



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. The public is invited to attend.

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2014-2016

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*The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
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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, 1st 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

29 August – Executive Committee

19 September – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station

10 October – CMURC, Mt. Pleasant

21 November – Okemos Public Library

5 December – Executive Committee

Visit www.marp.org

Email marprail@yahoo.com

MARP Observes Its 42nd Anniversary

Jim Mathews, President and CEO of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), was the keynote speaker as forty-three MARP members and friends gathered at Durand Union Station on September 19.

Mathews, who assumed leadership of NARP one year ago, was introduced by John DeLora, MARP’s founding Chair and currently a member of the NARP Board of Directors. DeLora characterized Mathews as “a guy who get things done.” His experience, talents, and vision “will be good for trains.”

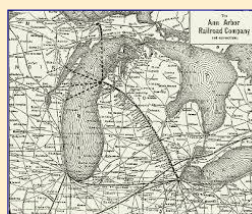
Mathews set out with a clear agenda, the first order of business being to improve NARP’s internal operations and financial picture. In concert with these efforts, and manifesting his basic philosophy that working from the grassroots levels is “where we will find success”, he initiated “The Listening Tour”. He gave a nod to Larry Swartz of America By Rail – and also well known to us for his support of MARP – for providing some valuable insights in this regard.

Moving on to talk about what is happening in Congress and what may be coming in the future, he began with the observation that things on The Hill are a little different than what we learned in civics class. There is a long and arduous process between “authorizing” funding for Amtrak and actually “appropriating” the money to keep the trains running.

The House passed the Amtrak reauthorization bill – **Passenger Rail Reform Investment Act of 2015 (PRRIA)** – in March. Widely seen as a flawed bill, the most egregious provision would bifurcate the national passenger train system, splitting off the Northeast corridor (NEC) from the rest of the system and prioritizing it’s funding.

The Senate’s version of the Amtrak reauthorization is the **Railroad Reform, Enhancement and Efficiency Act (RREEA)**, often referred to as R2E2. It was passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee in June and then rolled into the Senate’s surface transportation authorization bill passed just before the August recess. Known as the DRIVE Act, it has the distinction of being the first time ever that rail has been included in the bill that

(MEETING continues on next page)



MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, October 10

10:00 am – Noon

CMU Research Corporation

2625 Dennison Dr., Mt. Pleasant MI 48858

Map & Directions

New life for the old “Annie”? Chris Bagwell, Executive VP and General Manager of Great Lakes Central Railroad, and Erin Strang, CEO of Central Michigan University Research Corporation, will talk about a proposed “shuttle” train to be operated by GLC on 3 miles of the former Ann Arbor Railroad track through Mt. Pleasant.

Details on the website www.marp.org Or send an email to marprail@yahoo.com.



MDOT's Robert Kuehne Honored After Long Career

As the announcement said, "We all knew this day was coming, but it is still a surprise." On September 28th, a farewell coffee was held in the lobby of the Van Wagoner Building in Lansing to say farewell to MDOT planner Robert Kuehne after 40 years of service.

A quiet, gentlemanly type, Mr. Kuehne worked quietly and effectively, mostly in intermodal planning. He had a reputation for getting the job done right and on time.

On behalf of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), NARP Director John DeLora presented Mr. Kuehne with a NARP "Lifetime Achievement Award" for the excellence of his work benefiting the traveling public. Tim Hoeffner, Director of MDOT's Office of Rail joined DeLora in making the presentation.

Contributed by John DeLora.

MARP OUTREACH EVENTS

Grand River Valley Train Show

7 November, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

5625 Burlingame Ave SW, Wyoming MI 49509 ([Map](#))

Volunteers needed to help. Please contact:

john-langdon@sbcglobal.net

Lansing Model Train Show

15 November, 10:00 AM-4:00 PM

4301 Farm Lane, MSU Pavilion, East Lansing MI 48824

Volunteers needed to help. Please contact:

[Steve Vagnozzi svagnozzi@comcast.net](mailto:Steve.Vagnozzi@comcast.net)

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

You will have an opportunity to help shape SE Michigan's Regional Transit Master Plan. A series of RTA public meetings will be held at various locations the week of October 19-24. Information at RTAmichigan.org/events.

In Chicago, the Midwest High Speed Rail Association luncheon on 13 November will feature Kathy Haley, President of the Union Pearson Express, a premium Toronto airport express train that is seen as a model for Chicago's O'Hare express train. Information & Registration [HERE](#).

(MEETING continued from previous page)

has funded, until now, only highways and transit.

Mathews attributes this momentous "its-never-happened-before event" to the fact that NARP was "at the table" when the bill was being written. And, importantly, it was "aggressive outreach by NARP's local members" that made it happen. Lawmakers are hearing from their constituents and they are taking notice – people want trains.

Mathews cited provisions of this rail title within the DRIVE Act that will strengthen the national passenger rail system: (1) commits to expansion of the national system with additional funding; (2) recognizes the need to improve the passenger experience, e.g., food and beverage service are essential amenities; (3) changes the composition of the Amtrak board to make it more representative thus "changing the nature of the decision-making"; (4) boosts funding for Amtrak, rising to \$2.8 billion in FY 2019.

Mathews feels the NARP theme of "A Connected America" – promoting a seamless intermodal system in which rail is the connection bringing the pieces together – is catching fire with legislators. Reflecting his aviation background, he says this is not a model based on competition but one in which "all modes are working together."

To illustrate what he sees as a nascent bipartisanship growing around rail issues, Mathews cited Sen. John Thune, a Republican from South Dakota – a state with no passenger trains – who **championed** passenger trains as essential to the nation's transportation system as he sought inclusion of the RREEA rail title in the surface transportation authorization.

Michael Frezell, MDOT Office of Communications, was the other featured speaker. He gave an update on the ongoing work being done by Railworks on the *Wolverine* line, work which includes curve modifications, new ties, signal upgrades and closing of crossings. Anticipated completion dates include 110-mph service Kalamazoo-Battle Creek in 2017, Wayne-Dearborn double-track in November 2015, West Detroit project in 2016.

As a communications specialist, Frezell lamented the fact that financially strapped news organizations no longer have reporters knowledgeable about transportation matters. He challenged MARP members to make sure our message is getting out to the public.

Al Johnson, Supervisor of MDOT's Rail Passenger Unit, was on hand to field questions. The possible acquisition of the Talgo trains rejected by Wisconsin "is an ongoing procurement [process]." The Indiana Gateway project, which includes the now-completed Englewood flyover, as well as passing tracks to improve the flow of traffic through the northwest Indiana corridor, should be complete in 2016.

(MEETING continues on page 4)

MARP 2016 Meetings Tentative Schedule

January – GTW Depot, Lansing

February -- Battle Creek (airport?)

March – Troy Amtrak Station or Library
(alternate Howell)

April – New Buffalo (alternate St. Joe or Bangor)

May – Amtrak Train Day activities

June – Owosso, Indian Trails garage
or Steam Railroading Institute

July – Lapeer Amtrak or Capac RR Museum

August – Executive Committee meeting

September – 43rd Annual Meeting at
Durand Union Station

October – Dowagiac, Holland or Grand Rapids

November – Cadillac, Petoskey or Charlevoix

December – Executive Committee meeting

Adam Tauno Williams, who has recently assumed responsibility for planning the monthly meetings, is looking for your input on venues, speakers, and programs. The above schedule is tentative and open to change. In some of these locations, the current or former depot is a preferred meeting place. Two of the venues are libraries. Do you have other suggestions? And please let Adam know if you know of a place in Battle Creek that can accommodate 25-35 people, preferably at little or no cost.

As you look over the communities being considered for meetings, do speakers or programs come to mind? Do you know of someone who is knowledgeable about the history of that community, particularly as it relates to transportation? Are there projects planned or underway in the community that seek to provide more options for getting around? Bikeways? Trailways? Pedestrian enhancements? Transit? Is there someone who can talk about these? If so, Adam would appreciate hearing from you.

Send email to Adam at awilliam@whitemice.org or phone him at **616-581-8010**.

Suggestion received so far include: Shepherd, Southern Michigan Railroad Society (Clinton), Alma, Clare (when historic Depot is finished), St. Louis or St Johns depot museums. During the warmer months, we might plan a bring-the-family-along event on the Little River RR (Coldwater to Quincy), the Coopersville tourist railroad or the Adrian & Blissfield RR. What are your thoughts?



Coast-to-Coast Passenger Rail Study Wraps Up Public Meetings on Michigan Campuses

With upcoming visits to four college campuses, the **Michigan By Rail** team will have completed a series of 16 public engagement meetings around the state. Feedback collected at these sessions will help guide decisions about re-connecting Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids and Holland with passenger train service.

Formally titled “*Detroit – Holland Passenger Rail Ridership and Cost Estimate Study*”, the study is funded by a federal grant with public matching funds provided by 11 organizations and institutions located along the potential corridor.

John Langdon is looking for volunteers to assist with the upcoming meetings. As a volunteer, you are expected to be available for set up at 10 am as well as take down at the end of the meeting. Grant funding makes it possible to reimburse you for your mileage.

If you live in one of these 4 localities, please contact John at john.langdon@sbcglobal.net or 616-218-9009.

Volunteers are needed to:

1. Staff the registration table (1person)
2. Greet participants as they arrive (1 person)
3. Assist at the group tables (2 persons)

Monday October 19 11 am – 1 pm	Michigan State University In collaboration with MSU Office of Sustainability / Be Spartan Green Brody Hall, Tables near the cafeteria 241 Brody Service Rd, East Lansing (map) FREE SNACKS & SWAG!
Thursday October 22 11 am – 1 pm	University of Michigan James & Anne Duderstadt Center 2281 Bonisteel Blvd Ann Arbor MI 48109 (map)
Friday October 23 11 am – 1 pm	Hope College Maas Center Lobby (map) 141 E 12th St, Holland MI 49423
October TBD	Wayne State University Details to follow

**CONTRIBUTE YOUR THOUGHTS
TO THE COAST-TO-COAST
ON-LINE SURVEY**

View from elsewhere . . .

"With these ingredients coming together, the time is right for All Aboard Ohio to consider how best to use these opportunities for rail expansion in Ohio."

-- Ken Prendergast, Executive Director All Aboard Ohio, reacting to provisions in the Rail Reform, Enhancement and Efficiency Act approved by the Senate in July. One possibility he envisions would **extend the Pennsylvanian** to Chicago via Detroit.

"It is clear that most railroads will not meet the [December 31] deadline [to install PTC safety technology], so we must do everything in our power to guarantee that the trains are still running in 2016. Trains are still one of the safest ways to travel, and forcing people off the rails and on to overcrowded highways makes our nation less safe and our economy less productive. What we're seeing now is the manufacturing process for an artificial crisis."

-- Jim Mathews, NARP President and CEO, in a recent **news release** in which he calls on Congress to pass the Senate-approved DRIVE ACT which includes a responsible extension of the PTC deadline.



"Donate for Dining" Campaign

NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews brought this along to MARP's Annual Meeting last month. He invites you to send a message to Congress on keeping dining cars on the trains. You will also be supporting NARP's continuing advocacy efforts. Contribute \$50 and own one of these insulated travel coolers. Send \$25 more and NARP will send one to your member of Congress as well. **CLICK HERE** to order your bag.

(MEETING continued from page 2)

MDOT is "in discussions with Amtrak to evaluate" the possibility of a station stop in Ypsilanti. Acknowledging a dispute with CN about train speeds at a curve in the West Detroit area, he said he "thinks we can find a way to get to 40 mph." He also recognized the interest in connecting the *Pere Marquette* line with the 110-mph service at New Buffalo. "We'll have to look at how it interacts with the higher speed track" and added an intriguing comment about "bringing it to Kalamazoo." He also hinted that the **Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Corridor Study** currently underway could have implications for future service to Toronto. The decision on the Ann Arbor station "will come from the FRA not MDOT."

In response to Clark Charnetski's comments on the lack of trailblazer signage to the new stations, absence of SMART buses at the Troy station and difficulty of finding the Indian Trails thruway stop in Escanaba, Johnson said, "We need to work better with our partners." Frezell offered that "it is too early to say" if Michigan might pursue arrangements with private operators as Indiana is now doing with the *Hoosier State* service. Regarding the *Hoosier State Train*, which is now being managed by Iowa Pacific Holdings, Don Yehle from *All Aboard Indiana* said that he is seeing a real change in attitude toward passenger train service in his state.

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