



# 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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### 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

**10 October** – Mt. Pleasant

**November** – Former GTW Depot, Lansing (tentative)

**December** – no member meeting

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

## OPERATION LIFESAVER Making a Difference

One of the most compelling presentations at the recent Michigan Rail Conference was given by Curtis Stewart who is the education supervisor for **Michigan Operation Lifesaver**.

Operation Lifesaver has been working nationwide since 1972 to reduce injuries and fatalities around rail facilities. The new **See Tracks? Think Trains** national campaign is aimed at changing people's behavior around railroad tracks and crossings.

Car-train crashes occur almost weekly in Michigan, but are almost entirely preventable. Educating the public to be posted prominently to call the emergency current priority. incidents where time move a stalled vehicle call to the number



New signs required to at all grade crossings these incidents. look for these signs and number listed there is a Stewart knows of was wasted trying to off the tracks when a listed on the nearby sign would have warned an approaching train of the problem.

Michigan Operation Lifesaver's network of authorized volunteers offer free rail safety programs in school classrooms, to driver education students, community service and civic groups, professional bus, truck and emergency first responder drivers and others. If you have a group that would benefit from this program, click **HERE** to request more information.

Michigan Operation Lifesaver is always looking for people interested in becoming volunteer presenters. The next class will be held at Durand Union Station on 16 October, 9am - 3pm. More information and an application form are available on the [website](#). Or contact Michigan State Coordinator Sam Crowl [samcrowl@comcast.net](mailto:samcrowl@comcast.net) 248-823-7037.



**42<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Saturday, September 19**  
**10:00 am – 2:00 pm**  
**Durand Union Station**  
200 Railroad Street  
Durand, MI 48439

This year's keynote speaker is Jim Mathews, President and CEO of the National Association of Railroad Passengers. Other speakers will focus on prospects for expansion of Michigan passenger train service. Registration closes Sep 9. **CLICK HERE** for details. Or email [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com).

## 2015 Annual Michigan Rail Conference

by John Guidinger

The Third Annual Michigan Rail Conference was held at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids on August 19 and 20, 2015. The first day consisted of an afternoon tour of several rail freight facilities in the Grand Rapids area and the new Amtrak Station. The second day involved a series of panel discussions about rail freight and passenger issues. A total of 160 people registered for the conference and 16 businesses and other groups signed up as sponsors.

Following two previous rail conferences in Lansing and Detroit, the strong response to the Third Conference greatly pleased the primary sponsors, Michigan Technological University's Rail Transportation Program and MDOT. Other major sponsors included the NU Rail Center at the University of Illinois, Amtrak, Norfolk Southern, CSX Transportation, Lake State Railway, Keolis, and Quandel Consultants.

The tour on August 19<sup>th</sup> drew over 70 participants, requiring a second bus to accommodate the number of tour-goers. Five rail sites were visited in the Grand Rapids area. First was the Fulton Street Grade Crossing project where the City of Grand Rapids and MDOT are working to consolidate several local rail lines by building a new short interconnection which will serve a PADNOS scrapyards and allow the removal of several lightly used grade crossings in local roads.

The second tour site was the Steel-Pro Distribution Center where rolled sheet steel is received by rail and stored for distribution to area manufacturers. The Steel-Pro warehouse is located in the old shop buildings of the Pere Marquette Railroad, which were unused for many years and slated for demolition. Following this, the tour visited the new Grand Rapids passenger station on Century Street SW, which

opened last year and is named after former congressman Vernon J. Ehlers. The tour also passed the nearby former Amtrak Station on Wealthy Street, which is no longer used. The next stop on the tour was a CSX rail crossing of Turner Avenue, where MDOT's Local Crossing Project Manager explained the grade crossing inventory system and the newly required signage at railroad grade crossings. This grade crossing was located near the final tour stop, Grand Elk Railroad's Turner Yard transloading facility, where the tour observed frac sand being unloaded from trucks and reloaded into rail hopper cars for shipment to Pennsylvania and the eastern US. Fracking sand has become a major rail commodity in the Grand Rapids area.

The second day of the conference involved a series of plenary panel discussions covering topics such as railroad challenges and opportunities, railroad-highway grade crossings, shippers concerns, passenger rail updates, trends in rolling stock, and rail advocacy groups.

Among the most interesting discussions was the upbeat talk by Joe McAndrew, Policy Director at **Transportation for America**. Mr. McAndrew described how **commuter and intercity rail** must greatly expand to respond to the demands of young people of the millennial generation. Millennials follow lifestyles, not jobs and they choose a place to live before finding a job. They are moving away from communities completely reliant on automobile travel and moving into walkable cities where modern passenger rail and bus transportation are available.

Another very interesting talk was given by Larry Salci, a transportation consultant with over 40 years in the passenger rail industry, including as President and CEO of the St. Louis Metro, President of Bombardier Corp, President of Budd Transit Group, and General Manager of SEMTA in Detroit. Mr. Salci reviewed the progress in building the new locomotives and cars jointly ordered from Siemens and Nippon Sharyo by California, Illinois, Michigan, and Missouri for Amtrak intercity rail routes.



Former FRA Administrator, Joe Szabo, gave the key note address stressing the need for greater regional cooperation among the Midwestern states in order to solidify and coordinate efforts to improve and expand passenger and freight rail operations in the region. He also called for a predictable, dedicated funding source to modernize rail infrastructure and build a true multi-modal transportation system for the future.

*(CONFERENCE continues on page 4)*

## Mark Your Calendar MARP October Meeting

A special program is planned for the MARP membership meeting in October as we catch the excitement being generated around the idea of once again connecting Traverse City by rail to the southeastern part of our state. Addressing the question "Passengers on the Old Annie Line?" will be Jim Bruckbauer who has taken the lead on this initiative for the **Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities** located in Traverse City. He will be joined by Erin Strang of the **Central Michigan University Research Corporation** which sees the **A2TC rail** project as an asset to this university community. The meeting will take place from 10 am to noon on Saturday, October 10, at the CMU Research Corporation, 2625 Denison Drive, Mt. Pleasant.

## Other Upcoming Events

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

**Saturday, September 19, Durand Union Station**

[CLICK HERE](#) for details.

### NARP Fall 2015 Council & Membership Meeting

**Friday, October 16, 2015 - Sunday, October 18, 2015**

**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, October 17**

**Lansing Community College, West Campus, Lansing**

Includes a keynote by Larry Baggerly "New York Central Revisited - in Detroit" and a presentation by Kevin Keefe "Thoroughbreds of the Pere Marquette". Program and registration information at [MichiganRailroadHistory.org](http://MichiganRailroadHistory.org)



## Coast-to-Coast Passenger Rail Study Round 3 Public Meetings Will Engage Students on Michigan Campuses

With 2 rounds of public engagement meetings under its belt, the **Michigan By Rail** team will seek to engage students at five Michigan campuses over the next two months. Public feedback collected at these sessions will help guide decisions about re-connecting Detroit-Lansing-Grand Rapids-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 5 localities, please contact John at [john.langdon@sbcglobal.net](mailto:john.langdon@sbcglobal.net) or 636-218-9009.

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)

Wednesday September 30 11 am - 1 pm	<b>Grand Valley State University</b> Kirkhof Center Lot, S Campus Drive Allendale, MI 49401 FREE PIZZA!
Monday October 19 11 am - 1 pm	<b>Michigan State University</b> In collaboration with MSU Office of Sustainability / Be Spartan Green Brody Hall, Tables near the cafeteria 241 Brody Service Rd, East Lansing ( <a href="#">map</a> ) FREE SNACKS & SWAG!
October TBD	<b>Hope College</b> Details to follow
October TBD	<b>University of Michigan</b> Details to follow
October TBD	<b>Wayne State University</b> Details to follow

**Thank you to all who have  
recently paid their dues!**

**If you are not among that group**

**CLICK HERE NOW  
TO RENEW ONLINE**

~ ~ ~

**New members are invited  
to use this convenient way  
to become part of a great  
organization!**

**QUESTIONS?**

**e-mail us at [marprail@yahoo.com](mailto:marprail@yahoo.com)**



## View from elsewhere . . .

"Camping along the river and hearing the train on the other side of the river — it's such a friendly sound. Sometimes . . . I would see the train and it was like a ghost coming through at night."

-- Don Erdeljac, reflecting on experiences on the bike trail that parallels Amtrak's route in Pennsylvania. Don and 5 friends boarded the Capitol Limited Train 30 in Pittsburgh for an August 28 test of roll-on bikes. Their 95 minute train ride ended at Connellsville, where the 6 got on their bikes to ride the **Great Allegheny Passage** trail back to Pittsburgh. Read more [HERE](#).

**An article** about the inaugural run of the new *Hoosier State* on August 2 cites Ed Ellis, President of Iowa Pacific Holdings which manages the train, as believing the line will be a success and a model for future public-private partnerships that will inevitably save taxpayers money through more efficient operation. Doug Yerkeson writes in the September issue of **All Aboard Indiana** about the trip he and his son Nathan took to a Cubs game during that first week of operation. Hunter Gatlin boarded the train in Lafayette and "experienced fantastic service into Chicago." Watch his [video](#) here.



## Bikes on the Bluewater

As I began the first leg of a trip to Arizona on August 2, I was excited to see two young people with bicycles waiting at the Kalamazoo station to board the *Blue Water*. Ildemaro and Canmanie Ponnambalam are from Waterloo, Ontario, and had crossed the border to enjoy biking trails in eastern Michigan before traveling on to Chicago to visit friends. They were thrilled to find they could roll their bikes onto the train and thankful for the chance to nap and relax on the train. ~ by Kay Chase

(**CONFERENCE** continued from page 2)

The cars will be bi-level coaches following on the design of the very well received "California" cars that are used on many routes in California. The order was recently increased from 130 to 175 cars, of which 122 will be for Midwestern rail routes.

Former Federal Railroad Administrator, Joe Szabo, provided an excellent keynote talk during lunch. He spoke about the importance of the growing Chicago economic hub, which is expanding into west Michigan, and the need for mode-neutral funding of transportation needs. Mr. Szabo is currently Executive Director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, one of the largest MPOs in the country.

Among the companies displaying their services and products were several well know design and manufacturing companies including Keolis, Quandel Consultants, Bergman Associates, HNTB, and Siemens.

At the reception following the last presentation, there was complete agreement that the 2015 Third Annual Rail Conference was the most successful yet and served to further professionalize rail passenger and freight management. Everyone looks forward to the Fourth Annual Conference in 2016, which will be held on August 17 and 18 at Northern Michigan University in Marquette. Conference materials are available on Mi-Tech's [High Speed Rail Learning System](#).

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**CLICK HERE**

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



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