



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

marprail@yahoo.com

Issue #11

August 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

State Long-Range Transportation Plan Available For Public Comment

“MI Transportation Plan focuses on the important link between transportation and Michigan’s economic vitality and quality of life. It presents options to achieve Michigan’s goals for the future by providing an efficient, integrated transportation system.”

MI Transportation Plan, also known as the State Long - Range Transportation Plan, is a 25-year plan for transforming Michigan’s transportation system. Following a series of public meetings earlier this year, along with public input gathered through online surveys and public comments on the technical papers providing the basis for revisions to the current plan, the Draft 2035 State Transportation Plan is now available for public review and comment.

In addition to gathering public input, MDOT has been evaluating the inputs, forecasts and strategies against current trends to update the current plan and extend the horizon year to 2035.

The Draft 2035 MI Transportation Plan is at www.michigan.gov/slrp. Here you will find a 24-page overview of the 2035 Draft Plan and 18 Technical Report White Papers which should be referred to for details on specific goals, objectives, strategies, and decision principles of the Plan. Of particular interest are these 4 white papers: *New Policy Initiatives and Integration*, *Intercity Train Service*, *Intercity Bus Service*, and *Socioeconomics*. An online comment form is available at www.michigan.gov/slrp. Comments are being taken through August 31.

In addition, the Michigan Department of Transportation will conduct a series of 15 public meetings throughout the state between August 13-22. See page 3 below for locations and times.

No August Member Meeting

The next scheduled member meeting is the Annual Meeting on September 22 at Durand Union Station. For more information and a downloadable registration form, see page 3 below or visit marp.org/?p=4020.

AMTRAK COMING TO RAPID CENTRAL STATION

By Hugh Gurney

MARP's July 28 meeting took place in the beautiful and functional Rapid Central Station in Grand Rapids. Just south of downtown, Rapid Central Station serves Greyhound and Indian Trails intercity buses as well as the city's transit system. The transit center has been the incubator for a vibrant downtown area with student apartments, restaurants, a micro-brewery, and the home of the Grand Rapids Ballet. Rapid Central Station was the first LEED approved transit center in the nation when it opened in 2004. It includes platforms for eighteen buses.

From its inception, it was planned that Rapid Central Station would be a truly multi-modal transportation center including Amtrak, noted Project Manager Seth Horton, whose firm Progressive AE is providing the architectural design for the new Vernon J. Ehlers Amtrak station replacing the current station about six blocks to the west. With an initial FRA grant of \$3,800,000 secured by Congressman Vernon J Ehlers, plus additional grants from FTA/MDOT, the RAPID, the Grand Rapids DDA and the City of Grand Rapids, construction on the new station should begin in the next 2-3 months, as soon as agreements with CSX are consummated. Bergmann Associates of Lansing will construct a new rail spur to the station from the existing CSX main line about 500 yards to the south.



The 2800 square foot station includes a waiting room for passengers, a snack area and a separate area for the crew to relax. A tall clock tower lit at night will be visible from both the Wealthy Street overpass and U. S. 131. The platform will be 400 feet long with a canopy covering 312 feet of the distance. The station will be served by one track initially, but space is available to construct a second track as passenger volume increases. Erhardt Construction will do the work which should take about a year.

Prior to Mr. Horton's illustrated talk, John Langdon handed out a packet with visuals of earlier Grand Rapids rail stations and timetables. As late as 1956, Grand Rapids was served by the C&O/Pere Marquette, Grand Trunk Western and Michigan Central. C&O provided service to Detroit and Chicago until 1971, when Amtrak was established. Amtrak restored service to Grand Rapids in 1984.

Indian Trails schedules and routes are slated for changes as of August 1. Charlevoix gains service with a direct connection to the Beaver Island ferry, but Kalkaska and Mancelona lose service. All three Lower Peninsula routes will merge south of the Mackinac Bridge, meaning only one bus will cross the bridge to St. Ignace and beyond. Alpena, Tawas City and Hancock are now listed as Amtrak Thruway stops. See map at tinyurl.com/marp00049

Megabus is now offering three frequencies daily serving Detroit, East Lansing, Grand Rapids and Chicago, a total of 270 seats daily that could be taken from Amtrak and Indian Trails. Larry Krieg noted that *Megabus* seats are narrower and more confined than Amtrak seats.



Larry Krieg was asked to head up a subcommittee to organize a meeting with Chicago Amtrak officials to recommend immediate improvements to boarding procedures at Chicago Union Station. Krieg hopes to include representatives from passenger advocacy groups in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin on this subcommittee.

39th Annual MARP Meeting

Saturday, September 22, 10:30 am – 2:30 pm
Durand Union Station

Featured Speaker

Bob Johnston

TRAINS Magazine

Other invited speakers are Joseph C. Szabo, Federal Railroad Administrator; Tim Hoefner, Michigan Office of Rail; and Ronald K. DeCook, President, DeCook Governmental Policy & Strategies. Lunch will be provided by Railroad Catering of Durand. The registration fee of \$25 covers lunch and materials.

RESERVATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY SEPT 13

Download the reservation form at

marp.org/?p=4020

NEW EAST LANSING TRANSPORTATION CENTER RECEIVES FUNDING

A \$6.3 competitive grant to help build a new bus and train station in East Lansing was recently announced. Plans include a new train and bus station, train passenger platform, parking lot, bus loading area and local traffic improvements. With a 164 % increase in Amtrak passenger traffic since 2003, this is indeed welcome news. Look for more information in the next issue of *The Michigan Passenger*.

Michigan has been awarded 2 of the 47 awards made under the fourth round of the TIGER program. A grant of \$10 M will help support the LINK Detroit project which includes capital improvements at Eastern Market; plans to link the Dequindre Cut, Hamtramck and Midtown Loop greenways; and reconstruction of the Adelaide, Division and Wilkins Street bridges over the former Grand Trunk Railroad line. (\$24,834,173 total project cost)

Muskegon received a TIGER grant of \$1.35 M to purchase 3 buses powered by compressed natural gas, helping reduce costs, improve energy efficiency, and reduce pollution. The new buses will provide access to several large employers located in rural and suburban areas in the county.

Other competitive grant programs will benefit 3 other Michigan projects. \$30 M was awarded jointly to the Detroit DOT and SMART for transfer of excess DDOT buses to SMART; rehabilitation of buses in both fleets; addition of security cameras on buses, and help repairing fire damage at DDOT's maintenance facility. The Flint Transit Authority will receive \$4 M to pay for vehicle replacements. The MTA serves Genesee County and provides regional service to parts of Oakland and Saginaw counties.

Information and interactive map at tinyurl.com/marp00053

Details of the TIGER grants at tinyurl.com/marp00054

Draft 2035 MI Transportation Plan Public Meetings

*All meetings 5 - 7 pm., with formal presentations
at 5:15 & 6:15 pm**

ALPENA - Monday, Aug. 13

Alpena County Public Library, 211 N. First St.

ESCANABA - Monday, Aug. 13

Joseph Heirman Univ. Center, Bay de Noc Community College

GAYLORD - Tuesday, Aug. 14

University Center, 80 Livingston Blvd.

GRAND RAPIDS - Tuesday, Aug. 14

MDOT Transportation Service Center, 2660 Leonard St., NE

SAGINAW - Tuesday, Aug. 14

MDOT Bay Region Office, 55 E. Morley Drive

HOUGHTON - Wednesday, Aug. 15

Community Room, Lakeshore Center, 600 E. Lakeshore Drive

LANSING - Wednesday, Aug. 15*

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Suite 2C
3135 Pine Tree Road

***LANSING ONLY MEETING TIMES**

4:30 - 6:30 pm, with formal presentations at 4:45 & 5:45 pm

TRAVERSE CITY - Wednesday, Aug. 15

Council of Governments Conference Room
Michigan Works Building, 1209 S. Garfield

CANTON - Thursday, Aug. 16

Summit on the Park, 46000 Summit Parkway

DETROIT - Thursday, Aug. 16

MDOT Transportation Service Center, 1060 W. Fort St.

NEWAYGO - Thursday, Aug. 16

Cronk's Oakridge Facility, 9103 Mason Drive (M-37)

SAULT STE. MARIE - Thursday, Aug. 16

Lake Superior Room, Cisler Center, Lake Superior State Univ.

KALAMAZOO - Tuesday, Aug. 21

Board Room, Metro Transit, 530 N. Rose St.

ANN ARBOR - Wednesday, Aug. 22

Multipurpose Room, Ann Arbor District Library, 343 S. Fifth Ave.

BENTON HARBOR - Wednesday, Aug. 22

Anchor Room A & B, Michigan Works, 499 W. Main St.

YOUR SMART PHONE IS YOUR TICKET

Amtrak eTicketing went live on July 30 on all trains throughout the system. By integrating computers and mobile devices, the eTicketing program will allow passengers to skip lines at ticket counters, and make lost tickets a thing of the past. When a customer makes a reservation, the eTicket will be e-mailed as a printable document. Passengers using their smartphone or other mobile device can present the eTicket to the conductor by simply opening the document from their e-mail. Converting Amtrak's Thruway bus service to eTicketing will be a more gradual process, starting with a pilot program in California.

Details here: tinyurl.com/marp00050



This was the scene in front of Pennsylvania Station 50 years ago at 5 pm on August 2, 1962, as the well-dressed men and women calling themselves *Action Group for Better Architecture in New York* protested what they viewed as a "monumental act of vandalism" --- the imminent demise of the station to make way for the New Madison Square Garden.

What others are saying . . .

"We're not going to drop the ball on this . . . MAP-21 probably is a little highway-centric, but we will NOT be dissuaded from opportunities with our partners all over the country to continue our efforts where communities want to invest in bike paths and walking paths and other forms of transportation."

-- USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood responding to concerns that the new transportation bill shortchanges on Livability and Sustainable Communities programs. Watch "On The Go with Ray LaHood" video at tinyurl.com/marp00051.

*[America needs] a new vision of increasing prosperity and ensuring our global competitiveness in the 21st century by upgrading our transportation network, applying new ideas and new thinking to transportation issues . . . One bold step forward would be the creation of "Critical Commerce Corridors" . . . 3C would be **more than just roadways**; it represents a comprehensive vision of multi-modal integration, making full use, for example, of the economic value of rights-of-way as a new source of revenues.*

-- Letter from the *American Road & Transportation Builders Association*, quoted by Sean Jeans Gail. Read the rest of the blog at tinyurl.com/marp00052.



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>