



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

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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. The public is invited to attend.*

### MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2012-2014

Robert Tischbein	Chair
Larry Krieg	Vice-Chair
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Open	West Region Chair
Rosemary Horvath	East/Central Region Chair

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

### 2014 MEETINGS (tentative)

- 18 January** – Williamston Depot-Museum
- 15 February** – University of Detroit Mercy
- 8 March** – Herrick District Library, Holland
- 5 April** – Wayne County Community College
- 10 May** – National Train Day
- 14 June** – Former GTW Depot, Lansing
- 19 July** – Traverse City
- August** – Executive Committee
- 20 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 18 October** – Grand Rapids
- November** – TBA
- December** – Executive Committee

Visit [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)  
Email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)

## What's Your Agenda for Michigan in 2014?

This is an election year in Michigan. All too soon, the political ads will be everywhere and the air will be thick with rhetoric. If you find yourself



wishing you could have some influence on the issues that will be talked about, take heart. You and your neighbors are invited to attend one of several “conversations” throughout the state designed to send a message to the candidates about the issues you consider the most important.

Among the issues to be discussed during these events are questions related to transportation. This presents an excellent opportunity for MARP members to tell the pols that we are concerned with issues much deeper than the ubiquitous potholes (pardon the pun). We can let them know that it's time for Michigan to address the need for a 21<sup>st</sup> century transportation “system” – a system that provides access to a variety of options to meet the mobility needs of all the people of our state – a system that gives people choices that fit their lifestyles whether that involves walking or biking, using buses or trains, or driving a car.

On March 24, Detroit Public Television will partner with Oakland County Community College in sponsoring one of the larger of these community conversations. MARP members throughout the metro region are urged to register and attend the 6:00pm event in Auburn Hills. Please [RSVP here](#) .

Other conversations are scheduled at various locations around the state, including Dearborn (March 13), Hillsdale (March 17), Royal Oak (March 18), Marquette (March 18), Ann Arbor (March 19), Ypsilanti (March 19), Lansing (March 19), Caro (March 19), Plymouth (March 20), Hastings (March 26), Mackinaw City (March 26), Sault Ste. Marie (March 27), Bloomfield Hills (March 27), Pontiac (April 3), Detroit (April 3), and Howell (April 4). Visit the Center for Michigan's [Facebook events page](#) to RSVP to a conversation near you.

If you are unable to attend any of these events in person, you may participate in the Center's online community conversation. The conversation is guided via video by the Center's Public Engagement team, and is introduced by both candidates for governor, Republican incumbent Rick Snyder and Democratic challenger Mark Schauer. Visit the [online conversation page](#) and start your conversation today.



**The March 8 member meeting was held at the Herrick District Library in Holland MI. Watch this space for notice of the April 5 meeting which will be held on the campus of Wayne County Community College.**

## A LEADER IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

*Meeting Notes by Hugh Gurney*

On February 15, 2014, MARP members had the privilege of meeting with Dr. Leo E. Hanifin, Professor in the College of Engineering and Science, University of Detroit Mercy. Gathering in the Engineering Building on the beautiful UDM campus in Detroit, we learned that Dr. Hanifin, his colleagues and students, have been at the forefront of transportation planning over the past two decades. For a number of years, Hanifin headed up the Michigan Ohio University Transportation Center, a coalition of five universities funded by federal and state DOT's and partner corporations. In that capacity, Hanifin led a consortium of engineering and architectural faculty which provided invaluable input into the development of the Detroit light rail system, scheduled to break ground this spring.

Hanifin briefed the group on the work of a team that is currently analyzing the myriad factors that may enable or inhibit the development of an effective regional transit system in Southeast Michigan. To aid in this analysis, the team has reviewed recent transit successes and failures in three metropolitan areas with demographics similar to Detroit's – Cleveland, St. Louis and Atlanta, as well as Denver, which is dissimilar in many ways. Lessons learned include that a regional system must be truly regional, that progress requires tenacity, and that all stakeholders must be identified and brought into the planning process. Transit leaders must be effective consensus builders. The details of a transit system must be developed by transit professionals who can hone down everybody's wishes into a system that works for the majority of users. He advised MARP members not to let their affection for rail blind them to the benefits of other modes such as Bus Rapid Transit.

Hanifin concluded by reviewing the results of a recent survey of 800 likely voters in the Detroit metropolitan area representative of the mix of demographics in the region. Among those surveyed, 86.23 % thought public transit in Southeast Michigan needed improvement and 67.08% indicated support for regional taxes and fees to support public transit. While just 46.56% thought the Regional Transportation Authority would actually improve public transit in the area and only 45.93% said they would vote for increased registration fees to support the RTA, Hanifin was encouraged by these responses since the RTA has yet to put together a plan for improvements. For continuing updates, Hanifin suggested checking out the website [www.eng-sci.udmercy.edu/opportunities/research/udmtc](http://www.eng-sci.udmercy.edu/opportunities/research/udmtc) from time to time.

In other actions, the Executive Committee approved the budget for 2014. Chuck Merckel shared a letter he had

*(LEADER continues on page 3)*

## Summer Youth Rail Program

Michigan Technological University, Houghton MI, is offering a week long summer youth program designed to create awareness of, and stimulate interest in, the world of rail and intermodal transportation. Students will learn why trains are called the "green transportation alternative", how fast high-speed passenger trains move, and how containers find their way from China to USA.



The program is open to current 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. Included are technical tours to rail and intermodal facilities in Marquette, MI and Duluth, MN. Full scholarships are available to all who are accepted in the program.

The program is a collaborative effort by Michigan Tech's Rail and Intermodal Transportation Program and the Transportation and Logistics Management Program at University of Wisconsin—Superior.

For more details and a program application, visit: [http://www.rail.mtu.edu/summer\\_youth.html](http://www.rail.mtu.edu/summer_youth.html)

Application deadline is 5:00 pm, Friday, May 2, 2014.

## Keep Those Letters Coming

While Canadian National has agreed to keep the Algoma Central passenger trains running through April 29 on the 300 mile route between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst in Northern Ontario, the threat to this vital service remains.

With strong support from the City of Sault Ste. Marie and business leaders along the route, a Working Group has been formed to initiate talks with government and railroad officials with the goal of keeping the trains operating in the short-term while a longer-term solution is sought.

Supporters of the ACR are asked to send letters to: "Minister of Transport Lisa Raitt" [lisa.raitt@parl.gc.ca](mailto:lisa.raitt@parl.gc.ca).

Please cc: your letters to the following:

"Prime Minister Stephen Harper," [stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca](mailto:stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca)

"Mr. Bryan Hayes, MP Sault Ste. Marie" [bryan.hayes@parl.gc.ca](mailto:bryan.hayes@parl.gc.ca)

"Ms. Carol Hughes, MP Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing" [carol.hughes@parl.gc.ca](mailto:carol.hughes@parl.gc.ca)

"SSM Economic Development Corporation" [info@ssmedc.ca](mailto:info@ssmedc.ca)

"SSM Chamber of Commerce Ontario" [info@ssmcoc.com](mailto:info@ssmcoc.com)

"Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains" [info@captrains.ca](mailto:info@captrains.ca)

**Visit the website**

[www.algomapassengerrail.com](http://www.algomapassengerrail.com)

## 2014 Membership Dues are Due

Thanks to all who have paid their 2014 dues. If this has slipped your mind, now would be a good time to send your check, along with the form you received in the mail in January or [DOWNLOAD](#) a form and mail it in TODAY!

*(LEADER continued from page 2)*

received from State Representative Joe Walsh indicating that MDOT is favorable to the idea of having one of the Chicago-East Coast trains rerouted through Michigan. Reporting for Langdon, Gurney confirmed that the Governor's 2015 Transportation budget provides sufficient funds for current Amtrak operations in Michigan.

Robert Patterson reported that the Southeast Michigan Regional Transportation Authority is proposing to delay a vote on funding until the November 2016 ballot. In the meantime, the RTA will work to achieve smaller successes such as joint ticketing among transportation providers in the region.

Don Westcott provided a written report on the work of the Blue Water Promotion group as it prepares for the **Blue Water 40th Anniversary** celebration in September, 2014. Working with Therese Cody at MDOT and Tracy Robinson at Amtrak, promotional efforts will include billboards along the Blue Water corridor, posters at colleges, senior centers and other points along the line, updated *Blue Water* route guides, rail and bicycle and rail and golf posters, and three large banners for special events and festivals. All CVB's and Chambers of Commerce along the route are being asked to include a link to [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com) on their web sites. For the actual 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, all stations along the *Blue Water* line will be encouraged to stage festivities as the morning train arrives.

## On The Road With MARP

"Have you ever had the joy of assembling 600 junior conductor hats?" That was Chuck Merckel's response when asked about working **The World's Greatest Hobby Show** in Novi last month. MARP's crew of stalwart volunteers was there and they enjoyed talking with many of the estimated 20,000 visitors to the show. In addition to the hats for the kids, they provided information on train travel and on MARP's work to expand passenger services in Michigan.

Chuck and Jeanie are doing a great job, but **they need your help** to make these efforts successful. ON TRACK will publish upcoming outreach events and you are encouraged to volunteer to help at events in your area. If you can give even 3 or 4 hours to an event, that will be appreciated. Chuck can help to arrange carpooling to save on expense and offer some socializing as well.

You can email Chuck at [crmerckel@aol.com](mailto:crmerckel@aol.com) or phone him at 734-522-7329. He's waiting to hear from you!

Here are some upcoming events:

### [Elkhart Model Railroad Club Train Show](#)

Borkholder Dutch Village, Nappanee IN  
Sat, March 15, 10-3:30 PM  
(John Langdon)

### [Sustainability Conference 2014](#)

Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, Hastings MI  
Sat, March 15, 9-4 PM  
(Kay Chase, Christine Ballard)

### **Trainorama**

Costick Community Center  
28600 11 Mile, Farmington Hills MI  
Sun, March 16, 10-4:00 PM  
(Chuck and Jeanie Merckel)

### [34th Annual Mid-Michigan Model Train Show](#)

Finch Field House  
CMU, Mount Pleasant MI  
Sun, March 23, 11-4:00 PM

## Nominating Committee is Seeking Candidates

The election of officers for the 2014-2016 term is scheduled for the Annual Meeting, 20 September 2014. If you would like to play a more active role in MARP, please consider throwing your hat in the ring.

You may contact either Steve Sobel [weatherwatcher248@sbcglobal.net](mailto:weatherwatcher248@sbcglobal.net)  
or Clark Charnetski [camcharnet@aol.com](mailto:camcharnet@aol.com).

### View from elsewhere . . .

*“This month I had the opportunity to be the keynote speaker at a National Press Club luncheon in Washington, D.C. I took this opportunity to propose what I feel our policy makers should do to invest in America’s infrastructure. It is a pivotal time to start this discussion because Congress will have to reauthorize both Amtrak and the Highway Trust Fund in the coming months. I stated that I believe that the Highway Trust Fund is dead and that we must look at a much broader way to fund our national – and I stress national – surface transportation needs and that includes Amtrak. In other words, we need to be thinking about how to replace it with a surface transportation program for the 21st century and our changed transportation landscape.”*

-- Amtrak President Joe Boardman’s “Train of Thought” column in the January issue of [Amtrak INK](#). On page 7 of the same issue are excerpts of an interview by Bill Vantuono, editor-in-chief of *Railroad Age* magazine which has named Mr. Boardman “Railroader of the Year”.



Crew at the Ivy City Maintenance Facility mounted the roof antennas. Foreman Ron Wallace & Electrician Scott Sebby were part of the crew at the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Facility that did the installation.

### Free Wi-Fi on All 8 Midwest Corridors

Amtrak has installed the Wi-Fi equipment under contracts with the Illinois, Michigan, Missouri and Wisconsin as part of their collective sponsorship of Amtrak service. To make the service a reality, Amtrak maintenance facilities in Brighton Park, Ill., Chicago 14th Street, and Ivy City, Washington, D.C., installed approximately 38,000 feet of cable and wiring before performing countless hours of systems testing and validation.

### 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)

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

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