



# 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

Robert Tischbein	Chair
Larry Krieg	Vice-Chair
Dave Randall	Treasurer
Hugh Gurney	Secretary
John Langdon	Governmental/Public Affairs Coordinator
Kathleen Newell	Membership Coordinator
Kay Chase	Communications Coordinator
Jim Wallington	Meetings Coordinator
Don Monteith	Northern Region Chair
Jim Hinkins	Detroit/Metro Region Chair
Open	West Region Chair
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 Village & 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 Non-Negotiable !

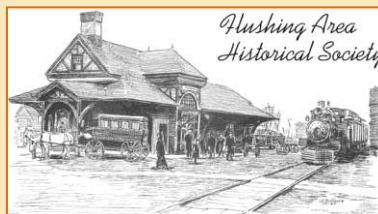
That was the reaction of the National Association of Railroad Passengers to the Capitol Hill news of proposed cuts to Amtrak's FY2014 and to questions raised concerning the future of the nation's long-distance train routes. Read the full press release [HERE](#).

In a party-line vote last week, the House Appropriations Committee failed to restore drastic cuts to Amtrak's budget for FY 2014. The final \$950 M level is nearly 1/3 less than the current year's appropriation. In addition, the bill zeroes out state passenger train capital grants as well as the highly oversubscribed TIGER grants. Perhaps more worrying is the talk, surfacing once again, of eliminating Amtrak's long-distance routes. On June 6, House Transportation & Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) reportedly said Amtrak's nationwide service mandate is "something we have to take a hard look at... There are places that it costs us a lot of money and the ridership is not there."

Meanwhile, the news from the Senate is more encouraging. On June 27, the Senate Appropriations Committee, by a vote of 28 to 8, approved \$1.452 billion for Amtrak in FY 2014, along with \$100 million for High-Performance Passenger Rail grants to states and \$550 million for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants. While less than requested for FY 2014, this amount will allow Amtrak to continue to operate in the coming year, but is not enough to expand and modernize service to keep up with demand as other transportation options become increasingly stressed.

NARP and Midwest Highspeed Rail Association are partnering in a campaign to rally support for Amtrak and passenger trains. To send a letter to your Senator and/or your Representative, simply [CLICK HERE](#). You may personalize the letter to increase its effectiveness.

You may also want to print and distribute [NARP's leaflet](#) explaining the importance of long-distance trains and calling on readers to take action.



**MARP MEMBER MEETING**  
**Saturday, July 20**  
**10:00 am – 1:00 pm**  
**Flushing Area Museum**  
**and Cultural Center**  
**431 W. Main, Flushing MI 48433**

[Map & Directions](#)

Mary and Don Wilson, Flushing Area Historical Society Director and Treasurer respectively, will be our hosts and guides. Meeting details will be available soon on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org). Or send email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

## May Meeting Notes

*By Hugh Gurney*

Efforts to attract and retain new members provoked a lively discussion at the MARP monthly meeting in Vicksburg on Saturday, June 15. As Vice-Chair Larry Krieg correctly noted, most of those who turn out at MARP meetings look back to a golden age of passenger rail in the 1950's and earlier. MARP needs to focus more clearly on **current** and **future** issues affecting passenger rail with meetings at locations accessible by public transportation. In particular, we need to consider the needs of a younger, working-age audience that wants to use passenger rail and other forms of public transportation in their daily business. In Krieg's thinking, the April meeting in Niles met these criteria, as it focused on plans for higher speed rail and was accessible via Amtrak.

It was suggested that MARP meet more frequently at or near MSU, UM, Wayne State and other large universities in an attempt to engage more graduate students and faculty. DeLora recalled that this had been done in past years with some success. Between Ann Arbor and Detroit alone, there are ten colleges and universities. MSU actually has a railroad related curriculum that we might tap into. Wallington suggested using social networks to attract technically savvy prospects. Krieg cautioned that we need a younger person to set up and run social media. Langdon suggested a youth membership coordinator to assist our regular membership coordinator.

On the other hand, we must remember that senior citizens have the time and desire to travel by rail. Langdon reported that he was well received at a recent Senior Outreach event sponsored by three West Michigan legislators. He plans to attend a similar event in Fremont on June 20.

Chairman Tischbein urged all to share their ideas with Meetings Coordinator Jim Wallington, who will be planning the meeting schedule for 2014 in the near future.

Local historian Gerald "Smitty" Smith discussed the importance of Vicksburg as a rail junction between the north-south Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad and the east-west Peninsular Railroad (now CN). He was followed by Dr. Roland Smith, professor emeritus University of Illinois, who demonstrated how ice harvesting on Vicksburg's Sunset Lake aided the burgeoning ice-cooled refrigerated "reefer" industry in efficiently moving dressed meat from Chicago slaughterhouses to eastern markets by rail, thus assuring fresh meat year round to cities on the Atlantic seaboard.

*(NOTES continues in next column)*

## Michigan Flyer Expands Airport Service

Thanks to a one-vote dramatic turnaround June 26, mid-Michigan travelers soon will have more options, particularly between East Lansing, Ann Arbor and Metro Airport.

A 9-9 tie vote last month at Tri-County Regional Planning Commission in mid-Michigan appeared to doom an effort by Indian Trails and its subsidiary Michigan Flyer to add four round trips to Metro Airport from East Lansing. But in a tense revote countdown, with an estimated 75 people looking on, Ingham County Commissioner Brian McGrain, an absentee last month, cast a 10<sup>th</sup> yes vote that broke the logjam and will lead to acceptance of a \$595,000 federal grant that the bus company will use to finance the expansion to 12 daily round trips, likely starting this fall.

Opposition to the funding was led by the Capital Region International Airport, which insisted the additional four trips would drain passengers from the local airport.

The Michigan Flyer expansion comes on the heels of other increases this June in motor coach service in the Lansing area, spurred by Greyhound's expansion to Chicago and expanded Thruway service at Kalamazoo via Amtrak's Blue Water to such western Michigan towns as Big Rapids, Cadillac, Traverse City and Charlevoix.

### ***More good news . . .***

Don Monteith, MARP's North Region Chair, has wondered for some time why he can make Thruway connections from Charlevoix to Chicago, but not from Charlevoix to Detroit. He brought this to NARP's attention and the ensuing discussion between Ross Capon, NARP President, and George Genge, Amtrak's Manager for Operations Support & Intermodal Service, has resulted in the addition of this previously overlooked connection.

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*(NOTES continued from previous column)*

In other business, the Executive Committee agreed to partially fund the installation of electronic status boards at the Pontiac Transportation Center. These would be like the boards installed at the Kalamazoo Transportation Center and will show the arrivals and departures of Amtrak trains, Indian Trails motor coaches and local SMART buses. MARP will assist in raising funds from other sources. With Indian Trails now serving Pontiac and connecting with Amtrak, electronic boards are now viable at that location.

## MARP Membership Cards

MARP membership cards have been mailed to all whose 2013 dues were processed before April 30. Our records incorrectly show many of our members as having joined in 2007. If you will let us know when you first joined MARP, we will make that change to our records.

Send email to [marprail@yahoo.org](mailto:marprail@yahoo.org)



## ***DON'T MISS THE BOAT !***

There is still time to make your plans to spend a summer weekend with friends and family in one of Michigan's most popular vacation spots.

MARP's August 10 meeting will take place on the rail car deck of the *S.S. City of Milwaukee*, the retired railroad ferry that is permanently berthed on Lake Manistee in the northwest Michigan vacation community of Manistee. 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.

MARP members are invited to arrive on Friday, August 9. Accommodations are available on board the ship or in several nearby motels. [CLICK HERE](#) for meeting details and information on lodging. 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 [carferry.com/contact](http://carferry.com/contact).

Please plan now to make this part of your family's summer vacation plans. Get ready to enjoy a weekend of interesting history and good company.

QUESTIONS? Phone Jim Wallington 517-303-6038 or email [marprail@yahoo.org](mailto:marprail@yahoo.org).

## A Visit to Flushing

*By Rosemary Horvath*

A film several years ago called "Standing in the Shadow of Motown" featured the talented musicians (The Funk Brothers) mostly responsible for the Motown Sound but who shared little of the fame.

Searching the Internet for tidbits on Flushing reminded me of the concept of a place standing in the shadow of a larger city. In this case, Flint is 10 miles away. Historically, when Flint's population neared 100,000 thanks to Buick, General Motors Corporation and Chevrolet manufacturing, Flushing's population stood at 1,169.

Today, Flushing's population of around 8,400 lives basically in a suburb of Genesee County (population half million). Nestled on the Flint River, it has a popular scenic river walk, downtown shops and restaurants.

Flushing sprang up as a railroad town and was named in the 1830s by Flushing, N.Y., native Charles Seymour. This first resident decided to honor his roots with naming the area he settled as a lumber town. By the way, that New York metropolis of the same name can hold Dutch settlers responsible.

The depot, which today houses the Flushing Area Museum and Cultural Center managed by the Flushing Area Historical Society, was built in 1888 by the Cincinnati, Saginaw & Mackinaw Rail Road. A grassroots effort raised \$300,000 to restore the depot damaged by fire after operating for a time as a restaurant.

A nostalgic portrayal of small town life when the depot was the most important building in town unfolds in the novel "The Situation in Flushing" (1965) penned by Edmund G. Love, a Flint native. Love died in 1990 in Flint. The New York Times obituary said the book "concerned a boy's love of trains in the early 1900s." Love authored 20 books, anthologies and textbooks on writing. His best known book was "Subways Are for Sleeping," which was the basis for the Broadway musical of the same name.

One other find about Flushing is Almar Orchards, 1431 Duffield Road, off M-13, southwest of the city. This place has a retail store that sells one of its key products J.K.'s Scrumpy Original Hard-Cider. Apple production in 2012 was down but the operation's website didn't mention a shortage of the alcoholic brew.

When MARP visits Flushing on July 20, Mary and Don Wilson, Flushing Area Historical Society Director and Treasurer respectively, will be on hand to tell us more about the former depot - which now houses the Flushing Area Historical and Cultural Center - as well as some history of the railroads that have served the area.

[The Situation in Flushing](#) by Edmund G. Love

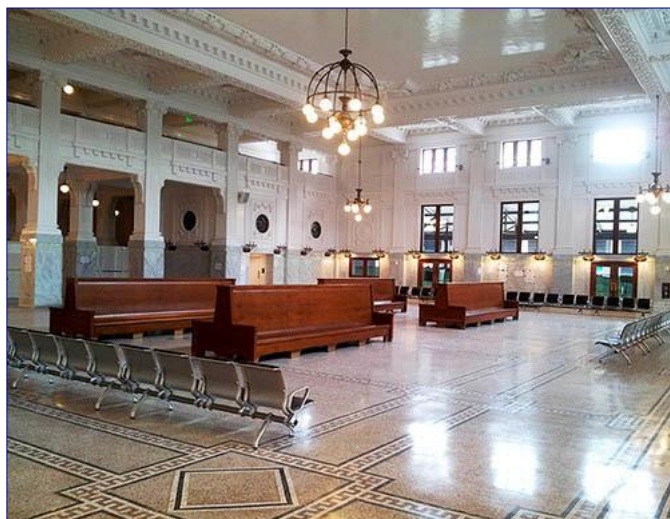
## View from elsewhere . . .

*"The proposed House budget is extremely disappointing in its unwillingness to tackle America's growing infrastructure crisis. Millions of Americans depend on the U.S. rail network to commute to work every day, and for millions more Amtrak is a vital intercity connection, allowing them to travel for work and for family. This is especially true in smaller and rural communities where trains serve as the only alternative to driving, connecting residents to essential services in larger cities. Curtailing service at a time of growing demand makes no sense."*

-- NARP President Ross Capon, 18 June [Press Release](#)

*"Last year we spent more than \$40 billion on highways. And Lord knows we need that. But that's more than we spent on Amtrak in its entire 40-year history."*

-- Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, long-time champion of public transit and passenger rail who passed away on 3 June, as quoted in the New Orleans Times-Picayune 24 Oct 2011



A long-overdue restoration project is now complete as Seattle's 100 year-old King Street Station embarks upon its second century of service. The multi-phase restoration was a partnership between Washington State, the federal government, and the city of Seattle. WSDOT contributed \$16.7 million in federal high speed rail funds to provide seismic retrofitting to improve the station's ability to withstand earthquakes.

## Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard  
202-224-3121

[tinyurl.com/Stabenow](http://tinyurl.com/Stabenow)

[tinyurl.com/SenatorLevin](http://tinyurl.com/SenatorLevin)

[tinyurl.com/YourCongressPerson](http://tinyurl.com/YourCongressPerson)

[tinyurl.com/YourRepresentative](http://tinyurl.com/YourRepresentative)

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