



May 10, 2016

STAFF REPORT

TO: EL DORADO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FROM: MARY CORY, MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR

CC: JEANNE AMOS, LIBRARY DIRECTOR
VICKIE SANDERS, PARKS DIVISION MANAGER

RE: EL DORADO WESTERN RAILROAD, THE COUNTY MUSEUM'S LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM

El Dorado Western Railroad

For the last five years, the El Dorado County Museum, a division of the Library Department, has managed the volunteers of the El Dorado Western Railroad who maintain and preserve the El Dorado Western Railroad program (EDWR) in the Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor and provide excursion rail for the public as a living history program. The mission of the Railroad program is: *to preserve the county's railroading history by providing the El Dorado County Historical Museum a dynamic living history railroad experience for the public, and by maintaining and operating on the historic Placerville Branch of the Southern Pacific Railroad.*

BACKGROUND

History of Program

Over 25 years ago, Museum Volunteers began preserving artifacts from the County's railroad history. Efforts to plan and build a dedicated Historical Railroad Museum have been underway since that time. The concept of a Railroad-themed Park in the town of El Dorado was supported by local merchants and residents, as well as the Parks and Recreation Commission, and approved by the Board of Supervisors in August, 2009.

History lives here

104 Placerville Drive, Placerville, CA 95667 ★ (530) 621-5865 ★ Email: museum@edcgov.us
Visit our website at <http://museum.edcgov.us>

In order to create a revenue stream to support the development of the Park, and to begin the repairs and maintenance of the track, the El Dorado Western Railroad (EDWR) program was started by Museum volunteers and began operating on a regular schedule in June 2011. Right from the beginning, policies and procedures were put into place that emphasized safety and followed CPUC and FRA regulations to the extent possible. Training by a professional railroad instructor and a professional railroad committee was established. A professional Track Inspector was brought on board as the volunteer EDWR Road Master. Even though Inspection Car operation is not regulated by the CPUC and the FRA (due to their small size and slow speed,) a CPUC Inspector was asked for his recommendations on road crossing procedures and required signage in 2010, which continues to be the basis of our operation.

A history of significant actions and information related to the EDWR program is provided at the end of this staff report.

Current Program

The Museum Administrator, a County employee in the Library Department, runs the EDWR program as the General Manager. The authorities and reporting structure of the EDWR program, including county staff and other positions of responsibility filled by volunteers who have experience and training appropriate to their positions, is outlined in the organizational chart included in the El Dorado Western Railroad presentation (Attachment D to Legistar file 16-0399). The General Manager holds a monthly meeting with the volunteers and discusses projects, programming goals, priorities, allocation of resources, and other concerns. At the start of each operating day a safety meeting is held. Forms and documentation are held in the Museum Administrator's office. The Parks Division Manager and the Museum Administrator meet regularly to discuss maintenance and operation plans.

Currently, the El Dorado Western Railroad program offers rides to the public on vintage 8-seat inspection cars every Sunday. Early on, the decision was made to offer rides alternating between Shingle Springs, where the historic depot is located, and El Dorado, where Ed Hagen built a small station on the site of the original railroad station. Mr. Hagen leases the station to the County for \$1 per year for use by the El Dorado Western Railroad program.

Volunteers conduct Maintenance of Way (MOW) every Wednesday and Friday. MOW is the work required to maintain the tracks in good working order. It includes repairs such as replacing rotted railroad ties, and projects such as clearing drainage ditches. Fire fuel reduction on 10 feet on either side of the track and 20 feet above is done annually during the rainy season.

While this work is being done, the volunteers and staff are making plans for the future. With the vision of providing a variety of programming experiences on the historic SPTC, projects are underway to restore full-size railroad equipment that will accommodate more passengers and

be in full ADA compliance. As it grows, the El Dorado Western Railroad program will become an even greater attraction to the residents and visitors to El Dorado County and do its part to support tourism to the communities of Shingle Springs and El Dorado.

El Dorado Western Railway Foundation

Early on, a nonprofit organization was formed to support and assist the County Museum to preserve the county's railroad history and to support the creation of a historical railroad to bring the experience of a railroad to the public. The El Dorado Western Railway Foundation, a registered nonprofit charitable organization, formed in 1996 with the mission to support the County Museum railroad program, conduct fundraising and expend those donated funds on projects supporting the Railroad program and the SPTC rail infrastructure. The board of this Foundation also advises the Museum Administrator on long range facility and programming planning, as both areas of growth require financial considerations. In 2015, the Foundation received the very generous donation of the historic Shingle Springs Depot building from Marlon and Chick Ginney.

Collaboration and Cooperation

The El Dorado Western Railroad program is an innovative private and public partnership utilizing volunteers, county staff, and nonprofit organizations with the vision of preserving a historic railroad corridor and operating a historical railroad for the public benefit. This means that cooperation between the Parks Division and the County Museum is of paramount importance. Over the years there have been various outside and county-organized committees to bring all SPTC users together with the goal of working out a plan that ensures that no one user group is barred from using the SPTC due to the promotion of another group. We recognize that this goal will take many years to accomplish and there will be many challenges along the way. To this end EDWR program volunteers and county staff support finding alternative trail crossings, installing rail and trail signage, installing the grant-funded restroom in El Dorado, and assisting the Parks Division with projects designed to maintain, repair, and improve the SPTC.

Upon approval of the recommendation presented today by the Library Department, Museum staff and EDWR program volunteers will develop a written management plan for the track in order to provide a consistent policy of use and procedures, proposed fees, safety protocols, signage, and other considerations relating to the Maintenance of Way and Operations for the track corridor in the SPTC. If additional excursion rail use is approved by the Board of Supervisors, the Management Plan will support the Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad operating regularly to Latrobe, as it supports the community of Latrobe. It is our belief that rail operation is rail preservation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The SPTC is owned by the SPTC-JPA and the Reciprocal Use and Funding Agreement (RUFA) delegates management to each jurisdiction. Library Department staff time has been expended on the El Dorado Western Railroad Program, its volunteer program, and on project management. As of the 2015-2016 budget, no additional departmental net county costs have been expended. Examples of expenditures for the program and for track improvements described below have been funded by donations raised by the Foundation, including rent collected from a tenant at the Shingle Springs Depot, as well as funds, tools, and equipment donated by the volunteers themselves, along with grants from local funding sources.

- Excursion Rail – EDWRF purchased and maintains the equipment with donated funds and grants; consumable supplies, such as fuel, safety equipment is purchased with funds raised by the EDWRF through donations
- Maintenance – ongoing maintenance and improvements to the SPTC rail corridor (10 feet to either side of the rail and 20 feet above)
 - Direct expenditures on improvements, repairs, and maintenance of the rail (ties, gauge bars, bolts, ballast, reinforcing rail bed shoulders, bridge footings)
 - Assist with projects such as the California Conservation Corps project to reduce fire fuel on the corridor, cleaning up trash illegally dumped on the corridor, clearing drainage obstacles
 - Conduct Weed Abatement in El Dorado County, funded by the SPTC-JPA
 - Install railroad signage required by regulators, such as the CPUC and FRA

The County benefits from investments made by volunteers with their time and out of their own pockets, from the donations made by the public, fundraising done by nonprofit organizations, and by covering associated costs such as the county requirement for the Foundation to carry 3rd party liability insurance. Additional county funding could be sought for the future upkeep of the SPTC rail by instituting fees for authorized outside rail use, designating SPTC lease payments to this purpose, or other mechanisms to provide a sustainable source of income. Currently the operation and maintenance is only occurring as funding allows.

This Public-Private partnership will continue to fund this important County Museum program and maintenance repairs to the SPTC track infrastructure. In addition, grant funding will continue to be sought for appropriate projects. I recommend that in the future, the County consider matching support for funding El Dorado Western Railroad program projects required by regulators, and projects which carry out long-lasting improvements to the SPTC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommended actions focus on the track in the SPTC and are presented with a brief explanation addressing questions and concerns that have been raised in the past. Our goal is to consolidate information and clarify the El Dorado Western Railroad program for the members of the Board of Supervisors, for other county staff, for the museum volunteers involved in the program, and for the general public.

Actions recommended by the Library Department:

- A. Approve the County Museum's updated El Dorado County Railroad History Center and Park Plan - This plan includes the El Dorado Western Railroad and its place in the Railroad Park, now called the Railroad History Center and Park. Working with the Parks Division and Foothill Associates, a masterplan for the site was developed with public input. The County Museum's updated plan, endorsed and recommended by the Historic Museum Commission, places the Railroad Program in the context of a Railroad Museum with a display building, a restoration shop, a reproduction of the original Southern Pacific Railroad Station, outside exhibits and displays. The Park will be at the eastern end of the property and the Railroad Center and Park will complement the each other as a premier recreational, educational and historical site for residents and visitors. The plan shows the phases of development over time; identifies plans for railroad program facilities at El Dorado, Diamond Springs, and Shingle Springs; describes future excursion rail plans; and references a future SPTC Maintenance of Way and Track Operation Plan. With the action taken by the SPTC-JPA to confirm that no rail will be removed, this Plan describes the future with assurance that rail will not be removed. The El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park plan was approved by the Board on August 25, 2009 to establish a railroad park in the town of El Dorado at a wide right of way along the SPTC. The revised and expanded plan is now called the El Dorado County Railroad History Center and Park plan.
- B. Approve the Memorandum of Understanding (a non-financial agreement) between El Dorado Western Railway Foundation and the County Museum - This non-financial agreement is being brought to the Board of Supervisors in order to clarify and confirm the role of the Foundation, a nonprofit organization financially supporting the County Museum program. The MOU defines the responsibilities and scope of services of the Foundation and County Museum staff and volunteers; references the EDWR Volunteer Handbook, which includes Museum policies, procedures, training and testing requirements; and establishes the public benefit use of the Foundation's historic depot and the parcel that is leased from the County.
- C. Make a determination that the El Dorado Western Railway Foundation provides a public benefit - The El Dorado Western Railway Foundation provides the railroad cars and equipment for the railroad program and purchases rails, railroad ties and other

equipment for railroad maintenance on the County's Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor. Through their fundraising and their equipment used in the railroad program, the Foundation provides a valuable public service that promotes cultural and historical preservation activities which enhance tourism and encourage a sense of community. The Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established solely to financially support the work of the volunteers by raising money used for purchasing supplies and equipment. The Memorandum of Understanding defines and establishes the relationship between the County and the Foundation.

- D. Direct staff to prepare a standard five year lease for Parcel #90-040-031-10 to El Dorado Western Railway Foundation and waive the lease fees due to the public benefit provided - The El Dorado Western Railway Foundation received a generous donation of the historically significant Shingle Springs Depot in October 2015. The underlying parcel is owned by El Dorado County and is used for storing railroad equipment and for a boarding location for the El Dorado Western Railroad. In recognition of the public benefit of the Foundation, the department is recommending that the lease fee on the underlying parcel be waived.
- E. Designate the County Museum Administrator as the manager of the railroad operating corridor of the SPTC - The County Museum Administrator, as the manager of the railroad operating corridor of the SPTC (from the western County Line to the west edge of Missouri Flat Road in Diamond Springs) shall be responsible for the operation, maintenance and preservation of the railroad, and for ensuring compliance with all federal, state and local rail safety rules and regulations.

EL DORADO WESTERN RAILROAD PROGRAM

HISTORY OF SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION

- The Southern Pacific Railroad Placerville Branch is part of the Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC) which was purchased by the SPTC Joint Powers Authority (JPA) in 1996, and member agencies, including the County of El Dorado, entered into the Reciprocal Use and Funding Agreement (RUFA) to establish their joint and severable responsibilities with respect to the ownership and management of the rail corridor.
- The El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park Plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 25, 2009 and is now updated as the El Dorado County Railroad History Center and Park Plan.
- The “Shingle Plan” designating Segment 2, identified as the section of the SPTC between Shingle Springs and Missouri Flat Road, as a joint multi-use trail including rail use, and designating Segment 1 as a multi-use trail was approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 28, 2011.
- The El Dorado Western Railroad Program, as the County Museum Living History Program, has been operating excursion rail operations on portions of the historical Southern Pacific Railroad Placerville Branch since June 26, 2011 with staff making regular reports to the Board of Supervisors since that time.
- The SPTC-JPA Board voted unanimously at their regular November 2, 2015 board meeting that rail will not be removed for any foreseeable projects, and the existing track, a part of the historic Southern Pacific Railroad Placerville Branch will be preserved in El Dorado County.
- The El Dorado Western Railroad Program, an integral component of the El Dorado County Railroad History Center and Park Plan, is a safe and professional operational Excursion Rail and Track Maintenance Program exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act and conforming with the rules of the Federal Railroad Administration and the California Public Utilities Commission.

- The El Dorado Western Railroad Program provides the public a “hands-on” railroad heritage and educational outreach experience, promoting tourism in El Dorado County by bringing residents and out-of-town visitors to the communities of Shingle Springs, El Dorado and Diamond Springs; and the Track Maintenance Program utilizing skilled volunteers and rail-based equipment and tools preserves and maintains the track.
- The El Dorado Western Railway Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation which owns the historic Shingle Springs Depot on Mother Lode Drive and provides a public benefit by making it available for use by the railroad program, and provides financial support and equipment to the operation and growth of El Dorado Western Railroad Program and whose roles and responsibilities are described in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County Museum.
- The El Dorado Western Railway Foundation through its support of the El Dorado Western Railroad Program provides a valuable public service that promotes cultural and historical preservation activities which enhance tourism and encourage a sense of community to the people of the County.
- County Museum volunteers, under the supervision of the Museum Administrator, operate and maintain the El Dorado Western Railroad Program.
- The SPTC Corridor Master Plan (2003) which calls for multi-use in the SPTC, the development of the El Dorado Western Railroad Program will be coordinated with El Dorado County Parks Division.