

Put Michigan on the Fast Track

Building a stronger Michigan with fast, frequent and affordable trains



High Speed Rail Alliance

4765 N. Lincoln Ave. Chicago, IL 60625
773.334.6758 | HSRail.org

Michigan's Future Rides on High-Speed and Regional Rail

Michigan, the birthplace of modern mobility, is ready to lead a rail revolution with great trains that connect communities, drive growth, and transform lives

Imagine a Michigan where fast, frequent, and affordable trains connect our towns and cities, fueling economic growth and revitalizing communities. An integrated network of trains, regional buses, and local transit can become the backbone of a thriving state economy.

Trains attract talent, energize small businesses, and create vibrant, sustainable communities where people want to live, work, and invest.

With more people living in and visiting the heart of our towns and cities, creativity and commerce flourish. Every train brings new opportunities for face-to-face connections, sparking innovation and driving economic exchange.

Michigan, already ahead with its established passenger rail program, has a chance to lead the nation by embracing this modern, sustainable transportation model. Acting now will position Michigan as a trailblazer in the shift to cleaner, smarter mobility.

Key Success Indicators

Clustered Cities

18 million people live along the Chicago - Detroit Corridor

Lansing

State capitals are magnets for train travel

Many colleges near railway stations

Students ride trains

Building Blocks for Growth

Experience

MDOT's experienced railroad division can easily be expanded

Existing rail assets

MDOT and Amtrak own most of the Wolverine Corridor

Proven demand

Michigan trains are often sold out



A Great Way to Travel

You'll ride trains because they're fast, fun and affordable

From the moment you step on board to the moment you arrive, trains give you the freedom to walk around, use the restroom, or visit the café car. There are no restrictions on using your phone, tablet or laptop.

A mix of downtown, suburban and airport stations puts you closer to your destination, making it easier to connect with friends or colleagues.

Access to opportunity

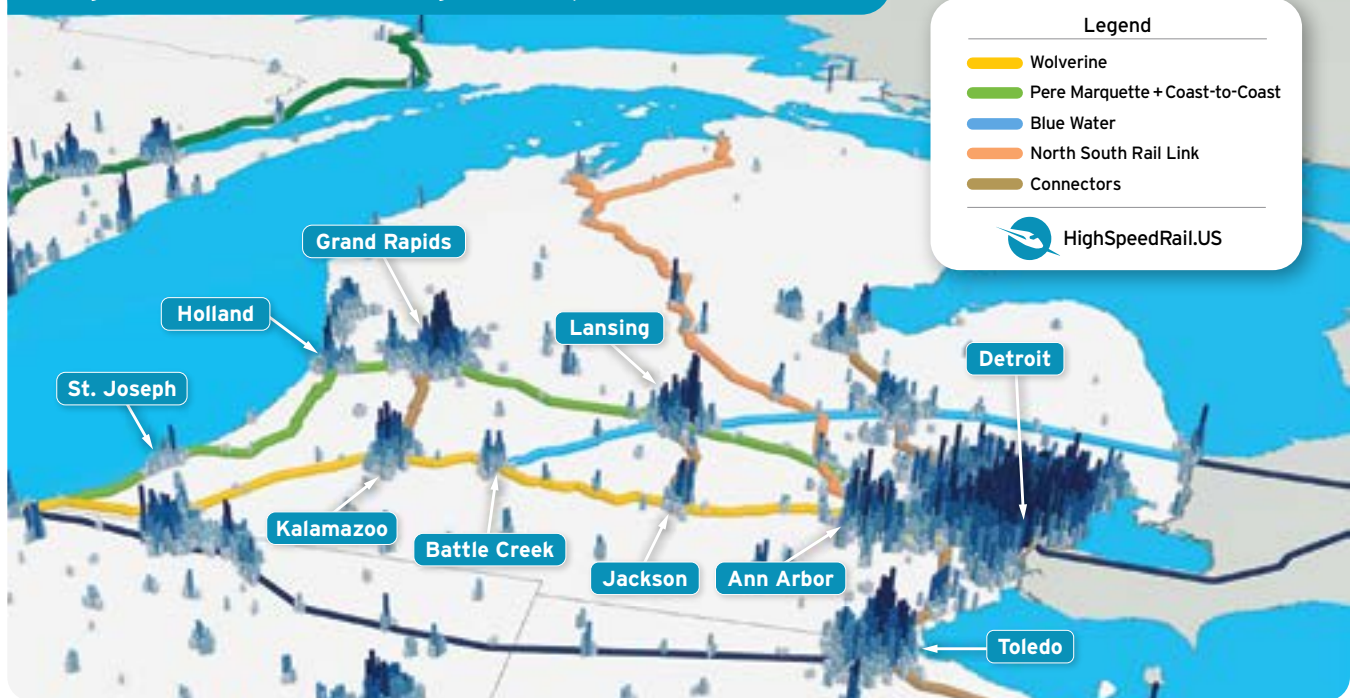
Trains aren't just about convenience; it's about opportunity. Trains unlock access to jobs, education, and small businesses, creating a more equitable, connected Michigan. They empower workers, boost local economies, and breathe new life into our communities.

A future with fast trains is a future of possibility—a Michigan where economic vitality and personal freedom go hand in hand. The time to build that future is now.

"MDOT should work with passenger rail providers to support the development of a more robust passenger rail system focused on connecting Michigan's regional population centers."

Growing Michigan Together Council Report, December 14, 2023

Regional Rail and Michigan's Population Centers



Connecting an Economic Powerhouse with Regional Rail

The lower half of the Lower Peninsula is home to 8 million people, or 80% of Michigan's population

From small businesses to global corporations, from major research universities to the Capitol, many of the state's greatest assets are along two core rail lines. It's a powerful, economic-driving region.

Imagine the transformation if cities like Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Jackson, Ann Arbor, and Detroit were linked by fast, reliable hourly trains.

Workers would have easier access to better jobs, students could reach their campuses more conveniently, and families could take affordable, stress-free day trips. Business travelers, freed from the frustrations of driving, could work comfortably and productively while on the move.

Fast, frequent, and affordable trains wouldn't just improve travel—they would create new opportunities for economic growth, education, and quality of life across the state.

What is Regional Rail?

Regional Rail uses frequent trains on memory schedules to serve many types of trips



Frequent Departures, All Day

Trains should run often, all day, so you can travel when you like. It's good for you and also good for the system because it grows ridership.



Faster Schedules

High-acceleration, level-boarding, and other upgrades not only make trains faster on existing lines but also reduce travel times, increase convenience, and attract more riders, amplifying the benefits for everyone.



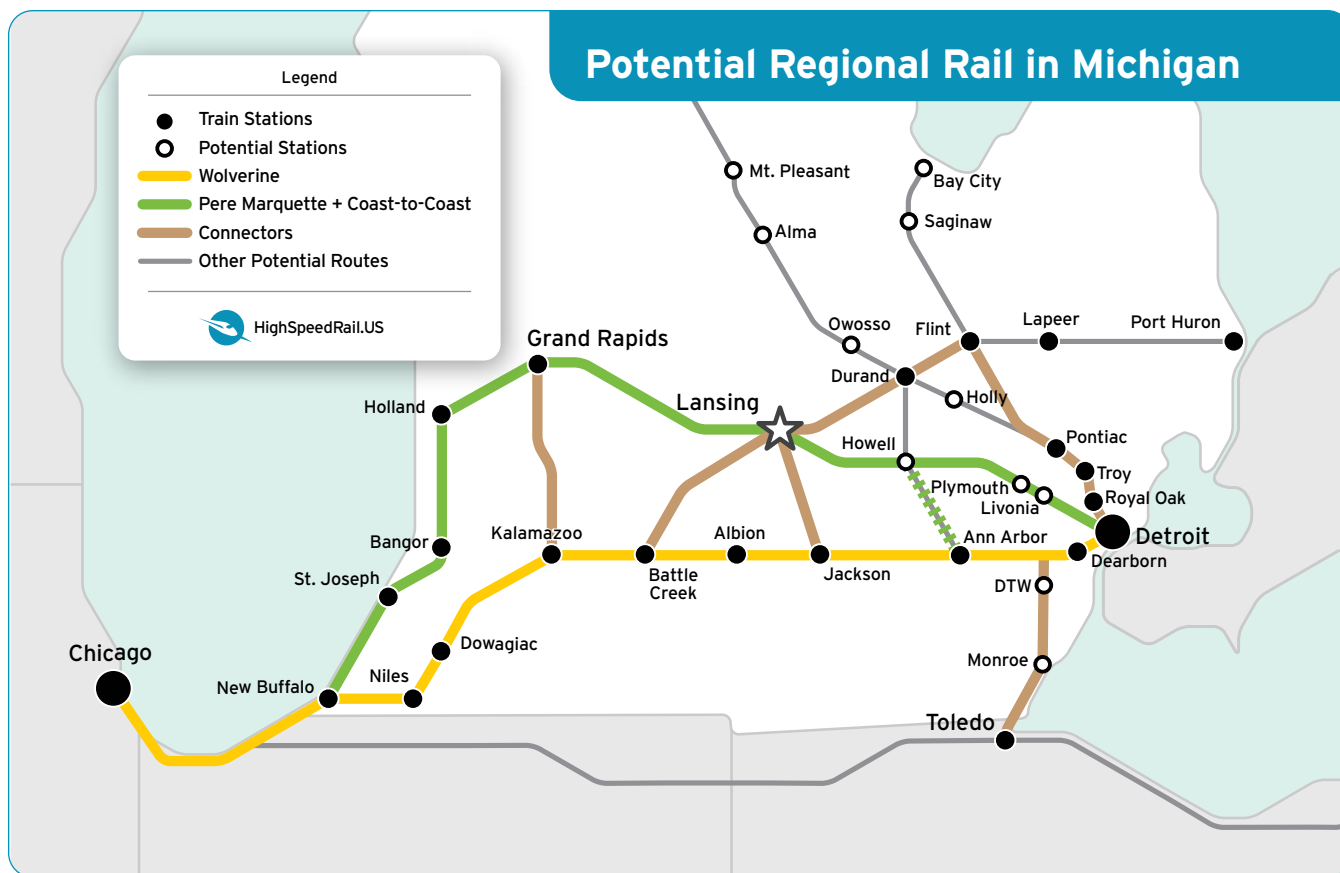
Affordable Fares

The State of Michigan should ensure affordable trains fares empowering riders with greater access to jobs, education, and leisure.



Schedule Integration

Bus and train schedules need to be coordinated to make every part of your trip seamless, easy, and affordable.



The Wolverine via Kalamazoo is the Foundation

State ownership makes it easy to expand

This is a very popular route, connecting Chicago and Detroit with college towns and other smaller cities.

Much of it has been upgraded to 110 mph, but there are currently only three trains per day in each direction, and they are often sold out.

The demand for hourly trains is already there.

See HSRail.org/Wolverine

Current status:

- Just three daily roundtrips
- In Corridor ID, with modest goal of six daily roundtrips

The State should move quickly to:

- Add frequencies east of New Buffalo focused on trips to Detroit
- Build a double-track flyover at Battle Creek
- Design the infrastructure needed for hourly service

Goal:

- Line should be electrified
- All grade-crossings separated (like Interstate highways)
- Hourly Departures from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm

Pere Marquette + Coast-to-Coast: Untapped Potential

Poised to be Michigan's most popular train

The Pere Marquette offers just a single roundtrip between Chicago and Grand Rapids, a metro area with a population over 1 million. If you live in Grand Rapids, your options are: depart for Chicago at 6:00am and get back from Chicago at 11:30pm.

There are no trains from Grand Rapids to Detroit, but the state is studying the route as an independent corridor called “Coast-to-Coast.”

The State should combine the Pere Marquette and Coast-to-Coast into a single corridor work with CSX to rebuild the entire line for regional rail and expanded freight service.

Current status of Pere Marquette:

- Just one daily roundtrip Grand Rapids - Chicago
- In Corridor ID, with modest goal of two daily roundtrips

Current status of Coast-to-Coast:

- No service
- MDOT studying the route as-if in Corridor ID, service goal not set

The State should move quickly to:

- Combine the Pere Marquette and Coast-to-Coast into a single corridor
- Design the infrastructure needed for hourly service
- Partner with CSX to develop an implementation plan

See HSRail.org/Pere-Marquette

Connectors

A combination of shorter rail or bus routes linking the upgraded Pere Marquette and Wolverine corridors – e.g. Grand Rapids–Kalamazoo and Lansing–Jackson – would further expand travel options, adding another dimension of convenience and connectivity.

Irish beat Michigan 16-0

Grand Rapids area pop 606,000
160 miles Detroit area pop 3.7 million
ZERO daily departures

Cork, Ireland pop 305,000
160 miles Dublin, Ireland pop 1.5 million
16 daily departures

The **FRA Corridor ID program** identifies key rail corridors to improve passenger rail service and guides planning, funding, and project development.

Michigan Needs an Integrated Network Plan

Coordinated trains and buses will make it practical and affordable to travel to every corner of the state

In addition to the Wolverine and Pere Marquette/Coast-to-Coast Corridors, an integrated railway network would consist of these parts:

Expanded Blue Water to Port Huron

The Blue Water is currently in the Corridor ID Program, with a modest proposal of just two roundtrips a day. MDOT should use buses to bridge service gaps.

North - South Service

The State owns most of the rail line from Ann Arbor to Petoskey. The Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority has launched a study of potential passenger train service on the corridor.

Linking to Toledo and Cleveland

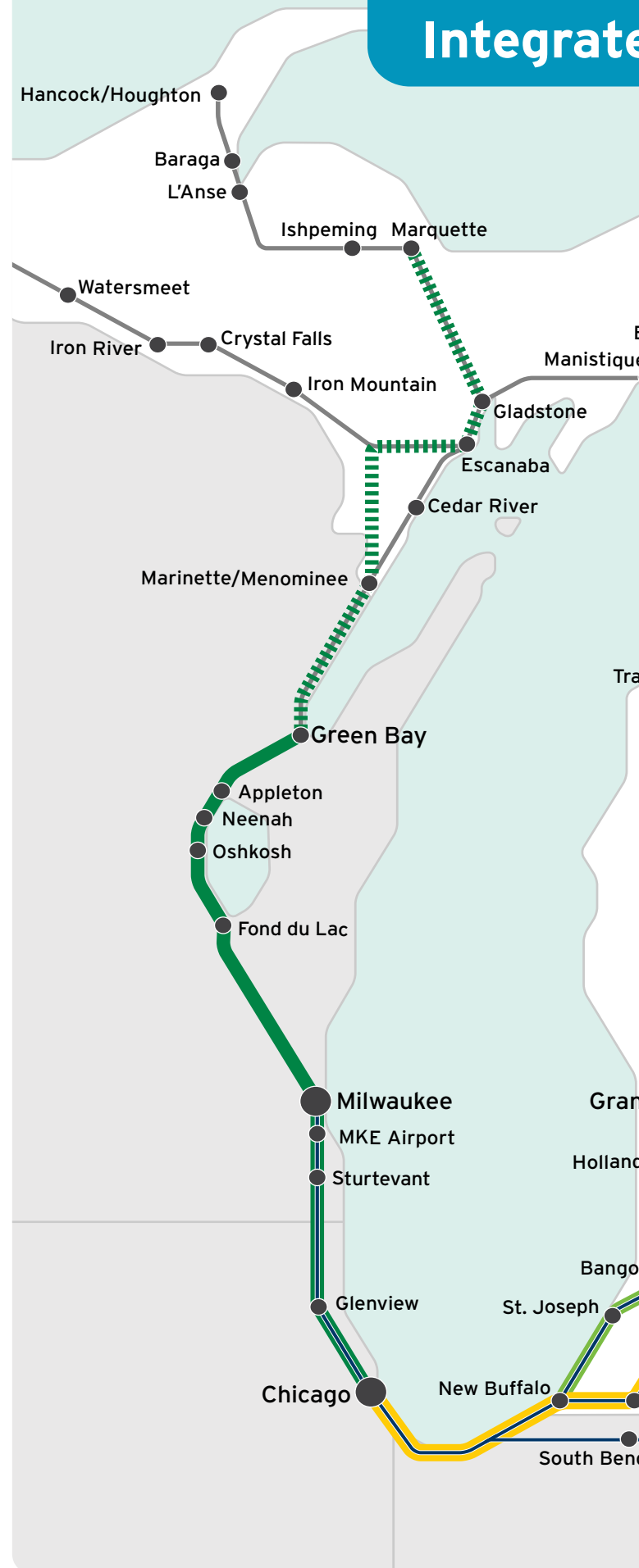
The State of Ohio is leading a Corridor ID study of Cleveland–Toledo–Detroit passenger service. Hourly service should be the minimum goal.

Upper Peninsula

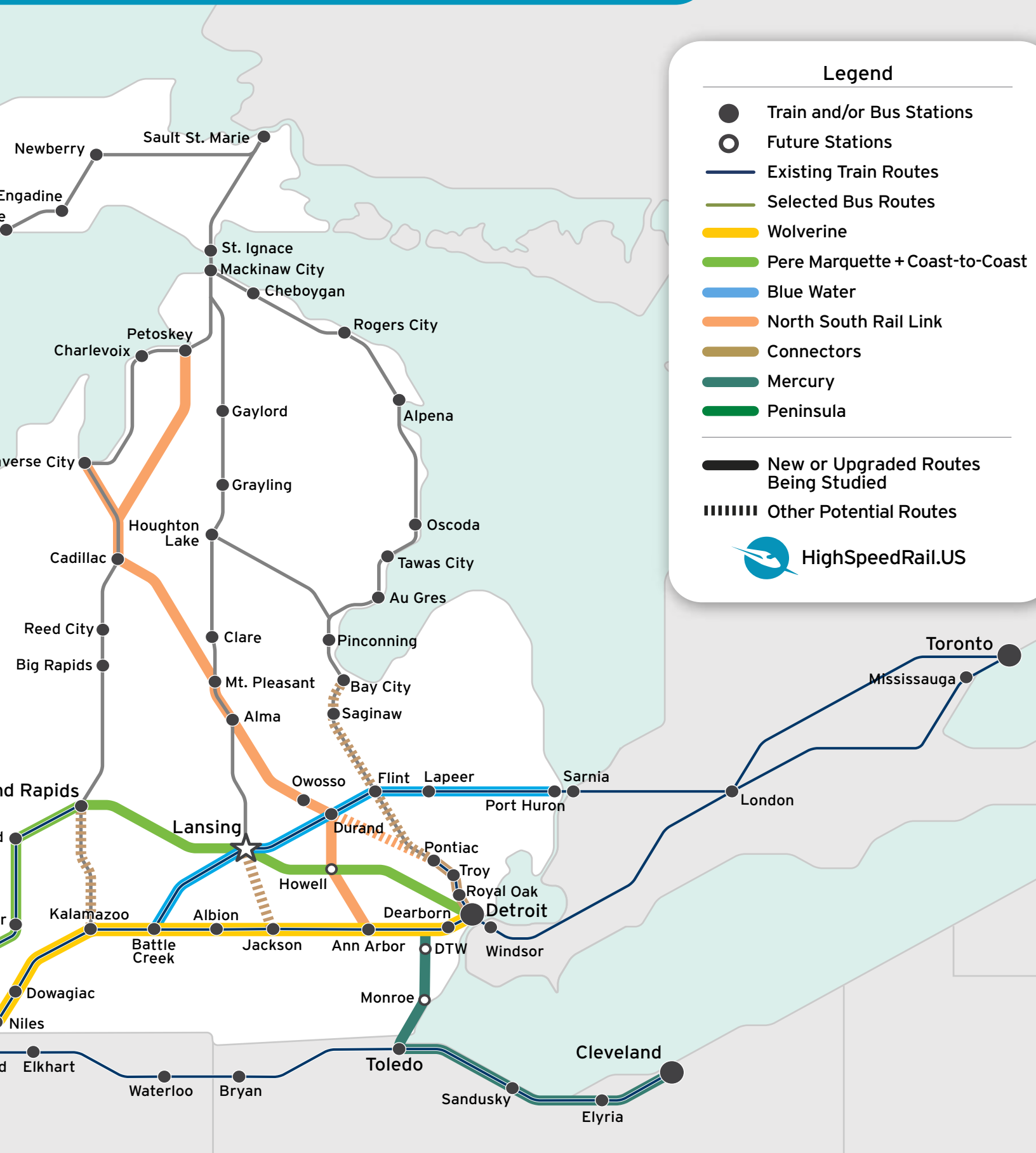
Milwaukee to Green Bay is in the Corridor ID Program. Michigan should partner with Wisconsin to explore extending the route from Green Bay to Marquette.

Expanded regional bus

Buses already provide excellent coverage across the state. The network would become much more valuable with more frequent service and better coordination with rail corridors.



ed Network Vision for Michigan



A Force Multiplier: The Power of an Integrated Transit Network

Unified network

Multiple types of trains and buses work together in a tightly integrated, web-like system.

Phased expansion

The network can be built in stages—starting with the highest-impact projects.

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts

A connected rail network multiplies value by dramatically expanding travel options. Instead of isolated routes with limited destinations, an integrated system allows seamless transfers, enabling more people to travel farther, faster, and with greater flexibility.

This connectivity creates a powerful virtuous cycle: more ridership fuels investments in better service, which attracts even more riders, driving further improvements. A growing network serves more communities, boosting its practicality and appeal for users with diverse needs.

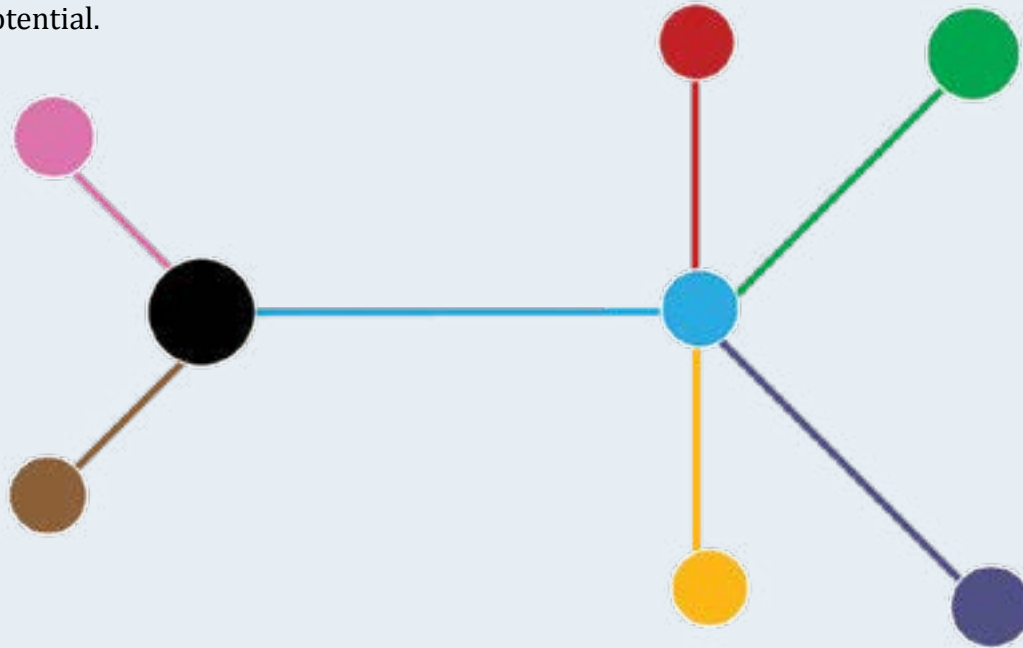
When routes are planned in isolation, this cycle is broken. The result is a stagnant, underutilized system—a costly consequence of short-sighted thinking.



How Networks Multiply Value

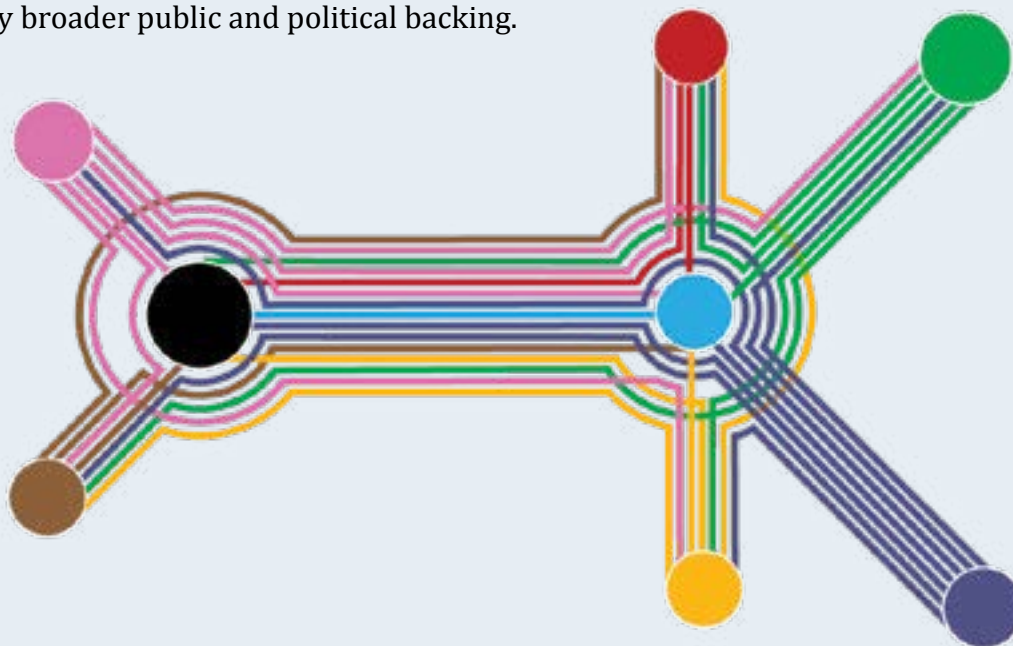
Isolated Planning

Transit planning often treats each segment as a standalone project, limiting its opportunities for use. This narrow approach makes individual segments seem less practical and results in low ridership potential.



Integrated Network Planning

When trains and buses are seamlessly connected, each segment gains far more utility. The entire system becomes more accessible, financially sustainable, and supported by broader public and political backing.





The Madrid-Seville
high-speed line matches the
length of **Detroit-Chicago**

It opened in 1993 with a
2 hour 20 minute trip time

200+ mph Bullet Trains: Making the Midwest a Regional Powerhouse

High-speed rail (HSR) would revolutionize travel across the Midwest

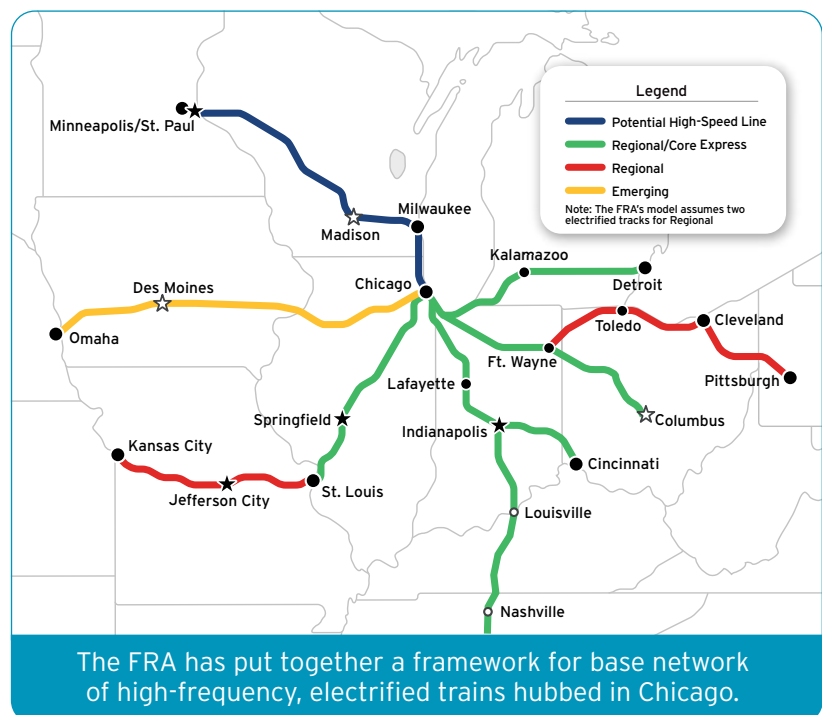
With a population and economy rivaling France—home to the successful TGV—the Midwest is primed for this transformation.

Michigan, as the Midwest's industrial leader, should spearhead the effort, designing in-state routes and collaborating with neighboring states to secure federal support. The Illinois High Speed Railway Commission is laying the groundwork—now is the time to act.

Federal Railroad Administration Pillar Corridors

In 2021, the Federal Railroad Administration outlined a framework for a core Midwest railway network. All but the Chicago-Omaha corridor would feature dedicated, electrified tracks.

The FRA's study emphasizes the transformative power of planning an integrated rail network. Isolated routes would create 189 city-pair connections. An integrated network would serve to over 1,100.





Imagine

A breakfast meeting in Detroit, then a lunch meeting in Chicago. In between, a productive 2 hours on the train. You're home in time for dinner. A great use of your day.

High-Speed Rail to Detroit

While the lower half of Michigan's Lower Peninsula is ideal for hourly regional trains, bullet trains might take a different path.

High-speed trains need to operate in a sealed corridor with long, straight tracks and very gradual curves. They cross above or below roads and other railroads – never at grade. Re-engineering the Wolverine corridor for 220mph trains could mean having to bypass city centers of places like Kalamazoo and Battle Creek and building new stations outside of town, ignoring the advantages of centrally-located train stations.

A better route for high-speed rail to Detroit could be through Fort Wayne and Toledo. It is much straighter and passes through few small towns. Very fast, convenient travel from Detroit to Chicago, Cleveland, Toronto, and beyond could help elevate the economic dynamic of the region.

Access to Chicago

There is a lot that Michigan can and should do on its own-within state borders. But a new, passenger-dedicated pathway into Chicago is needed to maximize the return on those investments.

Planning on this route, called the South-of-the-Lake Reroute, is underway right now.

Lawmakers across the Midwest should work together to push for serious funding and support from Congress and the FRA to complete this and other long-overdue rail infrastructure projects in Chicago.

Learn more at HSRail.org/Chicago

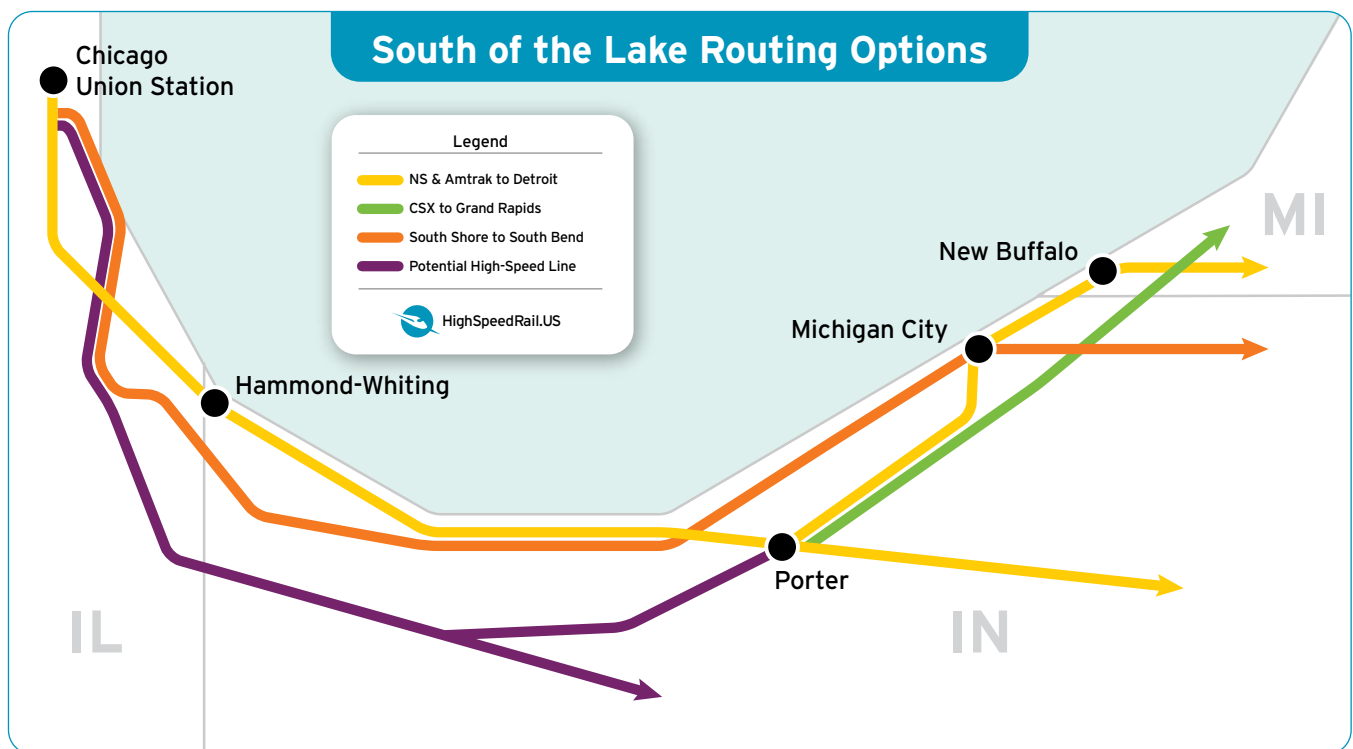


Illustration: SCB

Chicago Union Station

Union Station is the heart of the Midwest's rail network and is already operating beyond capacity. The station needs to be dramatically re-designed to handle expected growth. Amtrak has begun initial improvements.

See HSRail.org/ChicagoUnionStation

Needed Investments

Regional rail, high-speed rail, and freight rail all need similar investments



New Bridges

Michigan DOT should work proactively with railroads to replace out-of-date bridges.



More and Better Track

Slow zones need to be removed and a second or third mainline track will be required in many cases.



Safer Crossings

A win for the railroads, for communities, and drivers alike. A bridge is the safest.



Trainsets

Amtrak's fleet is too small to add service, the state should order new trains now.



Updated Stations

Many stations will need to be upgraded and connections to local transit need enhanced.



Electrification

Electric trains are more efficient, accelerate faster, and are cleaner.

**High-speed and regional rail will
make Michigan Central Station
“the epicenter of innovation”**



What Actions Are Needed?

Cross agency coordination is needed, but the State must take the lead

State of Michigan

- Create a new statewide railway fund to be used for bridge replacements, new trainsets, and railway station improvements.
- Create a statewide, integrated railway plan to coordinate investments.
- Expand the rail division of MDOT to implement the plan.
- Partner with surrounding states to win a federal rail program.

Metro Detroit

- Raise funds for regional rail service for Southeast Michigan.
- Facilitate a direct rail connection to Metro Airport.

Class 1 railroads

- Propose infrastructure investments and operating plans to support regional rail.

Amtrak

- Design Chicago Union Station expansion for hourly departures with electrified trains to major cities within 400 miles of Chicago
- Design and seek funds to double track entire Wolverine Route.

Cities and towns

- Implement new long-range plans, zoning, and parking regulations to foster walkable communities around railway stations.
- Partner with railroads to separate, close, or improve grade crossings.

Individuals

- Work with your local leaders to foster rail-friendly communities.
- Keep the pressure up on Lansing to fund the railway program we need.



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Our Alliance unites individuals, leaders, and officials to champion fast, frequent, and affordable trains. High-speed rail will revitalize communities, simplify travel, boost productivity, cut costs, and slash carbon emissions.

Join us to help make it happen at HSRail.org/Join-Us