



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

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Issue #34

July 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
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 15** – Port Huron
- December** – TTBA

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

Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission Convenes in Kansas City Union Depot

Some forty Commissioners, Partners, and Allies of the **Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission** (MIPRC) gathered in the First Class Lounge in Chicago Union Station on June 11 prior to boarding the *Southwest Chief* bound for Kansas City and the Commission's annual meeting. Later, aboard the train, Amtrak's Moe Savoy and Derrick James briefed the group on the operations of the long distance trains that are, once again, coming under fire from members of Congress who fail to understand the importance of these trains in serving people who cannot, or choose not to, travel by car or air. Importantly, Amtrak continues to provide access to many far-flung communities no longer served by air or motor carriers.

A major item during the Commission's formal session the following day was approval of a letter to Congress expressing strong support for Amtrak's national system, noting that 8 of the 13 long-distance routes originate in Chicago and serve numerous intermediate points throughout the Midwest. Also on the agenda was approval of a resolution supporting the naming of the U.S. DOT Building Complex in honor of James L. Oberstar, who was a strong advocate for rail during his 36 years in Congress and as chair of the House Transportation Committee.

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission was formed in 2000 as an interstate compact commission of Midwestern state legislators, governors and their designees. Advocating for improvements to passenger rail in the Midwest is at the heart of MIPRC's purpose. Tim Hoeffner, Director of Michigan's Office of Rail, chairs the Commission. Michigan's other members are Rep. Wayne Schmidt, Sen. Mike Kowall, and former state legislator and Congressman Dr. John J.H. "Joe" Schwarz.

Kay Chase, MARP's Communications Coordinator, attended the meeting. She serves on the Commission's Committee on University Partnerships, chaired by Missouri Sen. David Pierce, which is analyzing the use of Amtrak trains by college and university students. The committee will be recommending initiatives to involve students in advocacy efforts. Watch for her extended report in the Summer edition of *The Michigan Passenger*.



MARP MEMBER MEETING
Saturday, July 19
10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Former Pere Marquette Depot
(now the Filling Station Microbrewery)
Traverse City MI

This joint meeting with the Michigan Land Use Institute will feature a roll-out of the report *"Getting Back on Track: Uncovering the Potential for Trains in Traverse City"*.

Detailed information is available on the website. Click [HERE](#).

Restored Lansing Station A Gem

Meeting Notes By Hugh Gurney

On June 14, approximately forty MARP members gathered at the former Grand Trunk Western station in Lansing for the monthly meeting. **Recently restored** by the Lansing Board of Water and Light, the building is an absolute delight to all who enjoy historic structures. Built in 1902, the ornate brick structure with a terra cotta roof was designed to make a statement about the importance of both the railroad and Michigan's capital city. Restoration was overseen by the nationally acclaimed architectural firm of Quinn Evans in Ann Arbor and Cornerstone of Grand Rapids. While not generally open to the public, the structure is visible at 1205 South Washington Street in Lansing, twelve blocks south of the Capitol.

MARP met in the former waiting room with its beautifully restored wood ceiling and wainscoting. Meeting Coordinator Jim Wallington recalled that, when he worked in Lansing, the station was one of his favorite haunts. At that time, six trains each way stopped at the station. The last Grand Trunk passenger train left the station in May, 1971, and for three years, Lansing had no rail passenger service at all. When **Blue Water** service was inaugurated in 1974, East Lansing became the station stop. The Lansing Board of Water and Light plans to use the structure for board meetings and staff training.

Concerning plans for a new station in East Lansing, Kaz Fujita reported that the Capitol Area Transportation Authority is revising plans to align with a reduced budget but permit expansion in the future.

Opening dates for new stations in Troy, Dearborn and Grand Rapids have yet to be confirmed. All three structures are nearing completion, but track work is yet to be completed.

Planning for a new station in Ann Arbor is moving ahead. Possible locations include the present site, a site on Fuller Road, and six others. Tim Hoeffner, MDOT Office of Rail, explained that Section 4f of the Environmental Protection Act complicates the Fuller Road site because of possible impacts on public parkland.

Larry Krieg urged all to attend the July 19 meeting in Traverse City. MARP will be meeting with the Michigan Land Use Institute, which will release its report on the feasibility of a commuter train between Traverse City and the Turtle Creek Casino & Hotel near Williamsburg.

Check the Amtrak website for revised **Blue Water** and **Wolverine** schedules in effect through August 31 to facilitate continuing track work. Langdon stressed that MARP prefers new equipment for Michigan trains, not

(LANSING continues in next column)

SAVE THE DATES

Celebrate **CrossRail Chicago Campaign Victories**

July 9 Luncheon at Museum of Broadcast Communications

Details and Registration [HERE](#)

The 2nd Annual Michigan Rail Conference

August 26 & 27, Macomb Community College

sponsored by M-Tech, NURail Center, MDOT

Details and Registration [HERE](#)

(LANSING continued from previous column)

renovated equipment. The Talgo equipment, recently moved from Wisconsin to Beech Grove, fits the bill.

Dan Somerville, heading the **Michigan By Rail** Team, reported that the recently approved state budget directs MDOT to study the proposed Holland-Grand Rapids-Lansing-Detroit "**Coast-to-Coast**" passenger rail project. Somerville explained that Michigan By Rail is also assisting with the both the Traverse City and the Howell to Ann Arbor commuter train projects.

The Executive Committee voted to add Rosemary Horvath, Clayton Farmer and Bob Tischbein to the Membership Committee. Along with John Langdon who was appointed to the committee in April, this group will assist Membership Coordinator Kathleen Newell in devising strategies to recruit new members and retain existing members.

Tim Fischer, Chief Administrative Officer for **M-1 Rail** announced that construction of the Detroit streetcar line along Woodward Avenue, will be underway this summer

Michael Ford, currently CEO of the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, has been offered the position of CEO of the newly created Southeast Michigan Regional Transportation Authority. He is currently debating whether to accept the offer or stay with AAATA.

The **Blue Water** 40th Anniversary Celebration is slated for Wednesday, September 10. Don Westcott will have details by the July meeting. The **Pere Marquette** 30th Anniversary Celebration will take place in conjunction with the opening of the new Grand Rapids train station, probably in October.

Former MARP Vice President Michael Frezell has been promoted to the MDOT Office of Communications and will be responsible for press releases and other communications affecting passenger rail and intercity bus. One of his first press releases announces that eight **Indian Trails** buses serving Northern Michigan will carry the Pure Michigan logo and be wrapped in photos of popular Michigan vacation destinations.

Last Call to Renew Your Membership

Letters were sent last week to all who have yet to renew their membership for 2014. If this has slipped your mind, now would be a great time to get that check in the mail and ensure that you continue to receive meeting notices, your copy of *The Michigan Passenger* and the monthly online bulletin.

Thank You

News from Lansing and Beyond

The Michigan Legislature adjourned for summer recess on June 12 after approving a FY 2015 budget that fully funds operation of Michigan's three passenger train routes for another year. In addition, a \$10 million appropriation will help advance the **Continental Rail Gateway**, the proposed high-clearance rail tunnel under the Detroit River between Detroit and Windsor. This project is being developed by partners Canadian Pacific, Borealis Infrastructure and the Windsor Port Authority.

Of particular interest to MARP is the legislative directive to MDOT to study the feasibility of reintroducing passenger train service between Detroit and Holland via Lansing and Grand Rapids --- the "**Coast-to-Coast**" Rail project.

Unfinished business includes any solution to the structural shortfall in revenues to repair roads and support transit, trains, and bike and pedestrian facilities in coming years.

MARP members are urged to look for opportunities to talk with their lawmakers during their summer break. Let them know you appreciate their support for trains but you expect them to find a way to adequately fund the complete transportation system over the longer term.

For an overview of the legislative debate over transportation funding, please read the excellent column by Michigan Environmental Council President Chris Kolb "**How the transportation deal stalled**".

Indiana DOT has selected **Corridor Capital LLC** as its preferred vendor to **operate the Hoosier State** trains. The *Hoosier State* provides service between Chicago and Indianapolis four days per week. INDOT's Bob Zier explained that Amtrak has failed to meet improvements in its service sought by the seven communities along the route who are, under a deal set to expire in October, contributing 50% of the cost of running the train. Future state funding is predicated on continued contributions from these local partners. Unsuccessful bidders included Iowa Pacific Holdings LLC, Herzog Transit Services Inc., and Travel Train Holdings Inc.

(NEWS continues in next column)

Summer Schedule Changes for Michigan Trains

Passengers on Michigan's *Wolverine* and *Blue Water* routes are experiencing significant schedule changes this summer. Trains #358 and #359 offer attractive new options for travel between Chicago and southern Michigan destinations. Travelers in both Battle Creek and Kalamazoo are enthusiastic about being able to finish their workday and catch the train at 5:45pm or 6:15pm, respectively, for an early evening arrival into Chicago. These trains, in effect, replace trains #352 and #353 which are running only on Sundays.

Train #349 (Mondays only) gives visitors to Michigan an opportunity to extend their weekend in Michigan and still arrive in time to get to work in Chicago on Monday morning.

Also in effect during the summer is an earlier departure for the westbound *Blue Water* train #365.

Please let MDOT and Amtrak know if you think these changes, in effect through August 31, are something you would like to see continued. The printed timetable does not reflect these changes, but the schedule can be accessed [here](#). Go to page 3 of the document.

Were You There ?

Forty years ago this fall, passenger service was resumed on the route between Port Huron and Chicago, the current *Blue Water* route. The *Pere Marquette* route between Grand Rapids and Chicago was restored ten years after that. Both trains will be celebrating anniversaries this coming September. MARP is seeking information from anyone who was involved in efforts to reinstate these trains.

E-mail your recollections to us at
marprail@yahoo.com

(NEWS continued from previous column)

The eagerly awaited **Indiana Gateway Project** was officially kicked-off on May 29 when Indiana Governor Mike Pence and representatives from Amtrak, the Federal Rail Administration and Norfolk-Southern gathered near Porter IN to turn the first shovelfuls of dirt. The \$71.4 million project, designed to relieve congestion on the busy passenger and freight corridor between Porter IN and the Illinois state line, will be a significant factor in increasing reliability and shaving travel times for Michigan trains bound for Chicago. Read more [HERE](#).

View from elsewhere . . .

“Michigan needs a 21st century transportation system that is multimodal and interconnected, one that balances improved mobility with expanded access—to jobs, affordable housing, education, shopping, the arts and entertainment. We need to maintain our roads and bridges while increasing support for public transportation and passenger rail to link our major cities. Doing so is central to the future economic and social well-being of our great state.”

--Chris Kolb, Michigan Environmental Council President. See his excellent column ***"How the transportation deal stalled"***.

“This project significantly strengthens the Midwest Regional Rail Network, eliminates chokepoints, and creates an environment where intercity passenger trains and freight service can operate fluidly without prolonged delays.”

--Deputy FRA Administrator Karen Hedlund speaking at the May 29 kick-off of the **Indiana Gateway Project** designed to, among other things, improve Amtrak passenger train service for several routes that terminate in Michigan, Boston, New York City and Washington, D.C.



MARP at Train Expo 2014

Hugh Gurney and Chuck Merckel were two of the volunteers who helped out at the June 21-22 event in Owosso. Other volunteers included Jeanie Merckel, Robert Tischbein, Doug Wilson, Larry Krieg, Steve & Justin Vagnozzi, Clayton Farmer, John Langdon, and brand new MARP members Robert Tobleck, Warren Fritz, and Theresa and Dave Nielsen. A big thank you to all who helped spread the word about the work we do!



OUR ADDRESS HAS CHANGED



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