

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY – AGENDA REPORT

DATE: February 1, 2014
FROM: Eugene Vicknair – Director
ITEM: New Business 4
SUBJECT: Fundraising and Promotion

Over the past several years, many ideas for fundraising and promotion have been brought forward and discussed. Some received better traction than others, but so far nothing has been taken forward.

I would like to bring several of these ideas, plus some new ones, before the Board and request approval on those that are felt to be most viable. I offer to assemble a working committee(s) for these projects and see if they can be moved forward.

FUNDRAISING

Spring Fundraising Letter

Over the last two years, we have talked about having a second fundraising letter that will mail out in later April to complement the letter sent near year end. I offer to write this letter and have it printed and mailed through Paul Baker Printing, the print house in Roseville that handles our brochures. Estimated cost would be about \$1200 for printing and mailing.

Classic Car Show

Tom Carter presented this concept about a year ago. We would invite classic car clubs from the Reno and Sacramento areas to bring their vehicles and have a paid admission car show, perhaps including contests for best car, etc. This show would be complemented by rail operations and integrating our classic rail equipment in with the road vehicles. One idea was to have a Ford only show, since the WP was so closely tied to Ford Motors.

This idea would require resurfacing of the parking lot, plus adding a layer of gravel or liquid stabilizer. We would also need to rent portable toilets for the event and provide advertising. Cost is uncertain, but would be at least \$3000 to \$4000.

Book Publishing

Frank Brehm and others have discussed increasing our publications in the past. We have published two books so far and have not lost money on them. This is also an excellent way to use and promote our archives.

Ideas put forward have included: WP Employee Personal Stories (including stories we have on tape in our collections), Coffee-Table picture book from the photo collection, "WP by Decade" book series, Western Pacific cookbook.

A picture book would be a fairly low impact project, as it would mainly involve getting high resolution scans, then writing short captions and doing layout. What would be nice is to unveil something at the

WP Convention in August, assuming this is approved. I have a professional chef who has some interesting in helping put together a cookbook using recipes from the dining department, including adapting older recipes to more modern cooking philosophies / techniques. Costs would be variable.

Muni Charter

A special event for FRRS members and others interested in San Francisco railroading. Muni allows chartering of their historic trolleys, including the famous "Boat Trams", which hold 44 people. A tour, limited to 40, plus 4 docents, would board the San Francisco ferry at Alameda, near the right of way of the Alameda Belt Line. The ferry crossing passes the remains of the WP yard and WP ferry mole, then docks at the San Francisco Ferry Building, where the WP once maintained a ticket office.

The Boat Tram would be waiting at the Ferry Building to take the tour to Fisherman's Wharf and a short walk to the SF Maritime Museum. Guests would be given a guided tour of several vessels with the highlight being the Western Pacific tugboat "Hercules". After the museum tour, guests would have lunch in Fisherman's Wharf then reboard the Boat Tram for a trolley right across San Francisco to the western end of Taraval Street and a stop on the beach at the Pacific Ocean. Reboarding the Tram the tour would return to the Ferry Building and the Market Street Railway Shop and Museum, where guests would have about 1 hour to look around the Ferry Building and the MSR Museum before returning by ferry to Alameda.

Cost would be about \$1800. With a ticket price of \$125 for what would be a 7.5 hour special event, the projected profit for 40 sold seats is \$3300. Break even is 15 sold seats. An increase to \$150 would bring a profit of \$4300 and a break even at 12 sold seats.

To lower risk, we could take preliminary reservations and only confirm trip once break even +5 guests is met.

PROMOTION

Reciprocal Discounts

An idea that has been discussed several times is offering reciprocal discounts with other area attractions, particularly in Reno. Two that have been mentioned are the Reno Automobile Museum and Animal Ark, a wildlife park outside north Reno. The concept would be to offer a discount on admission (\$2 has been suggested) for someone who brings in a ticket / proof of purchase from a participating museum / attraction. We would have our brochures at these attractions, stamped with info on the discount, and would have brochures and promote our partners in the program.

Animal Ark recently announced that they were going to increase their advertising in Reno after discovering a large majority of their 17,000 annual visitors were from outside the area and that most locals were unaware of them. We could also explore joint advertising or other promotion ideas with any discount partners. Very low direct cost, indirect cost would be \$2 less per admission, hopefully offset by higher attendance numbers.

Joint Promotion

Partner with other local attractions (Nakoma Golf Course, for example) in purchasing a billboard in Reno and / or Sacramento. Also, partner with other attractions in having media and travel agent junkets to help promote tourism opportunities in eastern Plumas County. Costs unknown.

Equipment Display in Reno Area Casino(s)

Tom Carter has suggested approaching some of the casinos with an offer to exhibit some of our small, but interesting rail equipment at the casino and use these exhibits as promotion for the museum. Suggestions include motor cars, the Model T, the SP Fire Truck and small MOW equipment like the WP Weed Burner or a Tamper. These pieces would be cleaned up, with some repainting and have informational signage added, plus information on getting to the museum

Tour Packages

Partner with local restaurants and resorts on a complete vacation package that includes admission to the museum, an RAL, meals at local restaurants and lodging at the local hotels / resorts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several of these seem to me to be very straightforward to set up and have a low risk / high return possibility. The ones I would recommend proceeding on now are:

- Spring Fundraising Letter (cost is \$1200 estimated)
- Classic Car Show (requires some cost research)
- Muni Charter (cost is \$1800 estimated)
- Coffee Table picture book (requires some cost research)
- Reciprocal Discounts (cost is additional brochures)

REQUESTED ACTION: That the Board consider and select several of the ideas for further exploration. Provide approval and funding for at least two concepts to move ahead with immediately and provide consensus to continue exploration of others and report back with more information.