



# 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 2014-2016

Larry Krieg	Chair
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Warren Fritz	West Region Chair
Steve Vagnozzi	East/Central Region Chair

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

### 2015 MEETINGS

- 10 January** – Lansing’s former Grand Trunk Depot with Special Guest Speaker Bob Johnston, writer for TRAINS Magazine
- February** – Cancelled
- 14 March** – Kalamazoo, 1<sup>st</sup> Methodist Church
- 25 April** – Ypsilanti Depot Freighthouse
- 16 May** – Durand Union Station
- 20 June** – Crossroads Village
- 25 July** – Amtrak Exhibit Train at Grand Rapids Amtrak Station
- 29 August** – Executive Committee
- 19 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 10 October** – CMU Research Corporation Mt. Pleasant
- 21 November** – Okemos Public Library
- 5 December** – Executive Committee

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

## National Passenger Day of Action November 13

Congressional leadership and staff are meeting in Washington, D.C. this week and next to reconcile the differences between Senate and House transportation bills. To ensure that the final multi-year transportation bill gives states and Amtrak the tools they need to build a 21st Century rail transportation system, a broad coalition of passenger groups are organizing for a **National Day of Action on Friday, November 13.**

Your help is needed to stand up for rail! Led by the National Association of Railroad Passengers, groups are rallying around three simple requests. Please read the information below, then **CLICK HERE NOW** to send a message to your representatives in Congress.

### 1. Include passenger rail as part of a comprehensive surface transportation bill.

The Senate included passenger rail as part of the **DRIVE Act**, the first time it has been included as part of a truly comprehensive multi-year surface transportation bill. Now it’s time for the full Congress to ensure that passengers have a seat at the transportation table.

### 2. Allow for flexibility in investing the \$77 billion in general revenue used to fund the surface transportation bill.

Since 2008, Congress has subsidized the Highway Trust Fund to the tune of \$75 billion. Now, Congress is considering diverting another \$77 billion to keep the fund afloat. There’s no reason these general funds must only be used for road projects. Congress should grant communities the flexibility to invest these funds to best address local transportation challenges—whether it’s a roadway, a railway, a bus line, or new equipment.

### 3. Include predictable, dedicated funding for passenger rail, and restore funding to FY2010 levels, when Congress invested \$4 billion in trains.

The U.S. passenger rail system has been struggling to meet surging demand with stagnant resources. Congress must provide a trust fund so that the states and Amtrak can invest with confidence.

*(ACTION continues on page 3)*



### MARP Member Meeting

**Saturday, November 21**

**10:0 am – Noon**

**Okemos Public Library**

4321 Okemos Road, Okemos MI 48864

**Map & Directions**

Members will be asked to approve changes to the MARP Bylaws recommended by the Executive Committee. Debbie Alexander, Capital Area Transportation Authority, will give a tour of the nearly completed East Lansing station. Details on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) Or send email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

## MARP Members Will Vote on Bylaws Revision

A committee headed by Hugh Gurney has recently completed a comprehensive review of MARP's Bylaws and recommended a number of changes.

The executive committee has reviewed these changes and recommends approval by the membership. A vote will be taken at the member meeting on Saturday, November 21, 10 am, at the **Okemos Public Library**, 4321 Okemos Road, Okemos MI 48864.

All members in good standing have received a copy of the revised document, along with a summary explanation of the recommended changes. The documents were sent via email to those members for whom we have email addresses. Others received it via surface mail. If you have not received your copy, please send an email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com) or leave a message at 269-388-3777.

The current Bylaws are posted on the **MARP website**.

## MARP Meeting in Mt. Pleasant Held Surprises

When MARP members gathered for the October meeting in Mt. Pleasant, little did they think that the Central Michigan University "shuttle service" on the agenda for discussion was not a rubber-tired bus but a steel-wheeled train. Chris Bagwell, Executive VP and General Manager of Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLC), was on hand to stir up enthusiasm around the idea of a 3-mile commuter route connecting the **CMU Research Corporation** (CMURC) campus to the rest of the campus and the business district to the north. Bagwell sees the project as very do-able. GLC has the equipment and personnel to operate the trains. Switches would need to be installed at either end of the 3-mile route. Four or five "commuter type" platforms would have to be constructed. Trains would operate between 7:30 am and 2:30 pm, allowing GLC to continue its freight operations overnight to and from Traverse City.

Erin Strang, the CEO of CMURC, took the floor to recount how concerns with traffic and walkability as the technology/research park develops led to the idea of utilizing the nearby tracks. With GLC seemingly eager to take on the project, next steps include an analysis of ridership potential and the creation of an authority to oversee the project.

Bagwell responded to concerns expressed by the operator of the existing fixed route bus service, pointing out that other communities have found that train and bus services complement one another.

A story in the **local newspaper** reflects the interest aroused within the community for this project.



## Coast-to-Coast Passenger Rail Study Wraps Up Public Meetings

Kudos to John Langdon and Liz Treutel who have ably guided this phase of the **Coast-to-Coast** project to a successful conclusion! Thanks, too, to the MARP members who have volunteered their time to help make this a rewarding effort.

With its fifth campus visit on November 4, the **Michigan By Rail** team has completed a series of 16 public engagement meetings around the state. Feedback collected at these sessions will help guide decisions about re-connecting Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids and Holland with passenger train service.

Formally titled "*Detroit – Holland Passenger Rail Ridership and Cost Estimate Study*", the study is funded by a federal grant, with public matching funds provided by 11 organizations and institutions located along the potential corridor.

The technical aspects of the study are being handled by **Transportation and Economic Management Systems** (TEMS, Inc.), which has already delivered completed sections of the study to the team. The final report will be assembled over the next two months and should be available in early 2016.

John Langdon is MARP's Governmental and Public Affairs Coordinator. Liz Treutel Callin, a policy associate with the Michigan Environmental Council, is the project manager for the **Coast-to-Coast Study**.

Tuesday  
November 4  
11 am – 1 pm

**Wayne State University**  
Student Center  
5221 Gullen Mall  
Detroit MI 48202 ([map](#))

**CONTRIBUTE YOUR THOUGHTS  
TO THE COAST-TO-COAST  
ON-LINE SURVEY**

**5,120 Michiganders rode Michigan trains on the day before Thanksgiving in 2014. It would have taken thirty-four 149-passenger Boeing 737s to carry these people – and those planes weren't flying to most of the places those people wanted to go!**



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## MDOT Will Host Webinar on Revising State Long-Range Transportation Plan

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is hosting an online discussion of how Michigan will meet its transportation challenges over the next 25 years. You are invited to join the webinar scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 12, from 6 to 8 p.m. to discuss the information, forecasts and strategies contained in the current 2005-2035 plan, titled **2035 MI Transportation Plan : Moving Michigan Forward**, and revisions to extend the planning horizon to 2040. You can [register here online](#) or by calling 517-373-2227.

MDOT has posted a number of documents that you may wish to study prior to the webinar. Of particular interest are the Technical Report White Papers, the Vision White Paper, and the 2014 Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures White Paper. All of these can be downloaded easily at [www.Michigan.gov/slrp](http://www.Michigan.gov/slrp). You may also be interested in viewing the **State Rail Plan** adopted in 2011.

## Heavy Rail Systems See More Riders Transportation Ballot Issues Succeed

While 2015, with its low gas prices, has seen a slight dip in both intercity passenger rail and transit ridership, 9 out of 15 heavy rail systems (think Chicago Metra) reported increases, experiencing an overall increase of 0.5 % in ridership during the first half of the year, according to the **American Public Transportation Association (APTA)**. Interestingly, metro areas with significant job growth, such as Seattle WA and Austin TX, saw substantial growth in transit use, confirming the importance of transit to workers.

APTA also reports that 10 out of 14 **pro-transit ballot initiatives** were approved by voters across the country on November 3. In Michigan, Scio Township and Delta County approved millages to support local transit services. Communities in Colorado, Utah, and Washington approved new sales taxes in order to increase revenues to support transit services. In Maine, voters overwhelmingly approved a statewide multimodal bond initiative which includes public transportation.

*(ACTION continued from page 1)*

While the Senate's DRIVE Act is slightly better than the House's STRR Act, neither one addresses the significant challenges states and Amtrak face in building a 21st Century rail system. For FY2016, we're asking Congress to restore passenger rail funding to the \$4 billion invested in FY 2010, and sustain that level across the life of the transportation bill.

**Michigan's Representative Candice Miller** has been named to the conference committee working to resolve the differences between the House and Senate bills. If you live in her District, **please send an email now** urging her to support the rail provisions in the **Senate's DRIVE Act**.

### MARP OUTREACH EVENT

#### Lansing Model Train Show

15 November, 10:00 AM-4:00 PM

4301 Farm Lane, MSU Pavilion, East Lansing MI 48824

If you would like to help, please contact  
Steve Vagnozzi [svagnozzi@comcast.net](mailto:svagnozzi@comcast.net)

### OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

**Transportation for Michigan (Trans4M.org)** will hold a **Regional Transit Workshop** on Friday, November 13, 9:30 am - 2:00 pm, at the offices of the Michigan Municipal League, 208 N Capitol Ave, Lansing MI 48933. This workshop features leading experts in best practices for improving and expanding regional transit. The agenda is [HERE](#). Click [HERE](#) to RSVP.

In Chicago, the **Midwest High Speed Rail Association** luncheon on 13 November will feature Kathy Haley, President of the Union Pearson Express, a premium Toronto **airport express train** that is seen as a model for Chicago's O'Hare express train. Information & Registration [HERE](#).

### *We hear from an old friend . . .*

*I had heard about Bob Kuehne's retirement from MDOT and would have come home for the event, except I was in South Africa with a delegation of businesses looking to expand American exports. While at MDOT I was in the Bureau of Urban and Public Transportation, located on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of the DOT building and was feeling a bit lonely as the one train guy in a building filled with highway folks. I thought that it was to my best interest to recruit some more folks to my team, so I wandered down to the Bureau of Transportation Planning on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and recruited Jim Roach and Bob, both transportation planners. I took them on every Amtrak trip I went on and introduced them to all my local, state, and railroad contacts. Made them feel totally engaged and it worked perfectly. My team got bigger and stronger. After all those years, about 30 years ago, good old Bob never gave up on supporting our rail program. I don't get homesick too often anymore, but missing his retirement event was hard.*

*--Scott Hercik*

## View from elsewhere . .

*"Really, we're going to try to change the flow of shipping on the Great Lakes. It's not a Muskegon story. It's not a West Michigan story. It's a Michigan story."*

-- Dennis Marvin, Consumer's Energy New Generation Department, in a **news story** proposing redevelopment of Muskegon's deep-water port to handle containers for shipment to Milwaukee and Cleveland.

*"Railroad congestion [in the Chicago hub] creates an annual economic vulnerability to disruption that runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars, as delayed trains disrupt everything from supply chains to individual travelers on their daily commute."*

-- Tom Carper, Amtrak Board member, speaking recently about the recommendations of the Chicago Gateway Blue Ribbon Panel. Singled out as of particular importance in relieving this congestion are the Indiana Gateway program and the "South-of-the-Lake" project. Amtrak CEO Joe Boardman said the case needs to be made in Congress, state houses and elsewhere that these unfunded Midwest projects affect the entire country. A video overview of the study and animations demonstrating benefits of the recommended projects are posted at [Amtrak.com/ChicagoGateway](http://Amtrak.com/ChicagoGateway).



## New Era for Muskegon Harbor

The port that once loaded rail cars for the journey across Lake Michigan appears poised for a new era. On November 8, the *James R. Barker* delivered its last shipment of coal to the soon-to-be-shuttered B.C. Cobb energy plant, an event chronicled in a **photo essay**. In the 2012 photo above, a shipment of **wind turbine blades** is emblematic of West Michigan's energy future. Intense interest in redevelopment of the port engendered a **future use study** suggesting the possibility of **container shipping routes** to Milwaukee and Cleveland, noting that a railroad spur could be extended from the rail line bordering the east side of the 140 acres or prime real estate currently occupied by the power plant.



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## Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard  
202-224-3121

**Sen. Debbie Stabenow**

**Sen. Gary Peters**

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**Find Your State Senator**

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