

P *The Michigan* PASSENGER

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Michigan Association of
Railroad Passengers
www.marp.org

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FUTURE MARP MEETINGS

Royal Oak Library, Sept 13,
Saturday. 3-5 pm.

Durand Union Station, Oct 18,
Saturday, Noon, Annual Meeting.
Kevin McKinney, speaker

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Luxury Hotel Announced for Michigan Central Station



The upper floors at Michigan Central Station where the new NoMad Hotel will be located. (Gary Melford photo)

By Hugh Gurney

Ford Motor Company announced on June 2 that NoMad Hotels will open a luxury hotel on the top five stories of the newly restored Michigan Central Station in Detroit. This will be the first time ever in the long history of the structure that floors 14-18 will be occupied. Even in the glory days of the Michigan Central Railroad and the New York Central System, these floors remained largely unoccupied.

"A year after we opened Michigan Central Station to the world, our vision to create a global innovation hub and a destination symbolizing Detroit's future is well underway," noted Bill Ford, Executive Chair of Ford. "Together with NoMad and Hilton, we are now announcing the next phase of our ambitious vision offering visitors and the community a unique hotel destination and memorable food

and beverage experience in this iconic landmark."

NoMad is part of a super luxury brand being developed by Hilton. At present, one hotel has opened in London and another is underway in Singapore. "This project champions Detroit, rejuvenates a historic landmark, and marks Hilton's luxury debut in Michigan, part of Hilton's aim to serve every stay occasion in every location," said Kara Randal, Hilton vice president, luxury and mixed-use development.

Expected to open 2027, the hotel will offer 180 rooms including 30 suites on floors 14-18 as well as wellness facilities on the third floor. NoMad will also reopen the station's original restaurant and carriage house on the ground floor for restaurant and bar service.

Currently, the ground floor of the station is open to the public, permitting visitors to walk around and enjoy this splendidly restored public area of the building on their own or sign up for a paid guided tour, according to the June 22, 2025 issue of the *Detroit Free Press*. A coffee and donut shop, a gift shop and a store selling sundries are open. Employees with Ford's electric vehicles unit and Integrated Services teams are moving into floors 8, 9 and 10. Google's Code Next science education program is now occupying part of the 5th floor, with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan slated for other space on that level.

In other Michigan Central news, the *Detroit Free Press*, reported on June 22, 2025, that the restored building has brought a wave of visitors that fill Corktown neighborhood restaurants, bars,

See *Hotel* page 3

St. Joseph Michigan



Amtrak's depot at St Joseph Michigan was built by the Pere Marquette Railroad in 1913. Today it is owned by the City of St. Joseph, and serves about 14,000 passengers annually. The station is on Amtrak's *Pere Marquette* route, which operates daily between Chicago and Grand Rapids. The station is about 3 blocks from the lake front in Silver Beach County Park. The Silver Beach Pizza restaurant is also located in the building. (Todd Schultz photo)

The Michigan PASSENGER

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The Michigan Passenger welcomes your comments and submissions on passenger rail issues. Comments, articles, and other materials sent for publication should be sent by email to jhguidinger1@yahoo.com. Clippings from newspapers, magazines, and electronic sources must include the publication's name and date. Photos sent by email must be in .jpg format. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. Executive Committee

- Tom Fletcher, Chair**, (269) 998-5630, tom.fletcher@marp.org
- Ted Wojcik, Vice Chair** (231) 590-2916, ted.wojcik@marp.org
- Matt Thompson, Secretary**, (989) 233-8918, matt.thompson@marp.org
- Jean Merckel, Treasurer**, (734) 717-0326, jean.merckel@marp.org
- Chuck Merckel, Mtgs & Station Rep Coordinator**, (734) 330-0281, chuck.merckel@marp.org
- John Guidinger, Newsletter editor**, (517) 918-9958, john.guidinger@marp.org
- Steve Vagnozzi, Government Affairs Coordinator**, (517) 927-1118, steve.vagnozzi@marp.org
- Clark Charnetski**, (734) 761-3814, clark.charnetski@marp.org
- Alexander Kofman**, (313) 591-0855, alexander.kofman@marp.org
- Bob Lovell**, (527) 256-4552, bob.lovell@marp.org
- Eric Schertzing**, (517) 303-7233, eric.schertzing@marp.org

- Carolyn Ulstad, Webmaster**, (231) 941-6584, Ext 710, carolyn.ulstad@marp.org
- Kay Chase, Communications Coordinator**, (269) 388-3777, chase@wmich.edu

MICHIGAN SERVICES

Amtrak Train Schedules											
Effective May 5, 2025											
Chicago-Kalamazoo-Ann Arbor-Detroit-Pontiac											
Chicago-Kalamazoo-East Lansing-Port Huron											
Wolverine Service	Wolverine Service	Blue Water	Wolverine Service	Mile	Train Name		Wolverine Service	Blue Water	Wolverine Service	Wolverine Service	
350	352	364	354		Train Number		351	365	353	355	
Note A	Daily	Daily	Daily		Days of Operation		Daily	Daily	Note A	Daily	
6:45a	2:15p	4:00p	5:50p	0	Dp	CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT)	Ar	10:32a	11:45a	2:02p	10:40p
7:11a	↓	↓	↓	16		Hammond-Whiting, IN (CT)	↑	↑	↑	1:15p	9:54p
9:04a	4:31p	6:10p	8:04p	62		New Buffalo, MI (ET)			11:24a	1:21p	10:02p
9:29a	4:52p	6:32p	8:24p	89		Niles, MI			11:04a	1:01p	9:42p
9:40a	↓	6:43p	↓	102		Dowagiac, MI			10:52a	↑	9:29p
10:14a	5:26p	7:11p	8:58p	138		Kalamazoo, MI		9:16a	10:26a	12:28p	9:00p
10:56a	6:03p	7:38p	9:35p	160		Battle Creek, MI		8:48a	10:00a	12:01p	8:33p
		9:00p		208		East Lansing, MI		↑	8:54a	↑	↑
		9:37p		238		Durand, MI			8:08a		
		10:08p		256		Flint, MI			7:35a		
		10:34p		274	↓	Lapeer, MI			7:08a		
		11:31p	↓	319	Ar	PORT HURON, MI	Dp		6:20a		
	↓	↓		184		Albion, MI	↑	8:15a			
11:51a	6:55p		10:28p	208		Jackson, MI		7:51a		10:58a	7:37p
12:28p	7:35p		11:08p	243		Ann Arbor, MI		7:14a		10:23a	7:00p
12:57p	8:11p		11:27p	271		Dearborn, MI		6:44a		9:53a	6:29p
1:25p	8:44p		12:11a	281		DETROIT, MI		6:26a		9:35a	6:11p
1:49p	9:05p		12:34a	292		Royal Oak, MI		6:03a		9:12a	5:48p
1:57p	9:12p		12:41a	296	↓	Troy, MI		5:56a		9:04a	5:41p
2:11p	9:29p		1:01a	304	Ar	PONTIAC, MI	Dp	5:43a		8:50a	5:28p

Read Down

Read Up

Will NOT run on certain Dates. See Note A

Will NOT run on certain Dates. See Note A

Amtrak Train Schedule

Effective October 6, 2023
Chicago-Grand Rapids

Pere Marquette	Mile	Train Name		Pere Marquette	
370		Train Number		371	
Daily		Days of Operation		Daily	
6:30p	0	Dp	CHICAGO, IL, Un Sta (CT)	Ar	9:08a
9:14p	89		St. Joe-Benton Harbor, MI (ET)	↑	8:10a
9:50p	116		Bangor, MI		7:32a
10:33p	151	↓	Holland, MI		6:49a
11:34p	176	Ar	GRAND RAPIDS, MI	Dp	6:00a

Read Down

Read Up

These schedules are provided for planning purposes only and may not show recent time changes. Always consult with Amtrak at AMTRAK.COM or 1-800-USA-RAIL when making reservations.

NOTE A - Trains 350 and 353 will NOT operate on certain week days for track construction work. Trains 350 and 353 will NOT operate on Mondays through Thursdays between May 5 and October 31, with the following exceptions during which they WILL operate: May 26 (Memorial Day), June 19 (Juneteenth), between June 27 and August 3 (Mid Summer), and September 1 (Labor Day)

Printed by the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers - May 1, 2025.

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Letters & emails

Supports Chicago-Toronto Cross-Border Service

There is a fair amount of anticipation in Michigan about the proposed Amtrak service to Windsor and a direct VIA Rail connection to London and Toronto. I grew up in Dearborn and we used to take the VIA train from Windsor to Toronto occasionally on family trips. Now it's an hour's drive from my new home to the nearest station on the Wolverine line, but that journey would be worth it if the new train is a reliable and somewhat competitive alternative to the unknowns

of crossing the border by car and suburban Toronto traffic. An international passenger rail connection in the Midwest has been a missing link between the two systems since the previous *International* run was discontinued – 21 years ago.

As a future passenger on this route, if I might offer a proposal, I would suggest renaming the Amtrak Wolverine train that would go to and from Windsor the *Ambassador*. This would carry forward this historic

train name, pay homage to the international bridge of the same name, and inherently suggest the long-standing goodwill between our two countries.

I hope all partners will work together to bring this project to reality for the residents of Michigan and Ontario, and the passengers of both rail networks.

Nathan Nietering,
April 2025

MARP STATION REPRESENTATIVES

Chuck Merckel, Coordinator (734-330-0281)

Station	Staff	MARP Volunteer
Albion	Bus	Matthew Murawski
Ann Arbor	Amtrak	Clark Charnetski
Bangor	None	J. P. Descamp
Battle Creek	Amtrak	James Donahue
Chicago	Amtrak	Robert (Bob) Donahue
Dearborn	Amtrak	Mary Jo Durivage
Detroit	Amtrak	Greg Ptucha/Roberta Deering
Dowagiac	None	Matt Money
Durand	Museum	Mary Stone
East Lansing	Caretkr	John Boyse
Flint	Bus	Barb Westcott
Grand Rapids	Caretkr	Mit Renroc
Holland	None	Nathan Nietering
Jackson	Caretkr	Tom Schindler
Kalamazoo	Caretkr	Warren Fritz
Lapeer	None	Jim Slater
New Buffalo	None	Rich Knoll
Niles	Caretkr	Jack Kessler
Pontiac	Bus	Robert Tischbein
Port Huron	None	T. J. Gaffney
Royal Oak	None	David Roberts
St Joseph	None	Todd Schultz
Toledo, OH	Amtrak	James Parsons
Traverse City	None	Carolyn Ulstad
Troy	None	Thomas VandeGrift

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 E-mail * _____

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MARP Meets in Traverse City



Carolyn Ultstad updated meeting attendees on the study and answered questions from the audience.

On Saturday, June 7, a MARP general membership meeting was held at Northwestern Michigan College's, Scholar's Hall, in Traverse City. MARP had a full classroom to hear the guest speaker, Ms. Carolyn Ultstad, Transportation Program Manager, at the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities. Carolyn updated attendees on the lengthy process of

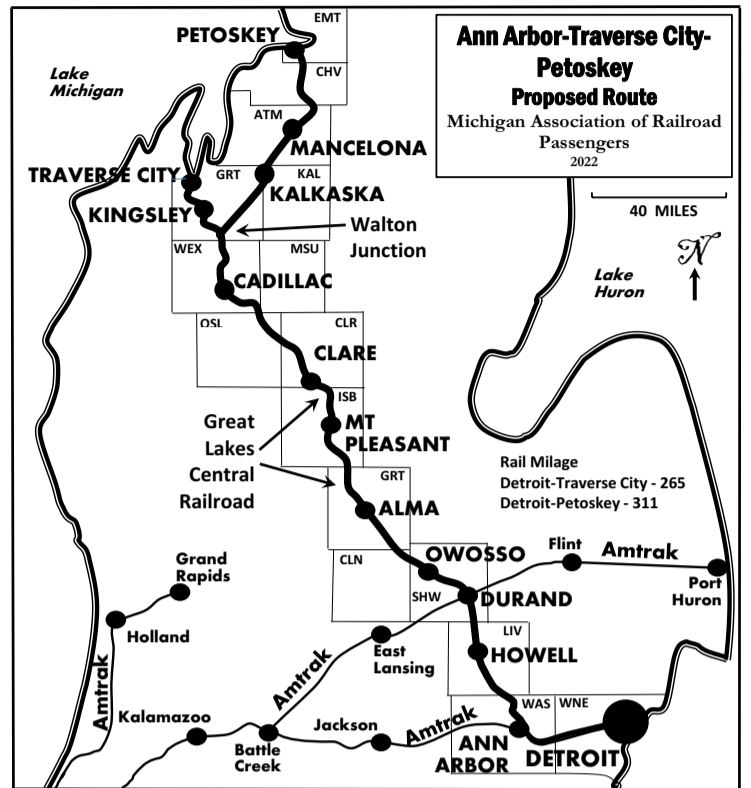
establishing new passenger rail service from the Detroit urban area north to Traverse City and Petoskey. A consultant, WSP, is working with The Groundwork Center, in conjunction with the Cadillac Wexford Transit Authority to evaluate the proposed rail operation. The proposal is to operate passenger trains from Detroit to Ann Arbor on the Amtrak corridor and then

north from Ann Arbor on the Great Lakes Central through Claire to Walton Junction. At Walton Junction, a section of the train would run to Traverse City and another section would run north through Kalkaska to Petoskey. From Detroit the rail route would be 265.0 miles to Traverse City and 310.7 miles to Petoskey. All but about 9 miles of the railroad is owned by the State of Michigan. The route is shown on the map at right.

The scope of work for WSP includes:

- Analysis of track conditions, cost of upgrades, and upgrade schedule
- Formulation of service options, such as frequency, schedule, etc.
- Estimation of market strength and ridership
- Estimation of economic costs and benefits
- Development of a management and governance structure
- Preparation of comparison case studies

Other presenters at the



meeting included Executive Committee member Eric Schertzing who shared slides of Michigan's Railroad Network, the Indian Trails Intercity Bus System, and updates on the FRA's Corridor Identification work in the state. MARP

Chairman Tom Fletcher also provided an update on Executive Committee Strategic Planning sessions that have taken place. (See article below.)

Hiking Trail Tunnel Built Under Amtrak Mainline



An important hiking trail link was nearer to completion on June 7th when the Barton-Bandemer pedestrian tunnel was installed under Amtrak's mainline in Ann Arbor. The tunnel will be part of a trail that will connect the Barton Nature Area and Bandemer Park in Ann Arbor near North Main Street, west of Michigan Highway 14 at the Huron River. According to CBS News, many pedestrians and bicyclists choose to illegally cross the railroad tracks at this location, showing that it is a highly desired route. When it opens in the fall, the tunnel will eliminate this temptation. It will also be one of the links in the Washtenaw County Border to Border trail. Using expedited 24-hour construction techniques, the railroad was closed for June 6 and 7, while the tunnel was installed. (City of Ann Arbor photo)

Hotel continued from page 1

and rooms at new hotels. Business owners have also been surprised by the number of people who stop by before or after attending Michigan Central special events, such as the monthly cultural series "Fridays at the Station."

But as the novelty starts to fade, the next big question for Corktown is whether Ford's new 30-acre Detroit innovation will eventually bring all 5,000 new permanent jobs that Ford once said it could.

MARP Executive Committee Activities

The MARP Executive Committee has been involved in several happenings over the last few months. The committee (the current members are listed on page two) has seen a few recent changes. Chair Todd Schultz has stepped down due to the responsibilities of his employment, which includes extensive international travel. Vice Chair Tom Fletcher has stepped up to become the new Chair and member Ted Wojcik has stepped up to become the new Vice Chair. We welcome these two talented members of MARP to their new positions of responsibility and wish them every success.

Under the leadership of Todd Schultz, the Executive Committee held two retreats to gather in person to discuss issues. The first was held in Jackson on Saturday, March 15, 2025, and the second in Durand on Saturday, May 3. Both allowed the committee members to get to know each other better and discuss issues related to setting goals for MARP. The goals involved matters such as growing the membership, involving more members in activities, raising funds for activities, and developing a vision of where MARP should be headed.

A facilitator, Jim Mitchel, was brought in to guide the all-day meeting on May 3 in Durand. Mr. Michel has over 40 years of experience in the railway industry and works with groups such as MARP to help strengthen their organizations and develop goals. Among the topics reviewed and dis-

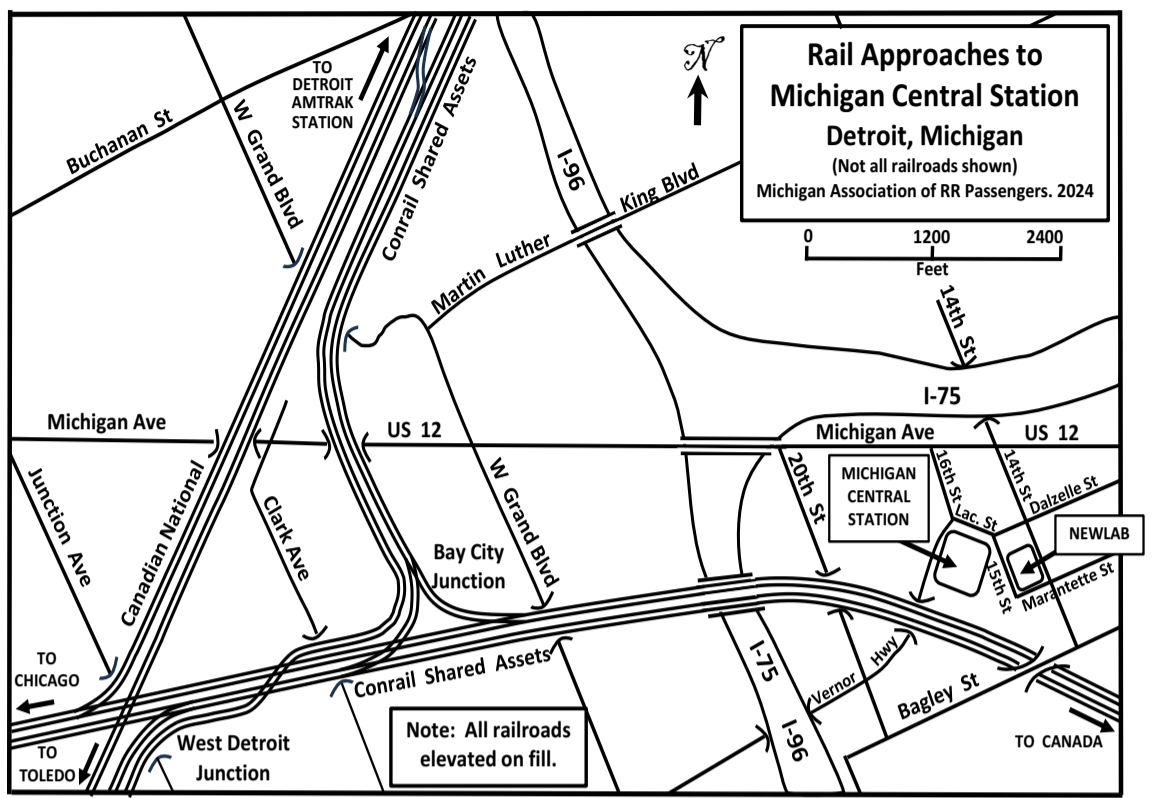
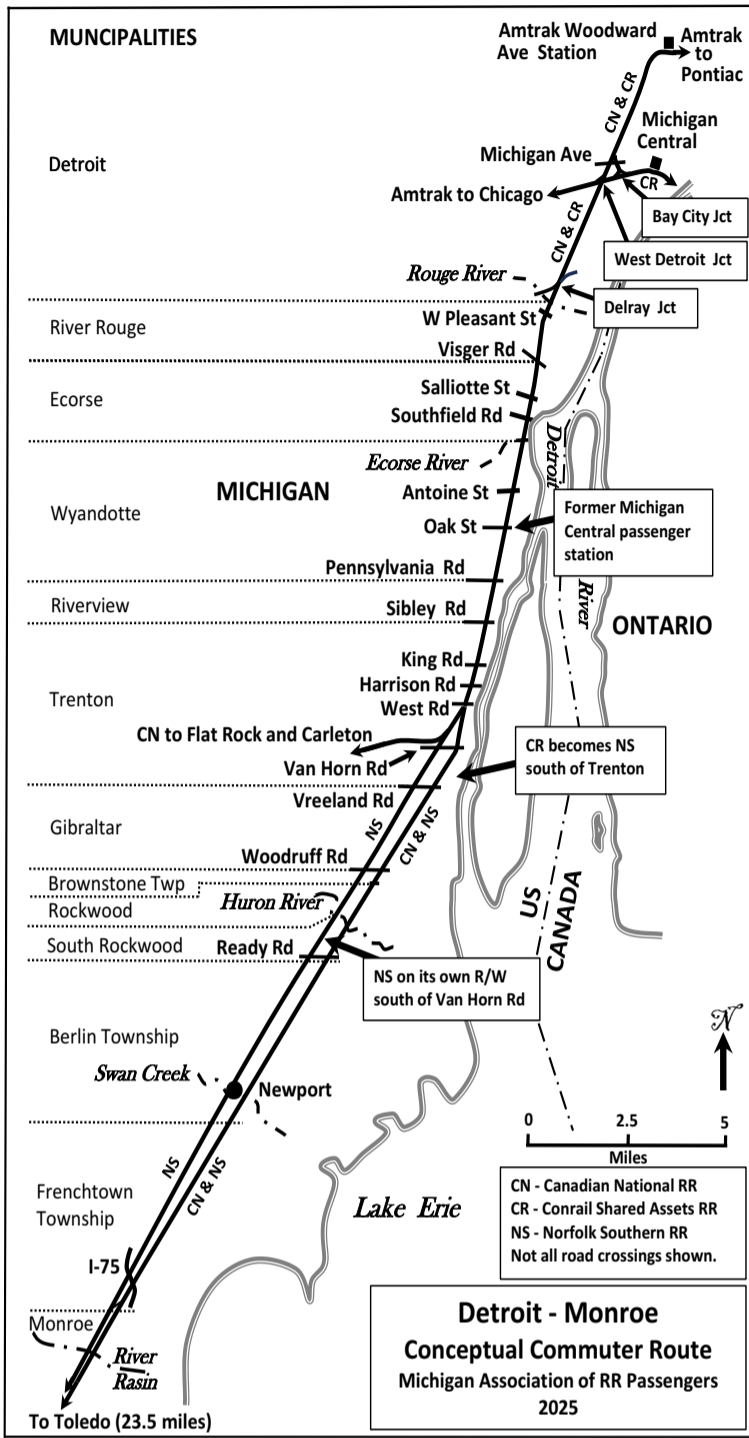
cussed were:

- The need for everyone to participate freely in the meeting
- The types of rail vehicles used in Michigan
- The track and signal systems in Michigan
- The process for funding Michigan trains
- Amtrak Michigan responsibilities
- Other passenger systems in Michigan
- Amtrak ridership in Michigan and trends
- Comparisons to passenger rail programs in California, Virginia, and North Carolina in terms of operations, funding, ridership, management, and ARP-type advocacy groups.
- Analysis of MARP SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
- Setting MARP Goals and Visions

At the end of the day, the meeting resulted in a tentative list of general goals for the Executive Committee to work toward. Everyone felt the meeting was very helpful and MARP members can look forward to further information on the work the Executive Committee is undertaking as a result of these retreats.

Possible Commuter Service Between Detroit and Monroe. This is the third article of a series.

A Detroit Area Commuter System



Base Source: Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Aerial Photography, and Google Mapping, 2024

the years the northern portion of these lines have become densely developed with heavy industrial developments served by rail. The railroads consist of a dense clutter of multiple mainlines, sidings, junctions, yards, yard leads, one-way operations, and many grade crossings. The primary railroads today are Canadian National (CN), Conrail Shared Assets (CR), and Norfolk Southern (NS). CSX is also involved in some locations.

Previous Passenger Service

MARP is unaware of any commuter service having been operated between Detroit and Monroe. However, intercity passenger trains of the Michigan

Central and New York Central once used the route from Detroit's Michigan Central Station (MCS) through Monroe to Toledo. The November 1920 Official Guide shows eight daily Michigan Central trains stopping at nine intermediate stations, the most prominent of which was Wyandotte and Monroe.

The August 1954 Official Guide shows that Monroe had two Michigan Central stations. The railroad had two parallel single track lines through Monroe about 800 feet apart that were operated in directional running fashion. Trains on the west track ran southbound and stopped at a station on Kentucky Avenue. Trains on the east track ran north-

bound and stopped at a station on East Chester Street. The stations were separated by four residential city blocks and both were located in the city south of the River Rasin bridges. Inspection of aerial photography failed to disclose any trace of these two stations.

The last of the intercity passenger trains ceased operating on this route before Amtrak took over in 1971. However, Amtrak has operated passenger trains between Detroit and Monroe. Starting in 1980 Amtrak ran the Lake Cities, a train providing Chicago-Detroit-Toledo service with connections in Toledo. The train ran on what is today Conrail and Norfolk Southern. It did not stop at Monroe, reportedly because

Continued on next page

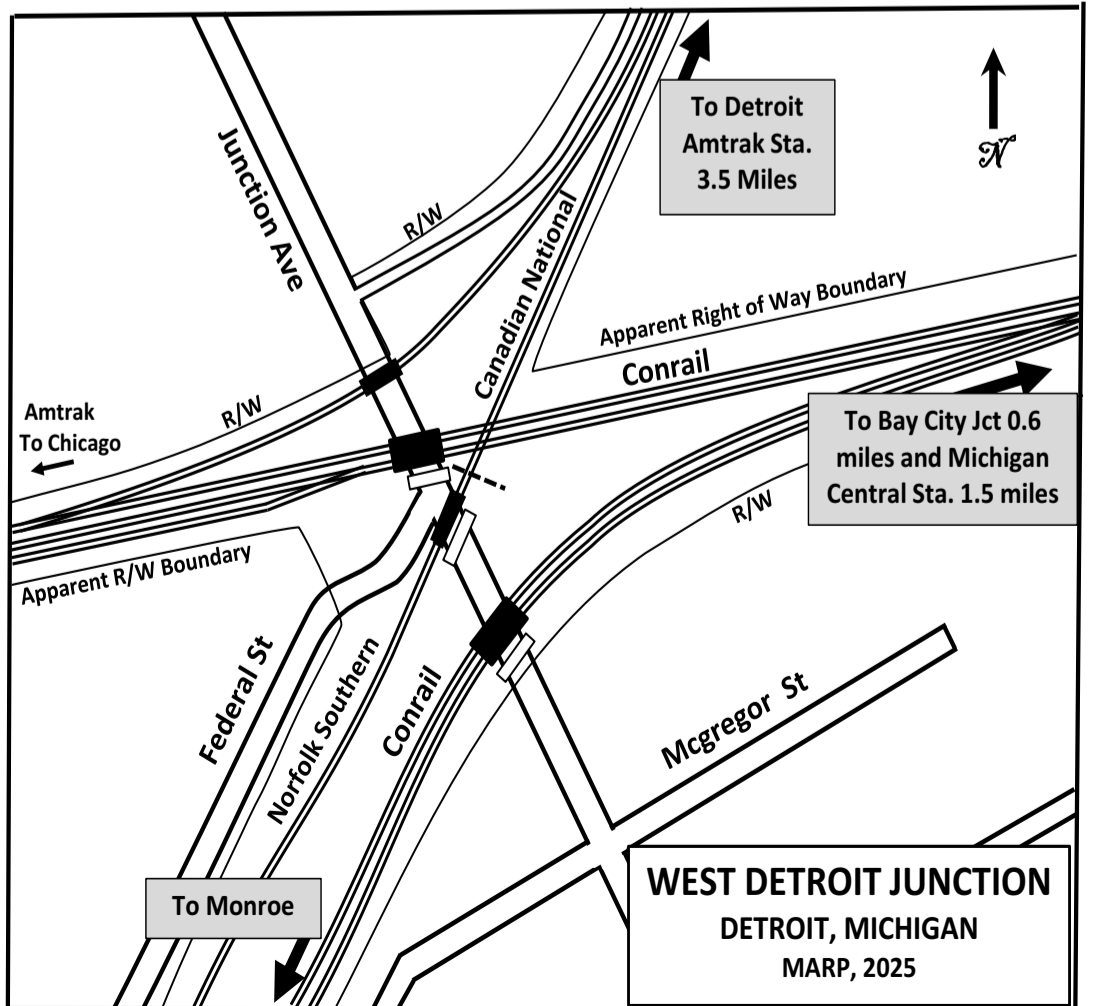
Introduction

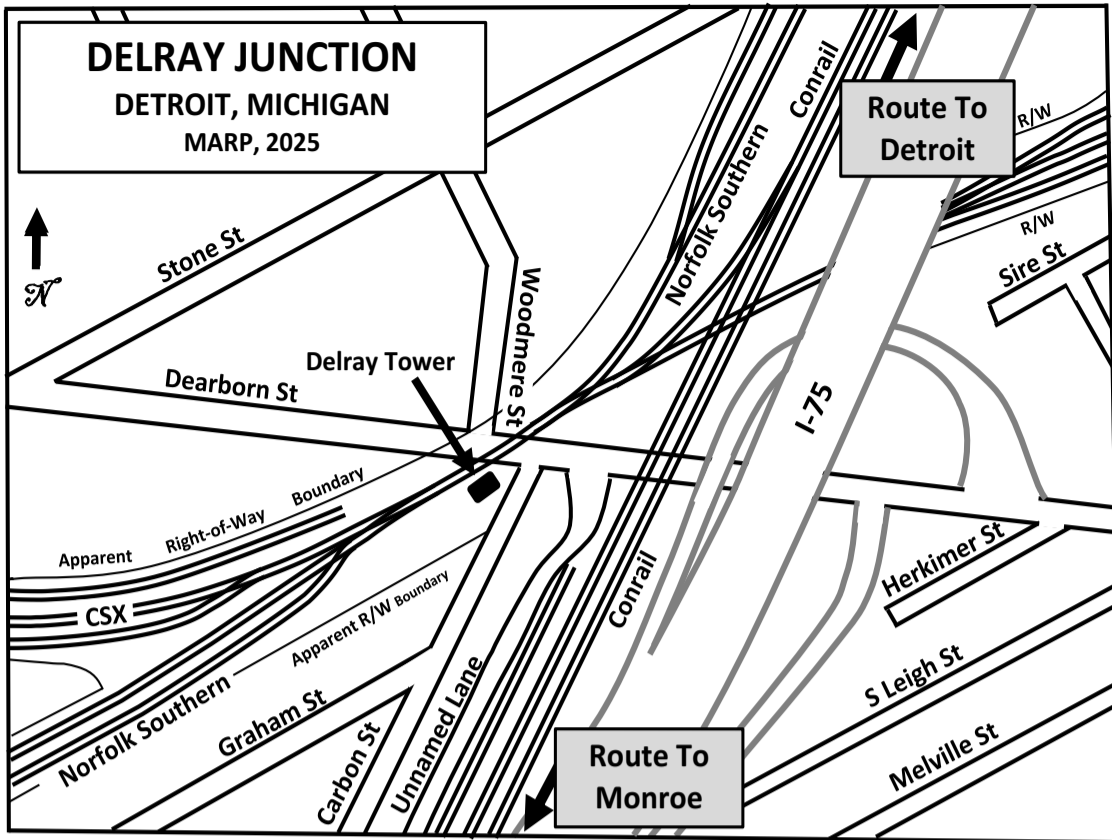
This is the third article on a possible rail commuter system for the Detroit area. This article explores a 33.8-mile Detroit-Monroe route to the south of Detroit. See map above.

Today the existing railroad lines south of Detroit show the influence of extensive over-building of parallel lines by competing nineteenth century railroad companies seeking routes from Detroit around the west end of Lake Erie to Toledo. Over

Features of Detroit - Monre Route

Miles from MCS	Feature	RR	Municipality
4.2	Woodward Amtrak Station	CN	Detroit
0.9	Bay City Junction	CR	Detroit
0.0	Michigan Central (MCS)	CR	Detroit
0.9	Bay City Junction	CR	Detroit
1.5	West Detroit Junction	CR	Detroit
3.9	Delray Junction	CR	Detroit
4.7	Cross Rouge River Bridge	CR	Enter River Rouge
6.4	Cross Visger Road	CR	Enter Ecorse
6.9	Cross Salliotte Road	CR	Ecorse, concept sketch
7.6	Cross Southfield Road	CR	Ecorse
8.4	Cross Ecorse River	CR	Enter Wyandotte
10.3	Cross Oak Street	CR	Former MC Depot
11.7	Cross Penvsylvania Road	CR	Enter Riverview
12.7	Cross Sibley Road	CR	Enter Trenton
14.8	Cross under West Rd overpass	CR	Trenton
17.0	Cross Vreeland Road	NS	Enter Gibraltar
19.6	Cross Woodruff Road	NS	Enter Brownstown Twp
19.9	Cross boundary	NS	Enter Rockwood
21.3	Cross Huron River	NS	Etr So Rockw, Monroe Cty
22.1	Cross boundary	NS	Enter Berlin Twp
26.3	Cross Swan Creek	NS	Pass through Newport
27.0	Cross boundary	NS	Enter Frenchtown Twp
32.2	Cross boundary	NS	Enter Monroe
33.8	End of Route	NS	Station site sou of R Rasin





Detroit Commuter System continued

the separation of the tracks in Monroe would have required two stations. The Lake Cities was discontinued south of Detroit in 2004.

At present, studies are underway that could return passenger trains to this route as part of long distance routes south from Detroit to Columbus and New Orleans.

Description of Conceptual Commuter Route

The conceptual route developed here is that the proposed commuter trains would follow Conrail/NS (instead of CN) to Monroe from either Michigan Central Station or the Amtrak Station at Woodward Avenue (with a short initial distance on CN).

From MCS, the route would proceed west 1.5 miles to West Detroit Junction. From

the Amtrak Woodward Avenue Station, the route would extend to the south on CN about 2.5 miles south of the station to a crossover to the parallel Conrail lines. The route then would follow Conrail for about 1.7 miles through the southwest leg of Bay City Junction and then west to West Detroit Junction. Perhaps in the future the NS line through West Detroit Junction could be improved to allow the loop through Bay City Junction to be eliminated. (See Table and sketch maps of the approaches to MCS and West Detroit Junction on the top right of page 4).

From West Detroit Junction, both routes are the same to Monroe. The route would turn south at West Detroit Junction and follow Conrail. Between West Detroit Junction and Delray Junction (see sketch

above) the rail lines (2.4 miles) are on a right-of-way about 200 feet wide. Both CN and Conrail are present for the most part as two parallel double track railroads, with Conrail on the east and CN on the west side of the right-of-way. The area on each side of the right-of-way is densely developed for industrial uses with many leads and sidings from the mainlines. At farther distances from the railroads, the area is primarily dense residential developments.

Immediately south of Delray Junction the railroads briefly combine into a single, double track line to cross the River Rouge on a Bascule lift bridge, leaving Detroit and entering River Rouge. Past the bridge for 3.7 miles the rail lines separate out again on the right-of-way in various double track pat-

terns as industrial facilities with freight leads and freight yards are passed. As before, industrial developments crowd along the immediate railroad right of way and dense residential development is present beyond the industrial/railroad corridor.

At Southfield Road the railroads evolve into a more uniform pattern of four parallel single tracks with Conrail on the center two tracks and CN on the outer two tracks. The right-of-way is about 200 to 300 feet wide. This general arrangement of four parallel tracks continues south for 7.7 miles to a point south of the West Road overpass in Trenton, passing through Ecorse, Wyandotte, Riverview, and Trenton. A double cross over of the Conrail tracks is located between the crossing of Harrison Avenue and West Road.

After crossing under the West Road overpass, two separate rights-of-way are formed. On the west, the west CN line and the west NS line diverge away on a separate right-of-way from the east NS and east CN lines. However, at a point south of the West Road overpass, the west CN line angles sharply away to the west toward Flat Rock and Carleton. For the remaining 18.5 miles to Monroe the west NS line is alone on its own right-of-way. On the east the parallel NS and CN lines (each on its own nearby right-of-way) are separated from the west NS line by as much as 2,200 feet in Gibraltar and Rockwood, but the separation gradually decreases to about 800 feet at Monroe. The lines cross

through various municipalities (see table on page 4) and pass from Wayne County into Monroe County at the crossing of the Huron River.

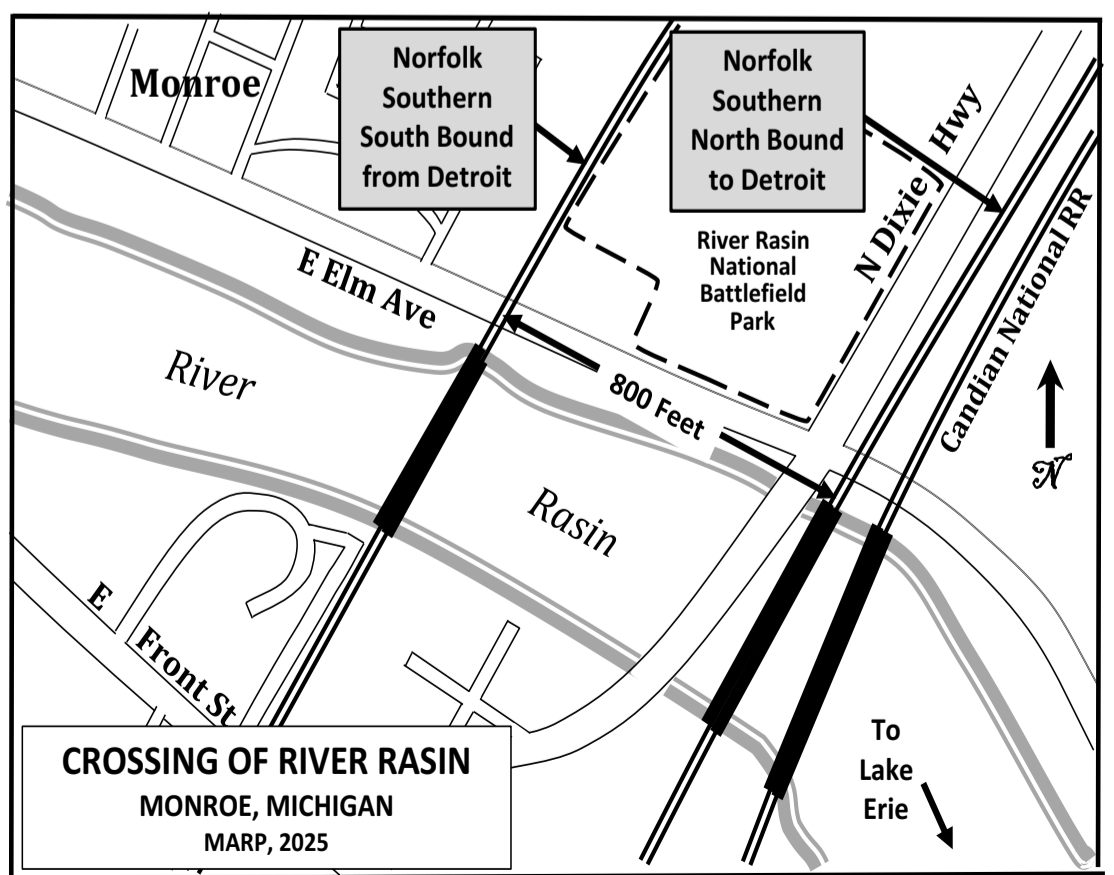
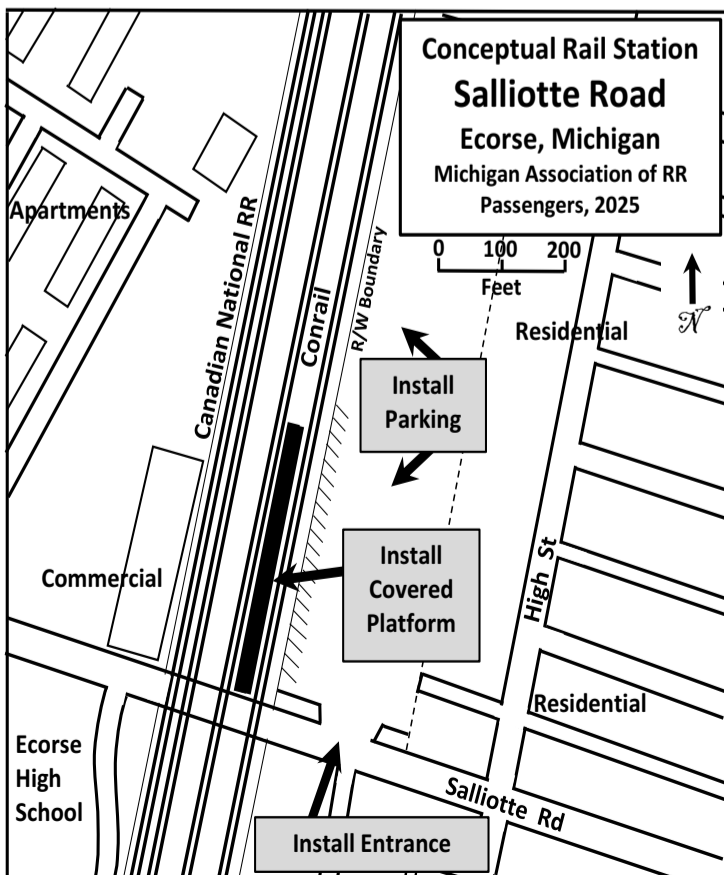
Conceptual Commuter Operations

The northbound commuter trains would follow the northbound NS line. The southbound commuter trains would follow the southbound NS line. A crossover would be installed in Monroe to bring the trains back to a common starting point on the northbound NS line.

For the portion of the route between Detroit and West Road, the Conrail lines are close enough together that commuter stations could be established at road crossings on land between (or over) the two lines so that the station could serve both the north and southbound trains.

For the portion of the route south of West Road where the rights-of-way are widely separated, perhaps two commuter stations could be established, such as at Newport and Rockwood. Boarding platforms could be established at these points on both the north and southbound NS lines with the understanding that the stations would offer only drop-off boarding ("kiss and ride") service. That is, the commuters would have to make arrangements that rely on family members or others to deliver them by automobile to the starting station and meet them at the return station. If this commuter operation proves successful, perhaps future arrangements could be made with NS to rebuild one of the NS

See *Detroit Commuter System* page 6



Detroit Commuter System . . . continued from page 5

lines into a bi-directional line for NS use with NS ceding the other line to public ownership for purely commuter use, thus avoiding the drop off “kiss and ride” limitations where the lines are widely separated.

Conceptual Station at Salliotte Road in Ecorse

A sketch (shown on page 5) shows a conceptual layout for a station at the Conrail crossing of Salliotte Road, 6.9 miles south of MCS. In this situation, a covered passenger platform would be built in the space between the two Conrail lines, which would allow for a platform about 45 feet wide. Parking for the commuters would be developed on the east side of the railroad right-of-way in what is now vacant land near residential developments. The double track CN line to the west on the right-of-way would not be affected. The right of-way is about 220 feet wide at the road crossing. A section of an old siding at on the east edge of the right-of-way could be removed to avoid interference with commuter parking.

Conceptual Station for Monroe Area

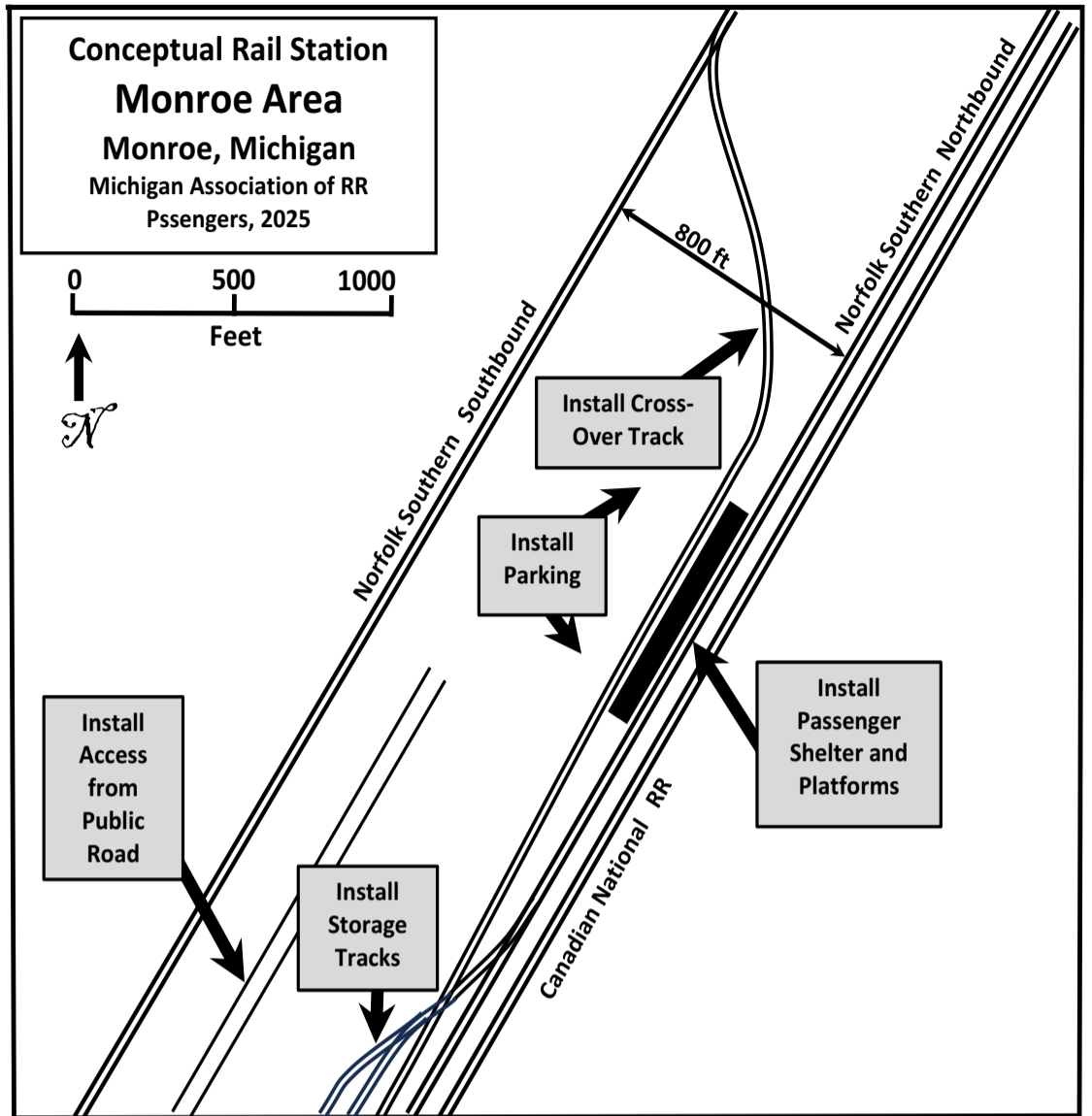
The sketch (at the bottom of page 5) shows the crossing of the River Rasin in Monroe. Although a site along East Elm Street would be an ideal location for a station, the area is a historical site. Therefore, a station site for Monroe would have to be located, preferably within Monroe north or south of the River Rasin where the parallel NS tracks

are about 800 feet apart.

A conceptual site layout for a station is shown in the sketch at right. An exact location is not suggested due to local constraints, such as the presence of wetlands, stream crossings, and conflicting land uses. However, the conceptualized station would establish a boarding platform on the west side of the northbound NS track for the start of an assumed morning commute into Detroit. The return afternoon trains would use a cross-over track to deliver the commuters from the southbound NS line back to the boarding platform where they started their commute in the morning. It is assumed that the trains would be operated in a push-pull mode, which would eliminate the need for turning the trains around at Monroe. Stub tracks would be needed south of the boarding area to allow the trains to be stored and serviced. This layout would minimize interference with NS traffic to brief periods of morning boarding. The parallel CN rail line should not be affected.

Conclusion

Although the Detroit-Monroe route has many complicated issues to resolve, the route appears able to support at least a limited commuter operation if funding and political will can be marshalled. Preliminary studies would be needed to determine the market for a rail commuter service on a route never having had commuter service. (MARP thanks Ken Borg for reviewing the existing rail system sketches for this article.)



Former Michigan Central Station in Wyandotte on Oak Street. This station is located between the north and south bound Conrail tracks, which are about 125 feet apart at this location. Both tracks could be served by this station.

Amtrak to Start New Orleans-Mobile Service

Amtrak reports that on Monday August 18 the long awaited new train will begin running between New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama. The new train, the Mardi Gras, will run twice a day in each direction on the 135-mile route. In addition to New Orleans and Mobile, the trains will also serve Pascagoula, Biloxi, Gulfport, and Bay Saint Louis in Mississippi. Amtrak plans to celebrate the start of service with a special Inaugural Train on Saturday, August 16, for public officials and others to thank them for working to bring Amtrak service back to

the region. A schedule and other details will be released later this month.

The new state-sponsored train will offer convenient morning and evening departures from both end point cities – the first opportunity to travel by train on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in nearly 20 years,” said Amtrak President Roger Harris. “Guests can plan travel for football trips this fall, for November and December holiday travel – and even Mardi Gras Season next year.”

See *New Orleans* on page 7



The Biloxi platform will see passengers again. Most of the stations along this route were preserved by the communities after the demise of Amtrak service in 2005 because they believed that Amtrak would return. (Nikki Nagaski/Wikipedia photo)

The Heartland Flyer is Saved for Another Year

Regional Agency Steps Up to Save Train

Eric E. Garcia, writing in the *Fort Worth Report* on July 10, reports that the North Central Texas Council of Governments will provide a grant of \$3.5 million to keep the Heartland Flier operating until October of 2026. The Fort Worth-Oklahoma City train would have stopped at the end of September because the Texas Legislature failed to match the amount Oklahoma provides for the train. The Texas Department of Transportation had recommended funding. Amtrak said the Flyer served more than 81,000 passengers and generated \$2.2 million in ticket revenue in 2024.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments is a 16-county agency that distributes funding for road, rail, and air quality improvements. The Council will seek reimbursement from the State of Texas for the money used to operate the train. It will also launch a campaign to improve ridership which should reduce the need for a subsidy. The Council previously provided a small grant to keep the train running from June to the end of September. The funding comes from allocations the Council receives from regional toll revenues.

Michael Morris, transportation director for the Council, said "it's critical to step in" and provide local funding since the federal government would likely seek reim-

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New Orleans from page 6

Adult coach fares end-to-end start at \$15 each way, less for shorter distances. There are everyday discounts for children ages 2-12, students, seniors, veterans, military personnel and families, small groups, large groups, and others.

At New Orleans, Amtrak Mardi Gras passengers will have same-day connections in both directions daily to Amtrak's City of New Orleans to Chicago via Jackson and Memphis. There will be next-day connections in New Orleans to Amtrak's Southern Crescent trains to and from New York, via Atlanta, and to Amtrak's Sunset Limited trains to and from Los Angeles via Tucson, San Antonio, and Houston.

"The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) is incredibly proud and excited that the Amtrak Mardi Gras Service is starting so soon after decades of work by all our partners who have played indispensable roles in today's announcement," said SRC Chairman Knox Ross.

"This new Gulf Coast passenger service wouldn't be possible without the leadership of federal, state, and local partners," said Joe Hinrichs, President and

CEO of CSX. "The collective effort reflects our ongoing focus on strengthening the communities that are part of our rail network and our workforce." This fine support by CSX is especially notable, because opposition to the train by the former CSX President was an important reason that the train was stalled for so long.

"We're absolutely thrilled to welcome Amtrak back to Mobile," said Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, who spoke at a Government Plaza news conference where the start date, schedule and fares were first announced. News conferences were also held at all the other stops on the route

Amtrak is operating this service under contracts with the states of Louisiana and Mississippi, with financial support by the City of Mobile, and with the long-time backing of the SRC. Grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation support operating expenses for this route and are funding improvements for freight and Amtrak trains. Including this new service, Amtrak will now operate 31 state-sponsored routes for 23 state and agency partners in 20 states.

SHORT LINES

On June 16 Amtrak added a 12th daily round trip to the Pacific Surfliner route

between Los Angeles and San Diego. According to *Progressive Railroading*, the new southbound train will depart Los Angeles at 4:10 pm and the new northbound train will depart San Diego at 8:10 pm. The goal is to restore the pre-pandemic service levels of 13 daily round trips between Los Angeles and San Diego. Meanwhile work continues to stabilize the tracks and hillside in the San Clemente area.....JetBlue and Brightline have announced a partnership to offer combined air and rail ticketing in Florida. *Ellis on the Rails* reports that the airline's customers are now able to directly book a single ticket on the JetBlue website for an itinerary that includes a Brightline train. Brightline's station at Orlando International Airport provides service to and from Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and other communities. *Ellis* reports that the railroad's frequent service throughout the day keeps waits to a minimum, but the Orlando rail station can be a long hike from some airport gates.....A broken wheel disc was the cause of a Swiss derailment of a cargo train in the Gotthard Base Tunnel on August 10 2023.

IRJ reported that the damage resulted in having to close the world's longest (35.47 miles) and deepest (8,040 feet) railway tunnel for almost 13-months. The Swiss Transportation Safety Investigation Board (SUST) reported that on June 2, 2024, a cargo train consisting of two locomotives and 30 wagons, derailed 10km into the western bore of the tunnel. A fragment of the right wheel disc of the first axle of the 11th wagon broke off causing the axle to derail. The train continued for approximately 7 km to the Faido multi-function station where the switch drives on a turnout were destroyed. The front section of the train passed through the turnout, but the rear section derailed and struck the tunnel cross wall. SUST says the damage was "considerable,"..... The Norfolk Southern board elected former Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson as NS Board chair on June 12, 2025. According to *Progressive Railroading* on June 1, Anderson joined the NS Board in May 2024. He is the former CEO and executive chairman of Delta Airlines, former president of Optum Health, former CEO of Northwest Airlines and, most recently, president and CEO of Amtrak. NS said that Anderson has contributed deep, experience-based business insight and a collaborative style that has helped drive NS forward.....

Amtrak and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) have opened a new fishing pier at Eagle Landing State Park in Haddam, CT. According to *Progressive Railroading* on April 28, Amtrak built the pier, which is owned by DEEP. This will provide fishing opportunities at an alternative location while the Ferry Landing Pier/Boardwalk in Old Lyme is closed to make way for Amtrak's construction of the new Connecticut River Lift Bridge to replace the existing 118-year-old bridge. Once the new bridge is in service, Amtrak will build a new 1,000-foot-long observation deck and stairway at Ferry Landing State Park.....

Extending the Amtrak Downeaster service northward to Bangor and Orono could generate \$62 million in annual economic benefits according to a report released on May 17, 2025. Research by the Rail Passengers Association with support from the Maine Rail Group and Train Riders Northeast, reveals that both served communities and unserved communities would see gains from improved mobility, higher visitor spending, new job creation, and reduced vehicle traffic. The proposed twice-daily extension would bring new service to Lewiston, Winthrop, Waterville, Pittsfield,

Bangor, and Orono. The project would attract more than 260,000 new rail riders and produce \$15.5 million in new visitor and traveler spending.....Transit ridership continues a post-COVID rebound according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) as reported in *Progressive Railroading* on May 16, 2025. Transit agencies delivered 7.7 billion passenger trips in 2024, or 491 million more than in 2023. U.S. transit-rail ridership has rebounded to 72% of pre-pandemic ridership levels, while ridership across all transit services reached 85% of 2019 levels, Ridership continues to rebound despite in-office work attendance on average at only 52%, said APTA President and CEO Paul Skoutelas....

.....Canadian National has budgeted \$175 million for 2025 capital projects in Michigan, Minnesota and Tennessee, for track maintenance and strategic infrastructure projects. *Progressive Railroading* reported on June 17, 2025 that CN will spend \$85 million to build intermodal capacity and improve operations at its Lansing, Battle Creek and Flint rail yards. CN operates 812 railroad route miles in Michigan and in 2024 spent \$79 million in the state, including a project to complete its transload facility in Flat Rock A new study of the proposed high-speed rail line linking Dallas and Houston could generate a \$5 billion annual boost to the Dallas County economy between 2029 and 2050. Theo Burman, reporting in *Newsweek Live*, said that the study by the Boston Consulting Group was commissioned by the City of Dallas. The analysis offers strong support for proponents of the Dallas-Houston high-speed rail project. The trains could cover the 230-mile journey in around 90 minutes, attract between 3 million and 6.5 million riders during its first full year (predicted to be 2035), and could support 28,300 new jobs. This is generally in line with recent statements from Texas Central. The U.S. DOT recently cancelled a \$63.9 million grant awarded to Amtrak by the Biden administration to help development of the train..... The San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Board voted to advance the Link 21 Program as a new transbay passenger train crossing between Oakland and San Francisco. According to BART, Link 21 is to be a standard-gauge rail project in contrast to BART's unique broad-gauge tracks. Link 21 is part of the California State Rail Plan, a series of projects to be advanced by the state for federal funding. Standard-gauge will improve regional rail connections and align the project with ongoing rail investments across California..... The Hudson River rail tunnel project continues to move forward in the sweltering summer heat of 2025. According to Larry Higgs, writing in *Mass Transit* on July 10, an army of 11,200 construction workers spread across five locations on ten mega projects have battled hot weather, freezing cold winters, the mighty Hudson River, a dense urban area, and the hard rock of the soaring Palisades in North Bergen as they build the \$16 billion Gateway tunnel. "When it's done, we'll have four good-as-new tubes to serve for the next 100 years," said Steve Sigmund, Gateway Development Commission spokesperson. "Ten mega projects will be made into one.".....Construction Begins on the Northlander's Timmins-Porcupine Station. *Railway Age* reported on July 15 that The Government of Ontario has awarded a contract to EllisDon for the construction of the Timmins-Porcupine Station. This is an affirmative statement that Ontario is serious about bringing Northlander passenger rail service back between Timmins and Toronto. Timmins is in the far north and the Northlander will provide service northbound from Toronto and southbound from Timmins seven days a week.

Heartland Flyer

from page 7

bursement of decades-old infrastructure work if the train ceases operation. I can't imagine that happening under my watch," Morris said. The Council said in a report that, "This item is an emergency funding commitment to extend service long enough to develop a second-year funding program..."

A joint letter from Fort Worth Mayor Mattie Parker, Gainesville Mayor Tommy Moore and Denton County Judge Andy Eads said the Heartland Flyer has "been key to our regional success as a global destination and has been central to our tourism industry, business community, and thriving economy."

The Flyer, launched as a transportation option in 1999, has increasingly gained more riders to pro-



The Heartland Flyer at Fort Worth Central Station in April 2022. (David Wilson, Flickr, via Creative Commons)

vide about \$5.3 million in direct economic benefits and an estimated \$23.7 million in overall economic activity, according to Amtrak. That overall amount has increased since a 2013 Texas A&M study cited an \$18 million economic impact to Fort Worth, Oklahoma City, and smaller towns along the 206-mile route.

Amtrak Proposing an Extension to Long Island

Several reports reaching MARP indicate that Amtrak has serious plans to extend several Northeast Corridor Regional Trains from Penn Station to Long Island. The trains would pass through Jamacia and Hicksville, and terminate at Ronkonkoma about 49.6 miles east of Penn Station on the Greenspoint Trunk Line. This would remove the need to change trains at Penn Station and bring a one-seat ride to the millions of people on the island to mainland cities such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington.

At present three daily round trip trains are planned for extension at off-peak hours to avoid interference with the intensive commuter operations on the line. The run between Washington and Ronkonkoma would take about five hours. Amtrak's existing electric locomotives apparently can operate on the Lond Island

Railroad electrical system without difficult modifications.

Ellis on the Rails says that the Ronkonkoma extension was one of many expansion projects included in Amtrak's Connect US plan, released in 2021. Since the service would operate over existing passenger tracks with an 80 mph speed limit in most locations, capital expenditures would be minimal. The proposed extension is very similar to the extensions at the south end of the Northeast Corridor where Regional Trains have been successfully extended into Virginia. Future trains from Long Island could go from Ronkonkoma to Albany or Boston. And, for those who believe that the solution to overcrowding at Penn Station is more run through trains, converting these Regional Trains to run through operations should help the overcrowding.

AMTRAK FY 2024 Ridership				
Train Name	Route	FY 2024	FY 2023	Pct Chg
Northeast Corridor				
Acela	Washington-Boston	3,238,130	2,959,384	9.4
Regionals	Washington-Boston	10,814,407	9,165,715	18.0
Special NEC Trains		0	0	0.0
Sub-Total		14,052,537	12,125,099	15.9
State Supported Trains				
Northeast Routes				
Downeaster	Boston-Brunswick	591,948	542,639	9.1
Empire Service	New York-Albany	1,356,711	1,244,276	9.0
Empire Service	Albany-Buffalo-Toronto	506,608	452,713	11.9
Adirondack	New York-Montreal	71,012	26,892	164.1
Ethan Allen	New York-Burlington	88,981	86,638	2.7
Berkshire Flier	New York-Pittsfield	826	1,210	-31.7
Vermont	Washington-St Albans	109,136	97,259	12.2
Valley Flier	N Hav-Spnfld-Greenfield	577,135	441,943	30.6
Keystone	New York-Harrisburg	1,269,005	1,115,779	13.7
Pennsylvanian	New York-Pittsburgh	233,942	192,724	21.4
Southern Routes				
Virginia Service	Washington-Newpt News	373,078	356,309	4.7
Virginia Service	Washington-Norfolk	507,812	480,047	5.8
Virginia Service	Washington-Richmond	148,809	135,257	10.0
Virginia Service	Washington-Roanoke	334,469	329,163	1.6
Carolinian	New York-Charlotte	347,360	315,781	10.0
Piedmont	New York-Charlotte	360,655	289,955	24.4
Heartland Flier	Oklahoma City-Ft Worth	80,371	72,357	11.0
Midwest				
Wolverine	Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac	425,832	420,569	1.3
Blue Water	Chicago-Port Huron	174,862	168,850	3.6
Pere Marquette	Chicago-Grand Rapids	94,381	85,845	9.9
Hiawatha	Chicago-Milwaukee	665,279	636,856	4.5
Lincoln Service	Chicago-St. Louis	586,170	523,302	12.0
Illini/Saluki	Chicago-Carbondale	296,616	270,017	9.9
Illinois Z/Carl Sand	Chicago-Quincy	141,722	114,521	23.8
Missouri River Run	St. Louis-Kansas City	187,750	153,183	22.6
Borealis	Chicago-St Paul	88,444	0	0.0
Northwest				
Cascades	Vancouver-Sea-Eugene	941,727	669,822	40.6
California				
Pacific Surfliner	San Diego-SL Obispo	1,984,069	1,517,426	30.8
Capitol Corridor	Sacramento-San Jose	1,032,632	921,112	12.1
San Joaquin	Oakland-Bakersfield	909,551	847,366	7.3
Buses and Special Trains		Not Included	Not Included	
Sub-Total		14,486,891	12,509,833	15.8
Long Distance Trains				
Southeast Routes				
Silver Star	New York-Columb-Miami	388,122	351,736	10.3
Silver Meteor	New York-Chas-Miami	298,328	283,934	5.1
Palmetto	New York-Savannah	357,196	318,328	12.2
Auto Train	Lorton-Winter Park	266,586	283,646	-6.0
City of New Orleans	Chicago-New Orleans	241,768	233,876	3.4
Crescent	New York-New Orleans	303,098	271,522	11.6
Central Routes				
Cardinal	Chicago-Cincin-Chicago	92,962	82,705	12.4
Capitol Limited	Chicago-Washington	163,136	126,309	29.2
Lake Shore Limited	Chicago-NYork/Boston	398,420	351,049	13.5
Empire Builder	Chicago-Sea/Portland	387,953	348,989	11.2
California Zepher	Chicago-Denver-Emville	351,155	328,626	6.9
Southwest Routes				
Southwest Chief	Los Angeles-Chicago	261,485	253,840	3.0
Coast Starlight	Los Angeles-Seattle	359,432	338,049	6.3
Texas Eagle	Los Angeles-Chicago	325,709	294,442	10.6
Sunset Limited	Los Angeles-N Orleans	76,937	77,288	-0.5
Sub-Total		4,272,287	3,944,338	8.3
Total		32,811,715	28,579,270	14.8

Source: Amtrak