	↓	6:43p	↓		Dowagiac, MI			10:52a	↑	9:31p
10:14a	5:26p	7:11p	8:58p		Kalamazoo, MI		9:18a	10:26a	12:30p	9:02p
10:56a	6:03p	7:38p	9:35p		Battle Creek, MI		8:50a	10:00a	12:03p	8:35p
		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		
↓	↓		10:04p		Albion, MI	↑	8:15a			
11:53a	6:57p		10:30p		Jackson, MI		7:51a		10:58a	7:37p
12:30p	7:37p		11:10p		Ann Arbor, MI		7:14a		10:23a	7:00p
1:14p	8:28p		11:54p		Dearborn, MI		6:44a		9:53a	6:29p
1:42p	8:57p		12:27a		DETROIT, MI		6:26a		9:35a	6:11p
2:06p	9:21p		12:51a		Royal Oak, MI		6:03a		9:12a	5:48p
2:14p	9:29p		12:59a	↓	Troy, MI		5:56a		9:04a	5:41p
2:28p	9:46p		1:18a	Ar	PONTIAC, MI (ET)	Dp	5:43a		8:50a	5:28p

Amtrak Train Schedule

Effective March 7, 2022
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	9:08a
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 (ET)	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 or 1-800-USA-RAIL when making reservations.

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Chuck Merckel, Coordinator

Station	Staff	MARP Volunteer
Albion	Bus	Matthew Murawski
Ann Arbor	Amtrak	Clark Charnetski/Steve Sobel
Bangor	None	J. P. Descamp
Battle Creek	Amtrak	Shuler Harmon
Dearborn	Amtrak	Mary Jo Durivage
Detroit	Amtrak	Dwight Phillips
Dowagiac	None	Dowagiac Chbr of Commerce
Durand	Museum	Mary Stone
East Lansing	Caretkr	Steve Vagnozzi
Flint	Bus	Barb Westcott
Grand Rapids	Caretkr	Mit Renroc
Holland	None	Nathan Nietering
Jackson	Caretkr	John Guidinger
Kalamazoo	Caretkr	Warren Fritz
Lapeer	None	Jim Slater
New Buffalo	None	Lori S. Peterson
Niles	Caretkr	Jack Kessler
Pontiac	Bus	Robert Tischbein
Port Huron	None	T. J. Gaffney
Royal Oak	None	David Roberts
St Joseph	None	Todd Schultz
Toledo, OH	Amtrak	Patrick Miller
Traverse City	None	Carolyn Ulstad
Troy	None	Brad Socier

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Chicago access project... continued from page 1

Railroad Administration (FRA) for design and Construction. The FRA funding decision is still pending.

2. Make Concourse Improvements

CUS and its original headhouse and concourse buildings opened in 1925. In 1969, the original concourse building was demolished, and replaced with an office tower, owned by a third party. The Amtrak waiting areas were created underneath the new tower in a much smaller footprint than existed in the original concourse structure.

CUS concourse improvements will set the course for the renovation and repair of the concourse level, thereby bringing it into a state of good repair and improving intercity passenger rail performance. Many walls will be removed and the space opened up to allow ready movement of passengers and luggage in a modern, attractive, and open area. Preliminary engineering will commence by the Fall of 2022 using other Amtrak Annual Grants. A NEPA Categorical Exclusion is expected to be secured during the preliminary engineering phase. A FY21 Partnership Program application was submitted to the FRA for final design for this project. The FRA's funding decision is still pending.

3. Improve Trained Ventilation

Development over time has led to seven city blocks, or one mile, of overbuilding capping the north and south trainsheds at CUS. The trainsheds do not have a coordinated mechanical ventilation system and are deficient in the existing volume of ventilation provided. The lack of natural cross ventilation exacerbates the ventilation problem. This causes stagnant smoke and diesel exhaust to accumulate in the sheds where Amtrak and METRA passengers board and railroad staff work.

The ventilation project would also advance Amtrak's ability to address the urgent need to remove failing plenums. A recent ventilation study conducted in 2020 has shown true promise to remove diesel exhaust and provide a code compliant emergency ventilation system. This project would also address falling concrete incidents at CUS.

4. Expand CUS Platform Capacity

As identified in the CUS Master Plan, four of the platforms that serve eight tracks with existing commuter service are under capacity. The platforms are narrow and blocked by structural columns that impede passenger flow and limit ADA accessibility and code compliance. The project will focus on platform and track adjustments that will widen the platforms, as well as alleviate emergency egress deficiencies, improve safety, add egress



The double-track St. Charles Air Line (SCAL) Chicago River Bridge (the bridge in the closed position) and the elevated SCAL are shown in this aerial photo about 1960. This view is looking to the southwest with the south part of what is now Amtrak's Chicago rail yard in the center of the photo and the Dan Ryan Expressway (I-90/94) in the background. According to Wikipedia, the bridge is a Strauss Trunnion bascule bridge, originally 260 feet long when built in 1919, the longest such design in the world at that time. When the Chicago River was channelized in 1930, the bridge was shortened to 220 feet in length. The St. Charles Air Line is about 2 miles in length and was built by several railroad companies as an east-west connector to cross over several north-south railroads and the Chicago River. (Library of Congress photo)

stairs, add elevators, and increase platform lengths to improve operational flexibility. Additionally, improvements to the passenger experience will be incorporated through new architectural finishes, improved lighting, and an additional street level entrance at Madison Street.

5. Install a Connection between the St. Charles Air Line and CUS (See Map)

When Amtrak commenced operations in 1971 all intercity Chicago passenger train service was consolidated at CUS. All but one of the routes in Chicago had trackage directly into CUS. The one exception was the former Illinois Central route to downstate Illinois and points south to New Orleans. This route is now owned by the Canadian National (CN) Railway and is used by Amtrak's Illini/Saluki and City of New Orleans trains. To access CUS, these trains must make a series of awkward maneuvers on the St. Charles Air Line (SCAL) and BNSF tracks south and west of CUS that add 10-15 minutes of passenger time per trip. (See the map.)

An obvious solution is to build a direct connection to the SCAL bridge that spans over the CUS entrance tracks south of the Roosevelt Road bridge. In recent years the City of Chicago has reversed a

previous position on eliminating the SCAL and now supports seeing it developed for intracity and intercity passenger rail.

In 2021, Amtrak collaborated with a consultant to complete a Feasibility Study to evaluate the constructability and operability of the envisioned connector. The Feasibility Study recommended building an interim, single-track "rail ramp" that would connect existing trackage in the Amtrak Chicago yards with tracks on the existing SCAL bridge. Assuming the connector functions as intended, a future plan would be to add longer-term improvements to the SCAL, including a new bridge that would span the Chicago River.

Linking CUS with the SCAL will provide enormous benefits including:

Eliminate the need for back up maneuvers by the Illini/Saluki and City of New Orleans trains, saving 10-15 minutes per trip.

Provide a means by which trains bound for Michigan and the east can link to the minimally used CN Lakefront Line through Chicago's south side to the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad, and then over the South Shore to a possible new connection to Amtrak-owned passenger tracks at Michigan City to Michigan and to Norfolk Southern at South Bend for East Coast trains.

Enable shifting the Lincoln Service and Texas Eagle trains, which currently use the CN between Chicago and Joliet, to Metra Rock Island Corridor trackage, thus putting those trains on passenger trackage in the Chicago urban area.

Permit direct rail transit service from O'Hare Airport to the McCormick Place Convention Center with an intermediate stop at CUS.

Although all nine components of the Chicago Access Project are important, Project 5 with completion of Projects 8 and 9, will bring enormous benefits for Michigan passengers.

6. Purchase of Property Near CUS

The existing Amtrak Chicago Yard facility is at maximum capacity. The purchase of additional yard space near CUS will alleviate the capacity issue that Amtrak is facing and will enable other major projects needed for Midwest expansion. The acquisition will also offset space lost during construction and implementation of the proposed SCAL connector (Project 5). The yard acquisition is crucial to the long-term success of Amtrak in Chicago as a whole. Without the property acquisition, the planned service expansions envisioned in Amtrak Connects Us could be negatively impacted. Amtrak has commenced conversations with the owner regarding the acquisition of this property.

7. Improve the Platform at Joliet

This project envisions building a new platform at Joliet Station that would serve Lincoln Service and Texas Eagle trains after they were moved to the Rock Island District (RID) as part of Project 5. The platform would be just east of the existing RID connection to the Union Pacific tracks immediately south of Joliet Station. Currently, the trains coming into Joliet from Chicago enter from the north on the CN Heritage Corridor and continue east and turn south at the station to access UP tracks. This project would permit rerouted Amtrak trains using the RID line to serve Joliet, as well as upgrade the curved connection from the RID to UP trackage. Amtrak has completed a concept design for this project.

8. Improve at-grade connection between SCAL and Metra RID at 16th & Clark Streets

This project will improve the at-grade connection between the SCAL and trackage at 16th and Clark Streets on the east side of the Chicago River. The current connection is 5 mph and the concept design will allow 25 mph. The improved connection in conjunction with completed Project 5 will allow several Amtrak trains to be moved off crowded freight railroads in the south side of the Chicago metropolitan area to the METRA passenger friendly RID as far south as Joliet. Amtrak has completed a concept design for this project.

9. Install a Second Track in Michigan Between Niles and Glenwood Road

The Michigan East Project supports the vision outlined in the MDOT Michigan Mobility 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan. This Project would complete all pre-construction tasks for double-tracking 16 miles of Michigan DOT-owned Michigan Line between Niles, Michigan, and Glenwood Road, Wayne Township, Michigan. This 19-mile project consists of 16 miles of new track extending northeast from Niles, through Dowagiac, and ending approximately 6.7 miles northeast of Dowagiac at Glenwood Road along the Wolverine and Blue Water lines. This Project would reduce travel time, improve reliability, add capacity on the Michigan Line, and remove the need for choreographed meets on the single-track segment that often result in small delays cascading.

A FY21 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) application was submitted to the FRA for Preliminary Engineering for this project. The FRA's funding decision is still pending. Preliminary engineering and NEPA review should be covered by the CRISI grant.



Looking west from the east side of the Chicago River at the deck of the SCAL Bridge. The SCAL remains in daily use for freight and Amtrak passenger trains. According to Wikipedia, the adjacent raised bridge, was built by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1930. It is no longer used and was part of another elevated double track line that crossed the north-south railroads and the river to former freight yards and passenger yards at Central Station to the northeast (behind the camera). (Library of Congress photo)

Amtrak's Southwest Chief Derails at Grade Crossing

On June 27, 2022, Train 4, the eastbound Southwest Chief derailed at 90 miles-per-hour in Missouri after hitting a dump truck at an unprotected rural road crossing. Tragically three passengers on the train and the truck driver were killed. Aerial photos of the derailed train show seven cars, all but the two engines and baggage car laying on their sides along the tracks. The day before, on June 26th, a westbound Amtrak train on California's San Joaquin Valley route collided with a car near Brentwood in the North Bay area of Contra Costa County killing three people in the car. The road crossing was an unpaved rural crossing on a BNSF mainline and has been the location of other deadly crossing accidents in the past.

Most of us who have been regular riders on Amtrak and other passenger trains have been involved as a passenger when our train hit cars or people walking on the tracks. The sign to a passenger that an auto or a person has been hit, is that the train comes to an emergency stop and the onboard crew runs to the rear car on the train.

These unnecessary deaths and injuries have occurred in Michigan far too commonly. Since 1972 trained instructors



A private grade crossing to a single residence. This crossing on the Amtrak Michigan Corridor near Parma is protected by lights, bells, and crossing gates.

for Operation Life Saver have been teaching about the danger of trespassing on the tracks and the folly of trying to beat the train to a road crossing. Operation

Life Saver has been involved in keeping images out of movies and popular media that depict walking on railroad tracks or racing the train to a crossing. Hundreds of millions of dollars are now available to state DOTs from the 2021 Infrastructure Act passed by Congress for the installation of safety devices at grade crossings.

All grade crossings on major rail lines, such as the two involved in the fatal accidents

mentioned here, should have signs, flashing light signals, and crossing gates. Many rural crossings should be closed.

In the nineteenth century, the newspapers are full of articles about people were killed by driving wagons and buggies across tracks and being hit and killed by trains. That this should still be the major cause of rail related deaths in the twenty-first century is completely unacceptable.



US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg visited Detroit on June 2, 2022, to announce the award of \$30 million in new freight rail transportation funding for Michigan. This is part of \$368 million in national CRISI grants for freight rail improvements. The Michigan grants include \$21.3 million for freight track upgrades for the Great Lakes Railroad in central Michigan and \$8.7 million for track upgrades for the West Michigan Railroad Company in southwest Michigan. In an opinion article in the Detroit Free Press on June 2, 2022, Mr. Buttigieg and Mitch Landrieu (White House Infrastructure Coordinator) said that more must be done to improve the freight rail system, which in many rural parts of the country is in deplorable shape with trains barely able to travel at 5 miles an hour in some location. (US Department of Transportation photo)



A closed grade crossing on the west side of Jackson on the Amtrak Michigan Corridor. This was the crossing where Amtrak train 351 collided with a large truck about 2007.

AN AMTRAK DAY TRIP Let's Go to Kalamazoo for Lunch!



The Radisson Plaza Hotel on the corner of North Rose Street and West Michigan Avenue is four blocks from the Amtrak Depot and has an upscale restaurant, a delightful place for lunch.

“Lunch by Rail” might be the title of a one day, get-away to Kalamazoo for lunch. Take your family along or your friends and catch up on all the chatter while enjoying a trip through the beautiful Michigan countryside. Be car-free for the day. Have lunch within walking distance of the Kalamazoo Depot. Check out the nearby Kalamazoo Valley Museum after lunch. Return to your home station rested after a unique and memorable trip. Free parking is usually available at most Michigan Amtrak stations.

The schedules for trains from the east side of Michigan work well for a one-day trip to Kalamazoo. Currently it is best to use Train 353 to Kalamazoo and Train 352 on the return. The schedule from selected stations would be:

Prices vary according to day of travel and demand. Using Saturday, August 13, 2022, as a sample travel date, and if booked at least two weeks early, one would pay an estimated \$277 round trip from Detroit for a



The Kalamazoo Amtrak Depot was built in 1887 by the Michigan Central Railroad and is now part of the Kalamazoo Metro Transportation Center.

family of four (2 adults, one child aged 13-15, and one child aged 2-12). The same family would pay an estimated \$228 leaving from Ann Arbor. Holiday and late booking may be priced differently.

When you leave the train at Kalamazoo, be sure to notice the wonderful old depot, built in 1887 by the Michigan Central Railroad. Then walk south from the



The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is at 230 North Rose Street and is a family oriented, hands-on, science, tech, and history museum. It is open every day except Monday.

bus and street side of the depot on North Rose Street four blocks to West Michigan Avenue. A great place to eat is on the corner of North Rose and West Michigan Avenue in Old Burdick's Bar and Grill, which is on the first floor of the Radisson Plaza Hotel. There are many other upscale restaurants nearby. Check out what is available on the Kalamazoo pedestrian mall, a block east of North Rose.

When you walk south on North Rose you will pass by the Kalamazoo Valley Museum at 230 North Rose. After lunch, you should have time to visit the Museum before your return train leaves at 5:26 pm. This is a family orientated, hands on, science, tech, and history museum open Tuesday to Friday 10 am to 4 pm, Saturday 10 am to 6 pm, and Sunday 12 pm to 4 pm. It is closed on Mondays.

SHORT LINES

The Rail Passengers Association reports that all Long-Distance Amtrak trains will be back to full seven days a week operation by October 3. Some of these trains were restored in May, while the Crescent, City of New Orleans, Silver Meteor, and Silver Star were still running limited schedules. Larry Chestler, Amtrak VP for the Long Distance business line, confirmed that The Silver Meteor and Silver Star will once again become two separate trains running on their full-length pre-pandemic routes. Chestler also hinted that Amtrak may bring back traditional the dining car service on these trains, perhaps mirroring the recent much improved and well-liked dining car service on the western long-distance trains. The cuts in service were blamed on not having enough trained members to staff the trains.....**The second Missouri River Runner returned to the rails** on July 18th after the Missouri General Assembly restored funding for the train. *Mass Transit* reported that there is widespread popular support for a second train along this route, which allows passengers to make a one day round trip between St Louis and Kansas City, Missouri's two largest cities**California Governor Gavin Newsom has taken note of the Del Mar Bluffs**. *Railway Age* reported on July 5, 2022, that the governor put \$300 million in the state's \$308 billion budget for next year to start the study process to move the busy tracks for the Los Angeles-San Diego passenger route away from the bluffs to an inland route. Millions of dollars are being spent annually to stabilize the rail right-of-way from the relentless action of the vast Pacific Ocean.....**Biden's Amtrak Board nominees seem to completely lack the qualifications** spelled out in the IJA passed last year by Congress in an attempt to get geographical diversity and operational experience on the Board. RPA and MARP pointed out in letters that of the five nominees, four are from the northeast corridor area, one is from Chicago, and none appear to have any experience in passenger operations. The billions of dollars appropriated by Congress for intercity rail demand that the Amtrak Board have the technical and political ability to oversee the projects. Apparently, the Republicans have the opportunity to nominate three additional Board members, which has yet to be done. For “Amtrak Joe” to nominate such persons is strange to say the least and shows a lack of attention on his part. MARP can offer many better nominees, such as Tim Hoeffner, retired from 40 years at the MDOT Office of Rail, Ed Ellis, formerly of Iowa Pacific, and Stu Nicholson formerly with the Ohio Rail Development Commission...**Cross-border Detroit River Tunnel passenger service** was the subject of an article in the *Windsor Star* in January of this year. Amtrak has discussed this service with the tunnel owner, Canadian Pacific Railroad, and Via Rail Canada. However, there seems to be a lack of interest from the Province of Ontario. The refreshing attitude of passenger-friendly CP has also drawn attention to expansion on CP rails of the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor, a second train between Chicago and Minneapolis, and new service on routes between New Orleans and Baton Rouge and between Meridian and Shreveport.....**Texas Central won a victory when the Texas Supreme Court ruled favorably** that Texas Central is, in fact, a railroad and therefore has powers of eminent domain that it can use if needed to assemble the right-of-way to construct a 240 mile high-speed railroad through central Texas between Houston and Dallas. However, the CEO Carlos Aguilar, resigned in June and the venture now seems to be in at least temporary disarray.....**The governors of New York State and New Jersey signed a memo of understanding** on July 5 for the multibillion-dollar Gateway Project and are ready to move forward, an indication that educated heads are finally prevailing. The project includes building a new twin-tunnel under the Hudson River, refurbishing the existing 111-year-old tunnels, replacing the Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River west of Secaucus, acquiring new surface and underground rights-of-way, and replacing other smaller bridges. The ten miles of railroad between Newark and Penn Station in New York City, which carry an average of one passenger train every six minutes, will be the subject of billions of dollars of improvements. Preliminary budget figures for the massive Portal Bridge, the cause of innumerable delays to thousands of passengers (on which work has started), call for each state to provide \$386 million, the Federal Highway Administration to provide \$57 million, and Amtrak \$261 million. (See the sketch of the new bridge.) The funding split for \$2.7 billion tunnel work has not been announced.....**A new seasonal Amtrak service, the Berkshire Flier, started on July 5**. This weekend only service will operate through the summer months with a Friday afternoon departure from Penn Station to Pittsfield and a return on Sunday afternoons. The Berkshire Mountains in western Massachusetts are the location of many well-known summer cultural and recreational events. The train will also run in the summer of 2023 and is being funded jointly by Massachusetts and New York State.....**On July 11 Amtrak extended a second New York-Washington Regional train to Roanoke, Virginia**. Trains now leave Roanoke northbound at 6:32 am and 4:30 pm, with returns arriving in Roanoke at 1:00 pm and 10:06 pm. The second train, a high priority of the Virginia DOT, also serves Lynchburg, Charlottesville, and other locations in Virginia on Norfolk Southern, as well as the normal stops on the Northeast Corridor between Washington and New York.....**The California High Speed Rail Project received \$4.2 billion in funding** from the California legislature on June 30, as part of a \$308 billion dollar state budget. Objections about the lack of spending control were satisfied, according to *Railway Age*, with the appointment of a new inspector general to oversee project expenditures. *Streetsblog* reports that over 100 miles of the project between Merced and Bakersfield can now be built. Funding the whole project will still be difficult after the cost estimate ballooned to over \$100 billion. In other related news from *Railway Age*, the project received environmental clearance for the 43-mile San Francisco-San Jose segment to bring the total cleared to nearly 423 miles, enough to reach from San Francisco to northern Los Angeles County.....**PennDOT and Norfolk Southern have reached an operating agreement to add a second train** between Pittsburgh and New York City. On June 30, *Mass Transit* reported that the state will invest over \$200 million in improvements on the NS-owned segment west of Harrisburg. Governor Tom Wolf and PennDOT credited the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Act with speeding the funding. Good cooperation from NS has helped too.....**Amtrak and partners New York Metropolitan Transit Authority and New Jersey Transit issued a Request for Proposal** for architectural and engineering services for the reconstruction of New York's Penn Station. Early sketches show an interior that is modern, open, roomy, and brightly lit, with no sign of the dreary, claustrophobic interior that replaced the beautiful station lost to demolition in the 1960s. Governors Kathy Hochul of New York and Phil Murphy of New Jersey released a joint announcement on June 9th seeking to expedite the reconstruction.....**FlexBus, a German Company, launched its Canadian operation in April in Southern Ontario** with three routes, according to CBC News. The company claims to be the world's largest-reaching bus provider with operations in 37 countries. It is a tech company that provides the app, website, pricing structure, route planning, marketing, and charges a 25 to 35 percent commission on sales, but it partners with local companies that own the buses and hire the drivers. Greyhound Canada has shut down entirely.....**Boston-Newburyport/Rockport rail service restarted in May after two years** during which the MBTA dropped a cool \$100 million to build a new Gloucester Drawbridge over the Annisquam River, according to *Mass Transit Magazine*. The trains run on a near hourly schedule from Boston's North Station to a point north of Beverly where some trains go to Newburyport and some go to Rockport, two enchanting New England destinations.

GOING TRAIN ON 353:

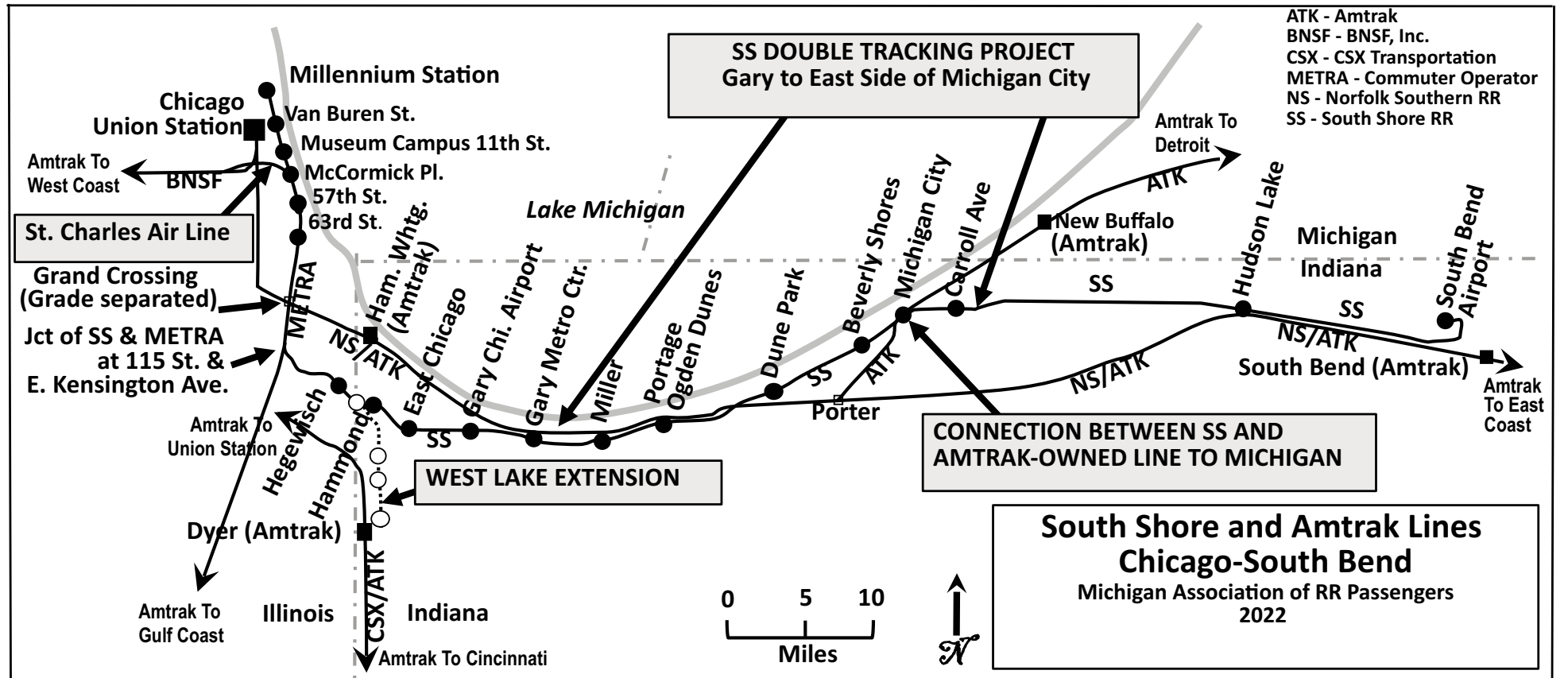
Depart from: Detroit 9:35a
 Depart from: Dearborn 9:53a
 Depart from: Ann Arbor 10:23a
 Depart from: Jackson 10:58a
 Arrive in: Kalamazoo 12:30p

RETURNING TRAIN ON 352:

Depart from: Kalamazoo 5:26p
 Arrive in: Jackson 6:57p
 Arrive in: Ann Arbor 7:37p
 Arrive in: Dearborn 8:28p
 Arrive in: Detroit 8:57p

(Note: Train times can change. Check with Amtrak.com when you book.)

Major Upgrades Underway On Indiana's South Shore Line



By Hugh Gurney
 After decades of planning and assembling the necessary funds, work is now underway on two major projects on Northwest Indiana's South Shore Line, a 90-mile commuter railroad connecting South Bend, Indiana with Chicago's Millennium Station. In March, 2022, www.construction-revisionline.com reported that Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), operator of the South Shore, had awarded six separate contracts totaling \$649 million for construction of a 26.6-mile second track between Gary and the eastern side of Michigan City. On June 3, 2022, Inside Indiana Business announced that the second major NICTD project, a completely new 8-mile rail line dubbed the West Lake Corridor connecting with South Shore's existing line at Hammond and running due south to Dyer, is now underway.

The benefits of a second track according to the Northwest Times include moving the railroad from a public street in Michigan City to its own dedicated and faster right-of-way, closing a number of grade crossings, installing more high-level boarding platforms, and allowing the number of daily trains to be increased from 39 to 55.

Because of the second track, some trains would be able to skip some stations and NICTD could offer nearly hourly service off peak. These improvements should expand ridership and transform the entire area around the South Shore. Estimated show that transit-oriented development within a mile of the tracks would add 6,000 to 7,000 new jobs over the next twenty years.

The double tracking project seemed assured in January, 2021, when the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) signed a Full Funding Agreement granting NICTD \$173 million toward the effort. The State of Indiana had already committed \$200 million and local communities along the route committed \$120 million more. But when bids were opened, the lowest bid was 75% higher than engineering estimates and was rejected, reported RT&S on May 15, 2021. After deleting some elements of the contract such as the purchase of rails, cross ties, signaling wire, and the oversight of the positive train control system, NICTD accepted a bid for the major work from Walsh/Herzog Joint Venture, Andrew Steele reported in the Northwest Times on October 11, 2021. The final hurdle was overcome, when NICTD inked an agreement with freight operator Chicago South Shore and South Bend

(CSS) and the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) involving a number of land swaps, Progressive Railroading reported on January 10, 2022.

Culverts are currently being installed, at least one of which near the Indiana Dunes National Park is designed to allow wildlife to pass through safely. The NIPSCO is relocating poles along the right of way. Tracks have been laid on the new right of way to move the railroad off 10th and 11th Streets in Michigan City and in the vicinity of the LaPorte/Porter County line. In Michigan City and in the Beverly Shores area, the electric catenary that powers the trains is being installed. The old Michigan City 11th Street Station has been demolished, although the historic façade was saved for incorporation into a new parking facility. The old station at Gary/Miller has been demolished and work is expected to begin on the new station in late July. Readers interested in the progress of the double tracking project may receive weekly updates by e-mailing: doubletracknwi@nictd.com.

For the new branch line, NICTD President and General Manager Michael Noland reported that workers are already relocating under-

ground pipelines, overhead power lines and demolishing structures in the path of the new railroad. Noland explained, "The most complex portion of the West Lake project will be the north Hammond area where we (trains) will be up in the air for a good mile or so over a number of different areas," on what he described as a "flyover." According to Noland, most of the work during the remainder of 2022 will be in this area.

Further south, approximately six miles of the new route will use the right of way of the old Monon Railroad, abandoned by CSX in the late 1980's and early 1990's. "In 2023 is where they'll really start to lay some of the ballast, rails and ties", Noland continued. Noland foresees trains entering service on the new West Lake branch sometime in 2025. During both the morning and evening rush hours five through trains will operate between Dyer and Millennium Station in Chicago. Off peak, two car shuttle trains will connect Dyer with Hammond, where passengers can connect with trains east and west on the existing South Shore.

Inside Indiana Business reports that funding for the West Lake branch will come from a \$355 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), plus \$255 million from the State of Indiana and \$355 million from local sources. On June 20, 2022, Progressive Railroading reported that the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) had awarded an additional \$203.3 million in a low interest loan from the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Fund (RRIF). The loan is primarily for construction of the four new stations along the line as well as sidewalks, walking trails and bike paths to enhance intermodal use. New stations will be Hammond Gateway, where the new branch joins the existing South Shore, Hammond South, Munster Ridge and Munster/Dyer Main Street.

For many miles in Northwest Indiana, South Shore parallels the heavily congested mainline of Norfolk Southern, which Amtrak uses to access Chicago Union Station from Michigan and points east. The major improvements to the South Shore could make the South Shore line usable for intercity passenger trains as well as commuter trains, thus

moving off the NS. This is a big subject in the rail buzz of today.

Once the connection to the Lake Charles Air Line is installed south of Union Station (see separate article), Amtrak trains would be able to readily reach the CN Lakefront Line in the area of McCormick Place. Some rebuilding of the CN would be needed, but it would allow Amtrak to move onto the parallel passenger-friendly South Shore trackage somewhere between McCormick Place and 115 Street, where the South Shore leaves the CN right-of-way. The South Shore would then be followed east to reach the Amtrak-owned line in Michigan City, Indiana, for the Michigan trains, and to South Bend for Amtrak trains to the east coast. The Detroit trains would be on passenger friendly track all the way to Dearborn!

In a letter to potential stakeholders including the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Amtrak states, "By acquiring this critical, but currently underutilized 13-mile segment of the CN Lakefront line, Amtrak would be in control of Illinois, Michigan and East Coast trains...this would eliminate all usage of the heavily-congested Norfolk Southern Chicago line." Several issues remain to be resolved, such as the amount of work on the South Shore that would be needed to accommodate intercity trains on this commuter and freight railroad. And because of the South Shore's electrified overhead catenary, the Capitol Limited might have to utilize single level rather than Superliner equipment.

Another benefit of an upgraded South Shore with the new West Lake Connector branch, is that the Cardinal could switch from the difficult CSX approach to Chicago at Dyer to the South Shore to Union Station when the new St. Charles Air Line connection is completed. At a conference several years ago, a MARP member asked NICTD's Noland about such a connection at Dyer and he responded that NICTD would consider it. At this moment, the move by Amtrak away from the Norfolk Southern and CSX in the Chicago area is speculation, but it appears Amtrak is now seriously considering making it happen. That would definitely be good news for Michiganders traveling to and from Chicago.



Amtrak ordered an additional 50 Charger Diesel locomotives from Siemens Mobility on June 22, 2022, according to Mass Transit Magazine. These are ALC-42 locomotives and are in addition to the initial order of 75 units. The Tier 4 passenger locomotives will be used primarily on long distance trains nationally. (Amtrak, Mike Armstrong photo)

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Toronto's Metrolinx Expands – "The Big Move"

A Big Lesson for Detroit

Many of us in Michigan can only look with envy at the expansion of commuter rail and bus service in the Toronto urban area, Ontario's "Golden Horse Shoe Region." Toronto is now the fastest growing major city in North America, much of which is due to a young, dynamic population who seem highly invested in the car-free urban experience.

A tiny sign of this expansion was reported by Railway Age on August 28, 2022, just after the former stub-end pocket track at the Aldershot GO/Via station was extended west about 200 meters and connected at the west end to the CN mainline. A new signal tower has been added to control the connection. This minuscule project signals that Metrolinx is about to extend multiple frequency commuter service 8 miles west on the Lakeshore West line to downtown Hamilton. Reaching downtown Hamilton has been a goal of Metrolinx since its founding in 2006. (Multiple trains have been recently extended to the West Harbor Station in Hamilton.)

Let's look back to 2006 when honest-to-goodness visionaries in southern Ontario formed the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority to coordinate commuter rail and transit bus service. These extraordinary futurists included folks in positions of responsibility who could make a real difference. These were transit leaders and political leaders, the movers and shakers not only at the local and metropolitan level, but in the Ontario Provincial Government and at the national level in Ottawa. A 2008 transportation plan named "The Big Move" was adopted to be the blue print for consolidation and development, a plan that was updated and readapted every few years to changing conditions. The transit development since 2008 has been astounding.

The Big Move turned out to be the Giant Explosion. The region has become a world-wide leader in transit development. Perhaps it is no surprise that Toronto is the fastest

growing major city in North America. (Detroit, have you noticed?)

In 2009 the name "Metrolinx" was adopted for public and legal use. Metrolinx has assumed responsibility for GO Transit, the regional commuter rail and bus service provider that we see everywhere when we visit the exciting destination city of Toronto. Underlying the vast number of commuter rail improvements is the purchase from Canadian National and Canadian Pacific of hundreds of miles of rail lines for GO Transit commuter service. Some impressive examples:

- The Weston subdivision of the Kitchener Line in 2009 for \$160 million.
- The lower portion of the Newmarket subdivision for \$68 million in 2009, giving Metrolinx full ownership of the Barrie Line.
- A portion of the Oakville Subdivision from Union Station to Etobicoke for \$168 million in 2010.
- The Kingston line for \$299 million in 2011, giving Metrolinx full ownership of the Lake Shore East Line.
- Key portions of multiple subdivisions from CN including affecting the Richmond Hill Line and the Lake Shore West Line for \$310.5 million in 2012.
- Additional portions of CN rail lines for a further extension the Lake Shore West line from Oakville to Burlington for \$52.5 million in 2013
- A segment of CN trackage on the Kitchener Line between Kitchener and Georgetown in 2014.
- Many stations and associated rail real estate property for commuter passenger service.

Other major Metrolinx projects include:

- The establishment of consolidated central offices, with management, design, and operations staff, and the development of equipment and facility management systems.
- Rebuilding existing tracks, sta-



Metrolinx Logo.

- tions, and signal systems, and adding new tracks and stations to provide for commuter passenger services.
- The purchase of hundreds of new locomotives, commuter cars, transit buses, and intercity buses for regional bus services.
- The double tracking of rail lines and the modernization of rail signal systems.
- The construction of the Union Pearson Express, a new airport rail link connecting Toronto Pearson International Airport to Union Station downtown. This line opened in 2015 with trains running every 15 minutes, seven days a week, on a 14.5-mile route, a service predicted to eliminate the need for 1.5 million car trips annually. (Detroit Metro Airport are you watching?)
- The establishment of the Presto Card, a smartcard-based fare payment system for all public transit systems in Ontario that calculates the correct fare and deducts it from a preloaded balance. (The card was placed in full use in 2009 and now serves over a million customers in Toronto, Ottawa, Brampton, Burlington, Hamilton, and other cities in Ontario.)
- The establishment of "Smart Commute", a program that

endeavors to fight climate change by reducing traffic congestion and increasing transit efficiency. (The program assists employers and employees with commuting options such as carpooling, transit, cycling, walking, remote work options, and flextime. Metrolinx assists municipal transit operators with the procurement of vehicles, technologies, and facilities, and helps provide an open process to procure transit services to reduce per unit costs.)

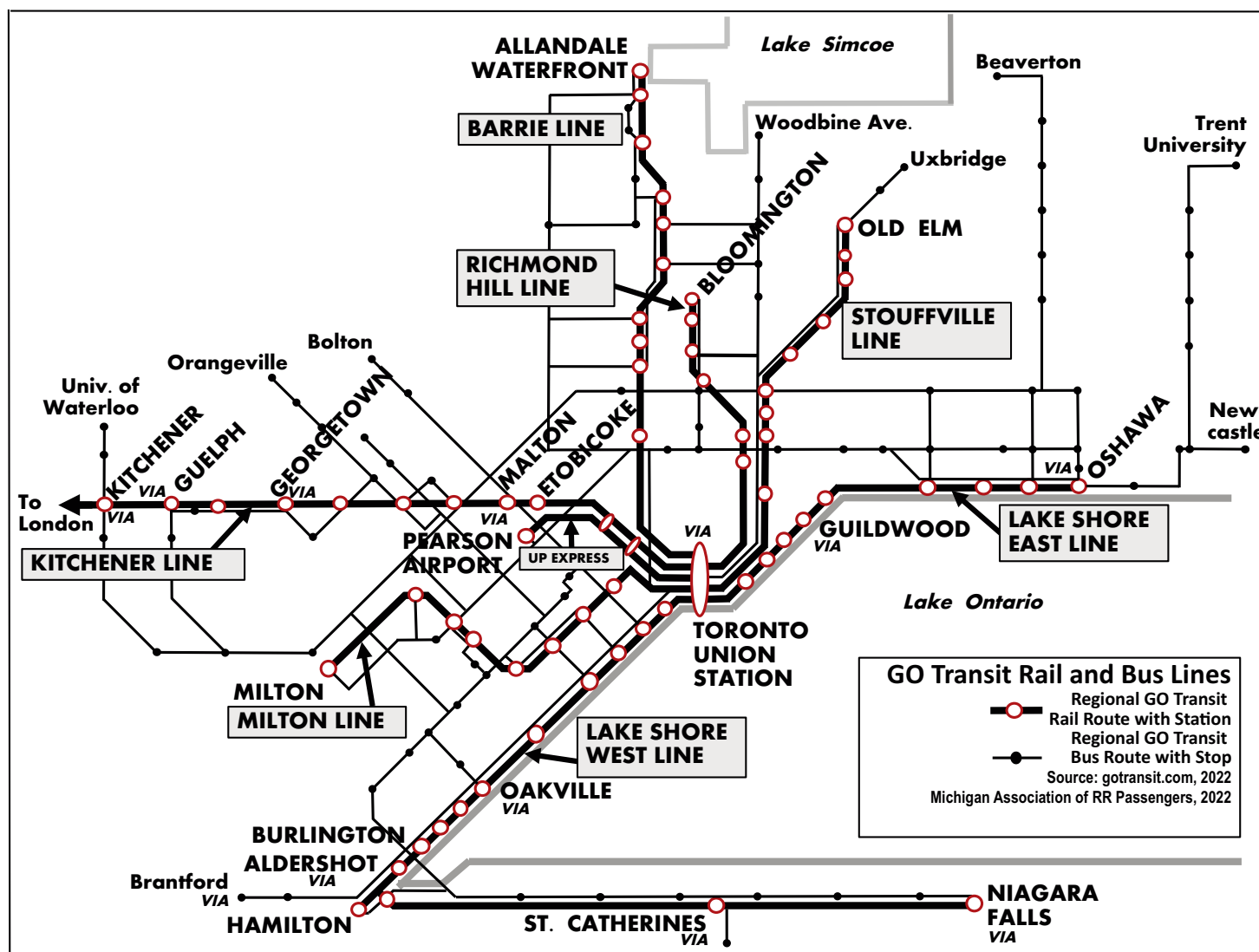
Not content with these astounding achievements, Metrolinx is undertaking billions of dollars of future improvements including:

- Eventual electrification of all lines
- Providing service in both directions every 15 minutes all day long on all lines
- Purchase of a faster and more efficient fleet of rail and bus equipment
- Adding more handicapped accessible stations
- Expanding Union Station, the downtown center of the system
- Extending several lines to reach more people and offer new destinations

Similar but less intensive transit developments are occurring in many other progressive cities in Canada and the United States.

But here in Michigan's major city, Detroit, with 4 million people, lying just 220 miles west of Toronto, is a hopelessly undeveloped world exists. Detroit's DDOT and SMART bus systems are still not consolidated after decades of efforts. Commuter trains have been studied to death, but nothing new has been built or run since the last commuter trains were dropped decades ago. Commuter useable railroad rights-of-way are being broken up into unusable fragments. Amtrak's thin schedule offers only token service that poorly serve Detroit and are skewed to take people from Detroit to Chicago and back. The tiny 3.2-mile trolley on Woodward Avenue, built with private funds, has seen no expansion after years of operation. Much of the city has been demolished for freeways that are always crowded and for parking lots that are empty most of the time. The demolition and rubble removal business seem to be the only growth industry in the city. Vacant lots are everywhere. Meanwhile, the movers and shakers in Detroit and Lansing, who have the power to fix all that is wrong, are engaged in squabbling, posturing, and foaming with self-serving statements, fighting over useless, never-ending political party differences.

When will Detroit join the progressive cities on this earth?



Maple Leaf cross border service resumed



The Maple Leaf crosses on the CN Whirlpool Rapids bridge over the Niagara River Gorge. The Via Rail Station for Niagara Falls, Ontario and the Amtrak Station for Niagara Falls New York are at near each end of the bridge, about 1,500 feet apart. The parallel, unused Michigan Central bridge is about 250 feet upriver, just to the left outside of the photo. (Amtrak photo)

The Maple Leaf is operating once again between New York City and Toronto, Ontario. According to Amtrak, the train began crossing the US-Canadian border again on June 27, 2022.

However, there are several new requirements for entry into Canada and for non-citizens entering either country.

The most significant is that all people entering Canada must use the ArriveCAN app before travel and wear a mask while on board all Canadian trains in Canadian stations. The app can be downloaded without charge to your smartphone and once activated with your input information, will produce a receipt or document that

must be presented at the border. Passports and other travel documents are required depending on your citizen status and travel plans.

Apparently, everyone must be fully vaccinated and have proof in the form of the original information uploaded into the ArriveCAN app. You must use the latest version (3.0) of the

app, which has eliminated some earlier information requirements. Confused? Join the crowd.

For further information go to www.canada.ca/arrivecan. Also apparently, persons without a smartphone or smartphone access can sign in at this address to submit the required information.



Sketch showing the proposed new Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River west of the Secaucus station in New Jersey on the Northeast Corridor. The new three-span bridge will be built alongside the 112-year-old, 961-foot, turn bridge originally built by the Pennsylvania Railroad and opened in 1910. The new bridge will be fixed in place and provide enough clearance over the river without having to open for river traffic. The old bridge will be removed after the new bridge is in service. (Amtrak sketch)



Amtrak has been taking a series of 55-hour outages on weekends to make repairs to the North River Tunnel under the Hudson River leading to Penn Station in New York. The work involves repairs to the masonry surfaces, electrical lines, and the signal system in an effort to reduce leakage and ensure the continued safety and reliability of the tunnel. (Amtrak photo)