



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

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The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. Everyone is welcome.

## MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2012-2014

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## 2013 MEETINGS

12 January – Williamston Depot-Museum

9 February – Capac Depot Museum

9 March – St. Johns Railroad Station

20 April – Niles

11 May – National Train Day

15 June – Vicksburg Historic Depot & Museum

20 July – Flushing Historical Depot

10 August – City of Milwaukee Train Ferry

14 September – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station

October – Grand Haven (tentative)

November – Albion Amtrak Depot (tentative)

December – Executive Committee

Visit [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)

Email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

## It's About More Than Roads

It has been widely recognized since the November 2008 report of the bi-partisan [Transportation Funding Task Force](#) that “Michigan needs to at least double its current investment in transportation to prevent a loss of up to \$1 billion in federal funds each year and to adequately maintain Michigan’s highways, roads, bridges, passenger transportation, freight transportation and aviation systems.” In the five years since that report, there has been much talk and little action.

However, Governor Snyder has put the issue on the front burner with his FY 2014 budget request, calling for \$1.2 billion a year in new road funding. Lawmakers have responded with a number of proposals, but no definitive action has yet been taken.

It is important to recognize that the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) is about more than roads. Specific to MARP’s interests, the MTF also funds the operation of the *Blue Water* and the *Pere Marquette* passenger trains. Even more to the point, beginning in October of this year, it will fund the operations of the three *Wolverine* trains under provisions of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) passed by Congress in 2008.

We, as advocates for more and better passenger train service, need to remind our decision makers that it has been many years since the name of the state agency charged with getting people and goods from place to place was changed from the State **Highway** Department to the Michigan Department of **Transportation**.

Let’s be clear. It’s important to fix our roads. But we also need to adequately fund our other transportation needs.

It is worth reminding our representatives in Lansing that ridership and revenue on Michigan trains is up 58% and 112%, respectively, over the last decade. Amtrak’s [FY2012 Michigan Fact Sheet](#) reports \$10,421,152 in wages paid to 52 Michigan employees and \$31,572,901 spent on goods and services in Michigan. Not a bad return on the state’s FY2012 investment of \$8 million!



### MARP MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, April 20

10:30 am – 1:00 pm

Niles Amtrak Station

958 Dey Street, Niles MI 49120

[Map & Directions](#)

Rodney Pena, Amtrak Deputy Division Engineer, will talk about ROW and track engineering on the 232 miles of Wolverine route track now owned by Amtrak or MDOT. Meeting details on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org). For further information, send email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

## MARP VISITS ST. JOHNS

*Meeting Notes by Hugh Gurney*

On March 9, 2013, MARP held its first ever meeting in St. Johns, at the former Grand Trunk Railroad Depot. The Grand Trunk tracks are long gone, but the station has been beautifully restored for museum and meeting space. Co-managers Jenny and Gary McCampbell reviewed how the building evolved from an art gallery to a railroad museum with a model train layout in one room and several historic rail cars outside in various stages of restoration.

Michael Hodges discussed his recent book, ***Michigan's Historic Railroad Stations***, published by Wayne State University. In the book, Hodges focuses on 31 period stations in varying states of repair. In their heyday, railroad stations were community centers where residents gathered to get the latest news, to greet visiting dignitaries, to bid farewell to soldiers departing for battle and to welcome returning veterans home. Hodges noted that this function faded fairly early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was gone by the 1930's, much earlier than he thought when he started the book.

The Executive Committee approved the Route Enhancement Recommendations for 2013. National Train Day commemorations on May 11 were discussed and individuals assigned to take the lead in staging local celebrations at the major Amtrak stations in the state. Robert Patterson will take the lead in planning activities on the trains themselves. MARP will also participate in the National Train Day events at the Toledo station.

Richard Pekarek announced that Amtrak will be tightening up the ***Blue Water*** schedule between Port Huron and Battle Creek to eliminate long dwell times that have plagued that train for several years. .

Ridership on the ***Wolverine*** is up 7.3% in recent months while remaining static on the ***Blue Water*** and ***Pere Marquette***. New Megabus service from East Lansing to Chicago and from Grand Rapids to Chicago may be a factor.

Langdon reported that the Governor's budget provides the funds necessary to continue to operate the ***Wolverines*** when the new PRIIA 209 provisions kick in on October 1, 2013. However, this budget is predicated on a \$1.2 billion increase in transportation funding during this legislative session.

Krieg discussed his recent attendance at a meeting of the Texas Eagle Marketing and Performance Organization. He came away convinced that MARP must do a better job of getting leaders in every community Amtrak serves actively involved in promoting passenger rail service.

## SAVE THE DATE !

### MARP Meets Aboard S.S. City of Milwaukee

On August 10, MARP will hold our member meeting aboard the historic S.S. *City of Milwaukee*, berthed in Manistee MI. We have the opportunity to bunk aboard the ship



on the nights of August 10 and August 11. For those who prefer less spartan quarters, there is a reasonably priced motel nearby. The members of the society responsible for preserving and presenting the ship will attend our meeting and will open their weekend of special anniversary activities to us. This will be a rare opportunity to experience life aboard this classic train car ferry. Look for more information in coming issues of ON TRACK and *The Michigan Passenger*. Make this part of your family's summer vacation plans.



### TRANSPORTATION DAY AT THE CAPITOL

**Tuesday, April 16, 2013**

**9:00am to 4:00pm**

*Michigan Municipal League  
208 N. Capitol Ave, Lansing, MI*

Join MARP and our Trans4M Coalition Partners for an exciting day in Lansing meeting with our legislators!

We will meet with our lawmakers to help them understand the need for transportation funding reform and why this is important to us. Legislative background and talking points will be provided.

Whether or not you plan to travel to Lansing, you are invited to learn more about the issues by joining the conference call on Monday, April 15, from 6 – 7 pm. Phone 517-999-0409. When prompted, enter code number 497786#.

Please [RSVP ONLINE](#)

**Also, please let MARP know you plan to attend.**

Send Email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

If you received a 2013 dues notice in January, please return the renewal form with your check as soon as possible in order to continue receiving the benefits of MARP membership. **THANK YOU!**

## Southeast Michigan Heats Up!

The nine members of the new Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority have been chosen and will hold their first meeting on April 10 at 3:00 pm in the SEMCOG offices, 1001 Woodward Boulevard. Transportation Riders United (TRU) is celebrating the event with a [RTA march and "Birthday Party"](#) commencing at 1:30 pm at the Rosa Parks Transit Center with a march down Michigan Ave. for a 2:15 pm press conference at Michigan and Woodward. Visit TRU's website [detroittransit.org](http://detroittransit.org) for details. TRU includes some suggestions for the new board and an easy way for you to email your own thoughts to the board.

In other news from the metro area, it appears that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has been chosen *"as the preferred modal option for rapid transit along Woodward Avenue."* Learn more about BRT and give your input on BRT routes, potential station locations and local feeder bus routes at one of the five community meetings during April. Visit [woodwardanalysis.com](http://woodwardanalysis.com).

Additionally, SEMCOG has posted videos and surveys on transit, non-motorized options, and much more on its website as it prepares to adopt the [2040 Regional Transportation Plan](#) in June of this year. Your comments are invited and can be submitted from the website.

## Rail and Intermodal Transportation Michigan Tech Summer Youth Program

Michigan Technological University, Houghton MI, is offering a week long summer youth program designed to create awareness of, and stimulate interest in, the world of rail and intermodal transportation. Students will learn why trains are called the "green transportation alternative", how fast high-speed passenger trains move, and how containers find their way from China to USA.



The program is open to current 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. Included are technical tours to rail and intermodal facilities in Marquette, MI and Duluth, MN. Full scholarships are available to all who are accepted in the program.

The program is a collaborative effort by Michigan Tech's Rail Transportation Program and the Transportation and Logistics Management Program at University of Wisconsin—Superior.

For more details and a program application, visit [http://www.syp.mtu.edu/docs/RTP\\_App.pdf](http://www.syp.mtu.edu/docs/RTP_App.pdf)

### *this 'n' that . . .*

**Durand Union Station** was featured recently in the series *"Destination Michigan"*, produced by Central Michigan University's public television station. You'll recognize the folks being interviewed, including MARP Life Member, Norma Ward, who played no small role in saving the station from the wrecking ball in 1979. The program has been archived and may be viewed [HERE](#).



March Madness may be drawing to a close, but you can still participate in some friendly competition. Michiganders far and wide have shared their transportation visions with Trans4M and now these videos – over 50 – are available on [YouTube](#) for a viewing contest.

Watch the *Lights, Camera, Transportation!* [contest videos](#) and help participating organizations win \$1,000. The organization with the most collective views will receive \$1,000 toward a transportation initiative of their choice. If any elected official comments on a video, the affiliated organization will automatically receive an additional 500 views added to their total view tally. (If above links don't work, go to [tinyurl.com/marp00067](http://tinyurl.com/marp00067))

Voting ends April 15. *Please take a few moments to enjoy these creative efforts.*

### View from elsewhere . . .

*"Although I often rail against excessive taxation and an overbearing government, I do agree that some basic necessities must be collectively paid for — such as the military, road construction, and basic infrastructure needs."*

-- Jeff Siegel, in [Modern Energy Report](#) 8 Feb 2013.  
Siegel goes on to make a conservative's case for investment in HSR.

*"Actually we are fortunate in that the expensive technical heavy lifting has already been done by the Japanese, French and Germans. We can buy any sort of high tech rail system we need, OFF THE SHELF! And 'buy America' clauses in procurement ensure that Americans will be employed, learn new skills and with hope compete in the now \$100BIL/year (and growing) international rail market. We already make the world's best heavy haul freight locomotives although China is stealing our overseas customers left and right with cheaper, inferior products."*

-- Malcolm Cunningham, U Illinois-Chicago, commenting on article cited above

### No April Fool's Joke

When I get to combine what I love to do, I am doubly thrilled. On Wednesday, April 1st, I combined my love of train travel and walking by taking the *Downeaster* to Durham, New Hampshire to complete a 10k walk through the University of New Hampshire campus and surrounding parts of town.



The *Downeaster* departs from Portland to Boston five times a day every day Monday through Sunday.

During the hour-long ride, I sat in the Café Car, enjoying a cup of coffee with the Conductor and Assistant Conductor who knew a lot about Durham and gave me some great tips on what to see while there. When we arrived in Durham, the Conductor let me off the train with a cheerful wave and good luck and set me in the right direction down Main Street.

-- Marilyn Russell, Portland ME



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