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HORSESHOE CURVE INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES AND ENHANCED ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES

STATEMENT FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOSEPH DEFRANCESCO

ALTOONA, PA — April 23, 2026 — The Railroaders Memorial Museum is pleased to provide a comprehensive update regarding ongoing site improvement efforts at the Horseshoe Curve National Historic Landmark. As the facility moves beyond its 30th anniversary of the 1992 renovations, the organization is doubling down on its commitment to safety, historic preservation, and visitor accessibility.

Restoring the Funicular: A “Beneath the Surface” Investment

The funicular remains the site’s primary mechanical priority. Since 2020, the organization has invested over **\$240,000** of the Museum’s funds to overhaul this one-of-a-kind piece of equipment. While only some of the progress has been visible to the public, the technical restoration has been exhaustive, including:

- Total replacement of the ***main computer and mechanical control systems***.
- Replacement of the ***brake system***.
- Replacement and programming of ***hundreds of sensors***.
- ***Track maintenance*** to ensure long-term stability.

The Museum inherited a system that has suffered from years of deferred maintenance and 'shoddy' previous repairs. These underlying issues became clear during our post-COVID reactivation attempts. While the process has been slow, the staff is working closely with state inspectors to ensure the funicular meets every modern safety and compliance standard.

2026 Progress Report

The Museum is pleased to announce significant milestones in the current repair phase:

1. ***Hydraulic Systems***: The hydraulic cylinders for the large steel access doors at the top station have been successfully replaced.
2. ***Top Loading Station***: A bid has been accepted for the complete overhaul of the top station door and gate; this critical project is slated for completion by ***June 2026***.
3. ***Sheave Maintenance***: New sheave guide liners have been received, and installation is currently underway.

These are all requirements set forth by the state to be completed, prior to inspection, which we are hoping to have completed by the end of ***June, 2026***.



The Utility Vehicle (UTV) Backup Plan

Recognizing the vital importance of accessibility while the funicular undergoes these specialized repairs, the Horseshoe Curve is introducing a new transportation alternative, by late May, early June, 2026.

Crews are widening and grading the old maintenance trail to accommodate a ***Utility Vehicle (UTV) shuttle service***. This service would be available throughout the day when the funicular is not in service, providing a reliable transport option for visitors who require assistance reaching the top observation area. The service will be limited to those who can reasonably use the UTV. The UTV will provide a great alternative to those who find the steps challenging.

Looking Ahead: Capital Needs

Beyond mechanical repairs, the site's physical structures require attention. Now over three decades old, the facility's buildings are in immediate need of roof replacements. Brush and tree cutting also remain a priority. The organization is aggressively pursuing competitive grants and seeking support from generous donors to fund these capital improvements in an increasingly competitive economic climate.

We understand the frustration that comes with technical delays, but our direction is clear. We thank our visitors for their patience as we perform the difficult, necessary work to preserve this landmark for the next generation of rail enthusiasts.

The Horseshoe Curve National Historic Landmark invites the public to visit this season to witness the progress firsthand and enjoy one of the premier engineering marvels of the world.

Joseph A. DeFrancesco
Executive Director