



WESTERN FOREST
INDUSTRIES MUSEUM

Annual Report



2023 *Reigniting a railroad*



Our Mission

To cultivate an understanding of the history and culture of Railroad and logging operations while promoting environmentally respectful tourism and economic opportunity.

Our Vision

Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad, (WFIM), through its various enterprises, will serve as a physical and cultural link between the urban and rural communities surrounding Mt. Rainier.

With the world's largest comprehensive collection of logging locomotives, we will promote and provide historical steam age experiences telling the stories of those who lived, worked, and were impacted by the railroad.

By utilizing our travel corridor, MRSR offers inclusive recreational opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, interests, and abilities.

We will provide sustainable and responsible tourism opportunities to benefit the local communities surrounding Mt. Rainier and our travel corridor.

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Leadership MANAGEMENT TEAM



Bethan Maher
Executive Director



Rowdy Pierce
Operations Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Betty Capestany
President



Seth Boettcher
Vice-President



Bev Wilson
Treasurer



Byron Adams
Director



Rich Williams
Director

Letter to our Stakeholders

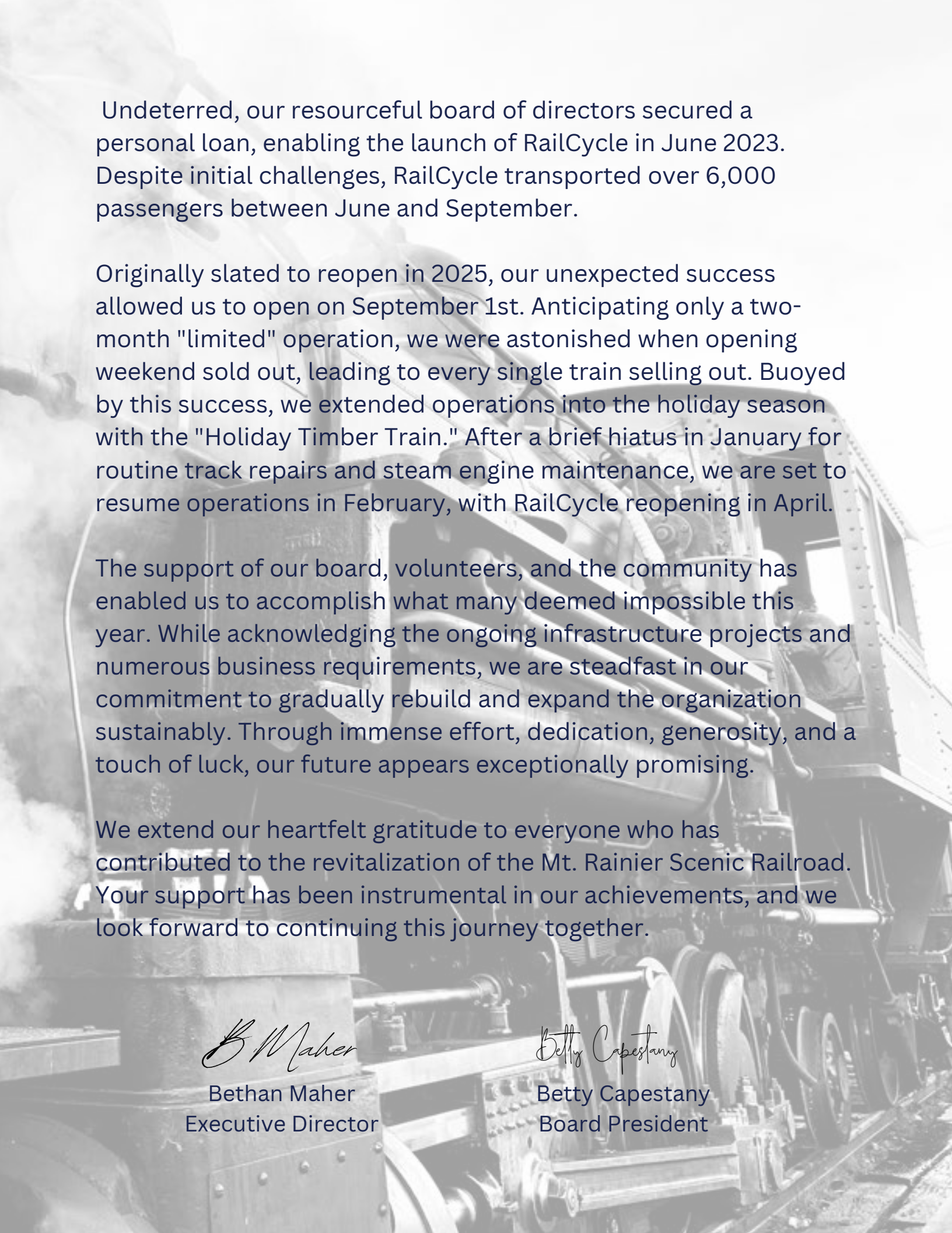
Dear Passengers, Donors, Volunteers, and Friends:

Reflecting on the past 15 months, it's challenging to encapsulate the journey of the Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad (MRSR) in a brief letter. The closure of the railroad in 2020 marked an uncertain period, but in September 2022, Western Forest Industries Museum, the original founding nonprofit linked with MRSR, was rejuvenated with a local board of directors, taking ownership from American Heritage Railways.

The responsibility to revive MRSR felt monumental, with the pressure to make it a success, recognizing it as the railroad's potential "last chance." We understood the need to manage costs efficiently, generate income swiftly, and devise a strategic plan for a sustainable operation. Without the backing of significant benefactors, the challenges were formidable, and success required extensive effort and support.

Our management team, composed of individuals associated with MRSR in the past, collaborated with a dynamic board of directors, including local business figures and politically astute individuals to determine our next steps and the future direction of MRSR. January 2023 marked the announcement of our first volunteer meeting – over the past year, an astonishing 100 volunteers have joined our cause.

This inaugural year was a blend of remarkable success and challenges. As our organization took shape, we initially secured a \$560,000 grant, but in March 2023, eligibility complications arose, leading to the loss of 80% of our planned startup capital.



Undeterred, our resourceful board of directors secured a personal loan, enabling the launch of RailCycle in June 2023. Despite initial challenges, RailCycle transported over 6,000 passengers between June and September.

Originally slated to reopen in 2025, our unexpected success allowed us to open on September 1st. Anticipating only a two-month "limited" operation, we were astonished when opening weekend sold out, leading to every single train selling out. Buoyed by this success, we extended operations into the holiday season with the "Holiday Timber Train." After a brief hiatus in January for routine track repairs and steam engine maintenance, we are set to resume operations in February, with RailCycle reopening in April.

The support of our board, volunteers, and the community has enabled us to accomplish what many deemed impossible this year. While acknowledging the ongoing infrastructure projects and numerous business requirements, we are steadfast in our commitment to gradually rebuild and expand the organization sustainably. Through immense effort, dedication, generosity, and a touch of luck, our future appears exceptionally promising.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the revitalization of the Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad. Your support has been instrumental in our achievements, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

B. Maher

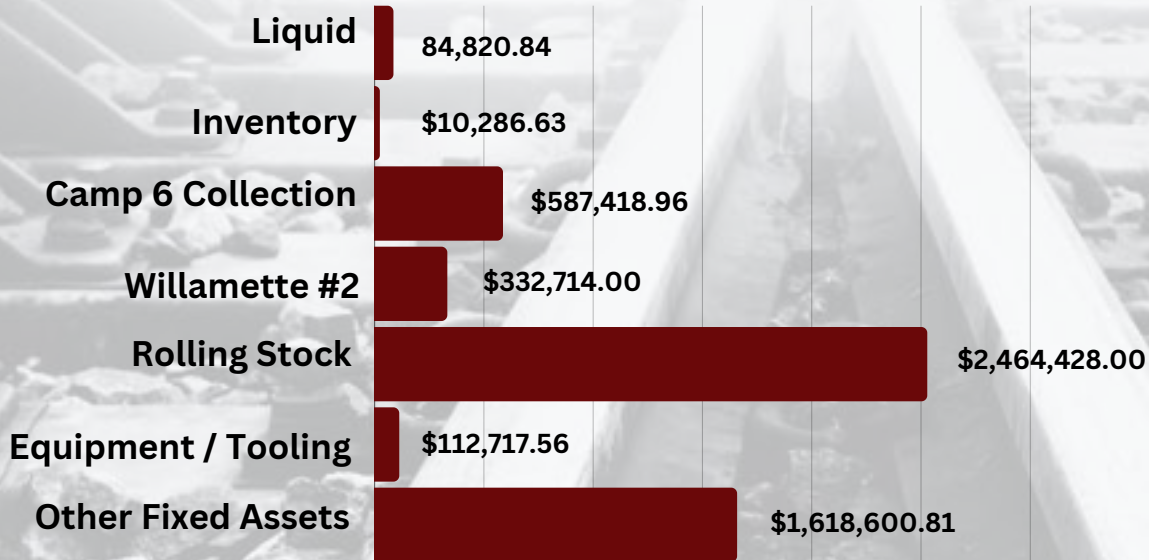
Bethan Maher
Executive Director

Betty Capestany

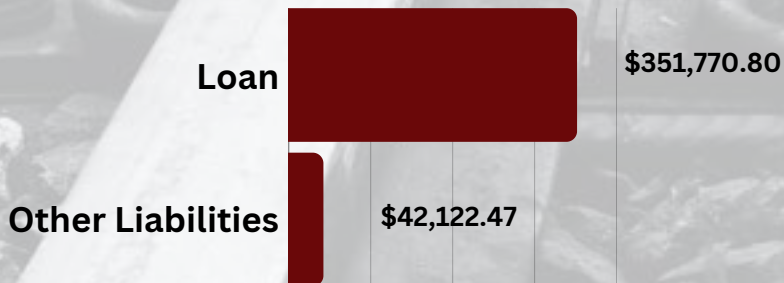
Betty Capestany
Board President

Financial Overview

Assets



Liabilities



Total Liabilities & Equity



Revenue

Contributed Income		
	Donations	\$70,962.27
	Grants	\$18,995.04
	In-kind Donations	\$20,250.00
RailCycle		
	Tickets	\$269,553.14
	Gift Shop	\$11,208.36
Railroad		
	Regular Excursion	\$263,225.23
	Whiskey	\$57,483.57
	Holiday Train	\$141,034.98
	Gift Shop	\$38,429.44
Other Income		
	Other Income	\$50,230.66
Total Income		\$941,372.69

Donation Highlights



356 Donors



\$428 Average Donation



\$60,000 Largest Donation

Expenses

Marketing		
	Advertising & Marketing	\$43,094.16
Administration / Overhead		
	Business Taxes	\$5,425.60
	Contract & Professional Fees	\$25,470.00
	Insurance	\$40,274.73
	Loan Payments	\$20,722.57
	Payroll Expenses	\$539,702.37
	Utilities	\$19,081.01
RailCycle		
	Operations	\$98,247.25
Railroad		
	Train Operations	\$79,623.24
	Repairs & Maintenance	\$52,054.00
	Vehicles	\$13,010.48
Miscellaneous		
	Volunteer Management	\$7,478.41
Other Expenses		
	Other Expenses	\$57,294.60
Total Expenditures		\$1,001,478.42

Net Revenue

NET REVENUE		(\$60,105.73)
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While our profit/loss statement shows a large net loss, these numbers are reflective of necessary capital expenditures, including the design and fabrication of our RailCycles, significant infrastructure, bridge, and mechanical work - all necessary to begin operating and generating revenue. We remain optimistic that our 2024 budget reflects both more capital improvements and debt paydown.

Volunteer Program

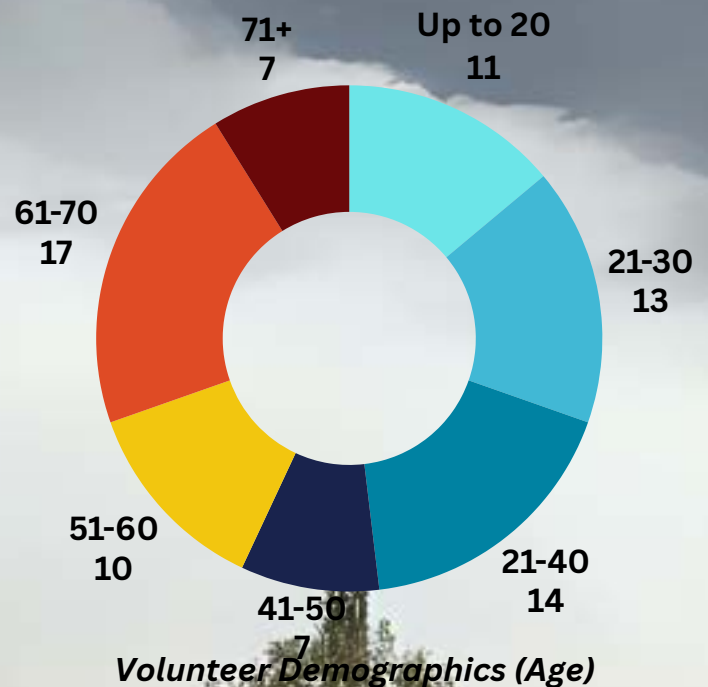
The reintroduction of Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad's volunteer program has been a standout achievement in the past year. With 109 volunteers, 80 actively involved, contributing 5,648.27 hours (equivalent to \$141,206.75), our team successfully launched RailCycle and restored rail service.

Volunteers played a pivotal role in initiatives such as the complete interior makeover of passenger coach 902, COT&S on all passenger car brakes, track maintenance, RailCycle assembly, steam engine Polson 70 maintenance, and survey work on MRSR Porter No 5. Additionally, volunteers served as car hosts and supported operations at the Elbe Depot during the resumption of train services.

Our volunteer program's strength lies in the diverse mix of experienced and new faces. Many bring prior experience with MRSR, Class I, and mainline railroad operations, while others are entirely new to the industry. Notably, nearly half of our volunteers are under the age of 40, injecting a refreshing level of enthusiasm into our operations traditionally associated with a more mature demographic.

Our gratitude and appreciation is immense. We would not be where we are without our volunteers.

Special thanks to Bill Westerlund for contributing the highest number of recorded service hours, totaling 1,283.





The concept behind RailCycle Mt. Rainier was elegantly straightforward. Its launch injected WFIM with a swift infusion of operational capital, established a robust business framework for expansion, and, in its inaugural year, drew substantial footfall and economic benefits while laying the foundation for a grander steam railroad attraction. RailCycle Mt. Rainier stands as a family-friendly adventure, featuring pedal-powered rail bikes traversing the breathtaking landscapes along the disused track near New Reliance, just beyond Eatonville. Crafted for ease of pedaling, these RailCycles are designed to accommodate families of various ages and abilities, with plans underway for modifications, including electric assistance and wheelchair accessibility.

However, an unforeseen setback occurred with the loss of a pledged \$560,000 grant, not due to any fault of our own, altering the course of RailCycle's timeline and budget. In the face of unexpected challenges, our dedicated team adeptly managed persistent delays in the rail bike shipments, resulting in a compressed assembly timeline. Despite these hurdles, our staff and volunteers showcased unwavering commitment, completing the rail bike assembly just in time for the scheduled opening. A last-minute concern with the cycle's design, though, necessitated additional safety measures, leading to the difficult decision to cancel RailCycle Mt. Rainier's opening weekend runs.

Responding to the setback, in June, we reverted to our "old" rail bike models, allowing us to address necessary repairs and evaluate the new design. Successfully reintroducing our RailCycles in July, we achieved notable milestones, serving 6,148 passengers and receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback. Despite a seasonal closure at the end of September due to employee loss and staffing challenges, our accomplishments remain significant.

Looking forward, our plans include implementing long-term modifications to the bikes, incorporating electric assistance, and adopting a more conservative schedule to refine operating practices. These changes aim to sustain substantial income generation and economic impact for the area.





MT. RAINIER SCENIC RAILROAD

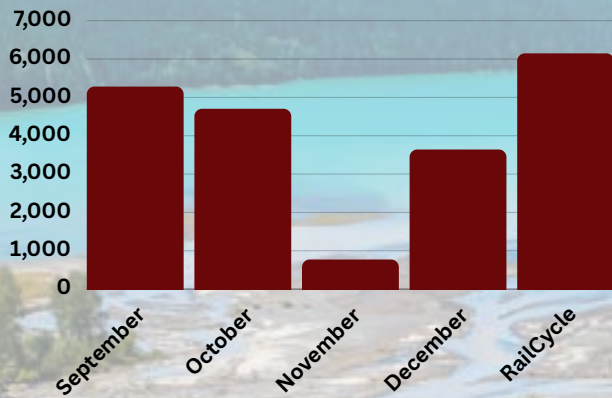
The return of railroad operations to Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad marks a significant milestone in our journey. When we acquired the railroad, our deliberate decision was to embrace the heritage of the organization - returning the name to “Mt. Rainier Scenic,” and offering a steam excursion in period-appropriate equipment, at family-friendly prices. Facing many challenges, including three years of neglected maintenance and infrastructure, we aimed for operations by 2025.

Surprisingly, thanks to an influx of volunteer help and a lot of determination from our paid staff, our equipment was ready by late Spring, but financial constraints preventing track and bridge repair led us to explore a collaboration with Chehalis Centralia Railroad & Museum. Although discussions were promising, the news leaked prematurely, and by the time we were ready to begin an equipment move and sign an agreement, the CCRM board had moved in a different direction. Subsequently, a generous donation empowered us to address the remaining infrastructure challenges. We announced operations for September and October on August 1st and the response surpassed expectations. Every. Single. Train. Sold. Out.

Navigating a successful fall season posed challenges, but with dedicated efforts from Rowdy, Brian, and invaluable volunteers during Bethan's maternity leave, we overcame operational and business hurdles. As inquiries about our future plans poured in, we faced constraints due to our agreement with American Heritage Railways. The agreement specified that we are only able to run The Polar Express during the holiday season through 2024. However, Al Harper, AHR's owner, graciously allowed us to operate a scaled-down holiday event – the Holiday Timber Train. Again, our expectations were surpassed. Every. Single. Train. Sold. Out.

In summary, we operated 96 trains flawlessly, serving 14,398 passengers, and establishing an operational model for 2024. Train operations will commence earlier than in the past decade, starting again in February. We express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support in making this remarkable journey possible.

Ridership Statistics



In 2024, Western Forest Industries Museum, via RailCycle and Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad welcomed **20,546** guests from 49 states and a total of 12 countries: Canada, Denmark, Algeria, the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Trinidad & Tobago, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, US, and the United Arab Emirates.

Social Media Success

Our social media outreach has been a notable success over the past year. We can largely attribute our sales success, volunteer recruitment, and general public interest to the combined channels of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Our Facebook page has 55,060 followers and reached 1,771,016 people in 2023 (a 7,100% increase) and an additional paid reach of 931,056 people. Our Instagram page has 8,640 followers and reached 116,222 people (a 26,700% increase). While we started a YouTube channel in 2023, efforts to publish biweekly updates regarding mechanical work and other endeavors have increased in 2024.

The goals for our social media channels are obviously to promote sales and ridership for both Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad and RailCycle, but also to be open and transparent about the work involved in maintaining heritage railroad operations and equipment.

Our restoration and maintenance project list this year was extensive and a combination of staff and volunteer efforts. Many critical capital repairs were made to begin RailCycle operations and put the railroad back in service, while other projects were “looking ahead,” to help us advance towards our future goals. A simple (but not exhaustive) list of capital and restoration projects includes:

Polson 70:

- Annual completed.
- Mechanical repairs were made, particularly to valves and running gear.
- Operated every service day without going down for repairs.

Porter No. 5:

- Survey work begun.

Coach 902:

- Complete interior gut and rebuild.
- Professional exterior body repair and paint.
- Window restoration.
- Mechanical restoration.

Coach 901 and Mountain View:

- Brake valves, mechanical review.

Baggage Car:

- Converted to gift shop car.
- Bathrooms installed.
- Brake valves, mechanical review.

Maintenance of Way:

- Significant bridge repairs to Mashel River and Roundtop bridges.
- Tie work.
- Significant tamping.
- Active railroad regulated.
- Signals back in service, inspected, certified.

RailCycle:

- Design 15 4-seat rail bikes.
- Assemble, paint, and test 15 rail bikes.
- Perform structural modifications to bikes.
- Assemble and test prototype e-assist.
- Restore Alaska Boxcar / convert to Gift Shop.
- Clear, gravel right of way at New Reliance for departure site.
- Parking lot construction.
- Clear brush from 3 miles of track for RailCycle.
- Site design at New Reliance.



