



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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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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Rosemary Horvath	East/Central Region Chair

*The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase*

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
- 20 July** – Flushing Historic Depot
- 10 August** – Train Ferry, Manistee
- 14 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- October** – Grand Haven (tentative)
- November** – Albion Amtrak Depot (tentative)
- December** – Executive Committee

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

South-of-the-Lake Update

On April 24, several MARP members participated, in person, or via the internet, in a meeting/webinar focused on the progress of the South of the Lake route alternatives analysis. The HNTB project team is evaluating existing and former passenger and freight routes, employing a detailed screening process to identify the routes that present the greatest opportunity for two dedicated passenger rail tracks in the area between Chicago and Porter IN, one of the most congested rail areas in the country.

This work is part of the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Study undertaken by the states of Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois to enhance intercity mobility by providing an improved passenger rail service that would be a competitive transportation alternative to automobile, bus and air service between Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac.

For those not able to take part in the April 24 meeting, a [Self-Guided Presentation](#) is now available. A detailed [Alternatives Evaluation Process and Criteria Technical Memorandum](#) is included in the presentation.

The project team is asking for our input in order to help narrow the range of route options possible in this area. Feedback is being taken through May 29. Visit the website greatlakesrail.org.

Transportation Budget FY 2013-14

SB 184, passed by the Senate on April 30, included the Governor's request for \$19.3 million to operate the *Wolverine* beginning September 30, 2013. The House bill HB 4328 did not. The bills now go to conference committee. Please let your Senator and Representative know that you want them to support full funding for Michigan trains.

Most legislators hold regular in-district meetings. Take advantage of the opportunity for a face-to-face meeting. If you are not already receiving e-newsletter updates or audio podcasts from your legislators, go to his or her webpage to subscribe. Find your legislator here:

tinyurl.com/YourRepresentative
tinyurl.com/YourSSenator

The Sixth Annual National Train Day will be celebrated in more than 200 communities across the country on Saturday, May 11, 2013.

[FIND AN EVENT NEAR YOU](#)

Ahoy, MARP Maties!

MARP Members, Spouses, Family Members, and Friends



Have fun attending MARP's August 10 meeting aboard a real (but retired) railroad ferry - the *S.S. City of Milwaukee*. The ship is designated a National Historic Landmark and is permanently berthed on Lake Manistee in the northwest Michigan vacation community of Manistee. We will meet on the rail car deck of a vessel that once shuttled rail cars between Muskegon and Milwaukee for the Grand Trunk Western Railroad. Members of the City of Milwaukee's preservation group, meeting the same weekend, will attend our meeting and have invited us to attend their events.

You are invited to treat this meeting, and the weekend of Aug. 9-10-11, as part of your summer vacation. Decide now to attend, save your gas money, and get ready to enjoy a weekend of history and good company.

As a special treat, we have the opportunity to experience lodging aboard this 1920's Great Lakes steamship. Most rooms are located in the historic passenger area which features beautiful oak paneling and polished brass. Other rooms are located in the Engineer's hallway. You can fish from the ship, just enjoy lounging on the deck under the stars, or watch a movie in the observation room.

Passenger, crew, and officer rooms are available at \$25.00 for a single, \$15.00 per extra person in a room + 11% tax. Options include: 8 rooms with two single bunks, 8 rooms with one single bunk, 1 room with four bunks.

Don't dawdle - there are 30 bunks total and the one room with a double bed is already rented. When gone, rooms will be offered aboard the former Coast Cutter *Acacia* at \$25.00 person + tax.

For those wishing a less "historical" experience, there are a number of hotels or motels nearby. Because this is a mid-summer vacation weekend in this popular Lake Michigan community, hotel space is limited. You are advised to book early.

Downtown Manistee is 1/2 mile from the ship and restaurants are within walking distance.

Sadly, there is no public transportation to Manistee so carpooling is recommended.

To make reservations aboard ship:

- Call 231-723-3587 during business hours on Mondays and Thursday-Sunday.
- Or go online to request booking information at <http://carferry.com/contact>

To make motel/hotel reservations:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Microtel 231.398.0008 | near the ship |
| • Super 8 231.398.8888 | near the ship |
| • Ramsdell Inn 231.398.7901 | historic downtown hotel |
| • Manistee Inn & Marina 231.723.4000 | downtown on the Manistee River |
| • Days Inn 888.626.4783 | opposite end of town |
| • Arcadia House B&B 231.723.4042 | 15 miles north |
| • Little River Casino Resort 888.568.2244 | U.S. 31 and M-22, 2700 Orchard Hwy.
Manistee MI 49660 |



For more information about the ship, read Rosemary Horvath's account in the Spring issue of *The Michigan Passenger*.

Questions? Phone Jim Wallington 517-303-6038 or email marprail.org

SEE YOU IN MANISTEE !

ALERT -- Chemical camp style toilets are provided in the communal/shared toilet facilities on board the S.S. City of Milwaukee, but the sponsoring group for the City of Milwaukee is striving to have flush toilets installed in June. There are no toilet facilities on the Acacia so guests will use facilities in the adjacent marina building. Showers are available in the marina building adjacent to both ships. The meeting area is handicapped accessible.

S.S. City of Milwaukee

<http://carferry.com>

BATTLE CREEK BY CHRISTMAS

Meeting Notes by Hugh Gurney

That's what John Michael Nevins, Amtrak's Michigan District Director for Capital Projects, told the 35 plus MARP members gathered at the Niles Amtrak station on April 20. Nevins expressed confidence that the rail line between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek will be upgraded to 110 mph by Christmas 2013. Amtrak crews under his direction are responsible for this segment of the 130 mile route purchased by MDOT in December 2012 and designated the "Michigan East Rehabilitation Project". Work includes improvement of the track itself, a new interlock with the Grand Elk Railroad in Kalamazoo, and the laying of new fiber optic cable to operate signals. According to Robert Lotsbaich, Amtrak's Assistant District Engineer, the cable work will be done by a contractor under the direction of Amtrak. Amtrak in Chicago can then begin dispatching trains between Battle Creek and the Windy City.

At the other end of the project route, Norfolk Southern will install ties on the existing main line between Town Line and Ypsilanti. In addition, site grading for the build out of the second main between Town Line and Wayne Junction should be completed by year end.

The remaining sections between Battle Creek and Ypsilanti are programmed for future years, with all work completed by 2016. Because there are many more curves on this segment, Nevins foresees average speeds of around 80 mph. He feels that 50 mph is a reasonable speed for trains passing through Albion.

The total project will cost approximately \$200M and involve new welded track, some 200 thousand new wooden ties, upgraded passing tracks, 730 car loads of ballast, and the rebuilding of 97 grade crossings. In all, 204 private and public crossings will see upgrades.

To keep this project on schedule, it is critical that MARP members apprise our federal legislators of the importance of this undertaking, asking them to keep pressure on FRA to release funds in a timely fashion.

(MEETING continues in next column)

CORRECTION: "MARP meets aboard the S.S. City of Milwaukee" in the April issue incorrectly stated the dates for the overnight stays aboard the ship. The correct dates are August 9 and 10. The MARP meeting will take place on August 10. See details of this special MARP meeting in August elsewhere in this issue and posted on the website

marp.org

It's Our Birthday !

This year marks forty years since John, Clark, George, and the other John cooked up the idea of MARP. We will commemorate this event at our Annual Meeting in September. If you have ideas, memorabilia, artifacts, memories, please let us know at marprail.org. *Thank You*



On April 16, over 35 participants met with legislators to discuss transportation issues. MARP was represented by John DeLora on the far left, Chuck Merckel, John Langdon Tim Fisher L to R in 2nd row, and Rosemary Horvath and Kay Chase to the right of the man in the hat in the center of the picture.

(MEETING continued from previous column)

In other business, Chase presented a Certificate of Appreciation to the Four Flags Garden Club for the work they do to maintain the beautiful grounds around the Niles Station. Gurney and Chase discussed the need for information on each rail station in Michigan as to ownership, management, and staffing. Far too many "staffed" stations are open for very limited hours, leaving passengers to the fate of the elements.

Gurney has filed a letter of intent seeking funding from the Sally Mead Hands Foundation to develop an interactive website to aid passengers in scheduling trips throughout Michigan by train, intercity bus and local transit.

Horvath reported on plans for the new East Lansing Transportation Center. The new depot will be somewhat west of the existing building and contain seating for 40 passengers. Currently, an average of 53 people boards the train at East Lansing daily. It is to be hoped that the new station be open and staffed at train times and be equipped to handle checked baggage. Local CATA buses, as well as intercity buses, should enter the station complex if it is to be a truly intermodal station. DeLora urges that a parking deck be constructed to provide sufficient parking.

View from elsewhere . . .

"Now that the truck-only lanes controversy appears over in Virginia, zombie-like, it has arisen again along I-70 in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. The massive and untenable plans for massive rebuilding of interstate highways will continue unless as a nation we adopt multi-modal thinking and planning." -- www.RAILsolution.org

citing a 2010 study by the Virginia Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation concluding that 50% or more of through-state trucks could be diverted to a reliable, scheduled, and frequent railroad service.

"The current trajectory of the Highway Trust Fund is unsustainable. Starting in fiscal 2015, the trust fund will have insufficient amounts to meet all of its obligations . . . Bringing the trust fund into balance in 2015 would require cutting the authority to obligate funds in that year from about \$51 billion projected under current law to about \$4 billion, raising the taxes on motor fuels by about 10 cents per gallon, or undertaking some combination of those options."

-- Congressional Budget Office analysis released April 24, 2013.



May is a beautiful time to visit the High Line

NYC's High Line was built in the 1930s to remove trains from the streets of Manhattan's largest industrial district by lifting freight traffic 30 feet in the air. Friends of the High Line, formed in 1999 when the historic structure was under threat of demolition, works in partnership with the City of New York to preserve and maintain the structure as an elevated public park. Visit www.thehighline.org

Michigan Operation Lifesaver Quarterly Meeting

Friday, May 10 at 10:30am
Durand Union Station

You'll be the guest of Jon Cool, who is succeeding Bob Chaprka as President of the Michigan Railroads Association, for lunch following the meeting. Please RSVP to samcrowl@comcast.net or 248-823-7037

MI Transportation Funding Webinar

Wednesday, May 15, 1:30 - 2:00 pm

Transportation for Michigan (Trans4M) staff will provide an update on the transportation funding discussion in Lansing and answer your questions. [REGISTER HERE](#)

Midwest High Speed Rail Assoc. Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 11, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
DankHaus, 4740 N Western Ave Chicago, IL
\$45 members & non-members, \$20 students
Attend both MHSRA events for \$65

Joseph Costello, Exec. Dir. of the Regional Transportation Authority, is keynote speaker. Also planned is an overview of the Obama administration's proposed nationwide high-performance rail network and an update on progress around the country.

Midwest High Speed Rail Assoc. Business Luncheon

Thursday, May 16 11:30 am - 1:30 pm
Petterino's, 150 N Dearborn St Chicago, IL
\$45 members & non-members
Attend both MHSRA events for \$65

Joseph Boardman, President and CEO of Amtrak is the keynote speaker. Formerly Commissioner of the NY State Dept. of Transportation and FRA Administrator, he has a unique understanding of how to expand fast, frequent and dependable passenger trains in our economy.