

Moody on the Market



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Amtrak's Pere Marquette on the Upswing

Amtrak's Pere Marquette passenger rail service to and through Michigan's Great Southwest is decidedly "on an upswing." That's the assessment of corporate spokesman Marc Magliari, who noted, "While there have been ups and downs in service on the line over the years, we are on an upswing."

That was great news to several dozen people who gathered for ceremonies at the St. Joseph Train Depot early Tuesday to mark the 30th Anniversary of the line which connects Chicago to Grand Rapids through St. Joseph, Bangor and Holland. Red, white and blue balloons, campaign-style bunting and a large welcoming banner thanked the passengers and other officials on hand for turning the service around over the years.

Even former Amtrak Board Chair and current board member, Tom Carper (pictured walking alongside the Pere Marquette train in the accompanying photo), was along for the ride and greeted by both St. Joseph Mayor Mike Garey and Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower who delivered a number of gifts to him including a street sign from St. Joseph, a public art puzzle, several books about the area and more.

Magliari told the crowd that annual ridership continues to be steady at more than 100,000 passengers a year ever since 2006, and he brought excellent news to rail fans with word that in about two years the line will be adding all new bi-level U.S.-built passenger cars that will wow the riders.

Amtrak and the State of Michigan have pledged to pour several millions of dollars into improved passenger rail service on all three of the state's key lines, including upgraded track sections to accommodate train speeds in excess of 110 miles per hour, the new cars that Magliari alluded to, and other improvements to continue to attract additional fans to public transit across the state.

John Egelhaaf (pictured below addressing the 65 plus people on hand) is Executive Director of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. He is also Chair of the Westrain Collaborative Coalition which saved the service from elimination a number of years ago. He acted as emcee for the event at trackside, calling the service a great option when gas is soaring over 4-bucks a gallon.



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