

# Portola Railroad Museum Master Facilities Plan

By Eugene Vicknair, Site Committee Chairman

## Part 3.. Edward T. Jeffery Display Building

*In 2000, the Feather River Rail Society Board of Directors adopted a concept master facilities plan for the Portola Railroad Museum developed by the FRRS Site Committee and shaped by meetings with members, discussions with public space professionals and years of observation and experience with the PRM site.*

*In an ongoing series of articles, the details of the concept plan adopted are going to be presented and the thinking and reasons behind them explored. This will serve to inform the membership as to the improvements being planned for the site and give them a chance to comment.*

In a previous article, the critical need for covered space and the difficulty of finding room for such was discussed. While the Parking Lot Display Building will provide an excellent venue for several items, there was still need for more weather-protected storage for our historic equipment.

Another goal came to light during interviews with members and visitors, who wished to see cars and locomotives displayed in context with each other. It was crystallized in a conversation with member Ed Powell during a Railfan Photographer's Day several years ago. Upon surveying the arranged demonstration trains waiting to run around the balloon, Mr. Powell pointed them out and said "Why can't we do that all the time?" This input led to the concept of a building large enough to house sample trains, with each track able to display a train from different eras of the railroad. Track 1, for example, would host a steam engine pulling cars and a caboose all dating from and restored to the 1930's. Track 3 would have our SN 146 towing 1950's equipment. To accomplish this feat, it was determined that the building would need to be at least 300 feet long and hold 3 or 4 tracks. Very little space is available on the property for such a structure, which would be even larger than the Diesel Shop.

The initial version of the Master Plan included a small "pole barn" directly north of the Diesel Shop. Over time, the Site Committee reevaluated the property and realized that, with major rearrangement of the east end of the RIP (Repair In Place) tracks near the museum's entrance, the larger building could be built to the east of the Diesel Shop. After reviewing the needed track changes with Roadmaster Rod McClure and gaining his opinion that it would be possible, the pole barn, which would block viewing of the UP yard, was deleted and the new building recommended to the Board. This change was approved and the new building officially added to the concept plan.

The space over the RIP tracks will allow for a 4 track building 315 feet long with the tracks inside on 24 foot centers. This will allow visitors to walk between the equipment down 14 foot wide aisles. The length of the structure will allow 1-2 locomotives (depending on size), 3-4 freight cars (depending on car length) and a caboose to rest on each track. Holding 20-22 cars and locomotives, the capacity would rival the large barns of the Western Railway Museum in Rio Vista. While the internal layout of the building has not been finalized, current thinking is that it would include raised platforms between tracks 1-2 and 3-4, allowing visitors to walk right into open freight cars or cabooses. These would be filled with displays showing how they cars were used and, in the case of the freight equipment, what products they may have carried. Visitor amenities would include complete restrooms and perhaps open walkways above the equipment where one could sit and look down at the roll stock history parade. One concept even includes a balcony off these upper walkways overlooking the Union Pacific Yard.

It was quickly realized that the design of the building itself could enhance the story of the WP. To this end, the Site Committee recommended that the exterior be modeled after the Western Pacific's Jeffery Car Shops that once stood in Sacramento. And, like its predecessor, the working name for this new display building also honors an early WP president: Edward T. Jeffery, WP's second top executive.

