



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

marprail@yahoo.com

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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

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### 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)

## A QUICK TRIP NORTH TO THE CLARE DEPOT

By Rosemary Horvath

Following the MARP meeting on October 13 in the Michigan community of St. Louis, MARP members may enjoy taking U.S. 127 north for a quick trip to Clare to see progress on restoring the depot built by the Ann Arbor and Pere Marquette railroad companies in 1895. This building replaced the original Clare depot, built in 1887, that was destroyed by fire several years before the present structure was built.

The classic design of the Clare depot is an historic Queen Anne style considered one-of-a-kind remaining in Michigan and among the few left in the United States. Dominant features are the functional turret and the unusual Y-shape of the structure which had to accommodate the agent or dispatcher for each of the two railroads served by the station.

Once a busy station with 3 daily round trips on the Pere Marquette to Detroit - two continuing to Ludington - and 3 round trips every day but Sunday on the Ann Arbor Railroad to its namesake city, no passengers have boarded scheduled trains here since Eisenhower was President.

Contractor Bob Meister and employees from the Clare Department of Public Works reroofed the building in 2011, a repair made possible with donations raised through the Clare Railroad Depot Steering Committee.

Plans are to move the building farther east on Fourth Street where dilapidated buildings were razed to accommodate the depot's new location. The City and the Main Street and Clare County Arts Council joined together to prepare the property for the relocation. The depot building will be renovated to serve the community as a welcome center for the city, a hub for the Pere Marquette Rail Trail, offices for the

*(CLARE continues on page 2)*



photo by archlapeer

### MARP MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, October 13

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

St. Louis Historical Society

1910 Pere Marquette Depot

110 E. Crawford Street, St. Louis MI

The meeting will feature a presentation by Dave McMacken on the historic depot and passenger railroads in St Louis, with ample time for questions. Dave is a local historian and has written two books about St Louis: *St Louis at 150* and *Saratoga of the West*. Details on the website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org) Or leave a message at (269)388-3777.



(CLARE continued from page 1)

Chamber of Commerce, the Main Street and Clare County Arts Council and a railroad museum.

Fund raising is ongoing. Author Robert Knapp was recently in Clare to sell books he has published on the city’s history. A portion of the proceeds from book sales will be donated to the depot restoration project. Tax deductible donations may be made at Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency, PO Box 768, Farwell, MI 48622. Funds are also being raise through the sale of wood replicas of the depot and commemorative bricks for a pathway at the new site.

The Steam Railroading Institute has scheduled a trip from Owosso to Clare on Oct. 6 as one of its fall color tours. A tour inside the depot is being planned as part of that visit. For more on the project, visit [www.claredepot.com](http://www.claredepot.com).



**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)

**Last stop for the Northlander**

Cochrane is the small railroad town at the end of the line. A couple dozen people are waiting on the platform as the *Northlander* rolls in shortly after 8 p.m. Friday night, just over half an hour behind schedule. Some are clutching signs – big red stop signs proclaiming *Ontario Northland Not For Sale*, others hand-crafted signs welcoming the last passenger train from Toronto. All are waving as the passengers step down to end the 110-year history of passenger rail travel in Northeastern Ontario.

Similar scenes had greeted the train at stations all along the line through the day, and even at small spots on the map that had long ago lost their stations. “This is a sad day,” Glen King, the rail passenger conductor on the final run of the *Northlander*, says. He doesn’t know how many times he’s travelled the route. Hundreds at least. His final run coincides with his final week with the company. He’s taking his retirement Tuesday after 34 years with the rail division. *Photos & more at [tinyurl.com/marp00058](http://tinyurl.com/marp00058)*

*MARP members attending the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on 22 September in Durand were treated to Bob Johnston’s first-person stories gathered on his recent travels on the Northlander. To many folks, the Northlander is a vital connection to the outside world and, in many cases, a literal lifeline. See more in October TRAINS magazine.*

**Events of Interest**

**"When Oakland County Rode the Rails"**

Saturday, October 6, 2012 8:30 am – 1:00 pm

A guided bus tour retracing the routes of the Detroit United Railway. Presented by the Oakland County Historical Commission in collaboration with Oakland County Parks & Recreation and the Farmington Historical Society. Reservations required.

Information at [tinyurl.com/marp00056](http://tinyurl.com/marp00056)

**The PASSENGER RAIL FORUM**

Monday, October 22, 2012 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

The Toledo Club 235 14th Street, Toledo OH

Thomas Carper, Chairman, Amtrak Board of Directors will discuss Amtrak's role in economic development and the latest plans for the Midwest. Presented by NOPRA and the *TMACOG Public Transit & Passenger Rail Committee*. Flyer/Registration Form at

[tinyurl.com/marp00055](http://tinyurl.com/marp00055)

**13th Annual Golden Spike Seminar**

Saturday, October 6 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

American Structurepoint, Inc.

7260 Shadeland Station, (Northeast) Indianapolis IN

Dennis Hodges, Founder of Indiana High Speed Rail Association, will speak on *Why The Midwest Regional Rail System is Important to Indiana*. Registration Information at [indianahighspeedrail.org](http://indianahighspeedrail.org)

**Midwest High Speed Rail Assoc. / NARP Joint Meeting**

Saturday, October 22 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Hilton City Center in downtown Milwaukee WI

In conjunction with the NARP Council of Delegates meetings October 22-23, a special Saturday program has been arranged.

Information at [tinyurl.com/marp00057](http://tinyurl.com/marp00057)

During the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla.) has held three hearings on what he considers to be “wasteful” spending by Amtrak. Mica plans to hold at least three more hearings. Do you think Mica should hold more Amtrak hearings? [*Poll by Progressive Railroading – Total Votes 131*]

**Yes, Mica should continue the hearings**

25%

**No, Mica should wrap it up**

74%

## Comments Due October 15

The initial round of public scoping meetings for the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Program have been completed. More than 50 people were in attendance at each of the two Michigan meetings – Dearborn on September 26<sup>th</sup> and Kalamazoo on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Earlier meetings were held in Chicago and in Michigan City. Formal presentations were given by Alan Tobias and Matt Webb, project managers for HNTB Corporation, the consulting firm managing the study.

According to the FRA press release announcing the program last May, a primary focus of the study will be on creating a dedicated passenger route for the last 40 miles from Porter IN into Chicago. The project seeks to improve passenger rail service in order to provide a competitive alternative to automobile, bus and air service. The result will be reduction in travel times and improvement in the quality, reliability and frequency of service on the route. A two- pronged approach is being taken: completion of a Tier I environmental impact statement, including evaluation of alternative routes between Porter and Buffington Harbor in Indiana, and creation of a service development plan for operation of the trains. This phase of the work is projected to be done by fall 2013.

Some of the comments and questions heard during these public meetings included:

- electrifying the corridor
- running some trains as express services with a reduced number of station stops
- scheduling earlier trains to both Detroit and Chicago to make day trips possible
- increasing Thruway bus and intermodal connections
- restoring the Battle Creek station track to reduce interference between Amtrak and CN
- looking at innovative ways to achieve level boarding on all trains – moveable ramps akin to airline boarding ramps
- rerouting of tracks at Albion due to narrow right-of-way through town, curves that slow trains, and numerous grade crossings on residential streets
- concerns with safety, for instance where Hwy M-52 crosses the tracks in Chelsea; MDOT's Mohammed Alghurabi, assured the audience that safety is always a top priority
- extending train service northward in Michigan, as well as into Canada at Windsor; while these possibilities are not part of the current study, the consultants said that this feed-back would be considered and that Governor Snyder has expressed interest in connecting Michigan to the East Coast through Ontario

If you missed the public meetings, you can view the slide presentation at [www.GreatLakesRails.org](http://www.GreatLakesRails.org). Click on the Online Scoping Meeting to start the session. Comments will be accepted through Oct. 15. Another round of public meetings will follow later this fall.

Submit your comments at [www.GreatLakesRail.org](http://www.GreatLakesRail.org), by phone at 1-877-351-0853, or by mail to Bob Parsons, Public Involvement & Hearings Officer, Michigan Department of Transportation, Van Wagoner Building, P.O. Box 30050, Lansing, MI 48909.



There was a large turnout in Kalamazoo to hear about plans for faster and more reliable passenger train service between Detroit/Pontiac and Chicago.

*Let Us Hear Your Ideas !*

**We'd like to hear what you think about improving passenger train service on the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac corridor. Send us an email at [marprail.org](http://marprail.org)**

**View from elsewhere . . .**

*"The most infuriating argument against government investment in rail is that it will never be profitable. How profitable is the Interstate highway system? According to the Congressional Budget Office, we spend about \$150B a year on highway maintenance! I cannot fathom why reasonable people don't immediately recognize the parallel between spending on rail and road infrastructure, demanding "profit" from rail but never noting how wildly "unprofitable" roads are."*

-- Zartan from Washington, DC, commenting on a New York Times article reporting that Amtrak has overtaken airline shuttles as the preferred method of travel between New York and Boston, Philadelphia and Washington over the past decade.

*"Part of their argument against passenger rail is that we don't have the density that Europe does. Actually we do. Draw a line from Milwaukee to St. Louis and then draw lines from those towns to the Atlantic Coast. There's your European density. (let's also not forget the Florida, Texas & Californian possibilities)."*

-- RDG from Cincinnati, commenting on the same New York Times article

*"Those political decisions will be felt by every town and city in the Northeast corridor for years to come . . . and it's all going to be negative. It's unspeakable what they are doing to their own residents."*

-- Glen King, conductor on the final run of the Ontario Northlander passenger train.

**Philadelphia's "The Porch" Welcomes You!**

Next time you take the train to Philadelphia, be sure to step outside to check out this awesome new public space. Installed next to Amtrak's 30th Street Station as part of a larger PennDOT undertaking, the project has reclaimed asphalt from cars and devoted it to people. "The Porch" provides a great place to meet up, and it shows what American cities can achieve at major transit hubs when they strive to create great public spaces.

[Watch the Video Here](#)

**Contact Your Lawmaker**

Congressional Switchboard  
202-224-3121

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

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

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

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Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers  
P.O. Box 532256  
Livonia, MI 48153-2256