

**STEAM LOCOMOTIVE ASSOCIATION #253, INC.**  
**1401 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Fort Pierce, Florida 34950**



January 22, 2016

Rebecca Grohall, Planning Manager  
P.O. Box 1480  
Fort Pierce, FL 34954

Dear Ms. Grohall,

It was a pleasure meeting with you last week. Thank you for sharing your insights on our project.

As you requested, enclosed is the progress report for 2015. I have also enclosed the Needs Analysis and Economic Impact report, which we discussed at our meeting with you.

We understand the circumstances for the sale of the property that the train and museum now occupy at 1401 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Although it is regrettable, we are hopeful that the sale of this property could be delayed until an alternate location for the train can be identified.

The Association is deeply grateful to the City of Fort Pierce for your extensive contributions to this historically important project and your continuing in-kind support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Terry C. Richtmyer". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Terry C. Richtmyer, Director Project Development  
(305) 323-4689  
[support@steamlocomotive253.org](mailto:support@steamlocomotive253.org)

cc. Nick Mimms, P.E., City Manager

\*\*\* Please visit our website for a complete overview of our operations at  
[www.steamlocomotive253.org](http://www.steamlocomotive253.org)

# ***STEAM LOCOMOTIVE ASSOCIATION #253, INC.***

## **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2015**

Much has been accomplished in 2015. Early this year the brake rigging was installed after a tedious restoration of its 36 parts, some weighing 80 pounds each. The parts restored include the brake beams, brake pull rods, coupler rods, brake head hangers, brake heads, U shackles, and pins. Another five month long project was replacement of the cab woodwork. All of the cab interior woodwork, including the eight windows, two doors, and the cab paneling have been replaced with new wood and painted. During the summer months, the entire locomotive and tender were refinished with a new coat of high temperature paint. The tubes and flues for the boiler have been purchased and are ready for installation. This boiler work is the final remaining step to bring the locomotive to operating condition.

Since the purchase of Locomotive #253 in 1998 by Robert Bates and Steve Spreckelmeier, more than 35,000 man hours have been contributed by workers and volunteers over 17 years of long, hard labor. Today, with the cost of restoring a steam locomotive approaching \$1.5 million, much has been accomplished in that time. As of 2015 nearly \$1 million has been spent on #253. Nearly all contributions were derived from grants, private donations, in-kind donations of materials and services, institutional donations, volunteer services, and local fundraisers.

Locomotive #253 was moved to Fort Pierce on June 13, 2009, and since that time the following components have been restored or rebuilt: Firebox pan, blowdown valve, steam injectors, brake valves, super heaters, boiler plate replacement, throttle valves, air pressure tanks, injector nozzles, brake rigging, and more.

Other efforts this year include a major remake of our website ([www.steamlocomotive253.org](http://www.steamlocomotive253.org)) and the filing of several grants which are pending.

As a tourist attraction, the future Fort Pierce and Western Railroad Museum has an astonishing confluence of factors in its favor. First, this 1924 Steam Locomotive, purchased for Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway, has a rich and glorious history by any measure. At 181 tons it is the largest and one of the last of its kind. For many years it traveled the entire east coast bringing settlers to Florida and made journeys to Key West on the famous "Overseas Highway". This important legacy of Florida's past will be showcased for centuries to come and shared, not only with South Florida, but throughout our Nation as well. The age of steam is a vital part of our history and is responsible for forging the industrial revolution and is largely responsible for the early development of our country and its infrastructure. It is important that this history be made available to the public at large.

Another major component is the proposed property location north of Savannah Road just past the City Public Works property. This is a dream location as it is adjacent to the F.E.C. Railway tracks and, in fact, there are older tracks entering the property, perfect for relocation of the locomotive and the five rail cars. This location is a fortuitous aspect of this project as it provides direct access to the F.E.C. "K Line" track which will be used for the planned public excursions on the train to Okeechobee County. It is also a short distance from the Heathcote Botanical Gardens, another heavily visited attraction in the area.

A third factor is the well preserved 1893 F.E.C. Railway Depot building. This historic structure will hold the museum artifacts and serve as the ticket office. Such a remarkable landmark as this will provide a period atmosphere with educational opportunities for children and adults alike. The museum, at the current location, is open to the general public on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and over the years has welcomed thousands of visitors and numerous groups including local school classes, community college classes, Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops, and many other organizations. When the steam locomotive becomes operational, it is expected to draw very sizable state and national patronage and recognition.

Yet another substantial component is the generous offer of Florida East Coast Railway to donate and install up to 300 feet of new track for the museum. This track would be laid on the proposed Savannah property and would be adequate for display of the train and a "Y" turnaround area.

Lastly, the museum has a narrow gauge train operating on the current property. This train could also be relocated to the Savannah property with tracks winding through the property to view the locomotive and tender as well as the five other rail cars. These narrow gauge trains are widely used throughout the country to provide exciting rides to children and adults alike.

The local economic impact of both the museum and the train operation are significant. The attached Economic Impact Report shows a projected annual recurring revenue of \$182,113,441 and revenues of \$28,339,661 contributed in taxes for St. Lucie County. The operation of Steam Locomotive #253 could indeed be the economic engine for Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County.

It also appears the operation would be self-sustaining. We know from other train excursions in the U.S., that 2% of visitors to the area will ride historical trains. With our County visitor numbers at about 1 million, the ridership number is estimated at 20,000 annually. A single fare of \$75.00 would therefore yield annual income of \$1,500,000. (The Durango & Silverton fares are \$89 for adults and \$55 for children which are in line with other railroad excursions). Because tickets must be purchased months in advance, most visitors are not able to ride the trains; however, they will visit the museum and come to see the train leave the station and experience the sounds and sights of a living steam engine under way. This provides addition income from museum entrance tickets.

We wish to recognize and thank our many sponsors, supporters, and contributors who have helped out so much this year.

We look forward to another exceptional and thriving year ahead.

## **Steam Locomotive Association #253, Inc.**

### NEEDS ANALYSIS and ECONOMIC IMPACT

Heritage tourism has been a growing trend, as more families and individuals wish to integrate recreation with meaningful educational experiences. Heritage tourism is focused on the experience and preservation of a distinctive place and its stories, from the past to the present. Steam locomotive exhibits and railroad museums are quite prevalent in the world and such operations elsewhere in the nation have drawn tens of thousands of visitors from around the world. Most visitors extend their visitation utilizing local facilities and visiting other attractions. It is estimated that an operational steam locomotive situated in a prime tourist setting will generate twenty times the rebuild investment in local revenue, once service has been initiated.

Although few economic impact studies exist with regard to locomotive exhibits or railroad museums, there are many anecdotal references to how successful they have been. However, one very interesting study was conducted recently by Western Carolina University which measured the economic and fiscal impact of The Great Smokey Mountain Railroad on the economy of Jackson County, North Carolina. The study relates to GSMR operating a Spur Line, Train Depot, Steam Engine and Turntable in Jackson County, NC. There are striking similarities between this operation in North Carolina and the operation of #253 in Fort Pierce and therefore many conclusions and parallels can be inferred. Both operations utilize a Steam Locomotive, a Train Depot, Visitor Excursions, and ongoing maintenance. The study found that the direct and indirect effect of their operation in terms of dollars would contribute a total of \$25,979,093 to the local economy. This figure is annual and recurring. In addition to its economic impact, the study found that GSMR's operation could contribute \$4,042,743 tax dollars annually to support federal, state, and local initiatives. <sup>i</sup>

Following the study, the County awarded \$700,000 for the restoration of Steam Locomotive #1702 located in Bryson City, North Carolina.

Jackson County, NC has a population of 40,919 (2013), while St. Lucie County has a population of 286,832 (2013). So, let us interpolate the above figures to reflect the real impact on our own economy here in St. Lucie County. With a multiple of 7.01 (St. Lucie County is 7.01 times larger than Jackson County) the total economic impact is \$182,113,441 annually with \$28,339,628 contributed in taxes.

The operation of Steam Locomotive #253 could indeed be the economic engine for Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County.

This important legacy of Florida's past will be showcased for centuries to come and shared, not only with South Florida, but throughout our Nation as well.

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<sup>i</sup> Western Carolina University, Estimating the Economic Impact of GSMR Turntable and Spur/Steam Engine/Train Depot in Town of Dillsboro, Jackson County, North Carolina