

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: August 2022
ITEM: New Business Item 2
FROM: Eugene Vicknair and Greg Elems

PROPOSED DONATION OF WESTERN PACIFIC BAY WINDOW CABOOSE 658

I was approached at the Great Western Steam-Up by a curator at another museum who had been contacted about a WP caboose available for donation. Their museum would not be a good fit, so he relayed the contact info to me.

I contacted the owner with permission of President Greg Elems and the owner responded. His family owns WP bay window wood caboose 658, rebuilt by WP in 1943. The current owner's father purchased the caboose from the WP in 1977 and moved it to Oakland. In the early 1990s, it went to Benicia and has been set up there ever since.

Now with the property once owned by the family going for sale, they want the caboose to go to a good home that will honor its history and care for it. The family has proposed to donate the cost of moving the caboose to Portola. Greg and I went to Benicia and inspected the car in July 23.

The caboose is in very complete condition externally, with couplers, brake systems, handrails, etc. in place or with the caboose (one coupler knuckle removed and under car). Some of the handrails and one ladder have some rust issues. Body is sound and in shape better than SN 1642. We found clear evidence of silver and orange paint on the body.

The interior has been refurbished as a small apartment with kitchen, toilet, shower and sleeping / sitting areas. One of the original bunks is still in place and the owner says they have another bunk in storage. The work done is very good quality and everything is reportedly operational.

Historically, while there are several ex-WP bay window cabooses out there and we have 3 in the collection, this one is of interest. We have confirmed it wore silver and orange paint in the 1950s. Also, in reviewing WP retirement records, this caboose has the latest retirement date I can find for a WP wood caboose. While most of the remaining WP wood cabooses were retired in the end of 1976, including SN and TS cars and barring use in MOW service, the 658 has a listed retirement date of 1977.

In light of the car's condition and history, Greg and I recommend to the Board that we approve receiving this donation and begin working with the owner to transport it to Portola.

We further recommend that the Board explore the idea of using the car as an overnight accommodate in coordination with RAL packages. We could market a combo package of an RAL and sleep in a real caboose. It is well set up for 2 people to stay in it. Greg and I discussed several location the caboose could be placed, including near the Edenwold and at the end of the future Parking Lot Display track.

Obviously such a proposal will require more study and has logistical issues to be solved, but we feel it should be explored.

For now, let's focus on accepting the donation and working with the family. There is no quick deadline on this, but likely it will need to be moved by Spring 2023.

REQUESTED ACTION: Approve donation and empower Greg Elems and Eugene Vicknair to draft formal donation agreement and begin working with family on move details.





