

Feather River Rail Society

February 9, 2024

Re: Board of Directors committee status report for the RAL Committee

The RAL committee held three more meetings since the last report on January 15, January 19 and January 26. The full committee was present for each meeting, specifically:

- Director Kerry Cochran
- Director Greg Elems
- Director Eugene Vicknair
- Chief Maintenance Officer David Elems
- Member Nicholas Manos

The committee has come to consensus on a number of items. In order to keep this update as brief as possible, I will provide a list of highlights only at this time:

1. Web presence change proposals are agreed upon. Various changes are designed to bring the visitor specific information to a more prominent position, specifically relating to the RAL. Changes are also planned for the RAL web page to simplify and improve the customer experience. The next step is to negotiate the desired changes with the webmaster
2. Social media will be updated to reflect RAL promotion. The facebook home page will have some updates and we will begin RAL related posts. We will also begin a pilot program for posting on X this year during the operating season
3. Promotion of RAL and cab rides at the museum will be enhanced with additional signage and the planning of 'open cab days'. This event would feature our RAL fleet and other popular locomotives displayed in front of the museum and staffed with volunteers. This would be used to attract visitors and promote RAL. First event is scheduled for June 8th and 9th - details to follow
4. An incentive program for store sales of cab rides and certain same day RAL sales has been developed. This, along with other communication enhancements between operations department and the store staff are intended to increase sales of train rides and cab rides, as well as result in additional promotion of RAL, since the cab rider is the natural candidate for RAL
5. A discounted RAL pricing structure is planned for members. The discount should make membership financially attractive to the RAL patron. Additionally, a discount is planned for first time membership purchases made concurrent with an RAL appointment
6. Repeat RAL business will be developed with new 'experience' programs, beginning with 'Consist experience'. This would be held on specific Mondays where a pre-defined locomotive consist will be offered for the RAL patron to operate. A 'hostler experience' add on is being designed that would allow the patron to connect the MU hoses and perform various other hostler activities alongside the RAL engineer, giving them a hands-on technical experience. 'Experience' RALs would be limited to FRRS members only (a member premium)

7. RAL scheduling is being updated. The plan is to discontinue RAL appointments for Monday and Tuesday, allowing for a full museum closure on those days and providing some certainty to staff regarding days off. Wednesday would continue to offer RAL by appointment. Special events and special arrangements can always override
8. RAL procedure documentation is being updated in support of these changes. This includes RAL engineer documentation, payment policy, RAL schedule and a new store procedure document. All documentation will be brought into alignment allowing for consistent end to end documentation of the RAL process for all involved parties
9. RAL offering simplification. Recognizing the vast majority of rentals are for one hour and noting some past failures with the 1/2 hour policy, the intent is to eliminate all multi and partial hour pricing and 'plan' discussion from the official advertisements. The customer will see an available locomotive and an hourly price. We would still support multi-hour rentals but it would not be promoted. Special arrangements for groups, such as scouts, would continue to be arranged with management, as they are today
10. Implement electronic booking software. This effort will be led by Eugene, schedule to be determined but target is to have a fully functioning, tested and documented application online for the 2025 season. The intent is to make all RAL booking through the software, but to leave the customer option of calling the museum store and speak to staff (during regular hours). Staff would be making the reservation in the software for the phone customer, in this case

Our next meeting has been scheduled for February 9, 2024. We will be closing out discussions of recommendations with our attention focused on RAL pricing.

The board can expect a full report on the committee findings with action plan(s) prior to their March meeting.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Manos
Run a Locomotive (RAL) Committee Chair