



February 2014

Ann Arbor-Detroit Regional Rail Project Update

1. Key Partners

- Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and Michigan Dept. of Transportation (MDOT) continue to work with each other and the host railroads, local communities, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Amtrak, and our consultant team toward completing many of the important steps that lead to commuter rail service.

2. Cab Cars & Coaches

- Refurbishment: The Great Lakes Central (GLC) Railroad has completed the refurbishment of all nine passenger cars needed for the proposed Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail service.
- Static Inspections: The cars successfully completed static inspections of communications, air conditioning, heating, air brake systems, door function and safety, wheel-sets, and a host of structural items.
- Mechanical & Safety Test: The cars cleared initial testing up to 40mph last summer. The last step, prior to being cleared for use in service, required operating a representative sample of the cars with an Amtrak locomotive and undergoing mechanical and safety tests up to 79mph in the corridor itself. This work was completed November 13 and 14, 2012 and all six refurbished commuter rail cars passed the tests with flying colors. For more information about the tests see: [Test Summary Statement](#)
- The final set of cars cleared slow speed tests in April 2013. As a result, 23 cars (7 cab and 16 coaches) are cleared to be used for special trains. Of these 23 cars, nine are programmed for use in the Ann Arbor to Detroit service, while the balance will be used in the Howell to Ann Arbor (WALLY) service.

3. Seats

- Manufacturing: Grand Rapids, Michigan-based American Seating has completed production of seats for all nine cars.
- Delivery & Installation: The seats have all been delivered and are installed in the completed cars.
- Crash Worthiness: The crash-worthiness of the seats in the passenger cars was a significant hurdle to overcome. The seats passed a rigorous set of Federal Railroad Administration crash tests and can now be produced for other passenger rail systems by American Seating.

4. Restrooms

- MDOT and SEMCOG have contracted with GLC to design, engineer and install ADA compliant restrooms in all of the coaches. This will allow the equipment to be used for longer trips and provide an added amenity for all users.
- Engineering and design is complete and work has begun on the first two cars. The initial cars are expected to be complete spring 2014.

SEMCOG is the only organization in Southeast Michigan that brings together all governments to solve regional challenges and enhance the quality of life for the seven-county region's 4.7 million people.

5. West Detroit Connection Track Project

- This rail infrastructure project will shave about ten minutes off the travel time in the Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail corridor. Agreements with the host railroads have either been executed or are in final negotiations. Construction of the West Detroit Connection Track is expected to begin in Spring 2014.

6. Environmental Clearance

- Federal Lead Agency: In the summer of 2011, the federal lead agency responsibility for the Ann Arbor-Detroit Regional Rail Project was transferred from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
- Environmental Review: FTA has determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be required to clear the project for construction. This is very good news as the more rigorous analysis required under a full Environmental Impact Statement could have caused significant delay. FTA has indicated that this will be an expedited EA, with priority for their staff. This will streamline their processing and result in a complete EA in the shortest time possible. However, prior to beginning this EA process, an additional capacity analysis that considers the Canadian National portion of the corridor as well as implications of the recent high speed rail funds that have been awarded to Michigan. Capital investment must be staged appropriately.
- Timeline: Once this process is completed, additional investments (e.g., track improvements and new stations in Ypsilanti and at Metro Airport) can be made in the project. This work is underway and a timeline is expected later this year.

7. Ann Arbor & Detroit Layover Tracks and Facilities

- Design: Work on the design of layover tracks and facilities is limited pending completion of the capacity analysis and environmental assessment.
- Stakeholders: The host railroads and host communities are a crucial part of the design.

8. Other Rail Infrastructure Improvements

- A capacity analysis has been completed for most of the corridor, including the identification of infrastructure improvements needed to initiate the Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail service. The analysis revealed the need for improvements such as new sidings, switches, and crossovers. Some additional capacity analysis is needed plus an environmental assessment. Work on these improvements can begin once environmental clearance has been granted. Due to the recent influx of high speed rail funds, additional capacity analysis must be conducted that takes into account the high speed trains being planned in combination with the commuter trains. This analysis is underway and is being headed by MDOT.

9. Stations

- Station Locations: Two new stations (Ypsilanti and Airport) together with three existing Amtrak stations (Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Detroit New Center) are proposed for the commuter rail service.
- Station Design: SEMCOG and MDOT have been working closely with host communities in the design of these stations. Preliminary design is complete and funding has been identified. Work can begin at these stations once environmental clearance has been obtained.

10. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

- Meetings: SEMCOG, MDOT, and GLC met on two occasions with an Ann Arbor-based ADA group to review improvements to the cars and the portable platform lifts. A number of changes have been made to the cars and lifts to make them more user friendly. The United States Access Board, and Amtrak have also tested and provided feedback regarding the portable platform lifts and cars.
- ADA Design Considerations:

- GLC has made the car modifications. A second generation of portable platform lifts has been obtained for the five stations to be used by the Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail service.
- All train sets will be ADA compliant.

11. Static displays

- The project team is working on scheduling additional static displays of completed cars at various venues in 2014. Three such events occurred in 2013 with nearly 3,500 touring the refurbished cars in downtown Ann Arbor as part of the Mayor's Green Fair, in Ypsilanti as part of the Heritage Festival, and Hamburg Township as part of their Historical Days celebration. Look for more of these events in the coming months.

12. Special Trains

- MDOT and SEMCOG are working with Amtrak and the host railroads to implement the first Amtrak Special Train using the MiTrain passenger cars to an event in 2014. Look for more on this in the coming months as well.