

Photo Courtesy of Kyle Korienek



# Spring 2019 MRA RAIL UPDATE

A publication of the Michigan Railroads Association

## PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE: PROTECTING THE FREIGHT RAIL NETWORK

The national railroad network is the backbone of the national supply chain and is effectively a 24/7 outdoor assembly line. This puts railroads in the path of hurricanes, snow & ice storms, flooding, wildfires and other natural disasters.

With safety always a top priority, railroads operating in Michigan collaboratively prepare for and respond to these weather threats to minimize network impact, swiftly restore service for customers and help communities rebuild.

### Preparation

Railroads actively prepare for the variety of natural disasters that could impact the network. By monitoring weather closely and coordinating directly with customers and emergency agencies, the freight rail industry takes necessary precautions to protect employees, rail infrastructure and shipments. Detailed contingency plans govern operational changes, personnel and asset allocation, and company communication throughout the weather event. As part of general preparation, railroads could:

- Utilize 24/7 command centers and work



Heavy rains encroach on the rail right of way east of Haslett. Photo courtesy of Kyle Korienek.

with contracted weather personnel using customized monitoring tools.

- Begin customer communications – which will last until service is fully restored – and hold traffic if necessary.
- Reroute trains, relocate business personnel, and move equipment, locomotives, railcars and cargo out of areas likely to be affected.
- Stockpile construction equipment to repair tracks/bridges; generators and fuel to restore

signals/grade crossings; and ballast for tracks.

- Position civil engineers, signal maintainers, track maintenance workers, inspectors and other critical personnel to begin recovery as soon as it is safe.

### Recovery

No matter the type of disruption, railroads work together to fully restore network operations as quickly and safely as possible. Through coordination with local, state and federal emergency agencies, railroad inspectors assess network safety and triage damage before working with civil engineers and maintenance crews to begin repairs. Once repairs are complete, railroads restart network operations in close communication with customers.

### Assess Damage

- Examine track damage and remove small debris where possible.
- Inspect dangerous areas with drones and helicopters to keep employees safe and speed up assessments.

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Jon Cool, President  
@MI\_FreightRail

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Legislature debate state spending priorities and a new infrastructure proposal, the Michigan Railroads Association is discussing the possibility of creating a new grade separation program. This would be modeled after Indiana's Local Trax plan and would be administered by MDOT.

Why does Michigan need a grade separation program?

There are locations in Metro-Detroit, and in other areas, that are home to congested roadway/rail crossings. We are partnering with local government groups, regional planning organizations, legislators and the Governor's staff to determine if there is a desire to act on this long-time problem.

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Challenging winter conditions near Shepherd require snowplows.  
Photo courtesy of Kyle Korienek.

- Inspect and repair damaged train movement and grade crossing signals.

### Restart Operations

- Coordinate with customers to determine and prioritize which locations are ready to receive and dispatch traffic.
- Start traffic at reduced speeds where necessary while workers continue making repairs.
- Fully restore network operations after workers safely complete critical repairs.

### Relief Efforts

Railroads care deeply about the communities they serve and often have employees living in affected areas. As part of relief efforts, railroads work with state, local and federal organizations to move critical supplies such as food, water, temporary shelter, fuel and lumber into communities and large debris out of disaster zones to help people begin rebuilding their lives. Railroads also often support the important efforts of relief organizations.

### Lessons Learned

After recovery and relief efforts end, the rail industry modifies their natural disaster contingency plans to make a safe network even safer. Additionally, railroads take preventative measures to mitigate the impact of future weather emergencies. For example, railroads have:

- Placed seismic, wind and water detectors along high-risk parts of the network.
- Developed fire prevention programs that clear train routes of grasses and brush to prevent wildfires, as well as built specialized fire trains that carry thousands of gallons of water and hundreds of gallons of firefighting foam.
- Rebuilt and moved electrical equipment to higher elevations; and raised tracks and bridges to better protect against flooding.
- Geomapped track to assess vulnerabilities.
- Proactively cleared snow to prevent avalanches.

Should you have comments or questions regarding emergency preparedness by the freight railroads operating in Michigan, please email the Michigan Railroads Association at [mra@michiganrailroadsassociation.com](mailto:mra@michiganrailroadsassociation.com).

*Source AAR*

- Inspect bridges, including deploying divers to look at underwater infrastructure.

### Repair Infrastructure

- Use cranes, bulldozers, chainsaws and other equipment to remove large debris from rail infrastructure, such as downed trees.
- Replace track, add ballast and re-install or install new ties.
- Repair damaged bridges and remove obstructions.
- Coordinate with local utilities to restore electrical power and telephone communications.

## ROBERT CHAPRNKA NAMED TO MDOT HALL OF HONOR

Robert J. Chaprnka was recently inducted into the MDOT Hall of Honor. Hall of Honor inductee's photos and plaques are permanently displayed in the Van Wagoner Transportation building in Lansing.

Bob fiercely advocated for the freight railroad industry from 1990 to 2013 as president of the Michigan Railroads Association (MRA). He successfully championed for the passage of the Michigan Railroad Code of 1993, which was a complete revision of the law that led to more efficient railroad operations. Working with MDOT and the state Legislature, he advocated for laws to improve the surface and safety of highway-rail grade crossings across the state.



Robert J. Chaprnka

Through his involvement in railroad safety issues, Chaprnka helped establish Michigan Operation Lifesaver, a rail safety nonprofit educational organization. His work included a special focus on teaching young people to be cautious around railroads. Prior to joining the MRA, Chaprnka spent 18 years working in the Michigan Senate in various capacities. Bob served our nation admirably for two years in the U.S. Army.

From its inception in 1971 to this year, the Hall of Honor has recognized 93 men and women for their contributions to all facets of transportation in Michigan. MRA long-time associate member and key contributor Philip F. Kazmierski, formerly of The Mannik & Smith Group, was also inducted. Congratulations Bob and Phil!

### ▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1: **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

What are the benefits? Easing congestion (blocked crossings) would be the key purpose. This program would help improve safety and mobility at railroad crossings.

The MRA also continues to work with MDOT to bolster the Freight Economic Development Program. The rail shipper program has worked well over the years and we're attempting to

make it more meaningful for shippers who want to move freight by rail. Thank you to our rail shipper partners who are collaborating with this advocacy work.

Last, please mark your calendar for the 2019 Rail Conference – August 7-9 in Lansing, MI. The conference will include the kickoff reception on Wednesday, August 7th and we'll have a full

day of speakers and panelists Thursday, August 8th. Derek Taylor, CN's VP Southern Region, will be addressing the conference Thursday. The conference will wrap up Friday with informative rail visits around Lansing.

Please go to: <http://www.rail.mtu.edu/MRC2019> for additional information.

# MOVING MICHIGAN

FEATURING  
**GENESEE &  
WYOMING**



A Michigan Shore Railroad train in Grand Haven, Michigan. Photo courtesy of Jonathon Leese.

Six Genesee & Wyoming Inc. (G&W) short line railroads serve businesses throughout Michigan's Lower Peninsula, totaling nearly 700 track miles and carrying a wide variety of commodities that range from chemicals and salt to lumber and grain.

The oldest company of the bunch is **Indiana & Ohio Railway (IORY)**, established in 1978. Only 21 of 548 track miles run into the state, but IORY serves as a critical link to the North American rail network for Michigan industries and likewise, through an interchange with Canadian National (CN) in Flat Rock, provides Midwest shippers access to Michigan markets. The railroad's top three commodities are agricultural products, chemicals and metals.

The youngest company is **Marquette Rail (MQT)**, established in 2005. Serving the western side of

the Lower Peninsula, MQT runs 162 track miles from Grand Rapids to Baldwin and, from there, branches west to Ludington and northwest to Manistee. The railroad interchanges with CSX and Grand Elk Railroad (GDLK) in Grand Rapids and transports primarily chemicals.

The largest in size is **Huron and Eastern Railway (HESR)**, comprised of several branches that span a total of 394 track miles across the upper portion of the Thumb. Founded in 1986, HESR connects with CN and Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLC) in Durand as well as Lake State Railway (LSRC) in Saginaw and Bay City and serves numerous towns, including Bad Axe, Brown City, Colling, Crosswell, Kinde, Midland, Millington, Munger, Owosso and Ruth. Agricultural products and chemicals lead HESR's commodity base.

The smallest in size – apart from IORY's 21 miles in the state – is **Grand Rapids Eastern Railroad (GR)** at 27 track miles. GR's line begins in Lowell and ends in Grand Rapids, where it interchanges with CSX, GDLK and Coopersville and Marne Railway. It was established in 1993 and today carries mainly agricultural products.

Founded in 1990, **Michigan Shore Railroad (MS)** hauls chemicals and sand from a CSX interchange

in Holland up through Muskegon and out to Fremont. MS spans 58 miles.

Last but not least, the 33-mile **Mid-Michigan Railroad (MMRR)** provides freight rail service from Paines to Alma, interchanging with LSRC in Paines and GLC in Alma. MMRR was founded in 1987 and today hauls mostly agricultural products.

G&W acquired these roads in 2012. Since then, safety and service for more than 200 customers

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A Marquette Rail train traverses through Baldwin, Michigan. Photo courtesy of Jim Thias.



A Marquette Rail train southbound in Newaygo County. Photo courtesy of Steven McKay.

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: **Columbus, OH**

TOTAL EMPLOYEES IN STATE **117**

TOTAL TRACK MILES IN STATE **695**

VP SALES & MARKETING **LEILA FORD**  
Leila.Ford@gwrr.com

WEB SITE: **gwrr.com** & "FIND A RAILROAD" DROPDOWN

## MAJOR COMMODITIES

**CHEMICALS  
FERTILIZER  
GRAIN  
LUMBER  
PULP & PAPER  
SALT  
SAND  
WHEAT**

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and many communities have been a priority. As of March 29 this year, these six G&W Michigan railroads collectively have completed more than 140 days reportable injury-free. Five of the six railroads scored above 8.0 out of 10, the benchmark for a truly loyal customer, in overall satisfaction on their most recent customer-satisfaction survey.

Among the railroads' major customers are Cargill, Consumers Energy, Dow, Martin Marietta, Michigan Sugar, North Star Bluescope Steel, Occidental Chemical, Proctor & Gamble, Sunrise Cooperative, Valero and WestRock.

## MICHIGAN STATE SPARTAN'S RAIL PROGRAM

In 2007, Michigan State University began offering the Railway Management Certificate Program. Compiled with the help of AAR, Class I's, Short Lines, Suppliers, and others, it offers a broad and deep perspective of today's railway industry. The program has a managerial focus rather than an engineering or operating focus. It covers both day-to-day management and a strategic view of the complex ecosystem modern railways represent.

The unique program comprises four linked yet stand-alone week-long residential modules, spread over the year. These are taught in four carefully chosen locations to enable site visits to see classroom concepts in action. The first module covers safety and regulation, based in the Washington, DC area typically with visits to AAR, STB, FRA, NTSB and Conrail's Newark, NJ operations.



Center for Railway  
Research and Education  
Broad College of Business  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The program covers infrastructure, mechatronics, control and technology with time at TTC in Pueblo, CO – the railways' research and development center and test track. Participants also see steel rail being made in a nearby steel works. In Chicago, the epicenter of North America's rail network, a look is taken at railway operations with visits to local terminals, classification yards, customers, and CREATE sites. The week at MSU covers business administration topics and a visit to a local short line (this year included a visit to Lake State Railway Company in Saginaw, MI, winner of the prestigious Railway Age 2018 Short Line of the Year.)

In January this year, MSU established the Center for Railway Research and Education. The educational program described earlier is one part; the other is research focused. We are fortunate to have Dr. Andreas Hoffrichter leading the Center. He is one of the world's leading experts on alternative motive power fuels for railways and majors on hydrogen fuel cells – the fuel for the future since it produces zero harmful emissions.

Additional research work is under way to look at the scaling-up of hydrogen fuel cell technology to switching and over the road duties, as well as passenger operations.

A major project looking to improve railroads' efficiency and effectiveness from the customers' and shippers' perspective is under way. This has the goal to deliver a long-lasting, positive impact for all key stakeholders (shippers, carriers and investors) associated with the rail and transportation industry. Improve performance through collaboration. Explore criteria and objectives such as planning, technology, information, open bi/multi-lateral communication, end-to-end supply chain visibility, preparedness, and long-term trust and value creation.

Lastly, rail may see opportunities presented by the Gordie Howe International Bridge. Trucks arriving from Canada transferring intermodal containers to rail for onward shipment US destinations and Mexico, could reduce congestion and wear on Michigan freeways.

Contact: Nick Little 517.353.5663 or [little@msu.edu](mailto:little@msu.edu)



John Rickoff of LSRC & Larry Lloyd of CN presented to the House Transportation Committee in March. (L-R) Larry Lloyd, Rep. Julie Alexander, John Rickoff, Chair Jack O'Malley.

The program is aimed at middle managers in railway companies, especially short lines and regional railroads. It is also great for suppliers and shippers to learn a lot in a very short time about the rail industry and how it works. Individual modules can be taken over multiple years to spread cost and time away from the job.

# MICHIGAN OPERATION LIFESAVER UPDATE



Michigan Operation Lifesaver, its 40 volunteers and many supporters, are pleased with improved safety numbers for 2018. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) "highway - rail" statistics for Michigan show a reduction in crashes - down from 54 in 2017 to 49 in 2018. There was one "highway user" killed in 2018 compared to five in 2017. Injuries were reduced from 19 to 15 in the same time period.

The first three months of 2019 have resulted in some fatalities on railroad ROW - with 8 people killed - 5 in crashes and 3 trespassing incidents. A crash in Trenton involved a car running into the side of the 60th car of a moving train with both occupants instantly killed. Another was near Kalamazoo where 3 young people died when the driver drove around stopped traffic at a crossing, with lights and gates activated, and was struck by an Amtrak train.

Michigan Operation Lifesaver OLAV's continue to make presentations and attend special events with a total of over 12,000 contacts made in 2018. Some of the recent special events included:

- Snowmobile enforcement between Grayling and Gaylord, with 4 violations observed by law enforcement including Michigan State Police, Department of Natural Resources, County Sheriff and TV 7 & 4 out of Traverse City.
- The State Coordinator and Asst. State Coordinator attended the National OL symposium in Salt Lake City.
- Eight new OLAV's received presentation training.
- MI-OL participated with the MRA and others in "Michigan Rail Day" making contacts with multiple legislators.
- Spoke at the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police conference held in Grand Rapids.

CN Police Inspector Jon Bondra, who is also an OLAV, was appointed to the OLI National Advisory Council and also serves on the national OLI committee to develop an updated "Emergency Responders" program to be out later in 2019. MI-OL board member Ken Gilsdorf is also on the team to develop the Emergency Responders training module.

MI-OL will hold another OLAV class this summer for anyone interested in joining the organization. For more information about this program, and all other inquiries about Operation Lifesaver, please contact Sam Crowl - State Coordinator at samcrowl@comcast.net or phone 248-823-7037.

## MICHIGAN RAIL DAY - GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT



Rep. Bronna Kahle [R]

Rail industry representatives attended Michigan Rail Day 2019 at the Capitol in March. We appreciated all of the legislators who allowed time for freight railroad advocacy visits.

Conversations included freight rail investments in Michigan, new industry technology advancements and an emphasis on safety.

The day was capped-off with the MRA legislative reception. Thank you to everyone who stopped by to talk #FreightRail!



Sen. Curt VanderWall [center]



#MIRailDay2019

House Transportation Committee Chairman - Rep. Jack O'Malley (third from right)

# MRA

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## RAIL INSIDER SPOTLIGHT



Michael Gaynor - Asst. VP, Field Operations at GoRail

### Q: PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELF.

A: I manage the field staff and operations for GoRail across 30 states and also serve as the State Director for several Midwest states including Michigan. Bringing two decades of political experience to this position, I have served as a congressional staffer, a political consultant and as a public relations director at a national non-profit. Graduated from the University of Dayton. My wife, Elizabeth, and I

have two sons, Nathaniel and Collin. Outside of work, I enjoy hunting, fishing, backpacking, mountain biking, motorcycles, karate and chauffeuring my boys to lacrosse and soccer.

### Q: WHAT IS GORAIL?

A: GoRail is a grassroots advocacy organization that works with thousands of community leaders across the country to tell the local story of freight rail – stronger economies, more jobs and cleaner skies.

Working with the support of U.S. freight railroads and rail supply companies, our coalition of community leaders reminds Congress how freight rail investments and rail policy decisions have real impacts back home, from local jobs and economic development to air quality and road congestion.

### Q: WHAT CHANGES HAS GORAIL MADE RECENTLY IN MICHIGAN?

A: Larry Lloyd served as the GoRail State Director in Michigan for eight years and recently joined the government relations team at CN. It has been an honor working with Larry and I look forward to taking over his role as the Michigan State Director.

### Q: HOW DO YOU INTERACT WITH STATE LEGISLATORS?

A: GoRail meets with state legislators across the nation to help them better understand the impact of federal issues on rail service and investment in their states and local districts. Their voices are particularly effective at educating Congress, especially given the fact that 39% of current members of Congress are former state legislators.

### Q: HOW CAN STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS IN MICHIGAN SUPPORT GORAIL?

A: Senator Peters and Representative Mitchell serve on transportation committees in Congress so they are in key positions to influence federal transportation policy impacting both freight and passenger rail service. Freight rail's positive economic impact can be seen across the state and I would encourage everyone to share these stories with your local congressional delegation. Additionally, GoRail is always looking for interesting rail success stories that we can promote nationally and on Capitol Hill.