



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

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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

2011-2012

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
Lawrence Bancroft	West Region Chair
Jim Wallington	Acting East/Central Region Chair

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

### 2012 MEETINGS

- 14 January** – Williamston Depot-Museum
- 11 February** – Old Dog Tavern, Kalamazoo
- 17 March** – New Pontiac Station
- 21 April** – Chelsea Depot
- 12 May** – National Train Day
- 16 June** – Muskegon Union Station
- 28 July** –RAPID Central Station, Grand Rapids
- August 25**– Executive Committee Retreat
- 22 September** –Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 13 October** – Pere Marquette Station, St. Louis MI
- 10 November** – Michigan Central Station, Essex, Ontario

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

## How About That Chicago Union Station?

*By Larry Krieg*

Been to Chicago Union Station lately? Enjoyed it?

If the answer to the first question was “Yes”, the answer to the second was probably “NO”! Chicago Union Station (CUS) is overcrowded, and the number of people riding Amtrak is still increasing. All Amtrak's Michigan trains start or end in Chicago, so MARP is concerned.

What is Amtrak doing about it? Apparently, they're hoping for money that hasn't come. They have a reasonable plan to use more of the space in the station and make passengers' experience more pleasant. The money was in the 2011-2012 budget, but for one reason or another, the money disappeared.

We don't believe Amtrak has done their level best to use the facilities that are available right now. They seem to be using policies and procedures that were put in place decades ago, when ridership was much lower. Staff and passengers are all under a lot of pressure, because yesterday's way of doing things just isn't working now.

This year at Thanksgiving and the year-end holidays, we could easily see a record-breaking number of people trying to ride the trains. But if nothing is done to improve the situation in CUS before then, more people will get turned off to Amtrak. Fewer people will support efforts to increase train service.

So MARP and a number of other Midwestern rail passenger groups are getting together to do something about it. Over the next few months,

*(CHICAGO continues on page 2)*



### 39<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

**Saturday, September 22**

**10:30 am – 2:30 pm**

**Durand Union Station**

200 Railroad Street, Durand MI 48429

Our keynote speaker will be Bob Johnston, writer for *Trains Magazine*. We'll also have an update from Tim Hoeffner, MDOT Office of Rail. A delicious catered lunch is included in the \$25 reservation fee. It's not too late to make your reservation. Download the form at [marp.org/?p=4020](http://marp.org/?p=4020) and put it in the mail by September 13.

*(CHICAGO continued from page 1)*

we'll be talking with Amtrak, both in Chicago and in Washington (through NARP), as well as to Union Station management. We'll use our best "Yankee ingenuity" to help Amtrak improve CUS with the resources on hand – including routing passengers more effectively, reducing conflicts between electric carts and people, making it easier for passengers to find their way around (especially those new to CUS), and helping staff and passengers to interact with respect and dignity.

We will need a number of willing volunteers to bring this off. MARP will cover some of the expenses involved. If you're interested in helping with this effort, please contact Larry Krieg at [Larry@WakeUpWashtenaw.org](mailto:Larry@WakeUpWashtenaw.org).

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## BANCROFT TAPPED FOR WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL CHAIR

### *Meeting Notes by Hugh Gurney*

At its meeting in East Lansing on August 25, the Executive Committee appointed Lawrence Bancroft of Kalamazoo to the vacant position of West Michigan Regional Chair. Bancroft recently retired from the Canadian National Railroad after 41 years of service to CN and its predecessor, Grand Trunk Western. As a former track supervisor, he frequently rode aboard Amtrak trains to perform track inspections. He signed on with Grand Trunk Western at the Durand Union Station. It was at Durand Union Station that he learned about the vacant West Michigan position from a copy of *The Michigan Passenger* he picked up there. Welcome aboard, Lawrence!

The Executive Committee also appointed Larry Krieg of Ypsilanti Township to the vacant position of Vice Chair, effective immediately. Krieg has extensive first-hand knowledge of both rail and commuter systems in both the United States and abroad. Welcome aboard, Larry!

Dave Randall has agreed to continue as Treasurer. He will be commuting between Michigan and Texas due to the illness of a close relative in the Lone Star State.

To reflect substantial grants to MARP from the Transportation for Michigan Coalition (Trans4M), it was agreed to increase the income line on our 2012 budget by \$10,000 and our expense line by \$8,000. MARP has been asked by Trans4M to assist in educating legislators about the proposed Regional Transportation Authority legislation, assist in efforts to increase funding for transportation needs in general, and to encourage local jurisdictions to adopt Complete Streets ordinances. Complete Streets is the concept that roadways should safely accommodate all users, including pedestrians and cyclists. The State Transportation Commission recently adopted a Complete Streets Policy for the state.

As it has been over ten years since our present By-Laws were enacted, Langdon, Gurney and Tischbein will serve on a committee to review them and recommend changes if necessary.

Langdon distributed copies of Amtrak's new guidelines for baggage. Passengers will be allowed to check a total of four bags per person, two at no charge and two for \$20.00 each. Passengers will also be allowed two carry-on bags. With new equipment arriving beginning in 2015, the *Blue Water* and some *Wolverine* trains may have baggage cars to accommodate passengers connecting in Chicago with long distance trains.

WALLY, the proposed Howell-Ann Arbor commuter line, has received a grant of \$686,000 from the federal government to assist in identifying station locations and preliminary design of those stations. The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority is pushing hard to see that commuter trains go all the way into downtown Ann Arbor.

Gurney briefed the group on his review of the draft 2035 State Long Range Transportation Plan and suggested that MARP reiterate its support for frequent passenger rail service along the I-94, I-96, I-69, I-194, I-75, U.S. 131, and U.S. 23, which MDOT terms "Corridors of Significance". Chase will compile MARP's response before the August 31 deadline.

## *Chicago - Detroit/ Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program*

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has initiated a program to evaluate passenger rail improvements for the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac passenger rail corridor. The program is being prepared in partnership with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and in association with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

The purpose of the program is to improve intercity mobility by providing an improved passenger rail service that would be a competitive transportation alternative to automobile, bus and air service between Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac, Mich. The program will provide sufficient information for the FRA to potentially support future decisions to fund and implement a major investment in the passenger rail corridor.

### Route Alternatives

The existing track alignment used for Amtrak's Wolverine service will likely be used for most of the corridor. More rail route alternatives will be considered between Buffington Harbor, Ind., and Porter, Ind., due to the many challenges already known in this area, which is referred to as South of the Lake (SOTL). This is one of the busiest freight railroad routes in the country and it currently does not have capacity for additional passenger train trips. The area also has several environmental concerns given its proximity to lakefront resources [primarily the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore].

### Participate in a Public Scoping Meeting

Public scoping meetings are scheduled in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan during September 2012. Your input will help shape the range of alternatives to be considered and topics to be discussed in the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement. The public is welcome to come anytime between 4 and 7 p.m. to review the displays and talk with staff. A presentation will be given at 4:30 p.m. and repeated at 6 p.m. The same information will be presented at each meeting.

### TIE A STRING AROUND YOUR FINGER!

Our November 10 meeting will be in Essex, Ontario. Visit your nearest Secretary of State's office to obtain your Michigan "enhanced driver's license".

**Information is available at:**  
[tinyurl.com/marp00026](http://tinyurl.com/marp00026)

## Participate in a Public Scoping Meeting

### Illinois

Wednesday, September 12, 4 to 7 p.m.  
Chicago Union Station  
Union Gallery Room (off the Great Hall)  
500 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL

### Indiana

Thursday, September 13, 4 to 7 p.m.  
Michigan City/City Hall  
100 E. Michigan Blvd., Michigan City, IN

### Michigan

Wednesday, September 26, 4 to 7 p.m.  
Double Tree by Hilton Hotel  
5801 Southfield Expressway, Dearborn, MI

Thursday, September 27, 4 to 7 p.m.  
Radisson Plaza Hotel  
100 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI  
*(Parking validation will be provided  
for the Radisson parking garage.)*

### Online Scoping Meeting

Starting September 7, 2012, tour the self-guided  
public scoping meeting [HERE](#)

### Documents

View the Notice of Intent as Published  
in the Federal Register [HERE](#)

View the Purpose and Needs Statement [HERE](#)

**To receive periodic updates, visit the website**

[greatlakesrail.org](http://greatlakesrail.org)

## WHAT IS THIS ?

(answer on next page)





## What You've Always Wanted to Know About the RTA

It was thought that this would be the year that lawmakers would finally (after 20-some attempts) agree to authorize creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) for 4 southeast Michigan counties - Macomb, Wayne, Oakland, and Washtenaw. The RTA has the strong support of Governor Snyder and leaders in southeast Michigan but seems to have stalled in the legislature.

In preparation for a renewed push later this fall, the Transportation for Michigan Coalition (Trans4M) is hosting a Webinar on **Monday, September 10, 3:30-4:30pm ET**. You are invited to join this discussion of how a regional transit authority will benefit businesses and residents of SE Michigan. You'll also learn how to get involved and help move Michigan forward. MARP, as a Trans4M partner, is committed to working for passage of this legislation. MARP members, whether you live in southeast Michigan or not, are urged to tune in.

### Panelists:

- **Michelle Hodges**, president of the Troy Chamber of Commerce, will discuss why transit is important to southeast Michigan and its businesses.
- **Dennis Schornack**, strategic advisor on transit to Governor Rick Snyder, will provide an update on the current regional transit authority legislation in Lansing.
- **Megan Owens**, executive director of Transportation Riders United, and **Joel Batterman**, transportation coordinator for the Michigan Suburbs Alliance, will discuss how you can get involved.

### Webinar log-in info:

Toll Free Number: 1-888-537-7715

Participant Passcode: 15275215 #

Webinar Link: <https://www.yourcall.com/webecho/GuestLogin.aspx>

### Answer to "What is this?"

*"At first, MTA spokesman Sal Arena insisted that no part of the architectural glory of the old Penn Station survived in the stripped down bunker of today's Penn Station. But the carved leaf pattern in a large steel entryway on the lower level seemed so at odds with the rest of the station's no-frills style that we asked him to re-check that."*

Jim O'Grady, writing in [TransportationNation](#) tells how Mr. Arena had to eat his words when he took another look. The entryway—part of the original Penn Station—was walled off in 1963, when the above-ground part of the station was razed. (In the August issue of ON TRACK you saw the photo of the men and women protesting what they called an act of "historical vandalism".) Madison Square Garden and an office tower rose above the destroyed station and the train hub was shunted into the corridors beneath them. The entryway lay hidden for 30 years.

In the early 1990s, Penn Station underwent a major renovation. That's when workers took down the wall and discovered the entryway. *"It was found exactly where it is now,"* Arena said. *"The contractor cleaned it, painted it and put in windows."*

I'M GUESSING WE'LL ALL LOOK MORE CLOSELY NEXT TIME  
WE GO DOWN THOSE STEPS!

