

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 14, 2013

ATK-13-019
Amtrak Contact: Marc Magliari
312 544.5390
MDOT Contact: Janet Foran
517 335.7176

AMTRAK MICHIGAN SERVICE IMPROVEMENT UPDATE State contracts with Amtrak to maintain former Norfolk Southern track; One-year anniversary of 110 mph service celebrated in Western Michigan

CHICAGO and LANSING – Amtrak and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) are gearing up for track improvements along the former Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) route used by Amtrak *Wolverine Service* and *Blue Water* trains from Kalamazoo to Central and Eastern Michigan. Amtrak has responsibility for this infrastructure, effective Feb. 16.

As announced in December 2012, MDOT used a grant from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to purchase of 135 miles of NS railroad for \$140 million. The line is directly connected to the Amtrak-owned Michigan District, which runs 97 miles from Kalamazoo to Porter, Ind. The result is nearly 80 percent of the route between Detroit and Chicago is publically owned and will be maintained for passenger trains at higher speeds.

The goal is to expand the 110 mph top speeds for Amtrak trains from the current 80 miles, starting eastward with the 22-mile segment between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Travel times will be reduced as more improvements are made. Last year, Amtrak shaved about 20 minutes from the 2001 schedules on the Amtrak-owned segment of the corridor and the plan is to further reduce the travel time between Detroit and Chicago to about five hours.

The \$140 million used to purchase the line included FRA High-speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program grant funds, plus a state match of \$37.5 million. The FRA also awarded \$196.5 million to MDOT for major track and signal improvements on this corridor, to be performed by Amtrak. NS will also transfer rail traffic control (train dispatching) to Amtrak in phases during the next three years.

“Amtrak looks forward to working with the FRA, Michigan, Illinois and Indiana to improve this corridor and better connect these vital cities in the Midwest with travel times far better than driving, more comfortable and productive than flying and with a smaller carbon footprint than either of those modes,” said Joe Boardman, Amtrak President and CEO.

NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION

Chicago Union Station, 500 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60661-5702 tel 312 544.5390 fax 202 799.NEWS MediaRelationsChicago@Amtrak.com

Passengers riding Amtrak trains in the higher-speed segment in Michigan and Indiana will be offered complimentary cake and beverages tomorrow (Feb. 15) to celebrate the first anniversary of 110 mph (177 kph) service.

“Rail is an important component of Michigan's economic comeback,” said State Transportation Director Kirk T. Steudle. “Investments in intercity passenger rail will reduce

travel times, improve service and set the stage for increases in capacity along the *Wolverine Service*. The first anniversary of 110 mph train travel in Michigan is the perfect time to give a shout-out of appreciation to passengers who are riding Amtrak trains in record numbers.”

Last month, MDOT announced nearly 800,000 passengers traveled on Amtrak trains in Michigan in 2012, setting a highest-ever ridership record for the state's three routes, including the three-times-a-day *Wolverine Service* (Pontiac/Detroit-Chicago), once daily *Blue Water* (Port Huron-East Lansing-Chicago), and once daily *Pere Marquette* (Grand Rapids-Chicago).

The line also will continue to provide freight rail services to major Michigan companies, with NS paying the state to access the track and being asked to participate in freight-related improvements in the years to come.

“The improvements being made to the line will be performed in a way that protects the freight rail potential throughout Michigan,” said Tim Hoeffner, MDOT’s rail chief. “MDOT will continue to work with NS and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to grow the freight business along with intercity passenger rail travel.”

A version of the above map in higher resolution is available from Amtrak or MDOT.

About Amtrak®:

Amtrak is America’s Railroad®, the nation’s intercity passenger rail service and its high-speed rail operator. A record 31.2 million passengers traveled on Amtrak in FY 2012 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 intercity trains in partnership with 15 states and contracts with 13 commuter rail agencies to provide a variety of services. Enjoy the journey® at Amtrak.com or call 800-USA-RAIL for schedules, fares and more information. Join us on facebook.com/Amtrak and follow us at 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 administrating 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 and follow us at www.twitter.com/michiganDOT. On the Web at www.michigan.gov/mdot.

