



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. The public is invited to attend.

MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2012-2014

Robert Tischbein	Chair
Larry Krieg	Vice-Chair
Jeanie Merckel	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
- 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
Email marprail@yahoo.com

POTHOLES

Just What Michigan Needed?

While the legacy of the grueling winter Michiganders endured this past season – potholes – is exacting a terrible price in damage to cars and aggravation, there may be a silver lining of sorts. Our lawmakers in Lansing appear ready, at long last, to deal with the crisis in transportation funding that they have been trying to avoid since at least 2010.

House speaker Jase Bolger (R-Marshall) has introduced a package of bills that would increase revenues into the state's transportation fund by \$450 million. While this is certainly a step forward, concerns have been raised that the package falls far short of the minimum \$1.2 billion that Governor Snyder has said is necessary to bring the state's transportation system up to par. There is also concern that all of the new money will go to roads, thus failing to address the very real need for greater investment in the state's passenger rail services, transit systems, and non-motorized transportation needs.

Michael Lamb, Friends of Wally, had this say last week: "There is no question that our roads are in need of repair. However, the house bill does not address two key issues: the proposed amount of money will **not** fix all the roads that need to be fixed and it does not invest money in other forms of transportation. If we do not start investing in other forms of transportation like commuter trains we are never going to solve this problem. In a year or two after a snowy winter our roads will be a mess and we will be back where we are today."

Michigan's Act 51, on the books since 1951, established a formula for distribution of transportation revenues to state and local governments for road construction and repair and to the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTA) that pays for all other forms of transportation. The CTA receives less than 10% of the \$3.5 billion distributed in recent years through the Act 51 formula. In 1997, when a \$.04 fuel tax increase was approved, the CTA was left out of the fund distribution. This has resulted in the loss of about \$15 million per year, or \$259 million since 1997.

(POTHOLES continues on page 3)



7th Annual National Train Day Saturday, May 10

No member meeting in May. Instead, you are invited to celebrate National Train Day at one of these Michigan locations: Grand Rapids, Holland, Bangor, Niles (Fernwood Botanical Garden's Railway Garden), Kalamazoo, Jackson, Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Detroit, Pontiac, Flint, Durand, and Port Huron. Details [HERE](#).

WORKING ON THE RAILROAD PAYS WELL

Meeting Notes by Hugh Gurney

That's what MARP members heard at [Wayne County Community College](#) on April 5. According to Howard Smith, the lead instructor for the [Light Rail Engineering Technology](#) course of study WCCC will begin offering this fall, the total package including salary and benefits for railroad employees comes to \$108,900 annually as opposed to \$67,700 for the average U.S. worker.

The initiative for WCCC to offer the new curriculum comes from the school's chancellor, Dr. Frank Dunbar, who sits on the SE Michigan Regional Transportation Authority Board, and sees a dearth of programs designed to train local residents in the operation and maintenance of the M-1 streetcar system. As Dr. Dunbar, chief architect of the program explained, students will begin maintaining the new streetcars as soon as they arrive in Detroit. Dunbar went on to point out that maintenance and operation of light rail and streetcar systems is quite similar to other rail systems, so the training that WCCC graduates will receive should give them a leg up on rail jobs anywhere in North America.

Among specific classes being offered are "Rail Transportation and Railroad Careers"; "Railroad Rules, Regulations, Standards and Practices"; "Safety in the Railroad Workplace"; "Reading and Interpreting Railroad Diagrams"; "Railroad Pneumatics and Hydraulic Controls"; "Railroad HVAC Systems"; and "Railroad Electromechanical Troubleshooting". These, plus several electrical engineering, physics and humanities courses, will lead to a degree of Associate of Applied Science.

Among railroads hiring at this time are Amtrak, BNSF, CN, CP, CSX, NS and UP. Many current employees are nearing retirement and will need to be replaced by skilled workers. Howard Smith, who has worked in the railroad industry since 1965, will offer the students a wealth of practical knowledge. Students will also spend time in the field at the Norfolk Southern Control Center and similar sites.

Tim Hoeffner, MDOT Office of Rail, noted that all rail companies have their specific training programs, but are looking for well-motivated candidates with basic skills. As a specific project, he pointed to Detroit's People Mover, which will need a major overhaul in the near future.

Kay Chase, head of the Treasurer Search Committee, recommended that Jeanie Merckel be appointed to the position of Treasurer when Dave Randall steps down on April 15. Randall has reviewed her qualifications and feels she will be an excellent fit for the job. Randall has relocated to Texas after ten years of dedicated service.

(MEETING continues in next column)

MARP Seeking Nominations

With more than 300 members statewide (even one in Great Britain), MARP is fortunate to have a talented and enthusiastic group of people committed to the betterment of passenger train service in our state and nation. And every one of our members (that means you) has the ability to help build a strong and lasting organization.

MARP will be electing officers to guide the organization for the next two years at our annual meeting at Durand Union Station, September 20. What better chance for you to step out of the shadows and become more involved in the work we do? Currently, the positions of Vice-Chair, Secretary, and West Region Chair are open.

The Secretary position is particularly important. Hugh Gurney is stepping down from his position as Secretary after eight years of faithfully recording MARP business. If you have secretarial skills, the nominating committee is anxious to hear from you

If you would like to be considered for Vice-Chair, Secretary, West Region chair, or any other position, please let Steve Sobel weatherwatcher248@sbcglobal.net or Clark Charnetski camcharnet@aol.com hear from you.

Current nominees are Larry Krieg (Chair); John Langdon, Jim Wallington, Kay Chase and Kathleen Newell for the four at-large executive committee positions which also chair Governmental/Public Affairs, Meetings, Communications and Membership Committees, respectively; Robert Patterson (Metro Detroit Region), Rosemary Horvath (East Central Region) and Don Monteith (Northern Region).

(MEETING continued from previous column)

The Executive Committee concurred and Merckel was welcomed as MARP's new Treasurer.

Langdon reported that [Trans4M's](#) Michigan By Rail team has gathered 25 letters of support from community leaders and government officials along the proposed Holland to Detroit [Coast-to-Coast line](#). The team is also well on its way to raising the \$20,000 match needed to fund a preliminary feasibility study. It is hoped that language will be put in the FY2015 state budget authorizing the study. Langdon and Krieg are key members of the project team, a joint effort of MARP, the Michigan Environmental Council and the Michigan Land Use Institute.

The next MARP meeting will be on June 14 at the former [Grand Trunk Western Depot](#) in Lansing. The Lansing Board of Water and Light has recently restored the structure for its offices.

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!

(POTHoles continued from page 1)

The fear is that lawmakers may again bypass the traditional funding formula, shortchanging transit, trains, and non-motorized modes by a minimum of \$31 million annually.

Your representatives in Lansing need to hear from you.

Let them know why trains and transit are important to you and your community. Urge them to ensure that any new transportation funding be subject to the full ACT 51 funding formula. Our legislators must not shortchange the non-highway portion of Michigan's transportation system.

Use the links on page 4 to find your legislator and send an online message. In addition, look for opportunities to speak with your lawmaker during local office hours or at public events in your community.

Michigan residents: Fix the roads

If Michigan lawmakers are looking for some cover for increasing spending on roads, they might look to the Center for Michigan's recent report on their Community Conversations with more than 3,700 state residents. Seven out of 10 participants said the state's roads, bridges and infrastructure are an urgent priority. More than half said they are willing to pay more in taxes for better roads.

Yes		52.0%
No		26.0%
Don't know		22.0%

Read the report [HERE](#)

On The Road with MARP

Are there opportunities in your community for promoting travel by rail and spreading the word about the work we do? Chuck Merckel, MARP's Outreach Chair, is always looking for new venues to meet and talk with people. MARP has exhibited recently at Green Fairs and has made presentations at Senior Centers and to local service organizations. Chuck is eager to hear your suggestions for other new outreach targets. Let him know your ideas.

National Train Day events will highlight MARP's outreach this month. If there is an event near you, please plan to be there to meet and talk with people. No training is necessary, just your experience and your enthusiasm!

Questions? Suggestions? Phone Chuck at 734-522-7329 or email crmerckel@aol.com.

National Train Day Saturday, May 10

Events are scheduled in Grand Rapids, Holland, Bangor, Flint, Durand, Port Huron, Niles (Fernwood Botanical Garden's Railway Garden), Kalamazoo, Jackson, Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Detroit, Pontiac.
Check for locations & times [HERE](#)

Senior & Veterans Expo
Antwerp Township Activity Center
24821 Front St., Mattawan MI
Monday, May 12, 9 am – 1 p.m.
(Kay Chase and John Langdon)

Durand Railroad Days
Durand Union Station
200 Railroad St., Durand MI
May 17 and 18, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
(Jim Wallington, Clark Charnetski,
Robert Tischbein, Michael Frezell, John Cwiek)

**If Amtrak were an airline, it would be
the 6th largest carrier in the county!**

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
or Clark Charnetski camcharnet@aol.com

View from elsewhere . . .

"We are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Chairman Jim Oberstar, who has been a true leader on transportation issues on Capitol Hill. Mr. Oberstar was a thoughtful and knowledgeable lawmaker with almost unparalleled influence in the transportation world, with an appreciation for planning for the long term. He was the leading infrastructure expert of our time who focused on the most effective ways to move people and goods, including the adoption of intermodalism. Congressman Oberstar will be remembered as a dedicated and loyal servant to the American people."

— Association of American Railroads President and CEO Ed Hamberger. See other tributes [HERE](#).

"We are examining the possibility of buying or leasing new equipment to run on Amtrak lines in Michigan until (we get) the new equipment that we have ordered."

-- MDOT spokesman Nick Schirripa, quoted in an April 20 [news article](#) confirming that Michigan is looking at the two Talgo trains built for use in Wisconsin but sidelined in a subsequent dispute.



World's First Car-less Bridge

Tilikum Crossing, Bridge of the People

Now under construction, this 1,720 foot, cable-stayed bridge over the Willamette River in Portland OR will be the first multi-modal bridge in the United States to carry light-rail and streetcar trains, buses, bikes and pedestrians, but no private vehicles. The name "Tilikum Crossing, Bridge of the People" derives from the Chinook Wawa word "tilikum" and symbolizes coming together. The span is scheduled to open Sept 12, 2015.



OUR ADDRESS HAS CHANGED



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