

The Conway Daily Sun

State awards ownership of Flying Yankee

Apr 9, 2024



The Flying Yankee at Lincoln. (BRIAN SOLOMON PHOTO)

CONWAY — Provided the Governor and Executive Council OK it, it looks like the Flying Yankee stainless-steel diesel-electric streamliner train will be returning home to the tracks of the Conway Scenic Railroad for restoration.

The Flying Yankee Association announced at its annual meeting on April 6 it has been selected by the state Department of Transportation to receive ownership of the historic train. This announcement comes after the state conducted a Request For Proposal process earlier this winter.

“We are both honored and thrilled to be receiving this historic train from the State,” said Brian LaPlant, president of the FYA.

“The Flying Yankee has languished for far too long, and we look forward to preserving, relocating and restoring the train, thanks to the State, as well as our friends, partners, and supporters that will help make this dream become a reality. A beautiful piece of New England history has been saved today.”

Under a scenario agreed to by the parties, the train would be moved to the Conway Scenic’s rail yard in Conway Village across from the Ham Arena and would then undergo restoration, with the public able to view the historic train as it undergoes restoration.

The CSRR would also provide mechanical know-how to the restoration effort.

“I think this will be a big plus for our region,” said Conway Scenic President David Swirk on Monday, noting that the CSRR will provide the real estate for the restoration of the train at its property in Conway.

He said his company is working with Shawn Bergeron of Bergeron Technical Services of Conway to determine where to site a building in which the train will be restored.

Swirk told the Sun their hope is to work with the Conway Planning Board on creating a history-themed railroad destination at that end of town.



The David Baker Upholstery Shop was moved from Greenwood Ave to the site last fall.

“We want to do this right about what’s best for the future,” said Swirk, who with his wife Rhonda acquired the CSRR in 2018.

The hope is that once restored, the train would return to ride the rails of the CSRR, which was founded by Dwight Smith, Carroll Reed and Bill Levy in August 1974.

“We are coming up on our 50th anniversary this August. This is a nice present to celebrate,” Swirk said Monday.

The train is currently housed at the recently sold Hobo Railroad in Lincoln.

The FYA will first meet with the state later this month to finalize the transfer details. Afterwards, the state’s Executive Council will meet to approve the details and transfer ownership. LaPlant expects that to take place sometime in the summer of 2024.

The NHDOT formally released an RFP in November of 2023, searching for a responsible entity to complete the restoration of the historic train. The successful bidder will receive ownership of the train from the state, the current owners of the train. The RFP’s submission window officially closed on Jan. 3.

The Flying Yankee Restoration Group d/b/a Flying Yankee Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization that is responsible for raising and managing funds related to the restoration of the famous Flying Yankee train, originally owned and operated by the Boston & Maine Railroad.

Jacob Eidsmoe of the Flying Yankee Association told the Sun this week that the goal is to create a building at the CSRR site in Conway that would double as both a restoration workshop and a museum. He said the long-term goal is for visitors to be able to see the FY even at the times it is not running.

“Unlike past restoration attempts, we are trying not to over-promise and under-deliver. However,” he said, “we do not have any specific details about the train’s storage to share at this time, but we hope to begin sharing updates soon,” Eidsmoe said.

“We couldn’t truly begin moving on some of these details (items that cost to begin planning) until we were certain we would be awarded the Flying Yankee. But the plan is to first move both the train and its parts from Lincoln to a secure area the CSRR (will) designate for us,” he said.

“There are a number of shipping containers full of parts that were pulled from the FY during previous restorations, that have been off-site from the Hobo railyard. We hope to be able to keep them together in one place moving forward so that we can better assess what parts we have and don’t have in those containers, determine their conditions, and then decide on the best “next steps” after that. It is no small job,” he related.

Late Story Land co-founder Bob Morrell (1920-98) acquired the then 58-year-old train in 1993 from the Edaville Railroad of South Carver, Mass., where it had sat for over three decades, and had it moved via flatbed to a siding in Glen in hopes of restoring it.

Morrell and partners had hoped to get the lease from the state of New Hampshire to the former Maine Central-owned Mountain Division line through Crawford Notch but the state instead awarded that lease to the Conway Scenic Railroad in 1994. Morrell sold the train to the state for \$1 in 1996, the same year the Flying Yankee Restoration group was formed.

It was moved the next year to the Concord and Claremont Railroad’s shops in Claremont where it underwent some work and grants were obtained but not enough to complete the entire work. It found a home in Lincoln in August 2005.

For more information, go to flyingyankee.org.