



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

marprail@yahoo.com

Issue #10

July 2012

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. Everyone is welcome.

MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2011-2012

Robert Tischbein	Chair
Vacant	Vice-Chair
Dave Randall	Treasurer
Hugh Gurney	Secretary
John Langdon	Governmental/Public Affairs Coordinator
Kathleen Newell	Membership Coordinator
Kay Chase	Communications Coordinator
Jim Wallington	Meetings Coordinator
Don Monteith	Northern Region Chair
Jim Hinkins	Detroit/Metro Region Chair
John Langdon	Acting West Region Chair
Jim Wallington	Acting East/Central Region Chair

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

2012 MEETINGS

- 14 January** – Williamston Depot-Museum
- 11 February** – Old Dog Tavern, Kalamazoo
- 17 March** – New Pontiac Station
- 21 April** – Chelsea Depot
- 12 May** – National Train Day
- 16 June** – Muskegon Union Station
- 28 July** –RAPID Central Station, Grand Rapids
- August** – Executive Committee Retreat
- 22 September** –Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 13 October** – Pere Marquette Station, St. Louis MI
- 10 November** – Michigan Central Station, Essex, Ontario

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

AT LAST ! Congress Passes Surface Transportation Re-Authorization Bill

After dithering for nearly three years, Congress pulled itself together on June 29 and passed *Moving Ahead For Progress in the 21st Century* – or MAP-21 for short – authorizing \$105 billion for the nation’s surface transportation programs over two years. Falling far short of the promise implicit in its name, the legislation fails to advance transportation policy or funding in any significant way. Continuing its failure to deal with falling revenues in the Highway Trust Fund, Congress has again raided the Treasury to subsidize highways to the tune of nearly \$17 B over two years, while making cuts to transit programs, reducing money available for bicycle facilities and pedestrian safety projects, and weakening provisions allowing citizen input on major transportation projects which impact their communities and the environment.

Although the bill was a disappointment to many of the groups advocating for more innovative and forward looking solutions - among them [National Association of Railroad Passengers](#), [One Rail Coalition](#), [Coalition for America’s Gateways and Trade Corridors](#), [American Public Transportation Association](#), [Smart Growth America](#), [Reconnecting America](#) - relief was expressed that many of the worst features of earlier proposals were dropped. The final bill removed language in the original senate bill that sought to reduce the design speed of the new intercity locomotives from 125 mph down to 110 mph. Three manufacturers had sent a letter asking for removal of this provision in order to encourage creation of a new passenger-specific locomotive. [Read the letter at tinyurl.com/marp00043] The Railroad Grade Crossing set aside, which funds improvements at crossings to eliminate collisions between automobiles and trains was retained. However, the \$100 M for the High

(LEGISLATION continues on page 3)



christmanco.com

MARP MEMBER MEETING
Saturday, July 28
10:00 am – 1:00 pm
The Rapid Central Station
Multi-Modal Transit Center

250 Grandville Ave SW, Grand Rapids, MI

Opened in 2004, The Rapid Central Station is the first LEED-certified transit facility in the country. A Representative of Bergmann Associates, the architects for the new Grand Rapids Amtrak station will be on hand. Lunch will be across the street at Founders Brewing Co. Details on the website www.marp.org Or leave a message at (269)388-3777.

A Real Railroad Town

Meeting Report by Hugh Gurney

On June 16, MARP members gathered at the beautifully restored Muskegon Union Depot, the first time in memory that MARP had met in this beautiful port city. The last passenger train left Muskegon Union Depot on April 30, 1972. Fortunately, travelers still come and go as the building is now the information center and headquarters for the Muskegon County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Following a welcome from Vice Mayor Stephen Gawron, Muskegon Railroad Historical Society Archivist Andy Busard explained that Muskegon was a real railroad town through the 1960's, with three major railroads, the Pere Marquette, the Grand Trunk Western and the Pennsylvania connecting with railroad ferries transporting loaded freight cars across Lake Michigan to Milwaukee. At the Union Depot and at the nearby Grand Trunk Depot, passengers transferred to these ferries for the Lake Michigan trip. With photographs and visuals of actual timetables, Busard traced the history of railroading in and around Muskegon from 1869 until today. It is ironic that the first connecting railroad to reach Muskegon is the last to serve the community, running north from Holland and Grand Haven to Muskegon.

Based on a recommendation from Treasurer Dave Randall, the Executive Committee voted to move its investment fund, often referred to as the Pratt Fund, to the Vanguard Total Stock Market Index Investment (VTSMX). Management costs should be much lower, Randall explained.

Langdon, Hinkins and Fischer attended a conference in Detroit on June 16 dealing with rail connections between Michigan and Canada. A proposed new rail tunnel between Windsor and Detroit could free the existing tunnel for passenger rail use. Langdon and Chase attended a meeting in Kalamazoo of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission. The group, which has developed the rail plan for the Midwest now coming to fruition, enjoyed traveling between Porter and Kalamazoo at 110 mph.

The Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday, September 22, at the Durand Union Station. Bob Johnson, passenger train reporter for *Trains* magazine, will be the principal speaker. Members were reminded to make sure their passports or enhanced driver's licenses were in order for the November meeting in Essex, Ontario

Charnetski reported that the City of Ann Arbor has voted to accept a \$2.8 million grant from the FRA to assist in planning a new passenger station. The new facility will probably be in the vicinity of University of Michigan

(RAIL TOWN continued in next column)

Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission Travels at 110 mph to Attend Annual Meeting in Kalamazoo June 10, 2012



(RAIL TOWN continued)

Medical Center, though there is sentiment for keeping it at the existing location.

Langdon continues to work with the Muskegon County Convention and Visitors Bureau and Muskegon transportation officials to establish bus service from that community to connect with the *Pere Marquette* in Holland. Langdon has also met with representatives of the Grand Rapids RAPID on better local transit connections with the *Pere Marquette*.

Effective in July, Megabus will operate several daily frequencies connecting Detroit, East Lansing, Grand Rapids and Chicago. Monteith announced that, starting August 1, Indian Trails will serve Charlevoix and the Beaver Island ferry. Monteith has been pushing for this service for several years.

All existing members of the Executive Committee have agreed to serve for another two years, Nominating Committee Chair Sobel reported. Larry Krieg has agreed to run for the office of Vice Chair. At present, there are no candidates for the positions of West or East-Central Regional Chairs.

(LEGISLATION continued from page 1)

Speed Intercity Passenger Rail grant program proposed by the Senate did not survive. “Complete streets” language in the Senate bill that created a federal requirement for accommodation of non-motorized road users was stripped from the bill, but the Cardin-Cochran provision survived to provide grants to local communities to make their streets safer for walking or biking. Dedicated funding for this purpose was retained, though at a lower dollar level - about half the money will be given directly to metro areas, with the remainder used at state discretion.

The House passed the conference agreement 373-52. The Senate followed suit with a 74-19 vote. All of the “nay” votes, in both chambers, were cast by Republicans. Michigan lawmakers supported the bill, the only nay votes being cast by Bill Huizenga (2nd), Justin Amash (3rd), and Tim Walberg (7th). If you want to call or write your representatives about the bill, you can use [this link](#) to do so. Many of them may have no idea what’s actually in this bill — you can let them know, and let them know how you feel about it. Or go to tinyurl.com/marp00048 to send your message.

A good analysis of the bill can be found at tinyurl.com/marp00047.

Also, see page 4 for links to other blogs about the new bill.

How Shoud Michigan Roll ?

On October 26, 2011 Governor Snyder delivered a special message titled, “*Reinventing Michigan’s Infrastructure: Better Roads Drive Better Jobs*”. In this message, he introduced his proposed plans for the future of transportation and infrastructure.

In this midst of his speech, Gov. Snyder stated, “I fully recognize that solving this decades-long challenge will not be easy, but I am convinced that starting the conversation and debate now is absolutely necessary for the future of our economy and our quality of life. I look forward to working with the legislature, our local communities and our citizens over the next several months to develop a plan and the political will to implement it.”

Trans4M, the statewide coalition working to change Michigan’s transportation future, wants to hold Governor Snyder accountable for his words by creating public “conversation and debate” throughout the state. Trans4M will hold a series of Community Forums in which the citizens, non-profits, and businesses will work together to create a shared transportation vision for the state.

MARP is an active Trans4M partner and encourages all our members to participate in these Forums. Please plan to attend one in your area. More information is available at trans4m.org/events/community-forums.

Trans4M Community Forums

Tuesday, June 12 – Midland

Thursday, June 28 – Royal Oak

Tuesday, July 17, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm – Dearborn
Ford Community and Performing Arts Center

Tuesday, July 24, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm – Detroit
U of M Detroit Center at Woodward and Mack

DATE TBD – Mt. Clemens

Location + Time TBD

Tuesday, August 14 – Flint

Location + Time TBD

Wednesday, August 15, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm – Muskegon
United Way, 31 E. Clay Ave, Muskegon MI

Tuesday, August 21 – Lansing

Location + Time TBD

Tuesday, August 28 – Jackson

Location + Time TBD

Tuesday, September 11, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm – Kalamazoo
Location TBD

TBD - Locations in Northern Michigan and Upper Peninsula

CORRECTIONS *Two items appearing in the June issue, page 2, should have read as follows:*

Amtrak and Trinity Transit are now providing thru-way connections from the Jackson station to Toledo, thus allowing Michigan passengers to connect with the Lakeshore route to Boston and New York City and the Capitol route to Pittsburg and Washington, D.C. *Indian Trails was incorrectly named as the carrier.*

Hot off the Presses!

RULING IN AAR CASE SUPPORTS AMTRAK

CN had used this case to bolster its position regarding timekeeping. The ruling nullifies a key element of the freight railroad’s counter-argument in the complaint filed by Amtrak regarding time keeping. It is not known if an appeal will be filed. *Original headline was misleading. The case was brought by Assoc. of American Railroads.*

See: www.courthousenews.com/2012/06/01/47054.htm

Have You Renewed Your Membership ?

Go to www.marp.org

Click on “Join MARP Today” at the lower right

Down load the form and mail it in today

What people are saying . . .

“There may be one unintended upshot from this bill . . . because highway needs outstrip what the gas tax is providing, the U.S. Treasury will have to pay general taxpayer dollars into the Highway Account—\$6.2 billion in 2013, and \$10.4 billion 2014 . . . the federal government has poured north of \$50 billion non-user tax dollars into highways in the last four years alone . . . more government funding than Amtrak has received in its entire history . . . So maybe we can finally stop hearing the ‘roads pay for themselves, abolish taxpayer-dependent-Amtrak’-myth. (But don't hold your breath.)”

-- Sean Jeans Gail, NARP Blog Post
7/28/12 tinyurl.com/marp00044

“ . . . it is clear that this bill represents the last gasp of a 20th century transportation program that has run out of steam. ”

-- Stephen Davis, Transportation for America
Blog Post 6/28/12 tinyurl.com/marp00045

“Within six months you really need to start the process of debating and designing a new bill moving forward.”

-- John Robert Smith, Reconnecting America
tinyurl.com/marp00046



Photo by John C. Dahl

Michigan Central Station Essex, Ontario

MARP will have its first ever meeting in Canada on November 10 when we meet in this historic station. Now would be a good time to update your passport or to obtain a Michigan "enhanced driver's license", a federally approved document that allows you to re-enter the U.S. when traveling by land or sea from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda and the Caribbean.

Visit your nearest Secretary of State's office to obtain your Michigan "enhanced driver's license".

Information is available at:
tinyurl.com/marp00026



Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
P.O. Box 532256
Livonia, MI 48153-2256

Contact Your Lawmaker

Congressional Switchboard
202-224-3121

tinyurl.com/Stabenow

tinyurl.com/SenatorLevin

tinyurl.com/YourCongressPerson

tinyurl.com/YourRepresentative

tinyurl.com/YourSSenator

<name>
<street address>
<city>, <state> <zip>