



# ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

marprail@yahoo.com

Issue # 47

August 2015

*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
Jim Wallington	Vice-Chair
Jeanie Merckel	Treasurer
Rosemary Horvath	Acting Secretary
John Langdon	Governmental/Public Affairs Coordinator
Kathleen Newell	Membership Coordinator
Kay Chase	Communications Coordinator
Don Westcott	Meetings Coordinator
Don Monteith	Northern Region Chair
Robert Patterson	Detroit/Metro Region Chair
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** – Cancelled

**14 March** – Kalamazoo, 1<sup>st</sup> Methodist Church

**25 April** – Ypsilanti Depot Freighthouse

**16 May** – Durand Union Station

**20 June** – Crossroads Village

**25 July** – Amtrak Exhibit Train at Grand Rapids Amtrak Station

**August** – Executive Committee

**19 September** – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station

**October** – Charlevoix

**November** – Former GTW Depot, Lansing

**December** – no meeting

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

## Who Pays for the Roads?

A new report from the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG) looks at how the costs of building and maintaining the nation’s roadways are being paid. The findings may come as a shock to the many Americans who believe that the taxes they pay at the pump, and other fees associated with driving, are paying the bills.

In stark contrast to the widely held belief that roads pay for themselves, the findings of the report "**Who Pays for the Roads?**" reveal that:

- Gas taxes and other fees paid by drivers cover less than half the costs of road construction and maintenance nationally – down from more than 70 percent in the 1960s – with the balance coming chiefly from income, sales and property taxes and other levies on general taxpayers.
- General taxpayers at all levels of government subsidize highway construction and maintenance to the tune of \$69 billion per year – an amount exceeding the expenditure of general tax funds to support transit, bicycling, walking and passenger rail combined.
- Regardless of how much they drive, the average American household bears an annual financial burden of more than \$1,100 in taxes and indirect costs from driving – over and above any gas taxes or other fees they pay that are connected with driving.

The authors assert that “The ‘users pay’ myth is deeply ingrained in U.S. transportation policy, shaping how billions of dollars in transportation funds are raised and spent each year . . . . More and more, though, all of us are bearing the cost of transportation in our tax bills, regardless of how much we drive.”

In a sense, the argument that roads are paid for by drivers and that buses and trains are “subsidized” by government seems silly. Every penny spent on every part of our transportation network comes out of our pockets in a tax or fee of one sort or another, at one level or another of government. What is gaining increasing recognition is that society is changing and that current transportation spending

*(ROADS continues on page 3)*

### NO MEMBER MEETING IN AUGUST

The Executive Committee will meet on 29 August in Kalamazoo.  
For information, send email to [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).



**42<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Saturday, September 19**  
**10:0 am – 3:00 pm**  
**Durand Union Station**

200 Railroad Street  
Durand, MI 48439

This year’s keynote speaker will be NARP President and CEO Jim Matthews. Mark your calendars and plan to attend. Socialize with fellow MARP members, enjoy a tasty luncheon and hear the latest in Michigan rail news. Watch for an email announcement with meeting details. Online registration will be available on the MARP website [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org). Contact [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

## MARP Outreach Events Heating Up

Plymouth's "Art in the Park," now in its 35th year, was the place to be on July 10-12. Billed as Michigan's 2nd largest art fair, there were more than 400 artists from around the country offering paintings, sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, fiber, glass, woodwork, photography, folk art & much more. Entertainment and food added to the festivities, not to mention the nine intrepid MARP volunteers, who enjoyed talking with many of the thousands of fair-goers about traveling by train to interesting events and destinations within our own state — among them the **Ann Arbor Hands On Museum**, the **Battle Creek Water Park** and the **Four Winds Casino** in New Buffalo — and throughout the Midwest and the rest of the country. With Chuck and Jeanie Merckel supplying their usual fine leadership and organizational skills, volunteers Robert Tischbein, Hugh Gurney, Jim Hinkins, Robert Patterson, John Delora, Steve Sobel and Robert Tobleck distributed 7 cases of Amtrak Timetables, 2 bundles of Amtrak Vacation Planners, 2 cases of Junior Conductor Guidebooks and 200 Junior Conductor Hats.

Three upcoming events are listed below. If you would like to spend a pleasant summer afternoon talking with folks in your community, please contact Chuck Merckel [crmerckel@aol.com](mailto:crmerckel@aol.com) 734-522-7329 and let him know you'd be interested in helping out.

### Brighton Fine Arts and Music Festival

July 31-August 2

Main Street, Brighton MI

*(Hugh Gurney, Chuck & Jeanie Merckel, along with volunteers from Friends of Wally)*

### Crossroads Village Railroad Days

August 1- 2

Crossroads Village, 6140 Bray Rd, Flint MI

*(Richard Pekarek, Don & Barbara Westcott, Bob Tischbein)*

### Howell Melon Festival

August 14-16

Main Street, Howell MI

*(Hugh Gurney & volunteers from The Friends of Wally)*



*Photo by Steve Sobel*

Bill and Carol Merckel, sporting their Missouri River Runner t-shirts, help out with the MARP table at "Art in the Park" in Plymouth.

## Kudos to Steve Sobel

Kudos to Steve Sobel, MARP Member and Staff Photographer, for his article and accompanying photos reporting on the December 16, 2014, opening of the John D. Dingell Transit Center in Dearborn. His article appears in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter issue (vol. 38 no. 263) of *Passenger Train Journal*. Steve has written a full report on the event complete with his usual excellent photos of the interior and exterior of the new Transit Center, along with a photo of the arrival of *Wolverine* Train #353 — not at the Dearborn station, but at the Troy station when it opened last October, an editorial error the magazine regrets. The article also has a very nice portrait of U. S. Representative Debbie Dingell, elected in 2014 to the seat occupied for nearly sixty years by John D. Dingell for whom the new transit center is named. Check out the article on your next visit to a well-stocked newsstand where train magazines may be found.

## Tim Fischer Leaves M-1 Rail

Tim Fischer, a life member of MARP, has taken a position with the Michigan Department of Transportation. As deputy communications director, he manages the department's strategic messaging, especially as it relates to intermodal developments and changing transportation needs. He formerly was the Chief Administrative Officer at **M-1 Rail**, leading the corporate donor program which totals over \$100 million in charitable donations. Prior to that, Fischer served as deputy policy director at the Michigan Environmental Council where he was instrumental in developing a focus on passenger rail that continues with such efforts as the current **Coast-to-Coast Line** study to assess the potential for re-establishing passenger train service connecting Detroit-Lansing-Grand Rapids-Holland.

## MI Operation Lifesaver

TROY, Mich. (NewsChannel 3) – The state is getting a new grant to boost rail safety education. Michigan Operation Lifesaver has been awarded \$8,400 from Operation Lifesaver, Inc., in partnership with the Federal Railroad Administration.

The grant will help support the nonprofit safety group's ongoing "**See Tracks? Think Train!**" campaign.

The money will be used to boost awareness on billboards, movie theater advertising and displays for public events.

Federal statistics show that about every three hours, a person or vehicle is hit by a train in the United States.

Michigan ranks 10th nationally for collisions at rail crossings, with 13 deaths from 79 crashes in 2014 according to Sam Cowl, State Coordinator for Michigan Operation Lifesaver.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Michigan Rail Conference

KEY NOTE SPEAKER

# Joseph C. Szabo

Former head Federal Railroad Association  
Newly named to lead the  
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning



**AUGUST 19 1:00 - 4:30PM**  
FIELD TRIP

**AUGUST 20 8:00AM - 7:00PM**  
MAIN CONFERENCE

[CLICK HERE for Information & Registration](#)

## Upcoming Events

### Operation Lifesaver Quarterly Meeting

14 August, 9:30am

Washtenaw County Sheriffs' Complex

Learning Resource Center

4135 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48107

Includes luncheon hosted by Michigan Railroads Assoc.

President Jon Cool. **RSVP required:** [samcrowl@comcast.net](mailto:samcrowl@comcast.net)  
or phone 248-823-7037

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Michigan Rail Conference

19-20 August, Grand Valley State University

See top of this page for details and registration link

### 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

Saturday, 19 September

Durand Union Station

Details available soon at [www.marp.org](http://www.marp.org)

### NARP Fall Council & Membership Meeting

Friday, 16 October - Sunday, 18 October

Crowne Plaza at Union Station

123 West Louisiana St, Indianapolis IN 46255

On-Line Registration will be open by August 1, 2015  
[narprail.org/events/narp-fall-council-meeting/](http://narprail.org/events/narp-fall-council-meeting/)

### 13th Michigan Railroad History Conference

Saturday, 17 October

Lansing Community College, West Campus, Lansing MI

Features a keynote presentation by Kevin P. Keefe titled "Motor City Limited" — Long before Amtrak, the Detroit-Chicago Route Defined Fast, Competitive Corridor Service." More information at [MichiganRailroadHistory.org](http://MichiganRailroadHistory.org)

*(ROADS continued from page 1)*

priorities are not meeting the needs of this changing population — a population that is becoming more urban and whose largest cohorts are the aging Boomers and the young Millennials, both of whom want a broader range of options for moving around in their worlds. In addition, there are important segments of the population whose mobility needs have never been fully addressed: the very young, the physically challenged, the poor.

Lawmakers at both the state and federal level, currently struggling with how to pay for transportation needs, are focused primarily on fixing the roads. In Michigan the shortfall is at least \$1.2 billion annually. At the federal level the situation is even more dire. The Highway Trust Fund, where all those dollars collected at the pump go to be redistributed back to the states, is broke and will need an infusion of \$16 billion from general revenues to keep it afloat for another year. This most recent bailout is in addition to about \$63 billion in general revenues transferred to the Highway Trust Fund between 2008 and 2014. (By the way, this is more than has been appropriated to Amtrak in its entire 44 year history.)

The **USPIRG report** concludes with this call for action:

"The transportation funding crisis cannot be solved with short-term patches. The weaknesses of the gas tax as a revenue source will only become greater over time as inflation, improved vehicle fuel economy, and slower growth in driving continue to erode revenues. Maintenance, repair and reconstruction requirements on our existing transportation infrastructure can only be expected to grow. And demands for investment in a more balanced range of transportation options—from transit to bike paths to pedestrian infrastructure—are likely to mount."

Find your Senator [HERE](#)

Find your Congressperson [HERE](#)

Find your State Senator [HERE](#)

Find your State Representative [HERE](#)

## News from Our Neighbors

All Aboard Wisconsin is now on the web

[AllAboardWisconsin.com](http://AllAboardWisconsin.com)



The July edition of **All Aboard Indiana**, the monthly newsletter of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA), is now available for viewing! [CLICK HERE](#) for the latest on *The Hoosier State* train and other news from our neighbor to the south.

*(Psst! Rumor has it that Iowa Pacific Holdings will take over management of the Hoosier State on July 29. Looking forward to the classy equipment and upgraded service promised by IPH!)*

### Trains in the Library

Warren Fritz, MARP West Region Chair, has had a long association with libraries. He has been busy during the past year visiting libraries and dropping off timetables and other train information. His conversations at the Portage and Battle Creek libraries have inspired library staff in those locations to set up attractive and appealing displays of books on train travel, history and lore, as well as information on popular destinations reachable by Michigan trains.

This display was created by media librarian, Anne Holcomb, at the Willard Library in Battle Creek. Note the current Amtrak timetable in the center and the Michigan train schedules. A nice addition would be some MARP brochures.

This is an outreach activity that MARP has not previously utilized and for which there is ample opportunity. Next time you are at your local Amtrak station (or at a MARP outreach event), pick up a handful or two of timetables, schedules, and brochures and get acquainted with your local library staff. Friendly and helpful, they are always looking for new ideas – and “shushing” library visitors is no longer part of the job description!





**SAVE 20%**  
ON A GREAT AMERICAN GETAWAY



**CLICK HERE**

Book at least 14 days in advance now through October 31, 2015, for travel through March 31, 2016.



**KIDS CAN RIDE EVERY DAY FOR 50% OFF**  
Terms and conditions apply.



**OUR ADDRESS HAS CHANGED**



MARP, INC  
PO BOX 510842  
LIVONIA, MI 48151-6842