



# 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. Everyone is welcome.

### MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2011-2012

Robert Tischbein	Chair
Barney Whittier	Vice-Chair
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Kathleen Newell	Membership Coordinator
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John Langdon	Acting 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 – Executive Committee Retreat

September 15 –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)

## Metro Detroit Needs Reliable Transit

Commentary By David Flynn, Detroit News 26 March 2012

Southeast Michigan desperately needs quality transportation options, and it is time to get serious about making this happen.

Transit does something simple: It connects people with their places of employment, the schools they attend, entertainment venues they enjoy, and to each other. In 2012, we no longer both live and work in the same community, and in southeast Michigan, a growing segment of the population that uses the available public transit is reliant upon current options. Studies show that approximately 65 percent of SMART bus users utilize the service to get to and from work, and nearly 1 million people use SMART (Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation) buses to travel to work, school, doctor's offices and shopping centers annually.

As a group of city and county legislators working across geographic boundaries, *Regional Partners Advocating Transit Here* recognizes that the need for access to reliable transportation affects us all. It is *R-PATH's* goal to engage public officials in useful dialogue that moves us toward a comprehensive regional transit plan for our area.

The first step in making this vision a reality is the creation of a regional transit authority that will allow us to capture crucial federal dollars that will otherwise be funneled to other regions. We are urging our legislators to realize the impact and importance of this urgent step.

U.S. cities, such as Denver, Salt Lake City and Portland, have tested and proven transit's impact as an effective economic growth tool, and it has been shown that for every dollar invested in public transportation, communities experience a \$6 to \$8 increase in local economic activity. Regional transportation is worth the investment.

Clearly, the need to reap both the economic and quality-of-life benefits of a world-class mass transit system exists here in Metro Detroit. It is imperative not only that *R-PATH* continues to work together across political and geographic lines to push this common goal forward, but that all state and local leaders lend support on this transformative tool that has the potential to revitalize the region.

*(Continued on page 2)*



Photo by Ren Farley

### MARP MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, April 21

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Historic Michigan Central Depot  
125 Jackson Street, Chelsea MI

Robert Shannon will speak on the Michigan Central Railroad and the history of railroading in the Chelsea area. Details on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)  
Or leave a message at (269)388-3777.

## MARCH MEETING NOTES

*By Hugh Gurney*

The March 17 MARP meeting took place at Pontiac's handsome new transportation center, which serves Amtrak, Greyhound and SMART. After watching Wolverine #353 board about twenty passengers and depart on time for Chicago, we were welcomed by Jim Fetzer, Deputy General Manager of Operations for SMART, which provides the local transit service for Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties. Fetzer spoke of his part in bringing Amtrak into the Grand Rapids Transportation Center while employed at RAPID. He is looking for ways to better connect SMART with Amtrak in Pontiac, Birmingham-Troy, Royal Oak and Dearborn.

Fetzer expressed pleasure that the Troy Transportation Center will go forward, but noted that many in the Detroit metropolitan area were not enthusiastic about public transportation. In both Wayne and Oakland counties, local communities can opt out of supporting SMART, meaning buses pass through many communities with their doors closed, hurting both the fare box and potential passengers. Despite a 23% cut in service in December, ridership on SMART is up in January and February of this year. Fetzer expressed hope that the proposed Regional Transportation Authority, now under consideration in Lansing, would help public transportation providers in Wayne, Washtenaw, Oakland and Macomb counties coordinate their services better.

Kay Chase noted that TRANS4M would be staging a Transportation Odyssey beginning March 21 to build support statewide for the Regional Transportation Authority. Participants will use local public transportation, Amtrak and Indian Trails to move from Detroit Metro Airport to downtown Detroit, then to Birmingham, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, and Traverse City. Events are scheduled in Birmingham, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids

Both MDOT and Amtrak are supporting New Buffalo's application for a TIGER grant to build a ten mile passing track on the Amtrak line between Dowagiac and Niles and to fund an engineering study on linking CSX tracks with Amtrak just north of New Buffalo, permitting the **Pere Marquette** to serve that station and to gain access to the 110-mph Amtrak route to Porter IN. The Michigan Senate with bipartisan support has approved a resolution supporting the grant application.

MDOT has also approved a Fennville station stop for the **Pere Marquette**. Amtrak must now review this proposal. Langdon will be meeting in the next week with WesTrain about a possible second frequency on the **Pere Marquette**.  
*(Continued in next column)*

*(Reliable Transit continued)*

Metro Detroit desperately needs to get into the "business of the future" once again, and without question, transit needs to be part of that future.

*David Flynn is a Macomb County Commissioner. Along with David Potts, an Oakland County commissioner, and Charles Pugh, Detroit City Council president, he provides leadership for Regional Partners Advocating Transit Here (R-PATH), a voluntary, bi-partisan group of elected officials representing the legislative bodies of the City of Detroit and the counties of Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne. The mission of R-PATH is to communicate a unified message of support for the development of a Regional Transit Authority in Southeast MI. Visit the website [southeastmichigansummit.org](http://southeastmichigansummit.org)*

*(March Meeting Notes continued)*

Don Monteith continues to advocate for rail access for the newly opening mines along the Michigan/Wisconsin border. Michigan Technical University in Houghton is now considered the best school in the nation for Rail Communication. Employees from CN, NS, CSX, BNSF and other railroads are taking classes there.

Mike Whims reported briefly on Amtrak's petition to the Surface Transportation Board protesting CN's delay of Amtrak trains. John DeLora observed that delays on CN dropped precipitously the day after Amtrak petitioned the STB for relief. Karen Kendrick-Hands suggested that MARP file an *amicus* brief in support of Amtrak's petition.

*(See last page for more information.)*

Slow orders are now in effect on the **Wolverine** route between Chelsea and Kalamazoo until tracks are repaired. Whether the westbound **Blue Water** is held outside Battle Creek when **Wolverine** #351 is late will depend on whether or not the **Blue Water** has enough capacity to handle those boarding at Kalamazoo.

At the afternoon Executive Committee meeting, it was recommended that the chair establish a nominating committee to solicit candidates for the next two year terms of Executive Committee members. The Publications Committee was asked to review the appropriate number of **Michigan Passenger** copies we should be printing. The budget for CY 2012 was finalized. Additional outreach events reaching new audiences were discussed. The Executive Committee accepted the resignation of Treasurer Dave Randall, who is relocating to Texas to be closer to elderly relatives.

## ON THE HORIZON

**"THE HISTORY OF THE RAILROAD IN OAKLAND COUNTY"** Saturday, April 14, 2012, 8:30 am - Noon

This free program will take place at the Activities Center, Springfield Oaks County Park, Springfield Township, 12451 Andersonville Road, Davisburg, MI 48350 (248) 634-7899. Download a flyer at: [tinyurl.com/marp00032](http://tinyurl.com/marp00032)

**2012 MAYOR'S GALA AT THE STEAM RAILROADING INSTITUTE** Thursday, April 19, 2012, 5:00pm - 8:00pm

Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, take a short ride on a Steam Railroad Institute train car, inspect the 1225 boiler reconstruction project, and be entertained by the Owosso Community Players Band. An RSVP is requested before April 12<sup>th</sup>. Call (989)725 9464 or order tickets online at [tinyurl.com/marp00033](http://tinyurl.com/marp00033) or pay at the door.

**MIDWEST HIGHSPEED ASSOCIATION RAIL ANNUAL MEETING-** May 5th, 2012, Chicago IL

Attendees will hear from Matt Dellinger, author of "INTERSTATE 69: The Unfinished History of the Last Great American Highway", an excellent overview of the politics of large infrastructure projects. Dellinger has lessons for passenger rail advocates on the need for greater economic connectivity and the politics of making that happen. Register at: [MidwestHSR.org/annual2012](http://MidwestHSR.org/annual2012)

**"KEEPING CONNECTED BY RAIL: MAKING YOUR VOICES HEARD!"** Friday, April 20, 2012, Washington, DC

Featured speakers will include Don Phillips, columnist for *Trains Magazine*, Art Guzzetti, Vice-President for Policy at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and Brian Rosenwald, Chief of Product Development for Amtrak. There will also be an optional "Day on the Hill" on Thursday, April 19th, so participants can campaign in the Halls of Congress for better transit and rail service. For information, visit [www.railusers.net](http://www.railusers.net)

**CELEBRATE RAIL - PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE! National Train Day in Toledo**, Saturday, May 5, 2012

Activities include the Amtrak 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train, model trains, rail art & history, drawings for train trips, kids activities, vendor booths. Free Admission - Free Parking. Info at [tinyurl.com/marp00029](http://tinyurl.com/marp00029)

**"WHY INDIANA IS SO IMPORTANT TO THE MIDWEST REGIONAL RAIL SYSTEM"**

13th Annual Golden Spike Seminar - Indiana HSR Association event May 17, 2012 [tinyurl.com/marp00028](http://tinyurl.com/marp00028)

**WATCH THE VIDEO OF THE INAUGURAL 110-MPH TRAIN ON MICHIGAN'S AMTRAK ROUTE** [tinyurl.com/marp00031](http://tinyurl.com/marp00031)

## It's Spring Break For Lawmakers !

Members of Congress will be in their home districts to meet with voters April 1-14. This would be a great time to meet with your Representative and make the case for trains. Congressmen need to hear from the folks who depend on trains to get to work, to visit family, and to get around the country. Some Representatives and Senators set aside time to meet with constituents one-on-one, so don't hesitate to reach out to them and ask. Or find out if they are holding a town hall event. Information on current legislation at [tinyurl.com/marp00037](http://tinyurl.com/marp00037)

Find your lawmaker using the links on page 4 below.

### ARE YOUR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS IN ORDER?

MARP will have its first-ever meeting in Canada when we gather on November 10 at the historic Michigan Central Station in Essex, Ontario. This would be a good time to think about updating your passport or to obtain a Michigan "enhanced driver's license", a federally approved document that allows you to re-enter the U.S. when traveling by land or sea from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda and the Caribbean.

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)

The *Amtrak for iPhone app* is a quick, convenient way to purchase tickets, review reservations, get train status and view station details while on the go. The app is available free through iTunes.

## Have You Renewed Your Membership ?

Go to [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)  
Click on "Join MARP Today" at the lower right  
Down load the form and mail it in today

### CN Responds to Amtrak Complaint

Canadian National responded on March 9 to Amtrak’s petition to the Surface Transportation Board protesting CN’s delay of Amtrak trains. CN also asked that Amtrak’s complaint be held in abeyance until a pending lawsuit by the Association of American Railroads is resolved. In that lawsuit, the AAR sued in U.S. District Court, Washington DC, to block implementation of PRIAA Sec.207 as being unconstitutional. That section ordered the STB and Amtrak, in consultation with other parties, to develop metrics and standards regarding on time performance. The AAR holds that this language turns Amtrak, “a private, for-profit corporation” into a regulatory body, a power which it does not have. CN also contends that Congress never intended that Amtrak have preference on privately owned railroads.

On April 4, the STB granted a motion filed jointly by Amtrak and CN requesting a delay action for 90 days and appointment of a mediator to supervise discussions to resolve the issues.

Amtrak’s complaint, Docket Number NOR 42134, filed with the Surface Transportation Board on Jan 19, can be viewed at [tinyurl.com/marp00024](http://tinyurl.com/marp00024)

CN’s response (a HUGE file!) is at [tinyurl.com/marp00036](http://tinyurl.com/marp00036)

Read the April 4 decision at [tinyurl.com/marp00038](http://tinyurl.com/marp00038)



Amtrak's Vermonter Train. Photo Courtesy of Amtrak

Frommer’s recently posted a slide show of **The 10 Best North American Rail Trips Under \$25**. Shown above is the 90-minute segment between [Brattleboro](#) and [White River Junction](#) which follows the Connecticut River, taking in small New England towns, low mountain vistas, and covered bridges. White River Junction is full of art studios and coffee shops; you can stay there, take a bus back, or continue on another two hours to [Burlington](#). View the slide show at: [tinyurl.com/marp00027](http://tinyurl.com/marp00027)

Do you have an idea for a short train trip to an interesting place in Michigan or the Midwest? Send your idea to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com) and we’ll include it in a future issue.



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### Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard  
202-224-3121

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

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