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Amtrak ridership and revenue soar on Michigan routes

January 24, 2011 -- Ridership and revenue soared on Michigan's three Amtrak routes during the first quarter of fiscal year 2011, according to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). The strong performance indicates that more passengers are becoming aware of the convenience and good value of rail travel. In addition, Amtrak is managing their fleet differently and has added rail cars to the Wolverine and Blue Water routes, which means more seats for passengers.

In figures for the 2010-2011 fiscal year first quarter (October - December), 130,683 passengers rode Amtrak Wolverine service trains on the Pontiac/Detroit-Chicago corridor, an increase of 22.7 percent from the same period a year earlier. Ticket revenue was up by more than 26 percent to \$4,949,889.

The Blue Water train on the Port Huron/East Lansing-Chicago route saw an impressive 29.5 percent increase with 46,272 passengers using the Amtrak service. Ticket revenue was up by 25.7 percent to \$1,454,500. In December, records indicate that the Blue Water surpassed four million riders since it began in 1974.

Ridership on the Pere Marquette train on the Grand Rapids-Chicago route experienced improvement too, with a 7.8 percent increase in passengers to 25,916 and a 14.1 percent increase in ticket revenue of \$801,219. These numbers are likely lower than the other increases because of the move of the New Buffalo station from the Pere Marquette to the Blue Water and Wolverine in 2010.

Overall, these percentage increases were among the best in the nation on Amtrak corridor services.

"Amtrak travel offers good value and mobility. It is a transportation option that Michiganders have grown to appreciate," said State Transportation Director Kirk T. Steudle. "The interest and publicity about high-speed rail has also played a role in the increased growth of train travel in Michigan."

Amtrak operates the Blue Water and Pere Marquette trains under a contract with MDOT. Amtrak does not receive any direct state support for the Wolverine. Michigan is one of 15 states that provide state-supported service.

For a Station Activity Summary Report that shows individual station statistics, go to the MDOT Web site for details: www.michigan.gov/mdot, then Rail & Public Transit, Rail Links.

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