



October 30, 2018

TO: El Dorado County Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Mary Cory, Museum Administrator

RE: El Dorado Western Railroad Program Requests and Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC) Track Management Plan

The El Dorado County Historical Museum, in the El Dorado County Library Department, is asking the Parks and Recreation Commission to recommend the following items to the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive a report on the El Dorado Western Railroad, a program of the El Dorado County Historical Museum
2. Authorize the use of standard rolling stock on the section of track from MP 142 to MP 144.8, in compliance with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) requirements
3. Approve the reinstallation of At-Grade Crossing equipment at the Forni Road railroad crossing
4. Approve a Management Plan for SPTC Train Operations, Right of Way & Track Maintenance ( MP 119.4 to MP 144.8) in El Dorado County
5. Approve the Diamond Springs Railroad Maintenance Yard concept and give direction to staff to proceed with CEQA analysis budgeted for the 2018-2019 fiscal year

#### Background

Museum Volunteers have been committed to preserving the County's railroad history since the County Museum was founded in 1973, and efforts to plan and build a dedicated Historical Railroad Museum have been underway for over 25 years. 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.

The El Dorado Western Railroad (EDWR) was started by Museum volunteers in 2011 with goals to preserve the remaining railroad tracks in El Dorado County; provide much needed corridor maintenance and repair; and create a fun and educational railroading experience for the public. By operating vintage track inspection cars as a source of revenue, the program provides motivation for volunteers to maintain the track, the volunteer crews are getting experience, and the equipment restored. The old Southern Pacific tracks have been placed

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back in use, a reflection of the county's history when the railroad was so vital to its economic health.

Safety is a paramount concern, and procedures and policies were put into place that emphasized safety and follow California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations to the extent possible. Even though the current 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 part of our operation.

#### Current Program

Volunteers provide rides for the public every Sunday, perform track maintenance work on Wednesdays, and repair/restore railroad equipment on other days of the week. Highlights of the programs are:

- Operations on vintage Inspection Cars for the public every Sunday, year-round weather permitting, from Shingle Springs east, El Dorado west, and El Dorado east.
- 3,500 riders in 2017
- Newly constructed switch and spur west of El Dorado in the original historical location
- Salvaged rail located on Old Depot Road was moved in June of 2017
- Plans for replacing the seriously deteriorated Rustling Pines Road crossing are in place for FY2018-2019
- The Washout in the corridor located in a section of track currently out of service but accessed by trail users, just west of Mother Lode Drive in Shingle Springs, is currently being repaired
- Cleaned and stabilized three historic railroad crew buildings in Shingle Springs
- Established a storage yard for track materials and tools in El Dorado
- Built a passenger-carrying car on a historic World War II flat car
- Restored the 17 ton Plymouth Locomotive
- Planned and implemented the annual weed abatement program for the SPTC tracks in El Dorado County
- Installed security cameras as a result of vandalism done by juveniles last year
- Monitor, repair, clear brush and clean up the tracks as needed

Facilities for the Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC) and the railroad program continue to grow. A new tenant, Sam's Cyclery, is in the Shingle Springs Depot. County Facilities Division built a permanent rest room facility in El Dorado. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis for the natural trail has been completed, and County Department of Transportation (DOT) is preparing to start building the paved trail between Missouri Flat Road and El Dorado. Before the end of FY 2018-2019, we plan to hold public meetings to plan a regional park in Shingle Springs that will highlight its historic railroad past.

I have been working with the Folsom-based railroad excursion railroad, the Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad when they schedule rides into El Dorado County, and I have been involved in the discussions about their license agreement with the SPTC-JPA. I have also met with DOT staff regarding the plans for building the paved trail, and meet regularly with Parks Division staff.

#### Goals for the Future

As a continuation of our plans presented to the Board of Supervisors over the past 9 years, our goal for the next year is to put a full-size train into service on the tracks between El Dorado Rd and End-of-Line at Missouri Flat Rd (MP 142 to MP 144.8), meeting FRA standards. We are focusing on this section first as the natural trail and the paved trail will be built adjacent to the tracks, and there are no shared bridges. This section will give rail users and trail users an opportunity to work out any issues in a collaborative manner that may arise from

“rails with trails”. We will tackle full-size train service on other sections of track as trail development occurs and conditions and funding allow.

The purpose for operating a full-size train, albeit a small one-car train, is to preserve railroad history by operating on the historic Southern Pacific Railroad Placerville Branch; provide a meaningful railroad experience for the public; derive economic benefits from a desirable tourist destination; and utilize the SPTC as a multi-use recreational corridor as proposed in the SPTC Master Plan of 2003. This train will be operated by trained and certified volunteers, traveling no faster than 10 MPH, and will be scheduled only on weekend daylight hours.

To implement the full size train and meet FRA standards, the El Dorado Western Railroad must have Operating Rules and certified crew; regular track inspections; and safe, operating and certified equipment. The at-grade crossing at Forni Road should be reinstalled, and we will continue the “stop and protect” protocol already in place. Required railroad signage will be installed in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Commission’s committee on SPTC signage. Protocols are in place to reduce fire risk, and respond to emergency situations in a timely manner.

In order to provide an appropriate site for necessary railroad maintenance, we have a plan for a Diamond Springs Railroad Maintenance Yard to be located at MP 144, across the tracks from Industrial Road in Diamond Springs. This location, in an industrial zone, is important for “behind the scenes” maintenance and repair work. I have met with Parks Division staff and County DOT staff to design the Yard so that it accommodates the constructed paved trail and the natural trail. The next step will be to conduct the CEQA analysis for this project. CEQA analysis has already been conducted on the paved trail project and the natural trail project in this area.

#### Management Plan for SPTC Train Operations, Right of Way, & Track Maintenance

The purpose of a Management Plan for the Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC) Track is to clarify and establish maintenance and operation regulations and restrictions for the SPTC Track in El Dorado County, thereby establishing standards of safety for all rail users, trail users, property owners, utility/road workers, and any other people near or on the SPTC track.

The SPTC is owned by the SPTC-Joint Powers Authority and the Reciprocal Use and Funding Agreement (RUFA) delegates management to each jurisdiction. The Parks Division is responsible for the overall management, and is staff to the SPTC-JPA. On May 10, 2016 management of the track was delegated by the Board of Supervisors to the Museum Administrator in the Library Department. This Plan provides consistent and clearly stated procedures for using the tracks. Currently the El Dorado Western Railroad is on the tracks between Shingle Springs (MP 136) and end of line near Missouri Flat Road (MP 144). The Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad (P&SVR), a private nonprofit organization based in Folsom, has a multi-year record of utilizing the tracks between the county line (MP 119.4) and the community of Latrobe (MP 126.4). This Plan will be applied to both established railroads, and to any new requests that come forward in the future.

Currently, the P&SVR requests access to the track in El Dorado County specifying the dates and times, as well as the purpose of the trip, such as maintenance or as part of a public operation. In keeping with previous actions of the Board of Supervisors, P&SVR’s public excursions into El Dorado County are to benefit the community of Latrobe by bringing visitors to their monthly Pancake Breakfasts, special events, or with a monetary donation. This Management Plan is designed to continue those procedures. P&SVR has requested

that their License Agreement with the SPTC-JPA be extended to Latrobe. However, that has not yet occurred, but may at a future date when all pertinent issues have been resolved.

#### Financial Impact

Costs associated with the SPTC track management and programming are shared by the Library Department and by the El Dorado Western Railway Foundation, a public benefit nonprofit corporation.

In the current Fiscal Year, the Library Department has included \$33,000 from the General Fund.

- \$20,000 for the Diamond Springs Railroad Maintenance Yard CEQA Analysis
- \$12,000 for the improvement to the SPTC track at the Rustling Pines private road crossing in Shingle Springs (with additional private funds)
- \$1,000 for professional track inspection

For the calendar year of 2018, approximately \$62,980 in private donations has been budgeted and collected for programming and additional track projects

- \$5,000 for the improvement to the SPTC track at the Rustling Pines private road crossing in Shingle Springs
- \$14,900 for programming and excursion train operations
- \$6,200 for track, rail corridor (10 feet to either side of the rail and 20 feet above), and equipment. This includes the annual weed abatement program, with out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed by the SPTC-JPA.
- \$36,880 for programming, facilities and equipment improvements, which includes replacing a section of the historic spur, rebuilding a Southern Pacific caboose, and converting a flat car to a passenger-carrying car.

The County benefits from volunteers donating their time, their skill and experience, and with cash donations out of their own pockets. The nonprofit El Dorado Western Railway Foundation covers associated costs such as carrying 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 fast 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 approved El Dorado Western Railroad projects required by regulators, and projects which carry out long-lasting improvements to the SPTC.

#### Attachments:

- Power Point presentation
- SPTC Management Plan