

PGRS TRACKIN'



The Newsletter of the Piedmont Garden Railway Society

April 2023

Editor: Wayne Hamilton

Greetings

This may be your last PGRS newsletter. If you have not paid your 2023 dues, your name will be removed from the PGRS Mailing List. Dues should be mailed to PGRS Secretary/Treasurer. We are also continuing our monthly newsletter series on “So, You Want to Build a Garden Railroad?” with this issue. If anyone else has thoughts to share on this topic, please contact me. Please send any idea, project, photo, or something you found surfing on the Internet, etc., no matter how great or small they may be, to your newsletter editor. Send your materials to: railman1959@aol.com Special thanks to this month’s contributors.

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Club Messages

The annual PGRS Trainfest was held on March 11th, 2023, at the Lutheridge conference center in Arden, NC.

President Huntman conducted the club business meeting, including election of officers and board members. Secretary/Treasurer Don Watson gave the treasurer’s report with our coffers containing \$2622.38, prior to the expenses of the Train Fest or collecting this year’s dues.

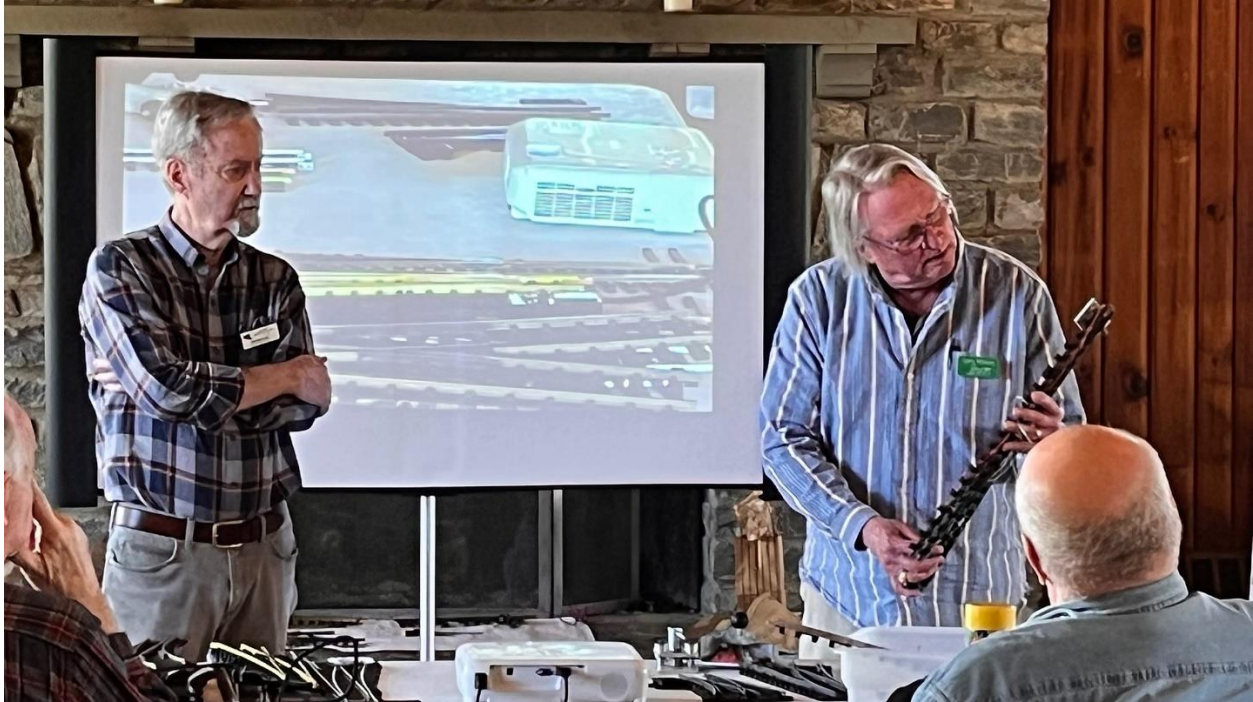
Food & beverages were provided, and nice door prizes were awarded.



Several seminars were held including *Track Work Basics* and *How to hold a Gandy Dancer Event*. Here President Huntman conducts our business meeting.



Larry Williams addresses our attentive audience.



Don Watson and Larry Williams explain track types.

If you missed Train Fest, our members should also visit the PGRS website links for the PowerPoints on these topics:

[GARDEN RR INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING](#)

[HOSTING A GANDY DANCER EVENT](#)

Name Tag Update: The club provides name tags to new dues paying members at no additional charge, upon request. Our current supplier has stopped supplying name tags, so we have found a new vendor. If any new members wish to have a name tag to wear at events please send an e-mail to Fran Monahan, "margemonahan2@gmail.com", and supply your full name as you want it to be shown on the badge and your current city of residence. Your badge will be given to you at the next PGRS event. The club is considering mailing them out too.

If you are an existing member who has already received the older style of the name tag and you would like to have a new one, you may also send a message to Fran, but you will be responsible for paying for the new name tag yourself. The new name tags will have a magnetic clip. You will be contacted about the price as soon an order is ready. The club is finalizing the cost details and you'll be informed of the price soon, but should be around \$10.00.



If you paid attention to the track planning seminar at Train Fest, you could have a layout just like this above by Doc Watson. (April Fools!!)

Here are several Train Shows you can place on your calendar:

June 2-3: Johnson City Train Show Sept 14-17: SER Convention - Cartersville, GA

April 14-15: East Coast Large Scale Train Show – Annapolis, MD

July 1-8: 38th National Garden Railroad Convention – Santa Clara, CA

Aug 30-Sept 2: 43rd National Narrow-Gauge Convention – Denver, CO

As always, consider sharing this newsletter with friends who might be interested in our club and if they wish to become members ask them to contact our PGRS Secretary/Treasurer for a membership form or download a form from our website:

[Join Us – Piedmont Garden Railway Society](#)

Dues can be mailed to PGRS Secretary/Treasurer at:

Doc Watson
125 Mistletoe Trail
Hendersonville, NC 28791
docwatson@morrisbb.net

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Railfanning - Prototypes to inspire a garden railway layout.

The Norfolk Southern OAR Train

By: Wayne Hamilton

Recently a special train was in town at the Asheville yard. Operation Awareness & Response (OAR), was launched in 2015 to educate the public about the economic importance of the safe movement of hazardous materials by rail and to connect emergency first responders in Norfolk Southern communities with information and training resource. In April 2016, Norfolk Southern unveiled a brand-new safety train, with a dedicated locomotive, specially equipped classroom box cars, and several tank cars for additional hands-on training along their lines.

"The derailment in East Palestine made clear that ensuring first responders are prepared for disasters involving hazardous materials is vitally important to the safety of communities," said Ohio Governor Mike DeWine. Norfolk Southern Corporation announced on March 8, 2023, that it will create a new regional training center in Ohio for first responders.

Additionally, Norfolk Southern will expand its Operation Awareness & Response (OAR) program, which travels the company's 22-state network and trains first responders on how to respond safely to rail incidents. I was able pull a few strings, tour the train, and get some photographs on a very rainy day.

This train is powered by a specially painted GP38-2 and the eight car consist is arranged in a mirror image so two training classes can occur at once. Each training car set has a boxcar classroom, a flat car with a bulk tainer, various tank dome appliances and a 20ft. shipping container, a classroom tank car, and a tank car with an extended top walkway.



[OAR - Operation Awareness and Response \(joinnsoar.com\)](http://joinnsoar.com)



Classroom cars





Classroom tank car interior with displays



OAR Train Overview with a class in progress



Flatcar with training devices



View of the support shipping container/conex box



Flatcar deck with various hatches



Tank car with topside training deck



NS 5642 - GP38-2 Beauty Shot

You may have also noticed the TRANSCAER® logo near the front of the locomotive. (Transportation Community Awareness Emergency Response) is an outreach program covering North America. Since 1986, the organization has focused on assisting communities and training emergency responders to prepare for and respond to hazardous material transportation incidents. The TRANSCAER program is led by industry professionals and supported by partner agencies such as Chemical Manufacturing, Transportation, Distribution, Industry & Industry Associations, Emergency Response, and Government.

LGB makes a G-scale set of this train, but it is pricey. MTH produces this train in O scale. Atlas makes a set in HO and N scale. Most of these models are hard to find.

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The Backshop – Modeling Tips and Projects

So, You Want to Build a Garden Railroad?

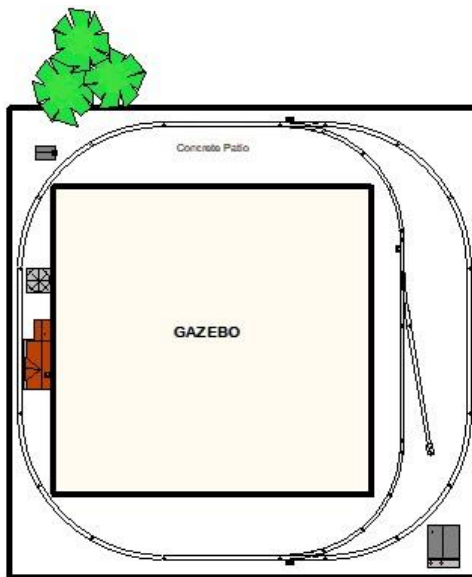
Last month we went over some planning concepts and during our annual Trainfest we were able to hear talks on the beginning and the end of constructing a garden

railroad, track and actual construction. If you missed Trainfest, these topics are available on our web site.

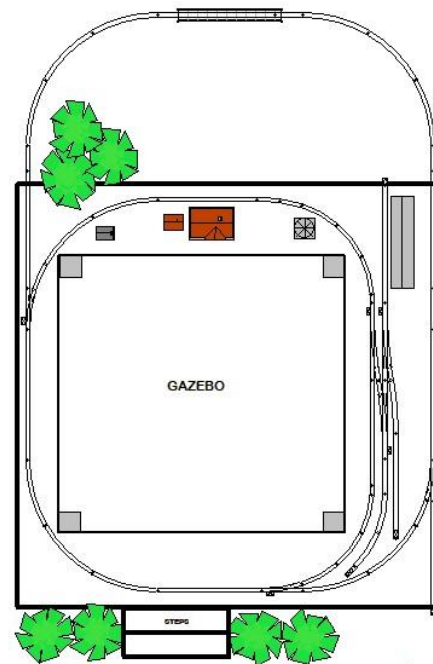
This month I'm going to focus on more track planning issues. A good plan solves a lot of issues in the end. When designing your track plan be realistic on your layout goals. Do you want to model railroad operations and switching or just enjoy seeing your trains make a loop through a garden. Is your railroad going to be elevated or ground level?

I am by no means an expert, but I knew that I needed to start small and build up to what I wanted. So, my track plan was planned in phases. I started on an existing elevated 16' x 16' concrete slab where my 10' x 10' gazebo is located. I planned out three years of work for now.

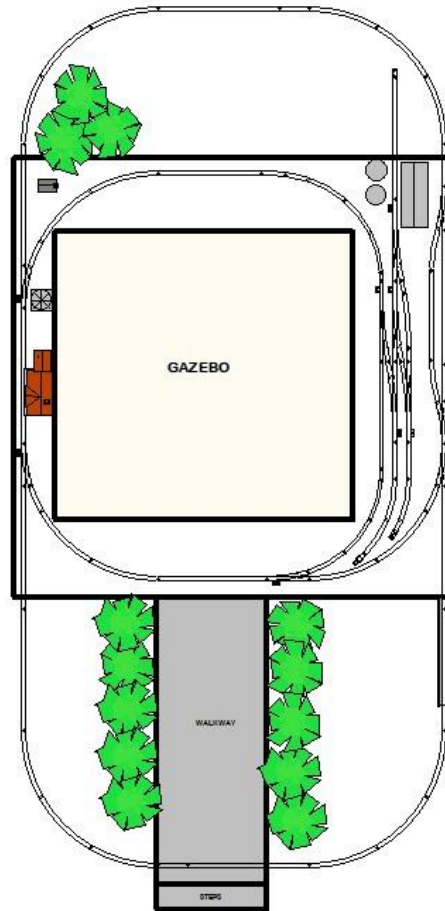
New bridge and trestle extension



My starting point.



This year's phase of construction also added a switching area.



My ultimate goal for next year.

So, my tracks are at ground level where we sit under the gazebo and low trestles in the front and back. Maybe year four will bring in some type of water feature.

Try to stick with a theme in your entire layout, or at least in entire sections. A Ferris wheel, next to a barn, next to a Victorian Farmhouse, next to a Saloon just reeks of poor planning. If you like all those things, consider dividing your layout into sections (residential, theme park, downtown, countryside, etc.). Even consider your rolling stock. Amtrak should not be running through your Western Old West Town.

Keep your layout interesting. Think of the most beautiful painting or sculpture in the world. In today's world the average person has an attention span of about 15 seconds. Yes, the Mona Lisa is beautiful, but how long can you keep staring at it? After a while you have seen what you need to see. The same goes for your layout. You may have done the world's most fantastic layout, but if its static, people lose

interest. How to keep the interest should be your goal. Using motion is a great solution. One train going by is great, two better, three even better. Now if the trains travel alongside each other, very interesting. If they pass each other, more interesting. Different speeds interesting, climbing grades good, passing over a bridge, setting off signal lights and passing gates, fantastic. Adding lights to buildings, structures, bridges, trestles, rolling stock, and plants can add a whole new dimension to your layout. This can make your layout pop at night. I suggest using 12-volt LED lighting whenever possible (it lasts long, is brighter, and uses 90% less power) or battery power if you have a way to recharge them. Understand that lighting your layout will increase your build time.

Things to consider when laying out garden RR track. Trains seldom have problems or derail on straightaways. Most problems happen on a curve. A large diameter curve (20 feet or bigger) seldom has any problems. Every foot shorter than 20-foot diameter increases the odds of problems. Most problems occur under a 10-foot diameter. Only go under 10 foot if that is all that will work with your layout. A 4-foot diameter curve requires constant care and eliminates most larger engines. Try to make your diameter consistent. A dual track bender is pretty much a necessity when building your layout. Don't try to just bend track freehand (it never bends smooth enough). You can buy flexible track or turn regular track into bendable track. Basically, bendable track has every other tie separated from the other ties so that the rails can be bent. It is almost impossible to bend track when all the ties are locked together. A curve with many back and forth "S" turns does look interesting, but usually causes problems. The next thing to consider is grade. A grade adds interest to your layout and is recommended for a good look. However, try to limit your grade to no more than 3% (3-inch rise over 100-inch distance). This is not very steep, but necessary for traction and engine power depending on how much rolling stock you are pulling. More than 6% grade will pretty much lead you to many problems.

Track Dips and Rises: Try to keep variations and left to right out of level in your track to a minimum. This is the major cause of derailments, loss of electrical contact, and uncoupling. To keep the track side to side level it needs to be on a level surface. Your dirt may be level when you build it, but after rains, erosion, and roots, it may soon get out of level and get dips and rises. It is best to have a very solid base.

Consider staggering your rails: Most factory rails are not staggered. However, staggering is recommended to make a much smoother running train. Most people

try to stagger an inch or so. The best is about a 1-foot stagger! No stagger opens you up to sharp bends in curves that can cause big problems. As a side note, full sized trains stagger their tracks. That gives the clickety clack sound. No stagger gives a rough / bouncy clunk sound. Keep in mind that one 6-foot rail is way more preferable than six 1-foot rails. Every joint is a potential problem.

Tunnels should be carefully thought out. Let's face it, tunnels are big spaces that you can't easily have access to. Difficult to clean the tracks, keep critters out of, and depending on the size could be next to impossible to work on and retrieve a derailed train. My suggestion is don't have a tunnel. If your goal is to have the train disappear, then think deep canyon. A canyon lets the train disappear, but you have total access to it. If you like the tunnel look. Have a sidetrack (that you don't really use) disappear into your faux tunnel or mind shaft that isn't really used. My solution is to use bushes as a view block.

Sidings: Sidings are often useful and add interest to your RR. The negative with sidings is they require switches. Switches are typically expensive (especially if they are electronic) and can be problematic to maintain. But they are so handy. It's nice to have several sidetracks to set up trains on, while the rest of your RR is already running. Also, sidings can be used around your layout at stations, etc. A lighted passenger car parked at the station really adds to the ambiance of your layout.

For some resources on these topics please visit this great site: [Family Garden Trains - Your First Stop for Garden Railroading Fun](#)

Next month we'll discuss powering your railroad and trains.

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Railroad Trivia

I'm going to continue to focus on railroad short-lines. My wife and I saw this Navajo Railroad while traveling in northern Arizona. What was unique about the Black Mesa and Lake Powell Railroad? The answer is found later in this newsletter.

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Businesses associated with our Club



Jim's Train Sales

O & G Gauge New & Used Trains

Jim Hendley

Etowah, North Carolina 28729

Lionel, MTH, USA Trains, PIKO, LGB
Bridgeworks Power Supplies, Bachmann
Split-Jaw Rail Clamps, O & G Gauge Track

Garden Railroad Design, New and Used Track
You can now reach Jim at: hendleyjim4@gmail.com
Or...(828) 333-2523



Peggy Keyes
Owner / Chief Conductor
RightTrackTrainMuseum@gmail.com
828.625-5551

The Right Track Toy Train Museum
A non-profit museum to benefit Pancreatic Cancer
research
2414 Memorial Hwy (Rte 64/74)
Lake Lure, NC 28746
Find us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Right-Track-Toy-Train-Museum-141291999274246/>

I am planning to close the Right Track Toy Train Museum at the end of 2023. Also, when I do open for this year I could use some help, particularly with running the trains. Since everything in the museum must be sold, I could not handle the sales and the trains. I plan to open on April 14 with it being open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 1PM to 5PM and would love some help. Everything that is for sale is 50% off.

A reminder to all our members of the Train Lovers Luncheons:

The Asheville Train Lovers Luncheons are on every 2nd Thursday of the month at the Post 25 restaurant in Arden, NC at 11:30.

The Greater Greenville Train Lovers Luncheons. They are on the first Tuesday of every month at the A&P Restaurant in Greer starting at 11:30 AM.

The Columbus Luncheons at Rural Seed are held at 12:00 on the Third Thursday of each month.

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Member Stories
By: Bob & Denise Thompson

We had a wonderful time at the first live steam event at the NCTM in Spencer NC. I was expecting some turnout from Piedmont Garden Railway society but, alas, Les Knoll, Denise and I were it. We went Thursday, Friday and Saturday March 2nd thru 4th. I shot plenty of movies and learned a lot talking to more experienced operators. Les ran a 2-4-4-2 articulated and I ran my LGB/Astor Frank S 0-6-0. My engine which I converted to radio control over the past month in preparation for the event ran way, way better than I expected. I ran my LGB Frank S four different times and learned a lot about live steam running. It is a really fine engine. It's not like just flipping a switch. Way beyond me, but there were engines burning coal. Firing them requires a long learning curve. There were around ninety people who signed up for the event total. Put on your calendar next year 2/29 thru 3/3/24. Even if you don't join in operations, the engines put on a show, from 0-4-0's to an Allegheny 2-6-6-6. It's a big engine and really slipped a lot. The last picture is of the kit manual of an Renegar engine Denise got me for my July birthday, a bit early.







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Railroad Trivia Answer

The Black Mesa and Lake Powell Railroad (BM&LP) was one of only a few privately owned electrified railroads used specifically to haul a single commodity. It was Arizona's only electrified railway. The BM&LP was never a common carrier system, wholly owned by the Peabody Coal Company specifically to haul coal from the

Kayenta Mine near Kayenta, Arizona to the Navajo Generating Station power plant at Page, AZ. The railroad operated 24-hours a day, seven days a week during peak operation using a combination of E60C motors built by General Electric to get the job done. The Black Mesa and Lake Powell Railroad, when opened in 1973, was the most highly energized system in place at the time using catenary powered with 50,000 volts, all of which was supplied by the Page power plant. Overall, the railroad was about 78-miles in length and had no stations or terminals located along its main line except for the coal mine it served. When it was announced the power plant it served would shut down in December, 2019, the railroad made its final delivery on August 26th that year to the Navajo Generating Station.



Black Mesa & Lake Powell E60C #6006 is seen here leading a coal drag

The power plant was shut down in December 2019 due to competition from cheaper energy sources. The electrical components of the railway were dismantled between winter 2019 and fall 2020, but the tracks have remained in place to be evaluated for future use. A video can be seen here: [Final days of the Black Mesa and Lake Powell RR.](#)



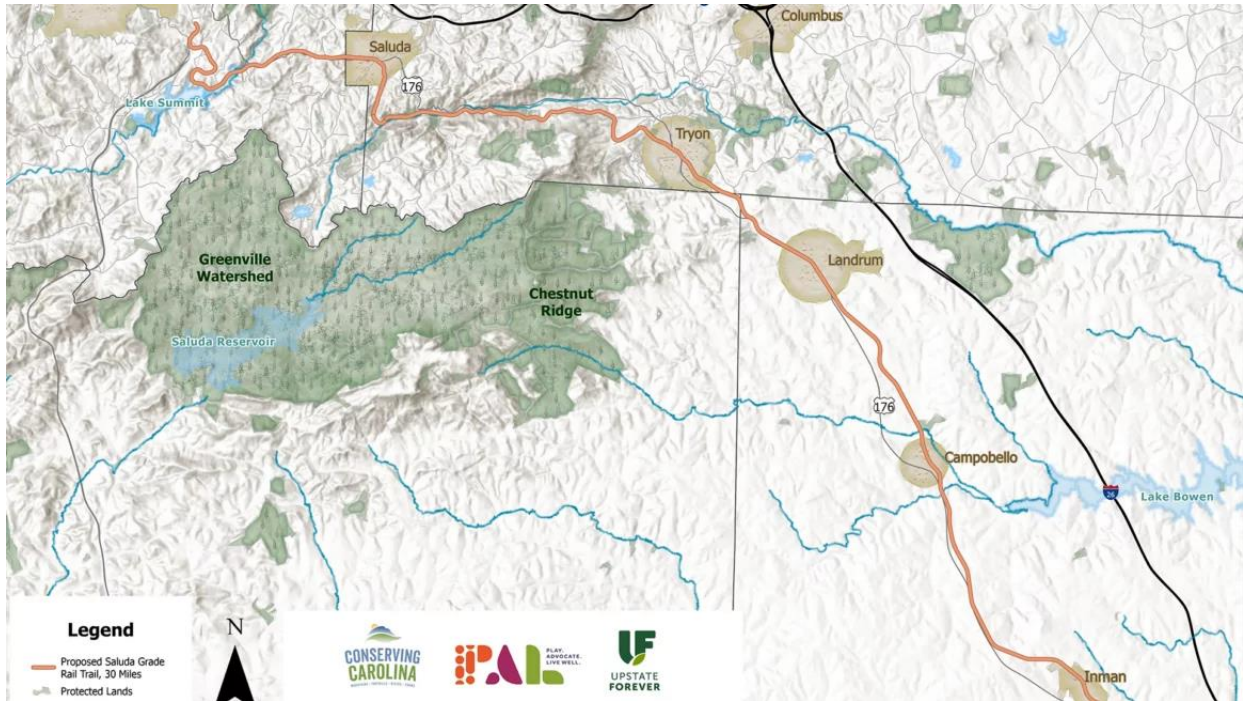
Black Mesa & Lake Powell E60C's #6005, #6006, #6003 and #6002 (products of General Electric) near Cow Springs, Arizona with a loaded coal train heading back to the Navajo Generating Station

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Web Bits

Saluda Grade Partners, a coalition of three nonprofits in North and South Carolina, has reached an agreement with Norfolk Southern to purchase the inactive 31-mile Saluda Grade railroad corridor rail line for an unclosed sum, the organization announced March 16.

Comprised of Conserving Carolina, Play, Advocate, Live Well (PAL) and Upstate Forever, the coalition plans to use the rail line to create a recreational trail that will cover around 16 miles in South Carolina and 15 miles in North Carolina. The route will begin in Inman, run along the Blue Ridge Escarpment, pass through downtown Saluda (N.C.), Tryon (N.C.), Landrum and Inman, and end in Zirconia, North Carolina



“The Saluda Grade Rail Trail will be a transformative project for the region,” said Pal Executive Director Laura Ringo. “This rail-to-trail will be a destination and provide a boost to the Spartanburg County tourism economy, especially for the cities along the route like Landrum, Campobello and Inman. During the first year that the trail is open to the community, 125,000 visitors are expected. The majority of those visitors will buy lunch or a beverage, shop along main streets, and hopefully spend the night.”

In the summer months, the coalition plans to reach out to landowners and stakeholders along the trail to seek their input on aspects of the trail, including:

- Opportunities and challenges presented by the trail
- Approaches that will best meet the needs of the community

The coalition plans to launch a website for the Saluda Grade Trail in spring 2023. For more information, visit conservingcarolina.org/saluda-grade, palspartanburg.org/saludagraderail or upstateforever.org/saluda-grade.

Another link to railroad preservation is [ORHS - History \(orrvillerrailroad.com\)](http://orrvillerrailroad.com) that promotes the preservation of Ohio railroad heritage. ORHS is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(3) historical, educational organization and is based in Orrville, Ohio.

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