A Sister Alco on Her Way to the A&TC
To Join ASTA’s Workhorse Diesel

ASTA’s 56-year-old diesel locomotive, No. 442, has been the mainstay of the railroad’s passenger operations since she arrived in Cedar Park in 2000.

Now the reliable 442 will have company on the railroad, in the form of a locomotive purchased by ASTA from Ed Bowers, the Houston-area owner of Vintage Locomotives Inc., a renowned collector of Alco diesels.

The A&TC’s new motive power is Belt Railway of Chicago No. 605, a C424 model built in 1966.

With the acquisition of 605, the A&TC’s roster of engines will remain entirely made up of products of the American Locomotive Co. (Alco), including our 1916 steam engine, Southern Pacific 786.

Having two reliable engines in Cedar Park Yard will provide much more flexible options for the railroad’s operations, as well as assuring that those operations will be uninterrupted in the rare event that one or the other engine is out of service.

The Belt Railway, largest terminal switching road in the U.S., bought six of the C424s, part of Alco’s famous “Century” series with which it closed out production of diesels in 1970. Although 605 has four-wheel trucks as opposed to 442’s six-wheel trucks, the newer engine was built extra heavy for freight-transfer service, and both engines generate the same 2,400 horsepower.

The 605 is coming to Texas from the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad, a 150-mile freight and excursion line based in Springfield in northwestern Arkansas. Following work to get the engine ready for its trip to Texas, 605 is expected to arrive in the A&TC’s yard sometime in February, courtesy of free mainline transportation provided by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad.

When the new power arrives, she will still need work to ready her for service, including new batteries and other electrical equipment, a crankcase exhaust and fuel pump, and most significantly, installation of a rebuilt air compressor.

Purchase price for 605 was $50,000, and the materials and work to ready her for service are expected to run about $40,000.

2015 was a banner year for passenger traffic on the A&TC, and the railroad for the first time topped $1 million in ticket sales for the year, thanks to the efforts of ASTA volunteers and staff.

And the new year is also off to a vigorous start, with ticket sales for January up 47 per cent from the year before.

A key ingredient in the surging ticket sales was the introduction of imaginative new special trains to complement the railroad’s regular routes, and those special runs are being continued and enhanced in the new year.

Springtime offerings coming up include:

• “Killer Comics” Murder Mystery, Feb. 27. Dinner, beer and wine and a unique murder-mystery performance on a 3-hour trip departing 7 p.m. For patrons 17 and older.

• Spring Break Flyers, March 15-16-17. Return of our popular midweek trains for Spring Break, leaving Bertram at 11 a.m. each day for a trip to Burnet with a two-hour lunch layover.

• Beer Flyer, March 26. Bluebonnet Beer Co. master brewer David Hulama will showcase the Round Rock brewery’s offerings, with food from Greenhouse Craft Food Co.’s executive chef Rob Snow. Three-hour round trip departs at 7 p.m.; 21 and up.

• Bluebonnet Festival, April 9 and 10. Burnet’s 33rd annual festival will include a carnival, vendors, biergarten and Wild West shootout. Saturday’s train, departing 9 a.m., will lay over for four hours, and Sunday’s departure at 10 a.m. will lay over for two hours.

• Wine Flyer, April 24. Flat Creek Estate winery of Marble Falls will provide the wines, and Bowties to Blue Jeans Catering of Round Rock the food pairings. The 3-hour round trip will depart at 6 p.m., for those 21 up. Departures (except the Spring Break specials) will all be from Cedar Park, and tickets and information are available by calling 512-477-8468 ext. 2, or visiting www.austinsteamtrain.org.
The Hill Country’s Railroad: a Popular Excursion Route From Its Earliest Days

Though the organizers of the narrow-gauge Austin & Northwestern Railroad in 1881 had their eyes on the potential freight traffic from the quarries and ranches of the Hill Country northwest of Austin, the scenic allurements along the new road seem to have suggested excursion service to them as well.

That’s the track, of course, that every week is transversed by the modern-day excursion passengers of the Austin & Texas Central.

An advertisement in *The Austin American-Statesman* of March 12, 1890, recently turned up by ASTA director and volunteer David Gracy, promotes the delights of weekend excursions, particularly since the line had been extended into Marble Falls the year before.

“To accommodate a number of our friends, who desire spending Saturday and Sunday at the Falls,” the notice reads, “we have decided to open the excursion season on March 15, 1890.”

In the ad’s proposed schedule, two trains apparently ran from Austin to Marble Falls on Saturday (leaving at 7:30 a.m. and 2 p.m.), and a single train brought everyone home on Sunday, departing Marble Falls at 4 p.m. Depending on the train, the journey from Austin was apparently four or five hours.

Ticket prices ranged from a quarter per passenger (Fairland to Marble Falls) to $1.50 a head for the full 75-mile trip from Austin. (That equating to about $40 in 2016 dollars, the excursion pricing was not entirely different from today’s!)
The long process of returning ASTA’s signature steam locomotive, Southern Pacific 786, continues slowly but steadily, and though the current restoration work is primarily behind the scenes, it continues to bring the 1916 Mikado steadily closer to the day she again raises steam.

786’s parts, big and small, returned to the Cedar Park Yard some time back for final assembly, but it was found that key elements—some of the assemblies that make up the engine’s driving-wheel bearings—proved unusable and needed to be cast and machined anew. Under the direction of 786 volunteer leaders Greg Duepner and John Mandell, this work is ongoing at the shops of the Strasburg Railroad in Pennsylvania, which is slated to have all eight driving boxes ready to go by late spring.

Until those parts are finished, of course, the frame cannot be lifted onto the wheels, nor the boiler onto the frame. Once they are complete, new grease (or oil) collars will be fabricated and installed locally, and the wheels will be readied to put under the engine.

In the meantime, work is also under way preparing for hydro-testing 786’s cylinders and valve chests (which involves testing them with high-pressure water), to be sure they are ready for steam service. This project involves custom machining of special studs which hold on the cylinder heads, and producing blanking plates to close off the various steam openings in the cylinder assembly. All this work is ongoing as well. Greg and John are also preparing special tools to drill the holes for mounting the engine’s smokebox door.

Beyond the current ongoing tasks, 786’s final assembly process will include:

- Installing a new drawbar center casting.
- Making and installing new shoes and wedges for the driver bearings and new spring-rigging hardware for the engine’s suspension.
- Lifting the frame onto the wheels and lifting the boiler onto the frame.
- Refurbishing and installing the cab.
- Finishing the rebuild of the hot-water pump. The engine’s other appliances—air compressors, cold-water pump, injector, dynamo and power reverse—are already rebuilt.
- Installing the appliances, boiler accessories and locomotive piping.
- Insulating the boiler outside and lining the firebox inside.
- Completing work on the tender.

It seems like a lot and it is, but given the massive overhauls required for the frame and boiler (plus manufacturing an entirely new cylinder saddle), the project is definitely in its final stages. ASTA’s board and officers are carefully considering how best to organize the final phase of the work, but it will probably involve oversight by an experienced steam project manager, hiring an on-site steam mechanic, and the efforts of both subcontractors and volunteers. Funding is currently sufficient for what is known to be required, though of course there are always unknowns and new problems to be discovered as ASTA starts the reassembly.

Volunteer work days are being scheduled, performing necessary tasks such as keeping a good finish on the side rods, working on the tender deck and exercising the engine’s appliance.

While vital work on 786’s bearings continues at a Pennsylvania machine shop, ASTA volunteers continue necessary restoration work in the Cedar Park Yard. Working on the finish of the engine’s rods and drivers: volunteers Jimmy Burleyson, Robert Schoen and Brian Smith.

ASTA Will Take Part Again in Austin’s Yearly Community-Wide Fundraising Push

ASTA will once again this year take part in Amplify Austin, the 24-hour fundraising push to generate support for non-profits all over Austin’s six-county area.

ASTA will kick off this year’s Amplify Austin with a reception hosted by Whitestone Brewery, at 601 E. Whitestone Blvd., Suite 500, Building 5, next to the A&TC yard in Cedar Park. The event will be Tuesday, March 8, at 6 p.m. The brewery generously donating $1 to the ASTA campaign for each beer sold at the event.

As it was last year, this year’s fundraising will be devoted to completion of restoration of Cedar Park, a climate-controlled Santa Fe coach being converted into a new concession car for ASTA’s trains.

As it was last year, this year’s Amplify Austin will be devoted to completion of restoration of Cedar Park, a climate-controlled Santa Fe coach being converted into a new concession car for ASTA’s trains. The online event is sponsored by I Live Here, I Give Here, the organization founded in 2007 to encourage and focus non-profit giving in the community. Last year’s event raised $7.7 million for hundreds of organizations.

This will be ASTA’s third year of participation. In 2014, the effort netted $5,881, and last year’s total grew to $8,111. That amount came from 74 donors, half of whom were first-time donors to ASTA.

ASTA’s board and staff are being encouraged not only to make their participation in this year’s Amplify Austin 100 per cent, but to create related online donation pages of their own to attract contributions from their friends and associates.

**YOU CAN HELP!**
If you’d like to donate or volunteer to help bring 786 back to life, please give us a call at 512-477-8468 or visit www.austinsteamtrain.org!
Jim Maloy Was ASTA’s Popular Movie Man

Jim Maloy was always a popular presence at ASTA volunteer gatherings, as frequently he would bring and display railroad films and tapes from his sizable collection. And when he did, the projecting work was in the hands of a pro, as Jim was a lifelong film projectionist and archivist.

Jim died at his South Austin home Oct. 28, at the age of 94. He was preceded by his wife and constant companion of 69 years, Edna Jensen Maloy, who died in February, 2014.

Jim was a lifelong resident of Travis Heights, and after Army service in World War II, he worked as a union projectionist in many historic Austin movie houses including the Cactus, the Austin and the Southwood. Later, he and Edna owned a film rental library, Feature Film Service, on South Congress.

In addition to showing many of his 16mm films to ASTA volunteer gatherings, from the 1970s on Jim presented movies to summertime crowds at the Zilker Hillside Film Festival, as well as at Deep Eddy Pool and other parks and swimming pools around Central Texas.

Jim and Edna both worked on A&TC trains in onboard service, and he was active with the Boy Scouts.

He is survived by a daughter, two sons, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

ASTA Welcomes New Volunteer Coordinator

Michael Warburton, who has more than 20 years of experience with non-profit volunteer programs, has been named ASTA’s volunteer coordinator.

Michael will be the staff member responsible for recruiting, recognizing, scheduling and communicating with the indispensable volunteer work force which crews the A&TC’s trains and other operations.

“Michael is a terrific individual,” said ASTA Executive Director Lil Serafine, “and the volunteers will really enjoy working with him.”

She said Michael’s experience has been “in the areas of volunteer program development, training, community engagement and administration in a number of different capacities, from creating and managing volunteer training programs to coordinating employee resource groups for the purpose of outreach and education.”

Michael was most recently director of programs and services for The Caring Place in Georgetown, which provides emergency assistance of all kinds for families in dire economic straits. He has also served as volunteer director for the Blood and Tissue Center of Central Texas and has worked in the AARP Texas State Office.

Michael holds a bachelor of science in communications from the University of Texas at Austin and a master’s degree in counseling psychology from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio.

As they have been since its inception, ASTA’s railroad operations are carried on by a dedicated corps of 200 volunteers in train-operating jobs, passenger-service jobs and other projects ranging from stuffing envelopes to laying track.

A Special Thanks to Our Friends and Supporters, the City of Cedar Park and Cedar Park Tourism Services!