**REPORT TO THE**

**BOARD OF MUSEUMS AND HISTORY**

**JUNE 11-12, 2020**

**I. Private Funds Budget Summary**



**Revenue/Expenditure Comparison Narrative:**

The above figures reflect the third quarter of fiscal year 2020 revenues and expenditures as of March 31, 2020. \* Further detail available in the below identified sections.

**II. Museum Store Sales**



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| --- | --- |
| NSRM BC STORE SALES ANNUAL COMPARISON |  |

**Museum Store Sales Narrative:** The Boulder City facility continues to operate an established museum store during a two-day-a-week schedule, coinciding with the operation of our train rides each Saturday and Sunday. The museum and store have been closed since March 12th due to Covid-19. Store sales are limited by the size of the very small store (196 squarefeet). We are concerned about how to deal with social distancing in this small space when we are allowed to reopen the museum. Identifying new merchandise is difficult. The POS system continues to have occasional credit card system issues, although less often than previously. Store sales are reported through March 31, 2020

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**III. Museum Store Revenue and Expenditure Chart**



**Museum Store Revenue and Expenditure Narrative:** The store continues to show a net profit, even in difficult times. That profit is erratic on a monthly basis, due to uneven merchandise purchases. The Minimum purchase quantities require us to purchase multiple months of stock at one time. We note that due to an increase in minimum wage, our cost of labor was increased effective June 30, 2018. Staff has been replacing part time labor in the store as much as 25% of the time, mitigating some of the increased labor cost. This report covers store/sales activity through March 31, 2019.

**IV. Membership Program**

**Museum Membership Narrative:** The NSRM/BC has no an active state membership program. Individuals wanting to support the museum do so by joining/supporting the *Friends of the Nevada Southern Railway.* The Friends have recently been working with the Board’s Membership committee, to make their membership program consistent with the programs of the other State Museums. The Friends current membership is 388, consisting of:

Family: 175

Volunteer: 118

Senior Family: 72

Individual: 8

Senior Individual: 9

Honorary: 6

In the last month they have had 2 new memberships (including 1 purchased on line), 9 renewals, 21 memberships dropped due to expiration.

1. **Museum Attendance Figures (Train Ridership Only)**

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The museum closed March 12 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. January and February ridership was near normal, but ridership for the years is down. It is not clear what is causing this reduction. Possible causes include the Interstate 11 bypass (opened August 2018), and current road construction on Hwy 93 (Boulder City Parkway) which started in August and is expected to last 14 months. This has reduced that road to one lane and has made accessing the museum more difficult. During Christmas, the more expensive night time Pajama train ridership was strong, selling out 99% of the seats, while the cheaper day time Santa train was at 71% capacity. It appears that guests prefer the higher level of service with hot chocolate and cookies as provided on the pajama train.

**Rail Explorer’s Ridership**

Starting January 10,2018 we hosted Rail Explorers, a rail bike program under a revenue contract. The attendance numbers above do not reflect their ridership, which was:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **July** | **Aug** | **Sept** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** | **Jan** | **Feb** | **Mar** | **Apr** | **May** | **June** | **TOTAL** |
| **FY 18** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 315 | 374 | 400 | 1026 | 0 | 0 | 2115 |
| **FY 19** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 693 | 1242 | 1413 | 1226 | 0 | 0 | 4574 |
| **FY 20** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 888 | 1788 | 1111 | 1152 | 1500 | 778 |  |  |  | 3787 |

Rail Explorer’s rider ship is not included in our ridership shown above. In F/Y 2018 and 2019 ra Rail Explorers only operated January through April. They recommenced operations on October 11th this year. They now have a dedicated Boulder City fleet of rail-explorer vehicles and will operate in Boulder City year-round. They are also closed due to the virus. Their current contract with the state expires in March 10, 2020. We completed an RFP on January 15, and are now in the process of renewing their contract.

1. **Attendance Traffic (Display Pavilion Only)**

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**Museum Attendance Narrative**:

The Boulder City facility does not charge an admission fee at his time. The NSRM/BC tracks non-paying visitors passing through our un-staffed, open-air display pavilion Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 3:30 only (hours extended as staffing allows) We use an automatic counter to determine attendance. Additionally, we maintain a visitor log book. That book shows that as many as 70% of our weekday guest are from outside the Las Vegas area. Increasingly we have volunteers working on the equipment in the pavilion and interacting with guests. In January we started an occasional docent program in the RPO car. The pavilion was closed March 12. Staff report that guests continue to visit the museum during the closure. Report is through March 31, 2020

**VII. Train Ride Receipts**



**Train Ride Receipts Narrative:** Although ridership is down, revenue is up primarly due to the success of the Friends Pajama train and REX payments. We expect revenue for the year to meet budget goals, even with the impact of the Covid virus. Santa Train tickets went on sale in October, increasing revenue in October and November. Report is through March 31, 2020.

1. **Fundraising Activities**

The Blue-Ribbon Committee continues to work towards support for museum expansion. There focus is finding approximately $2.5 million to fund the complete architectural package, to have the project “shovel ready” when bond money becomes available. Towards that, the committee has created a “one sheet” with donation information to be used with the project books created by our architect. We expect the virus to have a negative affect on fundraising going forward.

**IIX. General Museum Activities**

* **Corvid-19.** The Museum has been closed since March 12 due to the pandemic. Since then, I (Randy Hees, Director) have worked from home. My assistant, John Walker has had exclusive use of our shared office. Maintenance Specialist Greg Medcalf has been working outside, alone to preserve the property. He patrols the railroad weekly, has been spraying for weeds and doing other landscape work. We have updated our emergency procedures to include Covid response, have 60 days of supplies on hand including a suitable disinfectant which can be used on upholstered seats. The friends have purchased masks, and UV lights to disinfect those masks. REX has purchased hand sanitizer dispensers for use on the platform. We are hoping to open in the near term as an open space without train rides. Working with REX we have developed a plan allow their renewed operation with social distancing when the Governor allows gathering of 50 people of more. Regular public train rides would follow when gatherings of 100 people are allowed. We expect to initially use open cars, to avoid issues with air conditioning which could spread the virus.
* **Museum Expansion.** On June 3rd the Senate passed the Conservation Reauthorization Bond Act, AB 84, which includes $30 million for state museums, of which a significant amount is earmarked for expansion of the Boulder City Railroad Museum. Additionally, the Regional Transportation Commission has programed $500,000 to design our access road this year, and $5 million to build it in f/y 2021, pending coordination with the Division of State Lands and project management by the Division of State Public works. It is likely that the fiscal impacts of the virus will impact the timeline for developing the new museum.

We continue to work with the City of Boulder City and their Economic Vitality commission to develop the bike path extension through the museum. They have received 2 grants to plan and build a trail head west of the museum on the existing River Mt Loop trail. Architecture for that project was completed in January. Construction, which can only be done in Winter when desert tortoise are hibernating. Due to the onset of the virus construction will not happen this year.

* **I-11, Bridge status**. Staff continues to work with NDOT, the City of Henderson, the PUC and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to extend the museum train ride over the bridge. The FRA has accepted our operating plan and inspected the track. We have a interlocal agreement with NDOT. Henderson now has an interlocal agreement with NDOT. and now are writing an interlocal agreement to offer us.
* **Equipment Maintenance and Restoration**. Maintaining antique railroad equipment continues to be a challenge. During November and December, we were down to a single usable locomotive, Union Pacific 844. (We returned UP 1000 to service in early January.) Our head end power car (HEP) has been out of service since December 1st. Repair parts were ordered, but didn’t arrive until late January. As a result, we had to rent a generator to provide lights and heat for our Christmas trains. The HEP car has now been repaired and is available for service. Locomotive 1855 is out of service pending rebuilding the scavenging blower (gear driven supercharger) We believed we had funds to rebuild the blower this year, but the impact of the virus on state budgets are expected to prevent that. Locomotive L-3 has a blown head gasket. Parts for its obsolete engine are nearly impossible to source.

Restoration continues on our 1899 private car, *Ellsmere*. Volunteers continue to clean wood work removing darkened varnish. This is a slow process, which will take some years to complete. When volunteers are working on the car, we open it for visitors. Inspection of the cars exterior wood work is showing that there is significant rot, which will require removing and replacing the car siding. Removal of the car siding will allow repairs to the car frame work.

A separate crew completed the rehabilitation a “rider” car (passenger car built from a box car) which we received as part of the 1993 purchase of equipment from a Utah tourist railroad. This car has never been in service at Boulder City. This car will be equipped to carry bicycles, and to add capacity for our secondary trains. We submitted a waiver to the FRA to allow use of the car (required on any freight car over 50 years of age).

* The **Friends of the Nevada Southern Railway** have built a new website <https://nevadasouthern.com/> to replace their old one. The new site is much improved both in appearance, and it function. This site includes the ability purchase memberships online consistent with the Board of Museum’s Membership committee’s concepts.
* **Social Media Presence.** We have continued to utilize social media channels to promote our events as well as the regular weekend train rides. We monitor reviews on Facebook, Trip Advisor, Yelp and Google.
* We continue to find that social media is an excellent tool in outreach for the museum’s events and programs. We note that it is common for crowd base review sites to have separate pages for the railroad museum and its excursion railroad or Friends organization as well as for Rail Explorers. This can lead to confusion if not managed. We also note that these review sites change the way they present information, making direct quarter to quarter comparisons difficult. As social media matures, we find more difficult to maintain our presence. DMH policies make it difficult to pay for ads or to “boost” posts.

On **Trip Advisor** as a “museum” 4.5 stars with 127 reviews, ranked 5 of 24 “things to do”

- as a “tour” 4.5 stars with 57 reviews, ranked 6 of 24 “things to do”

- Rail Explorers 5 stars with 312 reviews 4 of 29 “outdoor activities”

On **Google** – 4.6 stars with 755 reviews (42 new reviews in the last three months).

On **Facebook** – for the Railroad Museum, 4.6 stars with 263 reviews

-- for the “Friends”, 4.8 stars with 85 reviews

-- for Rail Explorers, 4.9 stars with 571 reviews

On **Yelp** – 4.5 stars with 75 reviews (1 less than reported last quarter)

* During this report period (January through March 12), the NSRM-BC operated 4 school runs trains serving 348 students. Several schools canceled field trips in early March, and two school trains were canceled as a result of the museum’s closure.
* We continue to offer Storytime on the Train once a month, a program for K/pre-K students which includes reading an age appropriate book, then doing a craft. We are finding that families return regularly for this activity, contributing to our Friends membership success. This program has been recognized by a local Rotary club who have made donation to support the program and are supplying volunteers. The March Storytime was offered via Facebook.
* We hosted six *Engineer for an Hour* programs ($250 fee each) generating $500 in revenue. We hosted a commercial photo shoot, generating $1,000.
* The Live Steam (7.5” gauge ride on model trains) returned to operation in October. They were closed at the time of the museum closure to allow significant track upgrades. Those upgrades are expected to continue to allow them to reopen in September (they are normally closed June-August).
* Once again, we would like to recognize the invaluable hours that our volunteers here at NSRM-BC donate to the operations here at the museum. Without their help we would not be able to run the museum. Volunteer worked 1,583.5 hours in January, 1,630 hours in February, and 872 hours in March.

**Mission Statement**

The Nevada State Railroad Museum, Boulder City will interpret, through a working excursion railroad, exhibitions and public programs, the story of railroads and the importance of transportation systems to the development of southern Nevada since 1900, with a special focus on the construction of Hoover Dam. The Museum will acquire and preserve artifacts of railroad history ranging from paper documents to rolling stock, on exhibit or used actively for visitor enjoyment and education.

**Current Operations**

The Nevada State Railroad Museum, Boulder City offers public train excursions on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year. The display pavilion is open 7 days a week.