

TO the Board of Directors of
Feather River Rail Society

SUBJECT: FRA/ASLA Seminar/Conference

DATE: May 2, 2003

FROM: Doug Morgan

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) reserves the right to regulate the safety activities in the United States involving anything equipped with flanged wheels. However, they do not have the means to regulate everything and must be selective of who they regulate, generally those of greatest danger to the public and railroad employees. High profile railroads, many shortlines and regional carriers are constantly in the sights of the FRA. On a regular basis, the FRA can be found inspecting tracks, locomotives, railroad cars and signals. They also peruse the records of railroads concerning drug and alcohol monitoring as well as continued reviews of their operating practices.

For several years the FRA region 6, in concert with the western region of the American Short Line Association have sponsored continuing educational safety seminars to shortline, regional carriers, railroad contractors and railroad museums. Seminars have been offered on an average of one to two per year. Region 6 extends from Arizona to Nevada and California. The practice has been to offer one seminar in northern California, usually in the spring, and one in Southern California or Arizona, usually in the fall.

The seminars are normally 2 days in length and include classroom discussions and field trips. The field trips consist of hands on training in railroad yards and maintenance facilities. It has become customary for a shortline to host the seminars at its facilities, with the classroom studies being conducted at a local hotel's conference center. Attendance is about 50 to 100 people.

At each seminar, various topics are reviewed and include new regulations, topics requested by attendees and special subjects, usually dealing with items the FRA wishes to underscore. Those items are usually borne from incidents that have led to accidents.

Four years ago, the FRRS went out the gate for the first time in a really big way. It pulled a train of its equipment to Truckee and back. This practice has continued and grown. Currently the FRRS is the only railroad museum in the west and perhaps in the nation that enjoys such confidence by a mainline railroad in allowing the museum to venture over its mainline rails.

To the naysayers, it has been proven that when the bar is raised higher and higher, the FRRS meets the challenge.

Now comes yet another challenger.

I have had discussions with my good friend George Hardy, the FRA Chief Inspector of shortline and regional carriers, about an idea that we have mutually concocted, that being the notion of the FRRS hosting an FRA seminar. The idea has been buzzing around in my head for several years but the time never seemed right. The time may be at hand.

No railroad museum, to my knowledge, has ever hosted an FRA seminar. This would be a terrific opportunity to ratchet up the prestige of the FRRS and the PRM once again in a large and professional way. In my opinion, the dividends would be substantial.

Generally speaking, here's how this would work. I propose that we officially suggest to the FRA that the FRRS host the spring 2004 or 2005 seminar. This would take place in mid May. Classroom discussions could be held at the Feather River Inn. I have been in contact with our friends at the Inn, and the dates being considered are wide open. The Feather River Inn is one of, if not the most, precious gem to be found in Plumas County and the most perfect of locations for such an event. Field trips could be held at the railroad museum where various subjects could be explored that could not be examined at shortlines due to the non-availability of a cross section of shortline style locomotives. There is the possibility that we can snag a UP mainline locomotive as part of this course of study.

The event typically begins on Wednesday afternoon with a reception followed by 2 days of field and classroom discussions ending on Friday afternoon.

What will it cost? The current registration fee is \$50 per attendee plus the cost of some meals and lodging. The registration fee, of course, goes to the host railroad. The host generally offers a dinner to the attendees and sometimes a lunch, all catered. There is no charge from the FRA or the ASLA. It has been suggested that the FRRS provide a dinner on board the lounge car or perhaps we might be able to bring one of the private cars from the Bay Area for this event.

This event should not cost the FRRS anything but this will depend on how well the event is coordinated. The goal should be to at least break even on the event. The FRA pays for the meeting room, which is approximately \$250 per day at the FRI. The inn offers discounts on rooms as well for conferences. The FRA suggests that sponsorships be developed that might pay for a banquet or other meals. The sponsorships might come from railroad suppliers, such as Wabtec or insurance providers, such as Mike Deeble, or anybody else that wants to put their name to an event. Gift shop sales will probably enhance the potential profitability of the event as well.

As it stands at this moment, the FRA is saying it's a go for May of 2004 or 2005. The Utah Railway is pitching for 2004, but a decision has not been made.

UP and Downs: Like all events, there are pros and cons. The big challenge for a mostly all volunteer force is the commitment in time to clean up the museum. I don't mean a little bit but a lot. Last year's scrap drive was monumentally successful. The same kind of effort is require this year. The track must be in full FRA class I compliance including surfacing the balloon as well as regulating the ballast. Track inspection records of periodic inspections must be in place and current.

Locomotives to be used in various field discussions must be clean and in full FRA compliance but not necessarily all blue carded. Those locomotives used outside the gate such as the 2001 must be blue carded as well.

Hours of covered service records must be in full compliance. This is an easy thing to do provided it starts this season.

While the spring weather can be dicey, the weather towards the middle of May is usually fine.

The positives from the event are immense with the continued advancement in the relationship between the FRA and the FRRS, as well as being an opportunity to begin a relationship with the ASLA. We want to be known as the railroad museum that knows how to do things right. Here is an opportunity for the FRRS to put its best foot forward by demonstrating that safety isn't just a word.

Other positives are the networking opportunities to be enjoyed with all the other attendees. This is probably the biggest paycheck of them all. Shortlines throughout the region can be a consistent source of information on a full range of solutions to all manner of issues.

I am personally excited about the potential of this event. This is good stuff. The last time I felt so pumped about an event was when the possibility of going to Truckee for the first time was presented.

DBM