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K4s #1361 News Conference Press Kit

Contents

- Funding Announcement Release
- A Steam Era Icon
- 82 Year Lifeline
- The Long and Expensive Road Home
- The Future
- Partner Contacts
- Official PA House Republican Communications Release

Support materials:

- 4"x 6" black and white images shot at Steamtown in late February
- 3 min television b-roll shot at Steamtown on 3/29/2000
- PC Disk with pfd and Word 95 version of press kit



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March 31,2000
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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State Grant Assures Future for K4s #1361 Path Cleared for Full Restoration of Official State Steam Locomotive

Governor Tom Ridge this morning released \$600,000 for the full restoration and return to service of the State's Official Steam Locomotive. The announcement was made this morning by Representative Rick Geist (R-Altoona). The grant is part of the Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Community Revitalization Program.

Museum Executive Director R. Cummins McNitt says the support from the Commonwealth comes at a critical time for the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum – owner of the locomotive. “The restoration process was on the verge of shutdown due to lack of funding. We have been working tirelessly with our Board and a group of local banks to avert the need to layoff the crew at Steamtown and return this magnificent artifact to mothballs. This news comes at the best possible time. We have received great cooperation from Keystone Financial, Hollidaysburg Trust, Mellon Bank, Laurel Bank and Central Bank.”

The Pennsylvania Railroad donated the K4s #1361 to the City of Altoona in June of 1957 after more than two million miles of rail and passenger service. For nearly 30 years, the locomotive was on display at the Horseshoe Curve National Historic Landmark. In 1985, under the leadership of Representative Rick Geist, the K4s #1361 was towed from the Horseshoe Curve to the Juniata Locomotive Shops where a combination of paid and volunteer labor began work to return the locomotive to service.

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- 2 -

During 1987 and 1988, large numbers of residents and railfans supported several excursion trips on non-Conrail short-lines in the region. In 1988, during a return trip from York, PA, catastrophic failure of a main bearing and drive axle ended the renewed operating status.

Large scale, professional restoration of the K4s #1361 was initiated in 1992 with a \$420,000 grant from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission. In May of 1996, the Museum created a partnership with the University of Scranton and Steamtown National Historic Site. The locomotive and associated parts were then moved to Steamtown. The restoration process is currently 60% complete.

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K4s #1361 - A Steam Era Icon

Juniata Shop History Mirrors Steam Era

More than 100 years after the first steam engine was out-shopped by the Juniata Locomotive Shops, the K4s #1361 stands as a testament to the men, women and machines of the steam era. Through ingenuity, innovation and hard work, the Juniata Locomotive Shops became the standard for steam locomotive building in America. The Juniata Shops turned-out more than 6,000 steam locomotives and in doing so, rewrote the history of American railroading and nation-wide commerce.

The growing business of the Pennsylvania Railroad and crowding at the original 1850 Altoona Machine Shops Complex led PRR officials in 1886 to begin to develop plans for construction of additional shops. The site selected was a large tract of land in the eastern section of Altoona known as Juniata. The main reason an entirely new location was needed for locomotive building and repairing was the constantly increasing size of locomotives used in road service. Prior to 1880, most American locomotives were relatively small machines, rarely over 30 tons. But with more railroad freight traffic after the Civil War, larger pulling capacity was required.

Railroad officials in their 1886 plan determined the Juniata Locomotive Shops complex would contain a paint shop, boiler shop, blacksmith shop, boiler house, erecting shop, two-story machine shop, electric and hydraulic house, two-story office and storeroom, paint storehouse and gas house, and hydraulic transfer table and pit. Construction of these structures began on September 15, 1888, with most of the construction work completed in 1890. The first locomotive was built in 1891.

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- 2 -

Work increased sufficiently at the Juniata Locomotive Shops and by 1895 the number of people employed rose to 789. By 1926, the Juniata Locomotive Shops employed more than 4,200 workers with total PRR employment in Altoona numbering almost 17,000. The Juniata Shops repair four locomotives a day and build twelve new locomotives per month.

The Juniata Shops were busy during the WW II years. Locomotive maintenance work increased due to greatly expanded war material movement on the PRR, but with a fair amount of war related work done in the shops, such as machining castings for guns and straightening armor plate for tanks.

After the war, the PRR began converting from steam to diesel electric locomotives. This action had a significant impact on operations at the Juniata Shops since the new diesel-electric type locomotives required less maintenance than the old steam engines. The need for less maintenance resulted in less need for shop space and repair facilities. The predictable outcome was a number of furloughs, layoffs and recalls at the Juniata Locomotive Shops.

In the 1950's, the PRR began moving shop facilities away from Altoona thus reducing the workforce. The company announced in 1953 that by the end of the year, the steam locomotive program would be abolished. In spite of this order, the Juniata Locomotive Shops still repaired steam locomotives for the next several years, in addition to repairs to electric, gas-electric and diesel-electric locomotives. By 1957, steam locomotive work at the Juniata Locomotive Shops came to an end.

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The 82 Year Lifeline of K4s #1361

May 1918

Out-shopped by the Pennsylvania Railroad

August 1956

Retired after 2.5 million miles of service

June 1957

Placed on display at Horseshoe Curve National Historic Landmark

March 1985

Assessment for possible return to service

September 1985

Towed off of Horseshoe Curve to Juniata Locomotive Shops

April 1987

Returned to service in excursion capacity

July 1988

Catastrophic main bearing and drive axle failure ends excursion service

October 1988

Returned to Juniata Locomotive Shops for assessment

May 1996

Dismantled locomotive moved to Steamtown for restoration

March 2000

Governor Tom Ridge releases funding for completion of restoration



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The Long and Expensive Road Home

Restoration Process Full of Surprises

The restoration of any antique presents a myriad of challenges. Parts are often scarce, if not impossible to find. Most of the skills on hand for initial creation have been lost in time. As the process peels away decades, the scope of work often grows. When the antique is an 80-year-old precision machine and parts weigh thousands of pounds, the challenges increase exponentially.

Pennsylvania's Official Steam Locomotive is 60% of the way toward overcoming all of these challenges. To talk about any steam engine restoration is to talk about the boiler. Since August of 1996, the boiler has been almost the sole focus of the crew at Steamtown working on the K4s #1361. Heavy machinery was required to replace the boiler. Uncompromising restoration standards will meet current Federal Railway Administration regulations.

In addition to the boiler, one drive axle and one drive wheel were found to be worn and cracked. Pistons and valves have been replaced. One crankpin along with connecting rods have been renewed. It could take as long as a year to complete the boiler work. Work on the tender is also on the to-do list. The project mandate is to take as long as necessary to come as close to the original condition as possible.

Project Manager Chris Ahrens says the process reveals many engineering and economic lessons. "The railroad industry designed and built these locomotives with the intention of repairing, changing parts and reusing them. Labor was very affordable for the railroads. The labor required to restore such a machine in the 21st century is astounding."

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The \$600,000 released today by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) will allow Steamtown to deploy a full crew for the first time since the locomotive's arrival in May of 1996.

To date, the Museum has spent \$470,000 on the project. Just over \$400,000 of that money came from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission. In addition, \$50,000 in private contributions were made to the project including \$11,000 from the Philadelphia Chapter of the PRR Technical and Historical Society.

The K4s #1361 is expected to return to Altoona in the Fall of 2001 after testing on Steamtown trackage.

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The Future of K4s #1361

Education and Heritage Tourism Expected Beneficiaries

The return to Altoona of the K4s #1361 in the Fall of 2001 is sure to be a jubilant homecoming. The many personal, first-hand experiences of local residents with the K4s and the international interest from the railfan community will make the locomotive the focus of attention by thousands. Once the homecoming party concludes, the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum will be ready to use the thundering artifact as both tourist magnet and working classroom.

The top priority will be to use the K4s as the Museum's primary interpretive tool in telling the story of railroad life and labor in the era of steam. The scope of this interpretation will be much broader than a train ride behind a steam engine. Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum Executive Director R. Cummins McNitt sees vast opportunities for many. "We are at a 'never-again' point in history where we actually are able to meet and hear the words of the people who built, maintained and operated these machines. With the steam engine as the backdrop, we can teach lessons of history, engineering, economics and social studies."

Preliminary plans call for a limited excursion schedule in 2002. "There are many variables involved in a successful steam excursion program," according to McNitt. "Each of several key elements must be in place including permission from both Class 1 and short-line railroads, inspections, qualified crew and, most importantly, insurance issues related to live steam. With the assistance of Karl King from the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation, we will refine our business plan to reflect our new timetable."

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