



# NEWS RELEASE

**RAILROAD MUSEUM OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Real Trains. Real History. Real Excitement.

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*The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania is administered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, with the active support of the Friends of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania non profit organization.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OCTOBER 1, 2009

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## **RAILROAD MUSEUM OF PENNSYLVANIA FRIENDS AWARDED NORFOLK SOUTHERN FOUNDATION GRANT**

Imagine yourself at the throttle of a massive, rushing steam locomotive or relaxing in the plush splendor of a railroad president's car. Soon, visitors will be able to gain the inside track to a large number of the historic engines and railroad cars in the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania via virtual tours. The virtual tours, upgrades to Museum information kiosks and a new digital signage system will be made possible by a \$55,778 grant recently awarded to the Friends of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania by the Norfolk Southern Foundation, and will offer greater access to and information about the Museum's world-class collection.

According to Bradley K. Smith, Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania chief curator, the Museum has a responsibility to both share its collection with the public and to be an effective caretaker of its historic treasures. Virtual tours of the Museum's rolling stock will help to achieve both objectives. "The dual mission to provide access to artifacts while trying to preserve them is a considerable challenge," says Smith, "especially since the locomotives and railroad cars at the heart of our collection are difficult to access by virtue of their enormous size and many of them because of the nature of their physical condition."

Visitors will be able to take advantage of the Railroad Museum's virtual tours on the Museum's web site, on ten interactive, touch-screen computer kiosks in the Museum and on five large digital flat screen monitors, also situated in various areas throughout the Museum.

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The digital signage system will disseminate information to Museum visitors with eye-catching visual displays of movies, still images, web pages, text information, PowerPoint, audio, video and potentially even live TV. Five large flat screen monitors, strategically located throughout the Museum, will enhance the information that visitors now obtain through interaction with staff and volunteers, interpretive labels, publications and collateral materials. Each of the five units may be programmed individually and will be changed periodically as needed to reflect Museum events, collections highlights, desired programming and featured activities.

Virtual tours are created through the combination of professional photography and computer technology. Every facet of a particular space is photographed from a stationary position and the photos are then imported into an interactive computer program, which places the images in juxtaposition with each other to create a digital, 360 degree panorama. Visitors can zoom in on specific features or zoom out for a broader view of the railroad artifact they are viewing.

Smith adds, "Virtual tours will give Railroad Museum visitors an exciting way to tour the inside of railroad cars and locomotive cabs that they would not otherwise be able to see, including individuals with disabilities who cannot climb steep and narrow steps or ladders, which were the main ways to access railroad equipment by its workers."

Virtual tours of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania's historic locomotives and railroad cars are expected to be completed and installed within the next twelve months, and will include various areas in the Museum like Steinman Station passenger depot and Stewart Junction railway education center. Upgrades to the computer kiosks and the installation of the digital signage system should also be completed within the year.

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“We are grateful to the Norfolk Southern Foundation for their support and for recognizing the value of collections accessibility at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania,” acknowledges Smith. “This grant will assist us greatly in disseminating information to the public about the importance and nature of American railroading, historically, currently and in the future.”

The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania is administered by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, with the active support of the Friends of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania non-profit organization.

For more information on Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania collections, programs and operations, call (717)687-8268 or visit [www.rrmuseumpa.org](http://www.rrmuseumpa.org).