

## **ACCRS/Alameda County Fairgrounds**

### **Ongoing Operating Relationship Proposal**

The following is a proposal for the operating relationship between the Alameda County Central Railroad (referred to as ACCRS) and the Alameda County Fairgrounds (referred to as the Fair).

#### **ACCRS Mission**

The ACCRS has two primary missions; education, and model railroad hobby promotion.

#### **Education Mission**

The primary focus of the ACCRS organization is to educate visitors to the Alameda County Fair and other events about the history, present and future of railroading. The ACCRS educates on how railroads were a crucial element of the development of the United States and California as well as the role railroads played in the development of Alameda County. Currently, due to space limitations, the primary focus of this education is through the operation of two model railroad layouts that replicates the railroad environment and topography of California. During the Alameda County Fair and other events, the ACCRS operates a range of trains from early steam to modern diesels and electrics to demonstrate the range and changes in railroading. Using the range modeled on the ACCRS layouts, everything from early narrow gauge to the Altamont Commuter Express are demonstrated to the public.

#### **Model Railroading Promotion Mission**

A secondary focus is the maintenance and operation of a model railroad layout to encourage and promote the great American hobby of model railroading. By maintaining a safe and welcoming environment, the ACCRS is encouraging both young and retired alike to join in a great hobby. As part of this mission, the ACCRS welcomes junior members and helps develop the next generation of model railroaders.

#### **ACCRS Goals**

1. Promote Public Education
2. Maintain and Operate 2 model railroad layouts for the public during the Alameda County Fair and other events the Fair asks the ACCRS to be open for
3. Engage the public and the community to understand railroading, historically and currently
4. Engage community groups to extend education beyond the limitation of the Fair and events
5. Promote the model railroading hobby in the community
6. Provide a safe and attractive environment for displays, the layout, and educational activities.

#### **Fair Strategic View and ACCRS Role**

The ACCRS understands the Fair strategic plan and the plan to eventually remove the building housing the current ACCRS layouts. The goal of this document is to provide a working framework to optimize the ACCRS for the Fair and other events until such changes take place. The goal of the ACCRS in our relationship with the Fair is two-fold, first to optimize the current value and contribution to the Fair and the community, and second, to prove the ongoing value to the Fair and the community. With 2018 Fair attendance at the ACCRS being approximately 62,000 people, we feel we are a contribution to the Fair experience and which can be further enhanced.

The ACCRS understands the Fair desire to have a “generic” cultural facility to maximize the range of events that can be hosted. Within that construct, ACCRS understands that for events when the ACCRS is not open, especially when the event sponsor has rented the facility that includes the ACCRS, the goal is to have minimal interactions between the ACCRS and the renting entity. This applies to both the appearance of the facility and ACCRS volunteers in the area. The goal of the ACCRS is to not impact the Fair staff in recruiting and retaining events that do not include the ACCRS being open.

## Events and Fairgrounds Entry

### Events

The focus of the ACCRS will be to be open for the Alameda County Fair and any events that staff asks the ACCRS to be open for. We will continue to meet and communicate regularly to assure that any inquiries we have had are presented to the Fair staff. Ultimately, the fair staff will have the final decision on any open dates outside the fair period. Any requests received by the ACCS will be communicated to the Fair staff.

### Access Outside of ACCRS Open Events

Access to the ACCRS building for maintenance, general improvements, and other activities is critical to maintain and present the railroad layout in the best light to the public. Maximizing access opportunities are important to achieve the layout enhancement actions detailed below. It is proposed we create a simple system with Fair staff to define access by day/weekend based on the use of the facility. It is proposed the following categories be used:

1. Open – access is open for ACCRS volunteers. This includes events that may be in the area but are not concerned.
2. Low Profile – This category designates an event where access is enabled, however the ACCRS volunteers are asked to be very circumspect. Activities outside the building will be minimized and care will be taken in parking, etc.
3. Not Available – for those events where the event precludes access, it should be identified

As the ACCRS hosts work-nights on Fridays, Friday access should be considered separately from weekends where access is not available. For example, the Good Guys event generally stops activities about 5 on Fridays and there has been little impact of the ACCRS volunteers arriving generally later than that.

### Access Method

The change from issuing annual badges has had significant impact on the complexity of the ACCRS being open, for the fair and other events. For the ACCRS to be open, the Fair staff must arrange for parking access as well as arranging passes to the event. For example, the ACCRS has been open for the Good Guys for 15 years and the ratio of visitors is 3 times that of the fair. The badge elimination has made this much more difficult and time consuming for staff and intrusive to the Good Guys to support.

It is proposed that the Fair and the ACCRS create a special identifiable (potentially color coded) ACCRS/Fair badge that can have limited access as defined in the section above. ACCRS can pay for the cost of producing these. With a badge and defined access for any events, the Fair will have access control without the complexity of free passes, parking passes, etc. As the passes can be defined to specific events, access to either the parking or event for unauthorized events is precluded.

## ACCRS Fair 2019 Transformation Focus (Complete for 2019 fair)

The following are the changes and actions that the ACCRS is committed to complete before the 2019 Alameda County Fair.

### General Clean-up and Repair

Due to uncertainty of the future status of the facility, ACCRS has not invested to improve the overall appearance of the internal facility. As part the ACCRS commitment to the Fair, ACCRS will undertake a set of improvements and enhancements to the general facility for the 2019 fair.

- We will clean up the front and rear entry areas and make it more attractive, including more promotion of joining the club. These areas will be repainted, and we will update our displays with more educational content.
- Paint interior walkway walls
- Paint the children's viewing ramp
- Clean and/or paint floors
- Mitigate any fire marshal issues

### Railroad Signals for promotion

The ACCRS understands the Fair plan to remove Building D and open the area from the Sky lift to the Action area. The railroad signals currently located behind the building will be made "portable" and only displayed at fair to identify the exhibit. The ACCRS proposes displaying these between the front door and the adjoining antique farm equipment exhibit. If acceptable to the Fair, these could be stored in the adjacent area that is planned to be used for the antique farm equipment between fairs.

### External Promotion Before and During the Fair

The following are steps that the ACCRS will take to increase visibility of the ACCRS before the fair (to attract visitors), and during the fair (to attract fair guests to visit the railroad).

- Update the ACCRS web site (currently in process)
- Something new to promote for the 2019 Fair
- Something Happening at specific times during the fair

### Something New

During the 2018 fair, the ACCRS introduced a scavenger hunt to very high public acceptance (over 5,000 children partake in this). In addition to a revised treasure hunt, the concept of having defined "something new" to promote will be implemented for the 2019 Fair. For the 2019 Fair, the ACCRS will prepare some marketing materials about what is new. These materials will be shared with Fair Staff to consider in fair promotions.

- Promote on our web site and link from/to fair
- Promote in articles to local papers "Another Reason to Visit the Alameda County Fair"
- Highlight in any literature distributed at the fair
- Highlight on the layout with internal signage

### Something Happening

One area that was discussed with the Fair management team is having specific time events that would create a draw and could be promoted in the fair guides. For the Fair in 2019, the ACCRS intends to have at least one (preferably 2) times of day events on specific days. These can be promoted in the fair guides and will have specific defined interest. For 2019, the focus will be on doing these on the weekends with extension to weekdays in a future year.

### Operations Demonstration

This will be an operations demonstration with a docent and multiple operators. Using the north end of our HO layout, a team of 4 will demonstrate spotting and moving cars, a through train setting out and picking up cars and how the new cars are delivered. This 20-30-minute demonstration will educate the public on both the complexity of railroad operations and the need for safety when working around railroad equipment.

### Scenery Building Demonstration

Another concept that will be tried in 2019 will be to have some level of active modeling for the public to observe. This will either be work on a section of one of the existing layouts or work on a separate module. Work can be random, but a specific schedule can be implemented to enable promotion in the Fair guides. Have an active project that can be seen and is worked on at specific times

### Enhanced Recruiting focus

If the current uncertainty is mitigated, the ACCRS believes that recruiting can be improved. This can be further facilitated by the scheduled activities (operations, active modeling) as those will attract guests that have more defined modelling interests. In addition to the current more descriptive hand-outs, ACCRS will use a business card for potential members. In addition, the ACCRS will start a mailing list in 2019 and will promote returning to the fair for all on the list. The ACCRS will host a new member open house in August after the fair to capitalize on interest quickly.

### Community Engagement

As a member of the Fair community, the ACCRS is accelerating plans to engage the community for value-based activities that the ACCRS can provide. The ACCRS intends to engage a limited set of organizations that will increase community engagement with the fairgrounds.

- Boy Scouts – the ACCRS has been engaged with the Boy Scouts for a number of years. We are investigating hosting a Saturday Merit Badge festival for the specific Merit Badges that ACCRS can cover.
- High School Student Volunteering – ACCRS is developing a program under the High School Community Service to enable local High School students to learn about railroading and volunteer during the fair to engage the public. This mentoring program will benefit the public and the local students.

### Future Actions – post 2019 fair

The changes above are in the ACCRS plan for 2019. The following items are areas that the ACCRS is planning to pursue but are not in the schedule for the 2019 Fair.

## Portable Entrance

The current entrance to the ACCRS is difficult to find. At the 2018 fair, the opening was about 8 feet with the door buried 12-13 feet behind the edge of the vendor canopies. Using the adjacent area and opening the doors without canopies will make the ACCRS more visible. However, having a more significant visual presence will increase attendance significantly.

The ACCRS proposes an entrance structure, only to be set-up for fair or a specific event the fair asks us to support with that level of presence.

- Should be about 8 feet wide and come out 5 feet from the roof edge of the current building
- Large display placard of ACCRS, The Fair Railroad on the top at the outside makes the railroad much more visible
- Should be lightweight, but bolt to the building and ground for security
- May be a simple frame at the edge of the roof dripline
- Will be stored either inside the ACCRS or in the adjacent antique area (only when both are closed).

## Hobby Engagement and Sales at the Fair

The concept of selling some level of train-oriented merchandise is an excellent concept. A separate proposal will be prepared on this after the ACCRS engages one or two local hobby shops to see if they would partner for this or if we must operate as a business ourselves. One concern is balancing volunteer time for managing sales versus the operations of the railroads. We may also consider something we used to do which is a raffle of model railroad/railroad items which we delivered to the winners after the Fair. Wine Train tickets were often included as prizes.

## Elementary School Engagement Program

As part of our mission to educate, ACCRS has initiated discussions with Pleasanton School District to potentially create a program for 4 grade students (studying California history) that would detail how railroads were critical to the early days of California and are critical to our state today. The program would include some lecture and individual guides using scenes on the ACCRS layouts to illustrate key elements of the railroads in building the Golden State. If successful, this could be extended to other districts.

## Time Domain for ACCRS Occupancy

As was discussed with the Fair CEO, the ACCRS has been operating under the cloud of the current building the ACCRS occupies being torn down for over 15 years. Prior to the creation of the current Fair Strategic Plan, the proposal was to relocate the ACCRS into Building D relocated to another location on the fairgrounds. Since the current Plan became available, the impact has been more acute. Without any commitment for a defined time frame until closure, it has become increasingly difficult to get volunteer commitment for changes and modifications and even to support operations for the fair. Unfortunately, without a firm commitment, the assumption of most is that the railroad may be closed at any time. This has severely impacted morale and volunteer commitment.

Based on discussions with the Fair CEO, the current capital improvement schedule appears to remove the buildings around the ACCRS building over the next 4-5 years with the ACCRS building being the last of the buildings in that area to be removed. Based on a plan that does not require removing the

building for 4-5 years, the ACCRS is asking for a commitment from the Fair for a period where continued occupancy is extended to the ACCRs for the existing space (absent force majeure or other AoG). ACCRS proposes/requests that the Fair commit to a 4 or 5 year committed occupancy of the existing space. ACCRS commits to vacate the facilities within 6 months (end of Fair to end of Year) at any point after the agreed initial period. A 5-year commitment would be for 5 more Fairs or through the 2023 Fair with exit by the end of 2023. If plans change, this can be extended at the Fairs pleasure on a year by year basis.

During this time, in addition to the actions laid out above and generally optimizing the fair experience, ACCRS intends to promote the concept of the Fair identifying an alternative location on the fairgrounds. In addition, ACCRS will pursue other locations away from the fairgrounds as potential relocation options.