



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 2014-2016

Larry Krieg	Chair
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Jeanie Merckel	Treasurer
position open	Secretary
John Langdon	Governmental/Public Affairs Coordinator
Kathleen Newell	Membership Coordinator
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Warren Fritz	West Region Chair
Steve Vagnozzi	East/Central Region Chair

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

2015 MEETINGS

10 January – Lansing’s former Grand Trunk Depot with Special Guest Speaker Bob Johnston, writer for TRAINS Magazine

February – Clara’s in Battle Creek

March – Kalamazoo, Metro Transit Conference Room

April – TBA

9 May – National Train Day

June-August -- TBA

5 September –Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station

October-December – TBA

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

Season's Greetings



The Four Flags Garden Club will host the **23rd Annual Hometown Christmas Celebration** at the Historic **Amtrak Depot in Niles** on December 6, from 4:30 – 6:00 pm. Musical entertainment will be provided by the Community Evangelical Free Church Choir. Santa and Mrs. Claus will drop by with homemade cookies and candy. A special drawing will be held at 5:45 p.m. for 2 round trip tickets, compliments of Amtrak, from Niles to Chicago

Dowagiac, too, is welcoming visitors with lights on the depot, thanks to the efforts of MARP member Ron Leatz. Dowagiac’s lights glow from November 9 through March 9, brightening the way throughout the winter for Michigan train passengers.

*There will be no December member meeting.
All of us on the MARP Executive Committee
wish you and yours a safe and joyous
holiday season.*

MARP Meets on The Blue Water Shores

Meeting Notes by Clayton Farmer

Thirty-three MARP members and friends met on November 15 at the Port Huron Museum of Arts and History-Carnegie Center. In a brief business meeting preceding the program, it was announced that the Executive Committee has appointed Steven Vagnozzi to fill the East Central Regional Chair position vacated by Rosemary Horvath's resignation. Trains will begin serving the new Dearborn Station on December 10 with the official opening event scheduled for December 15. Shuttles will run from the old station for a while to assist people who may have parked at the old station before the move. The acquisition of Talgo train sets by MDOT is uncertain at this time.

T.J. Gaffney, owner of Streamline Historic Services and former Director of the Steam Railroading Institute, began his presentation of Port Huron rail history by emphasizing how much less access to public transport Port Huron has now than it did 100 years ago. He gave several detailed examples with copious historic photographs and maps. The Pere Marquette depot in Croswell is still standing. The PM line passed through Jeddo, Blaine, and Gratiot Center. The roundhouse was on 16th street. The bridge over the Black River still stands, but the one crossing the canal between Lake Huron and the Black River has been removed.

The Grand Trunk route through Canada and across the St. Clair River for some years served the second-largest number of immigrants to the United States. GTW's lead to Dunn Paper was once part of the CD&CGT line. Thomas A. Edison was raised in Port Huron and departed from the Fort Gratiot depot for his job selling newspapers and snacks on the train to Detroit.

In 1913 the Grand Trunk's main Michigan locomotive servicing shops were destroyed by fire and the railroad decided to rebuild them in Battle Creek. The Port Huron property was sold to Peerless Cement. When the tunnel was built under the St. Clair River, the old car ferry docks were converted to the Port Huron boat yard.

Paul Maxwell, Director of the Port Huron Charter Township Downtown Development Authority, then picked up the story with the building of the present-day Amtrak station in
(MEETING continues on page 4)

Staying Competitive

By Julius Parod

Last week, on one of my favorite podcasts two very successful business owners were discussing where they preferred to do business. They said over and over again how they thought China was going to be the center of their businesses – and manufacturing in general - for at least the next ten years. But probably not for the reason you'd think.

They weren't comparing China to America; they were comparing it to India and Bangladesh. And the reason they liked China so much, was because of the infrastructure. They even mentioned the power of high-speed trains (on a podcast that has nothing to do with transportation). China wasn't just competing on cost – it was competing on value.

They could pay people less in South Asia or elsewhere, but they saw China's existing infrastructure and the Chinese government's willingness to keep on building, as a major strength for their businesses.

So what does this anecdote have to with America or high-speed rail? A lot actually.

The jobs and wealth of millions of Americans depend on our economy being an attractive location for businesses. America cannot compete globally on price. To sustain the quality of life you and I enjoy, we need to compete on value. Businesses will accept higher costs if they see more benefits, like faster connections to their production and major clients.

The U.S. is very competitive in many areas, but our transportation system is 25-50 years behind dozens of other countries. If our government isn't prepared to make the necessary investments that other governments will, we will lose jobs and businesses.

It's a scary thought China and other countries that prioritize their infrastructure might not just beat us on cost – they might one day beat us on value too.

To ensure a more prosperous future for America, we need to spread the message of why investing in our infrastructure is so critical.

Julius Parod is Manager of Communications at Midwest Highspeed Rail. Read his blogs at midwestsr.org/blog.



CHRISTMAS DINNER AT DURAND UNION STATION

Phone 989-288-3561 for Reservations

The Depot is hosting a Christmas Dinner at 6-9 pm on Friday, December 12th.

Enjoy the display of 50 illuminated Christmas Trees while dining with friends and family in this beautiful historic depot.

Tickets are \$16.00 per person, \$14.00 for DUSI members, \$10.00 per child under 10, and \$120 for a table of eight.

Door prizes will be awarded at each dinner as well. Reservations are required.





ADVOCACY DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Join MARP and our Trans4M Coalition Partners for an exciting day in Lansing meeting with our legislators!

The Michigan House of Representatives is deciding right now how our state will fund our long term transportation needs. The Senate has already passed [HB 5477](#) to infuse our complete transportation system with an additional \$1.2 billion a year by 2018. The bill is now before the House, with just a few short weeks to decide the future of Michigan's transportation system.

Please plan to join advocates from around the state to let our Representatives know just how important a strong system of roads, transit and trains is to all of us. Help send the message:

Michigan Can't Wait Any Longer!

Please register ASAP to allow ample time to pre-arrange meetings with your Representative. Continental breakfast and lunch are provided at no cost.

[REGISTER NOW!](#)

Also, please let MARP know you plan to attend.

We will have a briefing to prepare for the visit.

Send email to marprail@yahoo.com



More than 35 members of Trans4M met with legislators during a previous advocacy day to discuss transportation reforms. MARP was represented by John DeLora on the far left, Chuck Merckel, John Langdon and Tim Fisher L to R in 2nd row, and Rosemary Horvath and Kay Chase to the right of the man in the hat in the center of the picture.

It's Time to Fix the Roads (and more)!

This is the mantra we've been hearing for months now. Yes, we need to fix our roads, but WE know it's about much more than just filing the potholes.

A 21st century transportation system must provide access to a variety of transportation modes to meet the needs of people of all ages, abilities and income levels. Without significant new revenue, our state will continue to fall behind in meeting these needs.

The Senate-passed [HB 5477](#) will increase funding for our transportation system by replacing the per-gallon fuel tax with an incrementally increasing wholesale tax. Consumers will see only modest increases at the pump over 4 years, but will save in aggravation and wear and tear on their cars while providing for an array of travel options to serve everyone.

Last spring NARP blogger Malcolm Kenton opined that lawmakers are sometimes slow to act because they are "not hearing a loud enough outcry from the citizens who elect them". **Let's make sure they hear our voices.**

CLICK HERE to find you State Representative and urge him or her to do their part to make this vital investment in Michigan's future now. MICHIGAN CAN'T WAIT!

PUBLIC COMMENT DUE DECEMBER 19

The states of Michigan, Indiana and Illinois are currently working on a plan to add trains to the schedule, improve reliability and cut as much as 2 hours from travel time along the 300 mile long corridor linking Pontiac and Detroit with Chicago. The current study focuses on alleviating a major chokepoint in the busy rail corridor around the south end of Lake Michigan.

A **draft environmental impact statement (EIS)** released in September, presents the proposed project's purpose, identifies route alternatives, describes the affected environment, and analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives under consideration. Public comment is due Dec. 19.

The Tier 1 Draft EIS for the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor may be viewed **online** and is also available on CD at **public libraries and municipal offices** all along the route from Pontiac to Gary IN. Also available on the website is a **Self-Guided Presentation** with more information. Submit your email comments to **MDOT-HSR-Detroit-Pontiac-Chicago@michigan.gov** or go to the project website www.GreatLakesRail.org for information on where to send written comments. **We would be interested in hearing your comments as well.** Send them to us at marprail@yahoo.org.

View from elsewhere . . .

"The rail gridlock in Chicago is causing unacceptable delays for Amtrak passengers while reducing revenues and driving up operating costs for Amtrak. Howard Learner will bring an important perspective to our work and will be a collaborative partner in this effort."

-- Amtrak CEO Joe Boardman announcing the appointment of Howard Learner, President of the Environmental Law and Policy Center, to a blue-ribbon panel charged with identifying infrastructure and operational improvements to address Chicago-area rail gridlock. Read the Amtrak news release [HERE](#).

"What is required here and across the country is a national policy that recognizes the unique value of rail service and uses public funds to maintain unprofitable lines that serve important public needs. Premier Kathleen Wynne's government is taking that approach with the provincially owned Ontario Northland Transportation Commission."

-- Greg Gormick, a Toronto transportation writer and policy adviser, in 25 November op-ed regarding a possible takeover by a third-party operator of the [Algoma Central Railroad passenger service](#).



Photo by John Langdon

New Role for Dowagiac Depot Ticket Office

Given an annual application of elbow grease by the Dowagiac High School Choir, under the watchful eye of MARP station volunteer Ron Leatz, the ticket office now shines as the office of Ted Yoakum, editor of the Dowagiac Daily News, which was putting out daily papers decades before the depot was built in 1903. Ron is at the depot to assist passengers almost every day. After the students finished polishing the woodwork and washing the 215 panes of glass this summer, Ron treated them to old-fashioned sodas and malts at [Caruso's](#), another of this small town's historic venues.

(MEETING continued from page 2)

1970 to replace the historic Grand Trunk station. Now, four decades later, a number of Port Huron area civic organizations and municipalities feel it would be desirable to relocate the station to a site with more space for parking and the possibility of private enterprise building shops, a restaurant, and even a hotel.

A possible site is adjacent to Canadian National's Tunnel Yard, which extends from 24th St. to 32nd St. The site is within half a mile of the intersection of I-94 and I-69, providing convenient access from the west, south, and especially east – where the many Canadians who patronize Amtrak's *Blue Water* cross the bridge from Sarnia. The location also would allow trains to continue through the tunnel to Canada, if that service is ever reestablished.

The station is envisioned as an intermodal terminal served by local and regional buses. A proposed rail trail near the site would add non-motorized access. The relocation is hoped to stimulate economic activity, particularly the tourist industry.

After lunch at Lynch's Irish Tavern, members boarded the *Blue Water Trolley* bus for a tour of the cultural and transportation highlights of the Port Huron region. This included a visit to the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Historical Society's restoration (in progress) of that railroad's depot on the south side of Tunnel Yard.



OUR ADDRESS HAS CHANGED



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