

ASTA Hitting the Ground Running With Capital Projects in 2019

Almost 30 years since it was chartered to promote and preserve Central Texas' rich railroad history, ASTA is looking back on nearly three decades of excursion operations and looking forward to preserving and enhancing those accomplishments for the generations to come.

That will mean new capital investment to secure and improve the association's assets, and four such projects are at the top of the list as we move into 2019. Making it happen will depend on the generosity of ASTA's supporters, donors and grantors. **We hope you'll help!**

1 Power Car.

ASTA's entire fleet of passenger equipment, representative of the last great era of passenger-car construction from the late 30s to early 50s, are climate controlled. All that air-conditioning and heating, not to mention lighting and other needs, require a substantial amount of on-board electrical power.

Originally, each of our cars had its own diesel generator, but in 2011 the train was equipped with "head-end power," in which a single generator provides 480-volt current to several cars through connecting cables. At present, a generator under the lounge car *Maurice Beckham* provides power for that car and five others. (Several remaining cars still carry their own generators.)

While the arrangement has generally worked well,

the *Beckham's* power output of 150 kilowatts keeps the generator working at 95 per cent of its capacity all the time the train is on the road, compared to the usual recommended load of 80 per cent of capacity.

The resulting strain is, of course, hard on the generator and limits the number of cars it can power. At times, generator failures have resulted in annulled trains and refunded tickets.

The solution proposed is a separate power car which could carry a much larger generator that could efficiently supply all the passenger cars in the train.

Through the efforts of ASTA's Chief Mechanical Officer Jack Pearson, a Cummins generator in excellent condition and a former Missouri Pacific "speed-box" car have been located that could



The 800-kilowatt Cummins generator being considered by ASTA for providing reliable head-end power to the trains. The unit last served in a commuter locomotive in Maryland, and would be mounted in a former MP express car.

be brought together as the power car needed by ASTA's trains. Both are located at Gateway Rail Services in Madison, Ill.

The generator would provide 800 kilowatts of power, comfortably providing more than enough for an entire train.

The car, built in 1962, is one of a fleet of 37 "merchandise-service" boxcars built by the Missouri Pacific in the early sixties to compete with trucks for

less-than-carload freight. Package shipments were loaded in "speed boxes" which were carried in the special boxcars coupled into passenger trains.

According to estimates by ASTA Mechanical Foreman Chris Hoff and Mr. Pearson, purchase of the generator and car would be \$25,000, with generator installation and parts, plus car shipping and improvements, costing an additional \$21,350 to \$31,000.

Thanks to our generous friends!

(Donations from May through September 2018. If we have left anyone off, please accept our apologies and contact us at director@austinsteamtrain.org so we can make sure we recognize you in our next edition.)

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We'd love to see your name here!

For building and investing in the future of historic railroad preservation in Central Texas, ASTA depends on the kindness and dedication of its friends! To make a donation or sign up as an ASTA member, call 512-477-8468 or visit our website, www.austinsteamtrain.org.

Longtime ASTA Veteran Sandy Sandford Departs at Age 91

Ellroy G. Sandford, known to his many friends as "Sandy," an early and longtime ASTA volunteer, passed away in Austin last July at the age of 91.

Sandy first volunteered for ASTA in 1991, and lent a hand in many ways around the railroad's operations, most memorably as a frequent member of the track patrol which, riding in a rail motorcar or hi-rail truck,

preceded excursion trains until 2009.

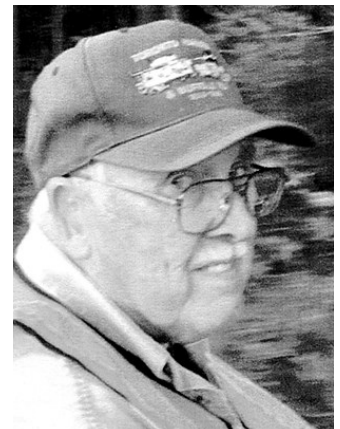
Sandy was also one of the first volunteers trained as a steam fireman, since, said longtime friend Chuck Pugh, he had been familiar with boilers in his career.

Always a proud Canadian, Sandy was born in Hamilton, the steel-making center of Ontario, and was an employee of Stelco, the Canadian steel-milling company,

before retiring to Texas.

(An early ASTA poster now in the possession of volunteer Seth Mehalic, is in a frame handmade by Sandy and marked on the back, "Made by the Canadian National.")

Sandy is survived by his sons Brian of Austin and Chris of Bastrop, two grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, a brother and three sisters.



2 Engine 442.

ASTA's workhorse diesel locomotive, No. 442, has been out-of-service for long-needed tender loving care since late 2016, but is getting close to returning to her accustomed place at the head of our trains.

Volunteer and staff labor have completed internal improvements on the engine including fixing of leaks and installation of new gaskets and injectors.

Next step will be to lift 442 off her trucks (a sizeable crane will be required) so that one (possibly two) of the engine's traction motors can be replaced, and bearing boxes and pedestal liners overhauled.

Once the truck work is completed, electrical troubleshooting will remain

and the 1960 Alco unit can then be sent out on shake-down trips to make sure all's up and running before she returns to regular passenger service on her own.

In 442's absence, ASTA's trains have been reliably powered by HZRX No. 3134, an EMD GP 40-3 leased from Horizon Rail of Cleveland, Ohio.

442, a 2,400-horsepower RSD-15 type built by the American Locomotive Works for the Santa Fe, saw service on at least four Midwestern short lines before ASTA acquired and got her running in 2000.

The remaining upgrades on 442 will require an estimated \$45,000 in capital and maintenance expense.

3 Yard Electrical Improvements.

Long overdue in ASTA's home yard in Cedar Park are improvements to the electrical system which supplies power for the tools used almost every day in maintenance and restoration work on ASTA's locomotives and equipment.

For many years, the yard's regular electrical service has been primarily in the vicinity of the centrally located yard office, and power to more far-flung locations came either from temporary connections or from portable generators.

(The yard is supplied by Pedernales Electric Co-op.)

Under the direction of ASTA volunteers Rich Wise and Bennie Kirk, both electrical engineers, a plan has been drawn up for central underground electrical lines, buried in con-

duit, which could then be extended as necessary up and down the 12-acre yard to supply power where it's needed.

According to Rich, the first phase of the project will be to install a "spine" along the two principal storage tracks in the yard which can then be extended as needed to other tracks.

The spine will provide electrical outlets at every other car-length providing xxx-volt dual-phase power, as well as providing LED lighting on 15-foot poles to illuminate the yard.

Cost of the initial installation is estimated at \$10,000.

4 Microphor Toilets.

For a number of years, ASTA has been converting the onboard toilets on its cars to the modern Microphor system.

Currently, three cars are equipped with Microphor toilets--the coach *Buckeye Lake*, leased coach *New Braunfels* and leased lounge car *Nambe*--and next to be

equipped will be the new concession car *Cedar Park*.

ASTA's first goal is to have at least every other car in the train Microphor-equipped, with the ultimate objective of installing the system in every car.

The Microphor systems operate by sending wastewater into an under-car septic tank where it is broken down by bacteria, producing clear water. Similar systems are used in ships, trailers and recreational vehicles.



ATCX 442 charges across the South San Gabriel River trestle in earlier days. Known as a "gator" for her long, low nose, 442 is a prime specimen of Alco engines' sturdiness and reliability.

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



ASTA Adds a Dining Car to the Fleet, From Generous Friend Jack Pearson

Jack Pearson, who has for years given ASTA the benefit of his career-long experience with railroad passenger cars, has gone a step further by donating to the association an historic former Missouri Pacific dining car which will be fitted for excursion service.

ASTA Executive Director Lil Serafine said the new car will be a welcome replacement for the departed lounge car *City of Chicago*, “giving us that lounge-car capacity we sorely have missed.”

Retired from a long management career with Amtrak, Jack has not only helped care for ASTA’s equipment but has been an able teacher to ASTA volunteers and mechanical staff about the restoration, repair and maintenance of the cars. Since early 2017, Jack has officially served as ASTA’s chief mechanical officer, signing off on the safety and road-worthiness of the equipment.

The dining car was built for MP predecessor International-Great Northern in 1949 as a combination 32-seat diner and 12-seat lounge. In MP service the

car, numbered MP 41, ran regularly through Austin as part of the Chicago-San Antonio *Texas Eagle*.

In 1969 the diner was sold to the Nacionales de México specifically for use on official trains (thus avoiding conversion to a diner-coach), and was sold to Jack in 2016.

The car is complete with a new air-conditioning system and generator set, all the necessary materials to restore the interior to its historic configuration and to install head-end power, and a complete stainless-steel galley.

Starting as a mechanical foreman in Houston, Jack wound up his career as superintendent of Amtrak terminal operations in Chicago, having served as an assistant superintendent for road operations, chief mechanical officer for Amtrak’s central region, and general manager of Amtrak’s maintenance shops in Beech Grove, Ill. He also served on the board of Chicago Union Station.

Now living in Hempstead, Jack advises many railroads as Texas Central Rail Inc.



MP diner-lounge No. 41, awaiting restoration in ASTA’s Cedar Park Yard. The historic car will add table accommodations, and even a full kitchen, to excursion offerings.

From the Generous Shannons, Help for the Microphor Project

Eileen and Dave Shannon are familiar faces around the A&TC, being exceptionally generous with their time in multiple volunteer roles.

They’ve also been generous with donating financial resources to ASTA, the latest being an \$8,000 contribution to help finish the Microphor toilet system for the new concession car *Cedar Park*.

“Eileen and Dave are a prime example,” said ASTA Chairman Ben Sargent, “of the kind of volunteers we should all aspire to be, always generous with not only time but treasure.”

Eileen can often be found working as a car attendant on the lounge car *Maurice Beckham*, and Dave as a conductor. Their volunteer roles go beyond the train, though, with Eileen helping to manage merchandise operations for the annual Day Out With Thomas event, and Dave regularly serving in the yard as ASTA’s official wheel inspector.

As detailed elsewhere in this issue, completion of the Microphor system in the *Cedar Park* will be a vital step forward in ultimately equipping the entire train.

...and From Generous Linda McDonough, New Shades For a Coach

Veteran Onboard-Service Crew Chief Linda McDonough finally tired of looking at (and trying to handle) worn-out and collapsing window shades in

ASTA’s coach *Silver Pine*. So she did something about it.

Linda took the lead in encouraging donations from other volunteers to replace the *Silver Pine*’s

shades, and handsome new blinds were installed on the car in September.

Cost of the new blinds, made by Austin Window Fashions, came to \$3,000,

contributed by ASTA volunteers.

ASTA hopes that Linda’s example will apply volunteer power to other projects around the railroad!