



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

marprail@yahoo.com

Issue #31

April 2014

*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. The public is invited to attend.*

### 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
Robert Patterson	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*

### 2014 MEETINGS

- 18 January** – Williamston Depot-Museum
- 15 February** – University of Detroit Mercy
- 8 March** – Herrick District Library, Holland
- 5 April** – Wayne County Community College, downtown Detroit campus
- 10 May** – National Train Day
- 14 June** – Former GTW Depot, Lansing
- 19 July** – Traverse City
- August** – Executive Committee
- 20 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 18 October** – *The Rapid* Central Station, Grand Rapids
- November** – TBA
- December** – Executive Committee

Visit [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)  
Email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

## Coast-to-Coast Line

### Creating Opportunities from Coast to Coast

Imagine this if you will: Grand Rapids entrepreneurs catch the morning train to a meeting in Lansing, and update their business plans on the ride home. A retired couple boards in Ypsilanti for dinner and a show with friends in Detroit. Michigan State students hop a train for a Saturday on the beach at Holland.

These are glimpses of how the **Coast-to-Coast Passenger Service** will knit together Michigan's largest population centers and reconnect our east and west coasts. By meshing existing train tracks with local transit options and intercity coach services, the route will extend possibilities well beyond its station stops and allow comfortable travel across Michigan without a car.

This **Coast-to-Coast** passenger train route will:

- Ignite innovation by providing a conduit for new partnerships between the world-class medical centers and 19 colleges and universities along its tracks.
- Provide workers access to jobs along the corridor and make their commutes more pleasant and productive.
- Breathe new life into our centers of arts and entertainment by giving out-of-town visitors a reliable and relaxing way to reach new cultural experiences.
- Help Michigan attract and retain more of the talented workers the state needs to prosper in the future.

To bring this vision to reality, MARP is partnering with the [Michigan Environmental Council](#), [Michigan Land Use Institute](#), and [Michigan Technological University Rail Transportation Program](#). The first step in this journey is to conduct a preliminary ridership demand study to see whether a passenger rail corridor could be developed using existing rail lines. MARP members John Langdon and Larry Krieg, along with MEC's Dan Sommerville, have been contacting planning agencies, business interests, and community leaders along the route seeking match funds and support

*(COAST continues on page 2)*



**MARP MEMBER MEETING**  
Saturday, 5 April 2014, 10 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Wayne County Community College  
(Downtown Campus, Room 236)  
1001 W Fort, Detroit MI 48226  
**Map & Directions**

WCCC faculty members Frank Dunbar and Howard Smith will tell us about new programs designed to prepare students for employment in the light rail industry developing in Detroit and other urban areas nationwide.

Details on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) Or email us at [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

## A Year of Anniversaries

*Meeting Notes By Hugh Gurney*

At the March 9 meeting in Holland, plans for two major 2014 anniversaries were reviewed. Thirty years ago, on August 4, 1984, the **Pere Marquette** made its inaugural run from Grand Rapids to Chicago. Stakeholders from up and down the line are working to promote the service and build ridership. A centerpiece of the anniversary celebration will be the dedication of the new Grand Rapids Amtrak station adjacent to **The Rapid** Central Station. The new Amtrak facility is complete and awaiting CSX crews to connect tracks from the new station to the main line track connecting Grand Rapids to Holland, Bangor, St. Joseph and Chicago.

In September the **Blue Water** will mark its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The route connects Port Huron with Chicago via Lapeer, Flint, Durand, East Lansing, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Dowagiac, Niles, and New Buffalo. Ridership growth on the **Blue Water** continues, with increases among the highest in the Amtrak system. The Port Huron station is considered inadequate and planning is underway for a new station at a new location. Work on a new transportation center in East Lansing is scheduled to commence this spring. The **Blue Water** Coalition will commemorate the anniversary with billboards along I-69, posters and banners in the stations, and an updated route guide. An effort is underway to involve the communities west of East Lansing, including Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Dowagiac, Niles and New Buffalo, in the festivities.

Members with reminiscences they wish to share about either the **Pere Marquette** or the **Blue Water** are asked to contact East/Central Regional Chair Rosemary Horvath at [rosemaryhorvath@hotmail.com](mailto:rosemaryhorvath@hotmail.com) or 989-506-9539.

Northern Region Chair Don Monteith distributed the 2014 schedule for the Beaver Island Ferry, pointing out that the St. Ignace-Kalamazoo **Indian Trails Thruway** bus stops at the ferry dock in Charlevoix.

Kay Chase, Robert Tischbein, Don Monteith and Doug Wilson participated in a well-attended meeting in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, on February 19 protesting the upcoming discontinuance of passenger service on the **Algoma Central Railroad** from Sault Ste. Marie north through the wilderness to Hearst, Ontario. *See more on the ACR effort elsewhere in this issue.*

In other business, the Executive Committee passed Resolution #5 clarifying the duties of the Public/Gov'l Affairs Coordinator and the Meetings Coordinator. Chase and Rich Vavra-Musser were appointed as a Search Committee to look for a new Treasurer.

*(ANNIVERSARIES continues in next column)*

*(COAST continued from page 1)*

for the grant application.

So far, the team has gathered 22 letters of support from across the proposed route and has raised more than half of the \$20,000 match funding needed. A full up-to-date list of supporters can be found on the [Michigan By Rail](#) website.

Here's how you can help: Encourage your agency, organization, or community to write a letter of support or to pledge match funds for this Service Development and New Technology grant from MDOT. For detailed information, please e-mail [dan@environmentalcouncil.org](mailto:dan@environmentalcouncil.org).

The **Coast-to-Coast** will reconnect Michigan's three largest population centers - Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing - for the first time since 1970. It will connect 19 college campuses, the Grand Rapids, Lansing and Detroit airports, as well as the state's major medical centers. The planned route will include Detroit, Williamston, East Lansing, Lansing, Grand Ledge, Kentwood, Grand Rapids, Hudsonville Grandville and Holland. Depending on the route selected, stops could also include Livonia, Plymouth, Dearborn, Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, Hamburg, Whitmore Lake, Genoa, South Lyon and Howell.

Demand for convenient rail travel has never been greater. Amtrak ridership in Michigan has increased over 78% since 2002. Michigan trains carried over 800,000 passengers in 2013, setting a new ridership record, and generating \$28.7 million in ticket revenue.

For a snapshot of what the **Coast-to-Coast** route and timetables could look like, check out this [marketing mock-up](#) created by [Freshwater Transit](#).

*This article was adapted from a blog appearing on the [Michigan By Rail](#) website.*

---

*(ANNIVERSARIES continued from previous column)*

Long time Treasurer Dave Randall has relocated to Texas and is resigning his position effective April 15, 2014.

Clark Charnetski and Steve Sobel will serve as the Nominations Committee. The terms of all Executive Committee members including the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Public/Governmental Affairs Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, Membership Coordinator, Meetings Coordinator, and Chairs of the Detroit Metro Region, East/Central Region, Western Region and Northern Region expire in September 2014. If you are interested in serving in one of these positions or want to nominate someone, please contact Clark at [camcharnet@aol.com](mailto:camcharnet@aol.com) or 734-761-3814 or Steve at [weatherwatcher248@sbcglobal.net](mailto:weatherwatcher248@sbcglobal.net).

## 2014 Membership Dues are Due !!!

Thanks to all who have paid their 2014 dues.  
If this has slipped your mind, now would be a good  
time to send your check, along with the form you  
received in the mail in January  
or [DOWNLOAD](#) a form  
and mail it in TODAY!

### Support Algoma Trains

While Canadian National has agreed to keep the Algoma Central passenger trains running through April 29 on the 300 mile route between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst in Northern Ontario, the threat remains. Talks are ongoing with government and railroad officials with the goal of keeping the trains operating in the short-term while a longer-term solution is sought.

Supporters of the ACR are asked to send letters to:  
"Minister of Transport Lisa Raitt" [lisa.raitt@parl.gc.ca](mailto:lisa.raitt@parl.gc.ca)

Please cc: your letters to the following:

"Prime Minister Stephen Harper,"  
[stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca](mailto:stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca)

"Mr. Bryan Hayes, MP Sault Ste. Marie"  
[bryan.hayes@parl.gc.ca](mailto:bryan.hayes@parl.gc.ca)

"Ms. Carol Hughes, MP Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing"  
[carol.hughes@parl.gc.ca](mailto:carol.hughes@parl.gc.ca)

"SSM Economic Development Corporation" [info@ssmedc.ca](mailto:info@ssmedc.ca)

"SSM Chamber of Commerce Ontario" [info@ssmcoc.com](mailto:info@ssmcoc.com)

"Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains" [info@captrains.ca](mailto:info@captrains.ca)

For a hint of what the train means to Canada's heritage,  
you will enjoy this preview of a [documentary film](#) that  
may remain unfinished if the train goes away.

Visit the website  
[www.algomapassengerrail.com](http://www.algomapassengerrail.com)

## On The Road with MARP

MARP is continuing outreach efforts at four events in the coming month. These are outstanding opportunities for us to promote travel by rail as well as to inform people about the work that MARP does to improve and expand passenger trains in our state.

Chuck Merckel coordinates these events and he and Jeanie dedicate much personal time to making them successful. They invite you to volunteer for an event near where you live. If you can give even 3 or 4 hours of your time, it will be appreciated. Chuck can help to arrange carpooling to save on expense and to offer some socializing as well.

You can email Chuck at [crmerckel@aol.com](mailto:crmerckel@aol.com) or  
phone him at 734-522-7329. You will enjoy the  
experience!

### "Traveling By Train"

#### Northville Community/Senior Center

Presentation by Chuck Merckel and Steve Sobel  
Wed, April 9, 11 AM

#### Grand River Valley Train Show

Home School Building  
5625 Burlingame, Wyoming MI  
Sat, April 12, 10 AM - 3:30 PM  
(John Langdon)

#### Portage Green-a-Thon 2014

Celery Flats, 7335 Garden Lane, Portage MI  
Sat, April 26, Noon – 4:00 PM  
(Kay Chase, Christine Ballard, JP DesCamp)

#### Blissfield Railroad Days Train Show

Blissfield Middle School  
1305 Beamer Rd, Blissfield MI  
Sat & Sun, April 26-27, 10 AM – 4:00 PM  
(Chuck and Jeanie Merckel)

#### 39th Durand Railroad Days Festival

Durand Union Station, Durand MI  
Fri, May 16, 10 AM – 8 PM  
(Jim Wallington, Kaz Fujita,  
Michael Frezell, John DeLora)

## Nominating Committee is Seeking Candidates

The election of officers for the 2014-2016 term is scheduled for the Annual Meeting, 20 September 2014.  
If you would like to play a more active role in MARP, please consider throwing your hat in the ring.

You may contact either Steve Sobel [weatherwatcher248@sbcglobal.net](mailto:weatherwatcher248@sbcglobal.net)  
or Clark Charnetski [camcharnet@aol.com](mailto:camcharnet@aol.com)

### View from elsewhere . . .

" . . . some have said that public transit ridership in New York increased while ridership elsewhere declined. That is not true. While the growth in trips in New York outpaced the nation as a whole, many other systems across the country saw ridership gains last year and some reported all-time record ridership. Cities that have invested in high frequency public transportation and transit-oriented development policies are experiencing significant ridership growth. This trend is evident since the end of the recession; fully 59.3 percent of ridership growth during the period occurred outside of New York City."

-- American Public Transportation Association (APTA) [in response to criticism](#) of a recently released report documenting the highest transit ridership in 57 years. Read a summary of the report [HERE](#).

"That we did this in spite of serious obstacles says a lot about the demand -- but the losses we did see are just the first of the challenges we can expect to face if we do not act now to stop the decay of the Amtrak system."

-- Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman [reporting](#) record ridership and revenue numbers for 2013 despite weather-related and other problems that cost more than 444,000 riders and \$42 million in ticket revenue.



### Detroit's M-1 Rail Line Jump-Started

The odds that Detroiters will be riding a Woodward Avenue streetcar line by late 2016 rose with the April 1 news of a \$10 M bridge loan from the Michigan Strategic Fund. Tim Fischer, well-known to MARP through his leadership of the Michigan By Rail project, recently left his position with the Michigan Environmental Council to become CAO for [M-1 RAIL](#). In other news, M-1 RAIL's Director of External Affairs, Sommer Woods, is up for the Corporate Transit Champion Award to be given at the annual awards event sponsored by Transit Riders United (TRU). Information about the May 8 event is [HERE](#).

### Midwest High Speed Rail Spring Meeting

Saturday, April 12 9am – 3pm

Information and Registration [HERE](#)

### 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)

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



Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers  
P.O. Box 180076  
Utica, MI 48318-0076