



Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society

NEWS

Volume 1 Number 1

Spring 2001

New Board of Directors on track!



The newly-created Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society has its Board of Directors. Front row, left to right: Jim Gillis (Kwantlen University College Liaison), Allen Aubert (Secretary), Surrey Councillor Judy Higginbotham (Honourary Member and Surrey Heritage Commission Liaison), Larry Fisher (Business Liaison), Graham MacDonell (Publicist/Researcher); back row: Vic Sharman (Vice-chair), Robert Ashton (Chair), Roy Mufford, Terry Lyster (Membership), and Howard Reich (Treasurer). Missing are directors Henry Ewert and George Johansen.

Heritage interurban rail to link many tourism venues

Revitalization of the former BC Electric Railway line running through Surrey for tourism and passenger use will link many existing and potential heritage tourism venues.

Once the four cars have been acquired and restored in a Cloverdale car barn, where they will be static displays until operational, they will provide passenger service on the upgraded rail line for regional and international tourists to reach:

- Brownsville Park along the Fraser River;
- the potential site of the proposed new PNE;
- Kennedy Heights and the Punjabi Market;
- Newton's cultural and recreational facilities;
- a potential "sustainable village" at Sullivan (near the old Sullivan Station of BCER fame);
- the old growth forest on historic Mound Farm Park;
- Cloverdale and its fairgrounds featuring the annual rodeo as well as the Fraser Downs Racetrack.

"Co-operative development of these heritage venues will ultimately provide "A Day in Surrey" for regional and international tourists," says FVHRS Chair Robert Ashton.

The newly-created Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society has a board of directors to steer an ambitious project to revitalize the old BC Electric Railway Fraser Valley Line from Brownsville Park on the Fraser River to Cloverdale.

The 13-mile (21 kilometre) Surrey segment of the rail line last saw riders in 1950 when BCER terminated passenger service, after 40 years of serving communities in the Fraser Valley. The rail line, built in 1910, extended 63.76 miles (103.6 kilometres) from New Westminster to Chilliwack.

"FVHRS' goal is to restore and to operate heritage interurban cars on the line through Surrey and eventually the Fraser Valley to link heritage tourism destinations," said Allen Aubert, Secretary and one of the Society's founding members.

Allen and Terry Lyster, a former Surrey Municipal planner, have spearheaded the

move to restore heritage interurbans in the Fraser Valley following the lead of former Surrey councillor - now retired businessman - Jim Wallace. He donated \$25,000 to the Surrey Heritage Advisory Commission to find ways to use the heritage of the BC Electric Railway track as a resource for the future of the Fraser Valley above and beyond its current freight hauling service.

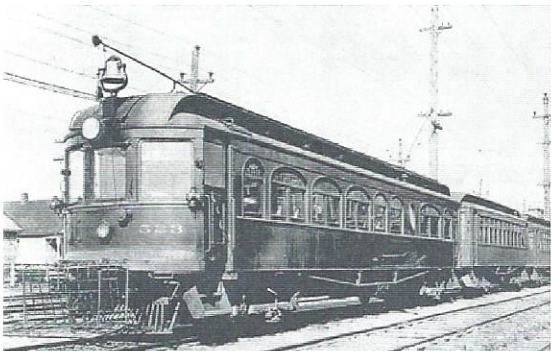
"The interurban legacy offers many community benefits valued far beyond the cost," added Lyster. "We will need the support of businesses, volunteers and other interested parties to make it successful."

The project is estimated to cost \$5,000,000 with one-fifth of that going towards purchasing and restoring two heritage interurban cars. With promotion and complementary heritage tourism initiatives, at least \$25,000,000 can be returned to the local economy within 10 years.

FVHRS' goal: four restored interurban cars



FVHRS' goal is to have four fully-restored interurban cars operational on the 13 mile (21 km) track by 2004. First step is to lease Steveston Interurban Restoration Society's BCER Car 1220 (top right) that has been almost fully restored. Second, acquire and restore BCER Car 1304, the largest of the remaining seven interurban cars from a fleet of 80 and the only one of them used on the Fraser Valley Line. (top left) Third, is the former Seattle-Tacoma interurban car 523. (bottom left) The fourth step is to acquire BCER Car 1225 currently owned by the Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris, Ca. (At right)



Photos by Geoff Meugens (BCER 1304), Oregon Historic Electric Railway Society (Seattle-Tacoma 523), Steveston Interurban Restoration Society (BCER 1220), Orange Empire Railway Museum (BCER 1225).

Surrey Council funds the first steps

Surrey Council has allocated \$200,000 to initiate a heritage interurban rail operation on the old but still existing interurban railway line through Surrey and the Fraser Valley, built by the BC Electric Railway Company in 1910.

The funding will allow the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society, a group of interurban rail enthusiasts interested in promoting knowledge and interest in the rail transportation heritage of the Fraser Valley, to complete the restoration of BCER interurban car 1220, to obtain Seattle-Tacoma interurban car 523 and to provide for a project manager who will seek funding from the public and private sectors.

Sustained by a \$25,000 gift from former Surrey councillor Jim Wallace, along with the support of the Transportation Department of Surrey Engineering Division, a sub-committee of the Surrey Advisory Heritage Commission made a presentation on Interurban Revitalization Heritage Tourism to Surrey Council in 2000. The council endorsed the \$5,000,000 project, which will utilize the existing track between Brownsville Park on the Fraser River and Cloverdale.

One of FVHRS' goals is to seek partnerships with Surrey and regional businesses and private citizens throughout the Fraser Valley to make the system operational within three to five years. Some of the businesses FVHRS is seeking to develop strategic partnerships with include:

- BC Hydro, which owns the rail right-of-way, to issue a passenger licence and to assist in electrification of the 13 mile track through Surrey;
- Southern Rail of BC, which owns and maintains the tracks for limited freight operations, to upgrade and maintain the track for passenger use;
- ICBC, to improve level crossings and assist in promoting safety issues;
- Kwantlen University College, to assist in restoration and maintenance of the heritage cars for engineering education;
- Lark Enterprises Ltd., to construct a car barn in Cloverdale.



The Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society NEWS is published quarterly by the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway Society for its membership and limited public distribution.

The Editorial Board welcomes brief letters and stories from readers who remember the Fraser Valley Line when BCER's interurban trains plied the rails between New Westminster and Chilliwack.

Please send your contributions to: Graham MacDonell, Editor, Heritage Railway NEWS, 148 - 3160 Townline Road, Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 5P4 or e-mail: gemcom@home.com

The Editorial Board also welcomes advertising for business card size ads at \$20 per placement per issue.

For additional information about FVHRS, contact: Allen Aubert, Secretary, FVHRS 1045 - 165th Street Surrey, BC V4A 9A2