



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

marprail@yahoo.com

Issue #33

June 2014

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.

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

2014 MEETINGS

- 18 January** – Williamston Depot-Museum
- 15 February** – University of Detroit Mercy
- 8 March** – Herrick District Library, Holland
- 5 April** – Wayne County Community College, downtown Detroit
- 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** – *The Rapid* Central Station, Grand Rapids
- November** – TBA
- December** – Executive Committee

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

Lansing's GTW Railway Station Takes on New Life as Reo Town Depot

MARP will be among the first community groups to enjoy the recently completed restoration of the historic Grand Trunk Western Railway Station in Lansing when it meets there on June 14. Built in 1902, this classic Spier & Rohn-designed building hasn't seen service as a passenger station since 1971 and was 4 years into its life as a restaurant when Gerald Ford dropped by for lunch during a whistle stop campaign tour in 1976.

The building has been painstakingly restored in conjunction with the development of the new [Lansing Board of Water & Light](#) cogeneration plant with which it shares the 5.3 acre site in the area known as Reo Town. The depot is listed on the State Register of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places.

The Board of Water and Light spent more than \$2.8 million [restoring the depot](#) to serve as the home for company board meetings and employee training. From its terra cotta roof to the dark wood ceiling, period light fixtures, windows, walls and wainscoting, the restoration has been described as "stunning".

Two design firms, Ann Arbor's Quinn Evans and Cornerstone of Grand Rapids, shared the design work on the restoration. Two Lansing-based companies, Granger Construction and Christman Co., did the exterior and interior work, respectively.

The [handsome terra cotta roof](#) involved a bit of serendipity. The tiles were 110 years old and needed to be replaced. The original manufacturer – Ludowici Roof Tile Co. of New Lexington, Ohio, a 120-year-old company with roots in Renaissance Rome and still in business -- had the original plans for the depot and produced 14,600 new tiles to the original specifications.

[REO Town](#) derives its name from Ransom E. Olds, founder of REO Motor Car Company, which was the backbone of Capital region manufacturing in the early 1900's.



MARP MEMBER MEETING
Saturday, June 14, 10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Former GTW Railway Station
Now Reo Town Depot
Board of Water and Light
1205 S Washington Street, Lansing MI

[Map & Directions](#)

[Street View](#)

Details on the website www.marp.org Or send email to www.marprail.org.

Getting Back on Track Up North

Continuing the recent series of meetings held in current or former train stations, MARP will meet on Saturday, July 19, at the former [Pere Marquette Traverse City Depot](#), now living life as [The Filling Station Micro Brewery](#). We will be hosted by the [Michigan Land Use Institute](#) (MLUI), one of the partners with whom MARP works as part of the [Transportation for Michigan Coalition](#) (Trans4M).



Photo © Gary L Howe

On July 19, MLUI will officially release [Getting Back on Track](#), a report analyzing the potential for restarting some type of train service in the Traverse City area.

Make plans now to attend and plan to bring friends or family and make a weekend of it. A map of hotels along “Resort Row” is [here](#). Bring your bike and take the trackside path directly to the depot. [The Park Place](#) is the historic downtown hotel. Other lodging suggested by the MLUI folks includes [Sleep Inn and Suites](#) in Acme, which is very supportive of the rail project, [Boarders Inn and Suites](#), and the modestly priced, but entirely acceptable, [Econo Lodge](#).

MARP Founding Member Dies

MARP has received word that George Schlaepfer passed away peacefully on May 21st with his wife, Diane, at his side. George was among the original group that formed MARP in the early 1970’s and was the organization’s first Life Member. John DeLora, the ringleader among that early group of advocates, cites George for his excellent organizational skills and says that he was instrumental in drafting the original set of bylaws. “He was one of the nicest people I have ever met.”



George worked in IT at Ford Motor Company until his retirement. Mike Wilhelm, who shared a cubicle with George, recalls that before his first trip to Europe, George encouraged him to ride the trains and forget about renting a car. “He even gave me a thick book of Eurail timetables and taught me how to use it. He was a very good man.”

George is survived by his wife Dianne and his children Charles Schlaepfer, Alice (Craig) VanEss, Ann (David) BeBeau, Carol (Kenneth) Newman, Cynthia (Michael) Kubus and Patrick (Deb) Irwin.

The family suggests that memorials be sent to:

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS
PO BOX 510842
LIVONIA, MI 48151-6842

Attn: Jeanie Merckel

Michael Ford Named to Head RTA

The nine member Southeast Michigan Regional Transportation Authority Board voted unanimously on May 21 to offer Michael Ford the post as its new CEO. The RTA was formed in 2012 to coordinate regional transit services and institute a rapid bus transit system. Ford has 35 years of experience in transit, previously holding leadership positions with transit authorities in Stockton CA, Portland OR, and Seattle WA. Most recently he has headed the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, where he was instrumental in achieving a decisive 71% voter approval for a new millage to expand transit service by 44% in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township.

Rigorous planning, communications and public engagement were cited as major factors in the victory. Ford replaces John Hertel who resigned in January to remain as head of SMART, the suburban bus system.



Where in the world is this?



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
or Clark Charnetski camcharnet@aol.com

2014 Membership Dues are Due !!!

Thank you 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!

Conference Report Includes Coast-to-Coast Rail Study

A Conference Committee of the Michigan legislature reported out legislation on June 5 that included language directing that a passenger rail feasibility study of the Detroit-Holland rail corridor be conducted.

More commonly known as the "[Coast-to-Coast](#)" study, advocated by the [Michigan By Rail](#) team, the study will examine the ridership potential in the rail corridor linking Detroit to Holland and including Lansing and Grand Rapids. The legislation is headed for floor votes in the House and Senate to approve the Conference Committee's version. It is expected to be passed by the legislature and be on the Governor's desk soon.

Three members of the conference committee – Senator Roger Kahn, Senator Glenn Anderson, and Representative Andrew Kandrevas – have previously expressed their support for the study, and have provided letters to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) supporting the grant application submitted by the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority on behalf of the Michigan By Rail team last month.

The Michigan By Rail team was re-launched last year by the [Transportation for Michigan](#) coalition and consists of [MARP](#), [Michigan Environmental Council](#), [Michigan Land Use Institute](#), [Friends of WALLY](#), [Freshwater Transit](#), and the [Michigan Technological University Rail Transportation Program](#).

*Written By: Dan Sommerville, Policy Associate,
Michigan Environmental Council*

On The Road with MARP

This month offers two exceptional opportunities for MARP members to talk with hundreds of visitors to two major summer events: the Ann Arbor Green Fair on June 13 and the Steam Railroading Institute's Train Expo 2014 on June 20-22.

The three-day Train Expo 2014 event will need many volunteers. Most will be assigned to the outreach table where they will distribute materials promoting Amtrak and the tourist railways. MARP Outreach Chair, Chuck Merckel, offers this assurance to those who may be hesitant to volunteer: "As a new volunteer, you will have the support of more experienced volunteers and will quickly find, after a few minutes talking with the public, that you are having a ball. You will be able to provide the public with your own experiences of train travel and knowledge of the Amtrak system."

Will you be a volunteer? Phone Chuck at 734-522-7329 or send email to crmerckel@aol.com.

[Ann Arbor Green Fair](#)

Main Street, downtown Ann Arbor

June 13 from 6:00-9:00 p.m.

(Clark Charnetski, Steve Sobel, Larry Krieg)

[Train Expo 2014](#)

"Locomotives, Wings and Wheels"

405 S. Washington, Owosso MI

June 20, 21 and 22, 10 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Volunteers needed especially on

June 21, 3:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

June 22, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

(Chuck & Jeanie Merckel, Hugh Gurney, John Langdon)

[10th Annual Senior & Caregiver Expo](#)

Newaygo Middle School

850 E. 76th St., Newaygo MI 49337

Thursday, June 26 from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

(John Langdon)

[Chicago, Kalamazoo & Saginaw Rail Fan Festival](#)

Historic Charlton Park, Hastings MI

Saturday, June 21, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

(John Langdon, Kay Chase)

CORRECTION to the MARP meeting notes for April: Dr. Frank Dunbar is Provost, Regional Program Planning, Wayne County Community College District, not Chancellor. The WCCCD Chancellor is Dr. Curtis Ivery. Dr. Ivery serves on the Board of the Southeast Michigan Regional Transportation Authority Board.

View from elsewhere . . .

"Fantastic! We were planning to take the Empire Builder out to Glacier this summer. Now we can hop on the Central Corridor to get from Minneapolis to Lowertown and take Amtrak all the way to the Park. Looking forward to doing all of it without ever touching a steering wheel!"

-- comment by teapot1019 on [announcement](#) that Amtrak would begin operating out of the St. Paul Union Station.

"This is a significant impact that may not be recognized by those who make the decisions."

-- Joe Fratesi, City of Sault Ste. Marie CAO and chair of the Algoma Stakeholders working group, commenting on the [draft economic impact assessment](#) released April 11 which found that ACR passenger service generates at least \$38 million in total economic activity.

"The administration's proposal would help address the large backlog of state-of-good-repair needs . . . and help expand the public transportation infrastructure to meet the growing demand . . . people want better transportation options and it should be a national priority to expand public transit services, including intercity passenger rail."

-- Michael Melaniphy, APTA President and CEO, commenting on President Obama's [Grow America Act](#).



Passengers stepped off an **Empire Builder** train at St. Paul's Union Station for the first time in 43 years on May 7. The newly restored station now serves Amtrak and 5 bus lines: Metro Transit and Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, providing local service, and regional and national carriers Greyhound, Jefferson Lines and Megabus. The **Green Line** light-rail will begin operating between the downtowns of St. Paul and Minneapolis in June. The architectural fragment shown on page 2 was photographed in Union Station by August Schwerdfeger.



OUR ADDRESS HAS CHANGED



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Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard
202-224-3121

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