

Mt. Rainier Railroad Plans to Return to Operation

The nonprofit organization managing the railroad plans to reopen with a longer train ride, new station, and a redesigned and more inclusive museum. The company will begin offering RailCycle Mt. Rainier, rail bike excursions, in Spring 2023.



Eatonville, Washington Sep 14, 2022 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Western Forest Industries Museum (WFIM), the nonprofit organization that founded Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad in 1980, has been reformed in order to bring the railroad back to operation. Mt. Rainier Railroad was briefly owned and operated by Colorado-based American Heritage Railways, beginning in 2016. In 2020, American Heritage Railways made the decision to shut down operations and Mt. Rainier Railroad & Logging Museum due to operational difficulties with the parent company and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The railroad was enjoyed by families from all over the country, bringing countless visitors to the area. Pierce County, as well as the towns of Elbe and Eatonville, have become acutely aware of the absence of the railroad. The railroad, once a jewel of the heritage railway preservation movement, was lost.

In August of 2022, Western Forest Industries Museum formed a new board of directors and management team. American Heritage Railways has returned all assets to the newly revitalized nonprofit. While the road ahead is long, WFIM intends to reopen the museum, and the railroad, and expand operations to the town of Eatonville, creating a significant economic demand generator for the town, while improving the museum, and highlighting the stories of the people that lived along and worked on the railroad.

The group has big plans for the railroad. “We will be undertaking a phased reopening plan,” said Bethan Maher, the organization’s Executive Director, and longtime stable of the heritage rail industry. “We will be launching a railbike attraction – RailCycle Mt. Rainier this upcoming Spring. Our plans include restoring several steam locomotives to service, relaunching railroad operations, and constructing a new museum that will provide a more inclusive and contextualized history of the people that lived along and worked on our historic railway. It’ll take us a few years to get there, but it’s a worthwhile project with a broad coalition of support.” Upon its relaunch, the railroad will continue to host events such as *The Polar Express™ Train Ride* and its popular Rails to Ales excursion. While Western Forest Industries Museum has historically focused on the logging equipment, the feats of engineering, and the ingenuity that helped navigate the challenging terrain of rural West Coast forests, the organization is committed to telling the railroad’s story in a wider and more inclusive context – including the stories of the Nisqually people, through whose land and villages the railroad was constructed and continues to operate.



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