

## **PA 192 of 2010 Boilerplate Report Section 741**

Per Section 741 of 2010 PA192, the Department is required to report to the house of representatives and senate appropriations subcommittees on transportation, the house and senate fiscal agencies, and the state budget director on progress of operations on the Ann Arbor and NW Michigan railroad, particularly concerning any use of the track infrastructure for the purpose of supporting a passenger train speed of 59 miles per hour.

The “Ann Arbor and Northwest Michigan” railroad system extends from Ann Arbor northwesterly to Yuma, Traverse City and Petoskey. With the exception of the portion between Durand and Owosso, the corridor is owned by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLC) provides freight service to shippers on the line under an agreement with MDOT, and hopes to incorporate passenger service in the near future.

While passenger service is envisioned to someday extend all the way to Traverse City and Petoskey, the initial focus of passenger operations continues to be the segment between Ann Arbor and Howell. A coalition of local government officials and business leaders has been formed to support that effort (nicknamed “WALLY”, for the Washtenaw and Livingston Line). The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) serves as the designated authority responsible for moving the project forward. MDOT continues to work with AATA and other supporters of the service to make this commuter rail option a reality.

During FY2010, MDOT completed a comprehensive project to rehabilitate the track infrastructure between Ann Arbor and Howell. That \$5.4 million project upgraded 26.5 miles of track with new ties and ballast, rebuilt 29 public road crossings, and made a number of associated safety improvements to benefit existing freight rail services. These improvements will also benefit passenger rail when service becomes available. In addition to the infrastructure improvements, MDOT issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide passenger cars to be used for both WALLY and the proposed Ann Arbor-Detroit passenger rail service. GLC submitted the successful proposal and is now working to rehabilitate 16 coach cars and 8 cab cars at a total cost of approximately \$7.2 million. MDOT will lease the cars from GLC to serve riders on both passenger rail lines. Through a separate RFP, MDOT has selected a supplier for 8 locomotives; however, no contract has been executed. AATA is taking the lead in determining how many passenger stations will be needed and identifying the exact locations of those stations. It is anticipated that the WALLY service will begin in 2013 or 2014.

Meanwhile, other work has been undertaken that, while designed for the line’s current freight focus, would help facilitate future passenger service. A new siding is being constructed near Ann Arbor to facilitate the interchange of rail cars between GLC and the Ann Arbor Railroad. It will have the side benefit of minimizing interference between freight operations and the proposed WALLY trains. Track improvements designed to stabilize and improve the overall infrastructure were also undertaken on an 18.6-mile segment in Clare County between Lake George and Marion. Additional improvements were made in Wexford County between Cadillac and Boon. While no passenger service has been discussed on this last route, the work was designed to improve the track structure in the area of one of the line’s largest freight shippers.

*Bureau of Aeronautics and Freight Services  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
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