



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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Issue #6

March 2012

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

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Jim Wallington	Acting East/Central Region Chair

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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- 17 March** – New Pontiac Amtrak 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
- 15 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 13 October** – Pere Marquette Station, St. Louis MI
- 10 November** – Historic Michigan Central Station, Essex, Ontario

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

AT LAST ? RTA POISED FOR VICTORY

The year 2012 is shaping up as the year when the southeast Michigan metro region may finally get a regional transit authority to oversee and coordinate transit services to better meet the needs of the 150,000 people in the region who depend on bus service to get to jobs, to school, to medical appointments, and to the grocery store. With Governor Snyder as a champion, chances for passage of a bi-partisan package of bills to authorize formation of an RTA and provide a funding mechanism are being viewed with guarded optimism.

MARP, as one of the fifteen founding partners of the Transportation for Michigan coalition (Trans4M.org), is fully committed to working for passage of the RTA legislation. Trans4M's campaign was formally launched on February 23 when some 60 advocates descended on the Capitol to learn more about the legislation and to visit lawmakers in their offices and on the floor. MARP members taking part in the action were Robert Tischbein, John Langdon, Jim Hinkins, Larry Krieg, Kay Chase, and Tim Fischer. While we found clear support for the concept, there are questions and, in many cases, a lack of awareness of the bills, thus showing that we have our work cut out for us to inform and educate the decision makers.

The RTA legislation appears to be on a fast track, with Senate action expected before the end of this month and House action in April. Senator Casperson, Republican from Escanaba, introduced SB 909. The companion HB 5309 was introduced by Representative Townsend, Democrat from Royal Oak.

Go to www.michiganlegislature.org to read the bills and analyses.

“How to calculate the opportunity cost of failing to build rail in '28 and '76? This time let's get an RTA done.”

A tweet by Larry Hands. More tweets [HERE](#)



photo by archlapeer

MARP MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, March 17

10:50 am – 1:00 pm

**Pontiac Transportation Center
(Amtrak – Greyhound – SMART)**

51000 Woodward Ave, Pontiac MI 48342

Jim Fetzer will talk about making connections between SMART and AMTRAK. Lunch will be at Little Daddy's Family Restaurant, 39500 N. Woodward Ave. Executive Committee will meet following lunch. Details on the website www.marp.org Or leave a message at (269)388-3777.

FEBRUARY MEETING NOTES

By Hugh Gurney

Despite icy roads and numerous accidents, a respectable crowd gathered on Saturday, February 11, 2012, for MARP's monthly meeting. It was a real treat to see former Chair Mike Whims in attendance.

The meeting was held at the Old Dog Tavern which is trackside of the Grand Elk Railroad in downtown Kalamazoo.

State Representative Sean McCann (D-60th) was present and said that he is sponsoring a bill to allow bicycles on Michigan trains. A legislative priority is the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority for southeast Michigan. The need for an additional \$1.4 billion to fund roads will be taken up later in the session.

Mike Madill and John Conor discussed the history of the CK&S Railroad (Chicago, Kalamazoo & Saginaw). As early as the mid 1870's, Kalamazoo businessmen conceived of a second railroad to break the stranglehold of the Michigan Central, but it was 1883 before construction was completed, connecting with the Grand Trunk south of town, proceeding north through Kalamazoo, then northeasterly through Barry County to Hastings but never reaching Lansing. Little by little, the northeasterly section was abandoned, the last section between Kalamazoo and Richland being torn up in 1974. The Grand Elk continues to use the section between the connection with the Grand Trunk at Pavilion and Kalamazoo.

Madill and Conor are working to assure that the CK&S is not forgotten, putting up markers along the old right of way, and at several bridges and depots. A 3rd Annual CK&S Railfan Festival is planned for July.

A revised MARP budget for CY 2012 was reviewed showing a slight surplus. John Langdon reported that MARP will receive a \$5,000 grant from Transportation for Michigan (Trans4M) to cover our expenses.

Don Monteith reported the largest attendance ever (10,500) for the Traverse City "Festival of Trains", December 15-January 1. People in that area keep asking "When do we get our passenger trains back?" and "When are we going to get a decent bus connection to the trains going East and South?"

Jim Hinkins reported that the Troy City Council reversed itself in January and plans for the Troy Transportation Center will proceed. Unfortunately, the University of Michigan has pulled out of the planned Ann Arbor Transportation Center, forcing that project to go in a different direction.

Tim Hoeffner, now Director of MDOT's Office of Rail,

(continued on next page)

What will the RTA do?

- Coordinate transit in the 4-county region Wayne, Washtenaw, Oakland, Macomb
- Implement a rolling rapid transit service along Woodward, Gratiot, Big Beaver/M-59, as well connect Detroit, the airport, and Ann Arbor
- Enable a vote on a new regional vehicle registration fee dedicated to transit
- Create a Citizens' Advisory Committee including riders, seniors, and people with disabilities
- Be run by a professional staff and governed by a Board of two people appointed from each county, one appointed from Detroit, and a non-voting appointee of the Governor as chair.

Advocates are seeking amendments to the enabling legislation to address concerns with certain provisions: (1) a voting requirement that creates a de-facto bias against rail; (2) a lack of assurance that the needs of current transit riders are met and that transit-dependent communities are not shortchanged; and (3) that local zoning ordinances might be used to prevent transit stops in a given community.

John DeLora, former MARP chair and currently a NARP vice-president, stresses the need to fix the anti-rail bias.

"As currently written, any rail project (commuter rail, light rail or subway), must have a unanimous vote by the RTA commissioners - only a simple majority is needed to approve other modes. This guarantees higher costs and political mischief. If a rail solution is proposed for its higher capacity and greater public acceptance, a single commissioner could hold out for some pork in exchange for their vote. It is not unlikely that a pork bidding war could break out, making the project unaffordable. I testified to this point (as did TRU) at the hearing in Detroit, but the legislature needs to hear this loud and clear from all over the state."

***This would be a good
time to renew your
membership !***

Go to www.marp.org

Click on "Join MARP Today" at the lower right

Down load the form and mail it in today

(February Meeting Notes continued)

reviewed details of the roll out of 110 mph speeds in West Michigan. On Wednesday, February 15, a special train will depart Chicago and operate over the Amtrak owned portion of the route to Kalamazoo at up to 110 mph. The train will stop in New Buffalo and Kalamazoo for festivities.

Hoeffner noted that the Governor's budget this year is in a new format, with many programs that had been separate in the past folded into larger packets. He hopes that this will prevent specific items like passenger rail from being targeted for cuts. PRIIA Sec.209-mandated funding for the **Wolverine** will not be needed until October, 2014 at the earliest.

A card of appreciation was presented to Archie Lhamon, who is retiring after 43 years with the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way, working the Norfolk Southern route in southern Michigan. He will continue as a legislative liaison.

Complete minutes of the February 11 meeting will be available on the website www.marp.org.

NEW BUFFALO SEEKS GRANT TO CONNECT PERE MARQUETTE TO HIGH-SPEED CORRIDOR

The City of New Buffalo, with support from Amtrak and MDOT, is seeking a \$56 million TIGER grant to make track improvements including extending rail siding from Dowagiac to Niles Michigan and for the design phase (\$800,000) for track improvements that would join CSX and Amtrak track in New Buffalo thus restoring a *Pere Marquette* stop at New Buffalo and allowing access to the high-speed corridor used by *Wolverine* and *Blue Water* trains. On March 1 the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council MPO approved a resolution in support of the application. Significantly, the resolution states that "The Michigan Department of Transportation has assured the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council that this project will enhance and promote the future development of the Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo passenger rail corridor, which is part of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and Michigan's State Rail Plan."

A fourth round of the TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) Discretionary Grant program was part of the FY 2012 Appropriations Act signed by the President on November 18, 2011, and will make \$500 million available for surface transportation projects having a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area or region. The previous three rounds of the TIGER program provided \$2.6 billion to 172 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. USDOT received more than 3,348 applications requesting more than \$95 billion for transportation projects across the

Bus Rapid Transit on the Horizon For Southeast Michigan

MARP members Steve Sobel, Clark Charnetski, Robert Tischbein, Jim Hinkins, Larry Krieg, and Tim Hoeffner were among over 140 participants in a workshop hosted by the *National Bus Rapid Transit Institute (NBRTI)*, the *Office of Governor Rick Snyder* and *R-PATH: Regional Partners Advocating Transit Here*. Practitioners from around the country shared their experiences building and operating rapid transit systems that run on tires.

Implementing BRT in the Detroit metro area has received attention since the December 2011 announcement that federal support for the Woodward light-rail project had been withdrawn.

The workshop was held on February 24 at the Detroit Zoo's *Ford Education Center*.

Workshop presentations can be viewed at tinyurl.com/marp00023

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



Amtrak train passes through Galien MI at 110 mph.

Photo courtesy MDOT

AMTRAK FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST CANADIAN NATIONAL RY FOR POOR ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

On January 18, 2012, Amtrak filed a complaint with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) regarding Canadian National's (CN) poor on-time performance in handling its trains. The 46 page long complaint can be viewed here:

tinyurl.com/marp00024

(this 1.8 MB file and may take a few moments to load)

The most interesting part of the complaint are the graphs which Amtrak uses to illustrate CN's poor performance in a multitude of ways. The complaint gives many specific examples, pointing out that CN delivers more late trains than any other carrier in the country, by far. The examples include putting Amtrak on sidings in favor of freights, not providing Amtrak with daily operating bulletins (engineers are not allowed to leave their starting points without these bulletins) and failure to meet with Amtrak to iron out problems. CN is expected to respond on March 9, 2012.

The next issue of *The Michigan Passenger* will have a fuller account of this action with the most recent updates

Poetry in Motion

Tom Ryan writes *haiku* on his frequent commutes between Milwaukee and Chicago on the *Hiawatha*.



Haiku No. 416:
*I just cannot place
Your mysterious accent
Are you from Tomah?*

Haiku No. 282
*His Doritos bag
Says it includes four servings
But he just found one*

Haiku No. 1:
*This loud train horn blows
The sun is not yet awake
I should be in bed*

Haiku No. 342:
*Just saw an eagle
A very majestic bird
And, like me, quite bald*

Story by Kathy Flanagan, Journal Sentinel 1 March 2012



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Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard
202-224-3121

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