

Moody on the Market



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Amtrak Celebrates 30 on the Pere Marquette

Amtrak's *Pere Marquette* passenger rail service connecting St. Joseph to Chicago and Grand Rapids will mark its 30th Anniversary in motion this week, with a full slate of ceremonies all along the route including Holland, Bangor, and St. Joseph. The Westrain coalition which saved the train from being discontinued years ago is teaming up with Amtrak officials and the folks from the Michigan Department of Transportation for the ceremonies at each stop, and everyone's invited.

You could win free round-trip tickets at any stop along the route, and catch a view of the double-decker Superliner train being used on the route during the anniversary run tomorrow, Tuesday, September 16th. The Superliner includes a special "theater car" at the rear of the train for better viewing. There will also be commemorative gift bags and refreshments at each stop including here in St. Joe.

Roughly one-half hour prior to regularly scheduled train departures, 30th Anniversary ceremonies in each city will include local mayors and other dignitaries as well as officials from MDOT and Amtrak.

The *Pere Marquette* serves Grand Rapids, Holland, Bangor, and St. Joseph and Benton Harbor with daily passenger service to and from Chicago. This is one of three state-sponsored routes. Michigan is among 15 states, including Illinois, Missouri and Wisconsin that sponsors Amtrak for services. Improvements to the service include free Wi-Fi service added last year and a new station location scheduled to open in Grand Rapids next month.

Since 2006, annual ridership has been steady at more than 100,000 each year. Currently, ridership is expected to be about 3-percent below last year's total of 104,491 due to the recent harsh winter and steady-to-lower gasoline prices.

Westrain Coalition members include the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council, Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, the City of Bangor, Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce, and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, and are supported by the

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers.

I will be broadcasting my radio show live from the St. Joseph Train Depot from 6am until 10am tomorrow on 94.9, WSJM-FM and will be offering up a pair of tickets to a lucky winner who registers on site and is present when the drawing takes place. Hope to see you there first thing in the morning.

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