



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..

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Valderas

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

8 Oct – Jackson MI, in conjunction with the visit of Amtrak's 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train

12 Nov – St. Joseph Amtrak Station to celebrate the new waiting room

December – no meeting

Visit the website for complete details
www.marp.org

Welcome To The Inaugural Issue of ON TRACK !

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers is pleased to bring you the first issue of ON TRACK. This on-line bulletin is designed to keep you abreast of the latest developments in the world of passenger trains, commuter rail, and local and intercity bus transportation.

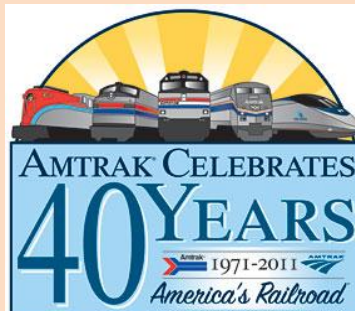
For those of you who have enjoyed *The Michigan Passenger* over the years, be assured that you will continue to receive that publication in your mailbox four times a year. You can look forward to the Fall 2011 issue, with the feature articles and photos you enjoy, in early November.

The emphasis of ON TRACK will be transportation issues within the state of Michigan and throughout the Midwest. You will also see coverage of funding and policy issues at the federal level as they impact our region.

We will highlight the proceedings of recent MARP meetings and let you know about upcoming meetings. Other meetings and transportation-related events around the state will be announced.

Most importantly, we want to hear from you. We will post thought-provoking offerings from you in each issue. Or perhaps you would like to share an informative article you have read. Let us know! Email marprail@yahoo.com

We hope that you will find ON TRACK useful for keeping abreast of the latest ideas and developments. We believe that timely and accurate information will make each of us a better advocate for trains -- a transportation option that we know is vital to our country's future. You will be urged to take action – write a letter to the editor, talk to a friend, educate a local leader or lawmaker – and we hope to give you the tools to do that!



Amtrak's 40th Anniversary Train
Jackson Union Station
October 8 and 9, 2011

MAKE PLANS NOW TO ATTEND
www.tinyurl.com/marp00001

**MARP Executive Committee will meet at the Michigan Theatre, 124 North
Mechanic Street, Jackson, MI 49201-1301, Oct. 8 at 10 am, followed by the
monthly member meeting at 11 am. Attend the meeting and then tour
the exhibit train.**

SUPER MEETINGS IN SUPER PLACES

By Hugh Gurney

Scheduling MARP meetings in train stations was the goal of meeting coordinator Jim Wallington this past year. In January, Williamston Depot Museum volunteers welcomed us to their *Pere Marquette* Depot and told us how the building had been saved. MDOT's Tim Hoeffner noted that the reappointment of Kirk Stuedle by the new governor was a good omen for supporters of passenger rail.

In February, we met at the Durand Union Station. Bob Cosgrove told us about the construction of the original Detroit River Railroad Tunnel in the early 1900's and plans for a new tunnel to replace it.

March found us at the historic 1929 Amtrak Station in Bangor, where owner and MARP member Ken Ratzlaff gave a lively presentation with maps and visuals on railroad development in western Michigan.

The Lansing Model Railroad Club welcomed us in April to their home, the former *Grand Trunk* depot in Millett. We saw their extensive model train layout and learned from Club President and MARP member Michael Frezell how his group is preserving and using that circa 1900 structure.

In June, we visited the beautifully maintained Witch's Hat Depot in South Lyon. Jennifer Redfern of the South Lyon Area Historical Society gave us a tour. Eli Cooper briefed us on plans for the Ann Arbor transportation center.

Dowagiac station host Ron Leatz, also a member of MARP, welcomed us in July to that town's Amtrak Station and briefed us on the history of that lovingly preserved structure. Certificates were given to the Town & Country Garden Club for their care of the station's surroundings and the Dowagiac High School Fine Arts Club for washing all 105 windows in the building and cleaning grime-stained woodwork.

The former *Michigan Central* depot in Battle Creek, now *Clara's On the River* restaurant, was the site of our Annual Meeting in September. Mayor Susan Baldwin offered an interesting overview of Battle Creek history. MDOT's Tim Hoeffner briefed us on current and upcoming rail projects in Michigan. Rick Harnish and Madeline Grennan brought us up to date on the work of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. Battle Creek native Joe Schwarz was given MARP's Michigan Leadership Award for his longstanding support of passenger rail as a Michigan state senator and U. S. Representative and now the Governor's Appointee to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

MARP will round out the year with meetings in Jackson on October 8 and at the newly remodeled waiting room of the St. Joseph Amtrak Station on November 12.

Michigan legislature approves spending for high-speed rail line between Detroit and Chicago

The Michigan legislature has approved [SB 237](#), a supplemental spending bill that will allow the state to move forward on a series of projects to improve speeds and reliability on the Detroit to Chicago high-speed rail corridor.

Gov. Rick Snyder promptly signed the bill, which uses a combination of \$39.2 million in local, private and state transportation funds to match \$358.9 million in competitive federal grants awarded to Michigan in October 2010 and May 2011.

Most significantly, the legislation enables the state to access federal grants to purchase and rehabilitate a 138 mile segment of tracks between Dearborn and Kalamazoo currently owned by Norfolk Southern. Coupled with nearly completed work between Kalamazoo and Porter, trains will eventually travel up to 110 mph, cutting the trip from Chicago to Detroit to less than 4.5 hours.

Michigan won a sizable portion of the federal rail funds -- nearly \$200 million -- after Florida's Republican governor rejected stimulus dollars awarded by the Obama administration, but [Snyder has embraced high-speed rail](#).

"Accelerated rail service has the ability to enhance our economy, environment and overall quality of life," he said back in May when Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood presented state leaders with a giant check.

"An investment of this magnitude can spur economic development in our communities with rail stations, and provide access to a 21st century rail system that will help Michigan citizens compete in a global economy."

Kevin Brubaker, deputy director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center, praised the development.

"Lawmakers in Michigan, and Governor Rick Snyder, rightly recognize that passenger rail is critical to restore the economic health of the region, creating jobs now while putting the infrastructure in place to keep Michigan competitive in the future," he said. "Good policy does indeed make good politics and we hope others will look to Michigan as a role model for bipartisan progress."

Read more: www.tinyurl.com/marp00002

Source: [Jonathan Oosting, MLive.com](#)

"While Michigan invests in more and faster trains, Ohio stands still. Watch for Michigan to attract more young professionals and trackside development while Ohio idles on a silent siding." -- Jack Shaner, public affairs director at the Ohio Environmental Council



Dr. John "Joe" Schwarz (right) accepted MARP's Michigan Leadership Award from Chair Robert Tischbein (left) for "his untiring efforts to improve passenger train service" while serving as a state senator, when representing Michigan's 7th Congressional district, and as a private citizen. Dr. Schwarz gave the keynote address at MARP's 38th Annual Meeting held September 10 at Clara's on The River, a restaurant housed in the former Michigan Central station in Battle Creek. In his remarks, he said we can have safe, fast, and frequent trains in Michigan and he pledged to work as hard as he can to see that happen. He was recently appointed by Governor Snyder to represent the public on the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

What's in store for FY2012?

The U.S. House, having voted in mid-September to zero out the High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program, slash Amtrak, and shut down state-supported routes, appears ready to reverse decade of support from Congress to modernize the nation's passenger rail system. If enacted by the full Congress, the House's FY2012 budget plan will eliminate nearly 150 weekday state-supported trains and negatively impact the more than nine million passengers who ride those trains each year and the communities they live in.

Things are not much better in the Senate. While initially eliminating the HSIPR grant program, an amendment to the FY1012 spending bill offered by Senators Durbin, Lautenberg, Feinstein, and Landrieu restored \$100M to the HSIPR grant program by rescinding old earmarks that USDOT was not going to spend anyway. The amendment will protect a program that is putting people to work and making needed upgrades to state rail routes. While important as a "placeholder" for possible restoration of HSIPR funding, this \$100M represents a 95% cut from the \$2B annually authorized by the Passenger Rail Investment Act (PRIAA) passed with bipartisan support in 2008.

***Have You Renewed
Your Membership ?***

www.tinyurl.com/marp00004

STAND UP FOR TRAINS !

Ask your elected leaders to stand up and fight for fast trains. Visit the website www.standupfortrains.org

Please send a message to your elected officials and ask them to fund the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program at no less than \$2.5 billion to match levels in FY2010, and to fully fund Amtrak's request of \$2.25 billion.

See if your lawmaker or community leader has signed a statement of support for trains.

www.tinyurl.com/marp00003

Advocates for passenger transportation criticize these cuts as the wrong direction for our economy, the jobs crisis and our infrastructure needs. It has estimated that every dollar spent on rail produces \$3 in economic output. Cutting federal funding by more than one-third as proposed would result in the loss of 620,000 public- and private-sector jobs during a six-year period, according to an analysis by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

On the brighter side, the American Jobs Act of 2011 proposed by President Obama and introduced in the Senate on September 13 (S.1549) includes \$60B for transportation investments and creation of a national infrastructure bank. Of the \$6B for train, \$4B would be available to the states to improve existing routes and continue development of HSR corridors and \$2B would go to Amtrak in the form of capital grants. Another \$5B in competitive grants would be offered for projects across all surface transportation modes that "will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area, or a region," similar to the existing TIGER program.

Sources: Amtrak, NARP

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING . . .

“Amtrak is not the only mode of transportation that gets federal subsidies” wrote Sam McQuire of Kalamazoo recently, continuing, *“Amtrak has received a disproportionate amount of negative press about its government subsidies. We fail to realize that most (if not all) forms of transportation rely on federal subsidies to operate. According to the Research and Innovative Technology Administration Bureau of Transportation Statistics website, transit travel received the largest amount of net federal subsidy at \$7.3 billion in 2007. The second largest amount of tax subsidies then goes to air travel. Amtrak receives the third largest subsidy. Let’s not forget that our roads, bridges, highways and many personal vehicles are all built using tax dollars.”*

Read more here: www.tinyurl.com/marp00005

An op-ed in the Windsor Star said this about the future of rail travel in Michigan: *“Are the railroads part of our romantic past – or an important and growing part of Michigan’s transportation future? The answer, it seems clear, is . yes.*

Read more here: www.tinyurl.com/marp00006

Let us hear your thoughts www.marprail@yahoo.com

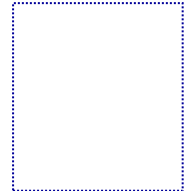


This was the scene last month as Norfolk Southern track crews of 75 men or more worked on the 135 mile segment between Ypsilanti and Kalamazoo replacing ties, smoothing the track, and improving grade crossings. The repairs have resulted in the lifting of speed restrictions that were slowing Wolverine trains between Ypsilanti and Battle Creek.

(Photo by John DeLora)



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**Contact Your Lawmaker**

Congressional Switchboard
202-224-3121

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