

FRRS Board of Directors and PRM Site Committee To Host Final Public Comment Meeting Before Adoption of Museum Master Plan October 7 and 14, 2000, 12 noon

The Board of Directors of the FRRS will soon consider adoption of an integrated Master Plan for the future development of the Portola Railroad Museum. The master plan will be a document that links plans for the physical design of the Museum with funding, action strategies and outline a timeline for implementation of improvements and objectives emphasized in the plan.

Currently, two documents outline the objectives to be achieved, (1) a Master Plan prepared by the Synthesis Design Group, historic preservation architects and urban designers who were retained through a United States Forest Service (USFS) grant authored by the Plumas Corporation, Plumas County's Economic Development, Visitor Center and Business Development agency, and (2) the Final Report and Recommendations – Facilities Improvement Plan for the Portola Railroad Museum authored by members of the Site Committee.

It is imperative that all members of the FRRS, residents of Plumas County, and users of the Museum facility review the recommendations contained in both documents and make comments on them before the Board of Directors adopt the final master plan. While the plan can always be revised, it is important that it be thorough from the onset to capitalize on cost efficiencies and create a complete vision for the future. The final plan will outline short-term actions and goals to achieve as well as long term projects to enhance the facility well into the future. This plan will also be reviewed with representatives of the Union Pacific Railroad and will form a cornerstone of our push to attain greater control over the PRM site.

In May and June of 2000, open meetings were conducted by the Site Committee to invite comment from members and allow discussion of findings and recommendations. Both meetings were held in Sacramento as a central location accessible to the majority of Society members. Unfortunately, problems with the mailing of the Train Sheet and a later special postcard gave members little warning concerning the meetings. It was then decided that at least one further meeting would be held before the board adopts a complete final plan. This has changed to two meetings to be held in Portola and open to comments from members, the Plumas County community, and government agencies concerning environmental, economic or service issues arising from plans for the Museum. These meetings will be held on October 7 and 14, 2000 at 12 noon in the Portola Railroad Museum Beanery. This will be a great opportunity for anyone interested in the Museum's future to attend the public meeting, tour the museum facility and assist the Society's site Committee in creating a vision for the future.

Copies of both reports are available on request by contacting Site Committee member Eugene Vicknair at 408.248.4039, or by e-mail at TSRY@aol.com.

If you are unable to attend the October meetings, please feel free to submit recommendations and comments either by letter, e-mail or verbally to any member of the Site Committee (listed below) or to any Director. Contact information is listed in the beginning of the Train Sheet.

Your opinions, comments and recommendations are important in helping craft the final plan. More information on current proposals is presented at the end of this article. Please take a few minutes of your valuable time to review these concepts and ideas and submit your comments. In addition, any other recommendations you may have are most welcome.

The Master Facilities Plan provides both an overview of the ultimate build-out of the site and also, more importantly, provides a roadmap as to how to get there. The Facilities Plan develops the site in a holistic manner, incorporating the safety concerns strongly emphasized by the FRRS, opportunities offered by the natural features of the site, recognition of the site's physical connection to the City of Portola and its downtown redevelopment plans, and finally a realistic strategy towards creating improvements that are fundable. The Master Business Plan will outline strategies for improving the fiscal operation of the Society to provide a stable base and opportunities for growth in the future.

The Site Committee has compiled an exhaustive investigation of the physical plant of the Portola Railroad Museum and spent many hours over several years including the following:

- Examination of the Museum site by members and public space designers
- Examination of the future needs of the Museum and its stakeholders
- Determination of what actions must be taken to comply with public space law
- Interviews with and recommendations by museum visitors
- Open meetings with Society members
- Recommendations of members and interested parties
- Studies of similar museums, railroad historical sites, and other sites of relevant public access.

Some of the highlights of the Plans were presented in the last Train Sheet. Some of the concepts that have been proposed by members include:

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Public Accessways

A system of hard surface paths to guide visitors through our facility and provide safe, all-weather passage areas for guests and members alike. The largest challenge will be retaining the classic, "working railroad" feel while making the site accessible.

Track Additions and Improvements

Including additional storage and display tracks and concepts for operational trackage traveling from the museum site, providing an opportunity for real excursion operation.

These include concepts for display track alignments around the parking lot, reconfigurations of existing trackage, and an idea for excursion tracks running east and west from the museum.

Plans and Concepts for New Facilities including

Locations of a Visitor's Center, sites including the existing parking lot, the WP Hospital, the bluff overlooking the museum, and locations off site.

A Library, possibly associated with the Visitor's Center.

A Display Museum, also associated with the Visitor's Center or located in one of the alternate Visitor's Center sites or in the Diesel Shop.

New locations for the Gift Shop, meeting and administrative spaces.

Locations for Magnolia Tower.

Proposal to construct a replica roundhouse to display historic motive power.

Proposals for display barns to protect historic equipment.

Diesel Shop Improvements/Alterations

Expansion and improvement of the Beanery and workspaces within the building.

Replica Railroad Structures

Potential structures include ideas for a replica WP depot, tower, steam era water tank, and roundhouse.

Display Buildings

To provide for all weather storage and display of our precious artifacts, including our growing California Zephyr collection.

Improved linkage of the museum site to the town center of Portola

These ideas include improved signage,

creation of a "guide corridor", and even a concept for an excursion line into the heart of Old Town Portola.

Improvements in Resource Utilization

How to best showcase and share our collection with the public.

How to manage restorations and conservation of the collection.

How to pare the collection to best utilize the resources of the Society.

Improvements in Business Operation

New thoughts on advertising, volunteerism, increasing membership, and fundraising, among others.

If you have questions or comments, please contact a member of the Site Committee:

Eugene Vicknair 408.248.4039 TSRY@aol.com

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Wayne Monger

Member Communications

An open form of communications still seems to be a problem that plagues our membership. The Board of Directors has identified establishing a form of communications usable by the membership as a priority. We have taken steps to alleviate this problem by establishing an opt-in mailing list on the Internet. This forum has been open for member participation awhile now but to date has only thirty-three members signed up. This has the potential to be a great tool for use by the members to discuss society business and help plan activities.

Signing up for the discussion area is free and easy. Point your Web Browser to <http://www.egroups.com/group/FRRS> and follow the prompts to sign up. It is requested that you complete the member profile as I use the information entered there to compare your request against the membership list maintained by member services. I remind everyone that only I as moderator can view the information in the member profile although your name will appear in the member list for the group.

This is an un-moderated discussion group for members' use. Attachments to messages are not allowed nor are messages that promote illegal activities. Some of the features of the group is the ability to share files with other members via the file area. Polls may be created were you can cast your vote on different subjects if needed. There is a calendar of events that can send out reminders of upcoming activities. A chat room is available for member use if desired.

I and the current members of the group invite you to join us.