

# News Release



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Amtrak Contact: Marc Magliari  
312 544.5390  
MDOT Contact: Janet Foran  
517 335.7176

## AMTRAK SERVICE IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN MICHIGAN DELAYED DUE TO NORFOLK SOUTHERN DECISION Railroad posts drastic speed restrictions while improvements are pending

CHICAGO – Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) has ordered passenger trains to slow to 25-to-30 mph on certain Michigan track segments it owns and controls between Kalamazoo and Ann Arbor, starting today. These restrictions from previous top speeds of up to 79 mph have an even larger impact than those imposed by NS last year. Amtrak is advising passengers to expect delays of 45 to 90 minutes on *Wolverine Service* trains to and from Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac, including Jackson and Dearborn, with lesser delays on the Amtrak *Blue Water* to and from Chicago and Port Huron, via East Lansing and Flint.

“The decision by Norfolk Southern to reduce train speeds on the track shared with the Amtrak *Wolverine* and *Blue Water* services will have a serious impact on passenger service, and could cause delays for freight shippers, too,” said Tim Hoeffner, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Office of Rail.

“Last year, MDOT invested millions of dollars to upgrade this line at the state’s expense, and we hope Norfolk Southern will bear that in mind and work to minimize slow-downs that inconvenience businesses and travelers,” Hoeffner added.

The duration of the service delays is unknown. NS has said it would begin track improvement work in three weeks. Amtrak will issue a detailed Passenger Service Notice when more details are available.

### FAST FACTS:

- Amtrak *Wolverine Service* and *Blue Water* trains are being made to run slowly by NS in parts of Central and Eastern Michigan, effective March 15.
- Amtrak *Pere Marquette* trains are unaffected.
- Last year, the state funded repairs in advance of a planned acquisition of the line this year.
- Norfolk Southern has said it would start track improvements in three weeks.
- Speeds on the Amtrak-owned portion of the route were increased up to 110 mph last month.

- more -

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“Amtrak believes that temporary repairs could be made promptly by NS to significantly reduce the impact of these slow orders,” said Paul Vilter, Amtrak Assistant Vice President, after Amtrak engineering experts inspected the NS-owned portion of the route earlier this week.

“The NS slow orders will affect operations of *Wolverine* trains to popular destinations across Michigan and will also somewhat delay *Blue Water* trains between Battle Creek and Kalamazoo,” said Morrell Savoy, the Chicago-based Amtrak Superintendent responsible for train service in Michigan.

Passengers affected by this service disruption can use the Amtrak *Blue Water* trains at East Lansing and Flint or Amtrak Thruway Motorcoaches as a substitute means to reach Central, Southern and Eastern Michigan. Amtrak *Lake Shore Limited* and *Capitol Limited* trains in Toledo and at Waterloo, Elkhart and South Bend, Ind., are another alternate choice. The Amtrak *Pere Marquette* trains to and from Grand Rapids via Holland and St. Joseph-Benton Harbor are not affected by the NS action and can also be an option for some passengers.

“Ridership was just returning to normal since the last service disruption and lowered speeds in the summer of 2011,” Savoy added.

From October 2011 through February 2012, ridership on Amtrak *Wolverine Service* (Trains 350-355, three daily round-trips, Pontiac-Detroit-Ann Arbor-Chicago) was 184,781; Amtrak *Blue Water* (Trains 364 & 365, one daily round-trip, Port Huron-East Lansing-Chicago) was 71,572; and the Amtrak *Pere Marquette* (Trains 370 & 371, one daily round-trip, Grand Rapids-Chicago) was 40,785. All three routes posted year-to-year gains in February ridership.

The slow orders from NS come while it is negotiating to complete the sale of the line to the State of Michigan. These orders come less than four weeks after a celebration of increased speeds up to 110 mph on the Amtrak-owned portion of this line in Western Michigan and Northwest Indiana.

**About Amtrak®:**

Celebrating 40 years of dedicated service as America’s Railroad® Amtrak is the nation’s intercity passenger rail provider and its only high-speed rail operator. A record 30.2 million passengers traveled on Amtrak in FY 2011 on more than 300 daily trains – at speeds up to 150 mph (241 kph) – that connect 46 states, the District of Columbia and three Canadian Provinces. Amtrak operates trains in partnership with 15 states and four commuter rail agencies. Enjoy the journey<sup>SM</sup> at [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com) or call 800-USA-RAIL for schedules, fares and more information. Join us on [facebook.com/Amtrak](https://facebook.com/Amtrak) and follow us at [twitter.com/Amtrak](https://twitter.com/Amtrak).

**About MDOT:**

MDOT is responsible for a network of 10,000 miles of state trunkline roadways. This network, comprised of all I-, US-, and M-numbered routes in Michigan, carries 53 percent of all traffic and around 70 percent of all commercial traffic in the state. MDOT also is responsible for administering a comprehensive multimodal program that includes airports, intercity passenger services, rail freight, local public transit services, nonmotorized transportation and the state's Transportation Economic Development Fund. A safe, well-maintained, and efficient transportation system provides the backbone for all economic activity within the state. Join us on [facebook.com/MichiganDOT](https://facebook.com/MichiganDOT) and follow us at [www.twitter.com/mdot\\_rail](https://www.twitter.com/mdot_rail). On the Web at [www.michigan.gov/mdot](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot).