



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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ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase*

2013 MEETINGS

- 12 January** – Williamston Depot-Museum
- 9 February** – Capac Depot Museum
- 9 March** – St. Johns Railroad Station
- 20 April** – Niles
- 11 May** – National Train Day
- 15 June** – Vicksburg Historic Depot & Museum
- 20 July** – Flushing Historical Depot
- 10 August** – City of Milwaukee Train Ferry
- 14 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- October** – Grand Haven (tentative)
- November** – Albion Amtrak Depot (tentative)
- December** – Executive Committee

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

What Infrastructure?

If you've been paying attention, you've heard much talk of late about infrastructure: it's vital to our global competitiveness, it's falling apart, it's a job creator, it's the reason we're falling behind the rest of the world, it's what an efficient, competitive, and prosperous economy needs.

While it seems everyone is talking about it, a careful listener has to wonder just how committed our lawmakers are to actually doing anything about it.

U.S. Transportation Secretary, Ray LaHood, announcing his decision to step down – an announcement met with expressions of regret from many quarters – highlighted the infrastructure spending that has helped jump-start a faltering economy, including an infusion of \$10.1 billion to advance 152 rail projects across the nation. These projects include 6,000 miles of rail, 40 rail stations, 260 passenger rail cars and 105 locomotives purchased, more than 350 miles of new transit rail and bus rapid transit, and—for transit and commuter services—5,545 rail cars. Currently, there are 43 rail construction projects under way in 17 states and the District of Columbia.

Despite this record of accomplishment, the President's proposals in the State of the Union received a decidedly cool reception on the Hill, with T&I Committee Chair, Bill Shuster (R-PA) criticizing the proposal as merely a short-term fix to a long term challenge – this from a Congress that seems interested in nothing more than short term fixes.

What accounts for the tepid response of our lawmakers? The anti-government, anti-tax rhetoric of the last couple of decades? Or is it, as suggested by NARP blogger Malcolm Kenton, that Congress isn't **"hearing a loud enough outcry from the citizens who elect them"**?

NARP's annual [Day on Capitol Hill](#) is April 23. If a trip to DC is not on your horizon, you can still make your voice heard. Email your [Representative](#) or [Senator](#) or call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. You may also send email to House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chair Rep. [Bill Shuster](#) (R-PA) and to Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation Chair Sen. [Frank Lautenberg](#) (D-NJ).

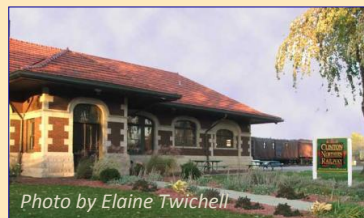


Photo by Elaine Twichell

MARP MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, March 9

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Grand Trunk Railroad Depot

107 East Railroad Street, St. Johns MI

[MAP & Directions](#)

Michael Hodges, author of the new book *Michigan's Historic Railroad Stations*, will be on hand to talk about his research. On display at the station are a 1903 RPO car and a 1902 Smith & Barney Sleeper car. Meeting details on the website www.marp.org Or leave a message at (269)388-3777.

St. Johns to Host MARP Meeting

by Rosemary Horvath

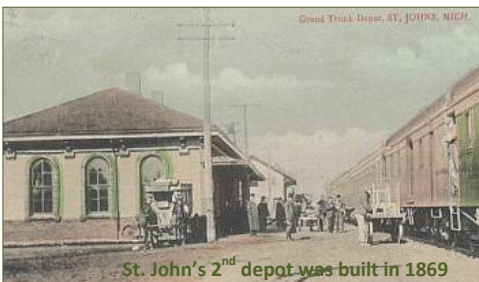
In February, MARP met in Capac where the tracks still carry freight across the southern Thumb, but the depot no longer stands, having been moved a couple of miles north. This month, we meet in St. Johns where the depot still stands on the spot it has occupied since the mid-1800s, but the tracks are gone.

St. Johns, the Clinton County hub 18 miles north of Lansing, came close to bearing the name Sweglesville in honor of John Swegles, the Michigan auditor-general who bought, surveyed and cleared land for new settlements along the projected route of the Detroit and Milwaukee Railroad. Swegles (remember his first name was John) had greatly influenced the beginning of this new village in 1853 and his companions apparently believed it should bear his name. Either that or the reverend in the group had John the Apostle in mind. By summer of 1854, the young town had gained population, a hotel, a general store and Swegles's steam saw mill. St. Johns was transformed into an incorporated village in 1857 and leaped to city status in 1904.

St. Johns celebrates the area's heritage as a major agricultural mint producer with an annual Mint Festival every August. The Crosby Mint Farm is the oldest, continuous family-operated mint farm in the U.S. During the warmer months of the year, the Crosby clan sells their products at a retail shop on East Parks Road. Stoney Creek Essential Oils has the largest operation and sells mint oil to gum, toothpaste and other industries. Hanover's Michigan Mints in St. Johns uses locally grown mint in their chocolates sold in specialty shops around the state such as Dusty's Cellar in Lansing and, locally, inside the Clinton County Art Gallery and Gift Shop, 215 N. Clinton, next door to the Main Street Cafe where MARP will stop for lunch following the meeting at the historic Grand Trunk Depot on March 9.

The statuesque Clinton County Courthouse, located 3 blocks south of the Grand Trunk Depot, towers over a busy shopping district. At the intersection of Clinton and East Railroad streets is the Veterans Memorial honoring men and women of the county who serve in the Armed Forces, past and present, and those who gave their lives in battle, beginning with the Civil War.

The historic Grand Trunk Railroad Depot, located at 107 E Railroad St, is now home of the Clinton Northern Railway Museum. This building was built in 1920 in the identical style of the 1869 depot that a tornado had destroyed the same year. Fire destroyed the original wooden depot built in 1858.



Passenger train service ceased in 1964 and the last freight rumbled through in 1992. A group of volunteers brought back the luster of the depot, which the city owns, and opened the museum. Available for viewing on the grounds are a 1903 Barney & Smith combination post office and baggage car and a 1926 maintenance away crew car. One day museum volunteers expect to have restored the 1902 Barney & Smith Sleeper Car, rescued from a side yard in Traverse City and brought to St. Johns in 2005. Jenny and Gary McCampbell manage the museum and will be on hand to tell us more about these efforts to preserve some of Michigan's rail history.

Check out more of the railroad and city history at clintonnorthernrailway.org.

ELPC Releases Midwest High-Speed Rail Supply Chain Report

A new report released 8 Feb 2013 by the Environmental Law & Policy Center profiles manufacturers and supply chain companies in the Midwest that are ready to begin making parts and putting people to work to improve existing rail systems in the US. ELPC's study of high-speed and other new technology passenger-rail suppliers identified 12 original equipment manufacturers and 460 supply chain companies in seven industrial Midwest states. This includes 122 in Ohio, 99 in Indiana, 49 in Michigan, 84 in Illinois, 73 in Wisconsin, 26 in Minnesota and 7 in Iowa. Three Michigan manufacturers are profiled: Armond Cassil Railroad Construction—Warren, MI; Brasco International—Madison Heights, MI; Independent Machine Company—Gladstone, MI.

The complete report is online and can be accessed at tinyurl.com/marp00065.

CAPAC DEPOT MUSEUM IS A GEM

by Hugh Gurney

Over fifty MARP members and guests from throughout Michigan's Thumb area gathered at the Kempf Memorial Center in Capac on February 9 for MARP's monthly meeting. Capac is definitely one of Michigan's little known treasures. The Capac Historical Society complex includes Capac's 1914 Grand Trunk Railroad depot, a huge, well preserved structure crammed full of railroad and local history artifacts. One large room houses the Kempf Model City, a miniature model city with moving streetcars, automobiles and trains, built by the Kempf Brothers in 1916 as a touring attraction. Adjacent to the depot is the Kempf Memorial Center, housing a commodious meeting room and kitchen plus numerous research materials dealing with Michigan's Thumb. The next time you are travelling east on I-69 to Port Huron or Ontario, plan to spend several hours at the Capac Historical Society's complex on the north side of town.

Our speaker was T. J. Gaffney, former Director of the Steam Railroading Institute in Owosso and Curator of Collections at the Port Huron Museum. Gaffney reviewed a wealth of material from his recently published book, ***Rails Around the Thumb***. Port Huron itself was the center of railroading in the Thumb area with a plethora of rail facilities including a round house with turntable, railroad bridges, depots, and docks, from which car ferries transported rail cars across the St. Clair River to Sarnia, Ontario. Gaffney went on to describe a number of rail related facilities across the Thumb, in communities such as Blaine, Crosswell, Carsonville, Deckerville, Uby, Applegate, Bad Axe, Harbor Beach and Port Hope. Gaffney's interest in local and rail history comes from his father, who collected over 20,000 post cards dealing with St. Clair County, and Orv Swift of the Grand Trunk Railroad.

Bringing things up to the 21st century, Gaffney urged those present to consider a new Amtrak station along the Canadian National tracks at 24th Street in Port Huron Township. This location would offer easy to access from the interstates, ample parking and the possibility of intermodal connections with *Indian Trails* intercity buses. It would not preclude reestablishment of passenger rail service into Ontario through the CN tunnel. Amtrak recently announced its decision to construct a new station on the site of its current facility on 16th Street. Several MARP members agreed to check out the proposed 24th Street location.

Gaffney introduced Sandy Duffy of the Port Huron and Sanilac Historical Society which is planning a rail museum in Port Huron. An existing roundhouse would be part of the facility.

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If you received a 2013 dues notice in January, please return the renewal form with your check as soon as possible in order to continue receiving the benefits of MARP membership. **THANK YOU!**

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In Larry Krieg's absence, Chuck Merkel briefed the group on the work of the Chicago Union Station Taskforce. Amtrak is redoing the lighting on the platforms and developing a new signage plan in conjunction with Metra and the Chicago Transit Authority. A disabled person can now go on line to arrange for redcap assistance. Bids are going out for more comfortable bench seating. Further progress remains clouded because of upcoming personnel changes at the top. MARP continues to push for use of the Great Hall as a waiting area year round, not just during holiday rush periods.

Gurney led a discussion on the draft 2013 Route Enhancement Recommendations. He would like to finalize the 2013 plan and submit it to the Board in the near future. Contact him at hgurney@hsmichigan.org for a copy of the draft and your suggestions.



BOOK TODAY



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Follow-up to *All Aboard in Watervliet?*

Watervliet area resident Rick Rasmussen has been working on behalf of the Watervliet DDA over the last several weeks to advance the idea of a train stop in Watervliet. He has set up an email account watervlietrain@gmail.com to gather support for the idea. As of 22 February, Rick has received over 175 responses with 400 people willing to take the train. He adds the caveat that AMTRAK and MDOT appear unlikely at this time to add the stop.

View from elsewhere . . .

"Old-line 'rust belt' manufacturing businesses are retooling to seize opportunities from rail growth. Our study found dozens of companies that now supply rail manufacturers after years of supplying the automotive industry and other sectors." -- Kevin Brubaker, releasing Environmental Law and Policy Center's **Midwest HSR Supply Chain Report**

Read the report at tinyurl.com/marp00065

"All well and good, I suppose. Is it presumptuous to ask that the Feds implement a TRUE multimodal approach to transport policy in which each mode is encouraged and given the resources to do what it does best? For the last fifty years, Fed policy has largely centered on highways to the detriment of passenger/freight rail. The 1950s and its cheap oil and perceived benefits of sprawl development is long gone. HSR and multimodalism need to be embraced." -- Malcolm Cunningham, U Illinois-Chicago, commenting on federal role in infrastructure following 13 Feb. House T&I Committee hearing

View the written testimony and archived video at tinyurl.com/marp00066



During his State of the Union address on 12 February, the President made a strong case for continued investment in our nation's infrastructure, warming the hearts of many who have long advocated a "Fix-It-First" alternative to building new roads, but emphasizing, as he has throughout his tenure, the need to modernize the country's rail infrastructure and expand public transportation options. View the entire address at whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2013. The case for improved infrastructure begins at 0:22:10. View details of the President's proposal at tinyurl.com/marp00064.

Woodward Streetcar Public Hearing

Thursday, Feb. 28, 4pm to 7pm
(formal presentation at 5pm, stop by anytime)
Detroit Main Library, 5201 Woodward Ave., Detroit

This is your chance to learn more and share your thoughts and concerns about the M-1 Rail Project, a fixed-rail streetcar system along Woodward Avenue from downtown to just north of Grand Boulevard in New Center. MDOT and the Federal Transit Administration have completed an assessment of the expected social, economic, and environmental impacts of the project, which may be [viewed online](#).

WEBINAR: Transportation Funding: What's Up in Lansing?

Thursday, March 7, 2013, 1pm to 2pm

Legislative experts will provide you with an overview and brief analysis of each of the recently introduced house and senate transportation bills including bills proposing increases in a statewide sales tax, gasoline tax, and/or registration fees. Speakers include: Tim Fischer, Deputy Policy Director, Michigan Environmental Council, and Dusty Fancher, Midwest Strategy Group. To register for this event, go to trans4m.org/events

Michele Hodges Leaves Troy Chamber of Commerce

The Belle Isle Conservancy, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserve, protect, restore and enhance Belle Isle Park in Detroit, has named Michele Hodges its first President. MARP awarded its *Citizen of the Year* award in 2012 to Ms. Hodges for her work to gain approval of the new Troy Transit Center.

CN donates \$500,000 to Michigan Tech for rail fellowship

The funds will create the CN Endowed Fellowship in Rail Transportation to provide scholarships and support rail transportation-related projects and research, as well as hardware and software resources for students. The university's Rail Transportation Program includes courses in rail transportation and engineering, and urban rail transit. Bill Worek, dean of the College of Engineering, says "Our students are highly sought after by industry, and the combination of hands-on, discovery-based education, technical backgrounds and leadership abilities make them ideal for the challenges in the rail industry". CN's total funding for the program now stands at \$750,000.