



News Release

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Railway Celebrates 30-Years of Partnerships in Osceola Area

(Osceola, Wisconsin) Thirty years ago this month the steam whistles and diesel horns sounded as the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway (OSCVR) made its way across the St. Croix River to begin offering vintage railway excursions to delighted passengers who boarded the train at the historic Soo Line Depot in Osceola, Wisconsin. Over these past thirty years a half million people have ridden the rails between Withrow, Minnesota and Amery, Wisconsin, the original route of the railway. The OSCVR continues to maintain a seasonal schedule operating between Osceola and Marine on St. Croix in Minnesota, and short scheduled trips to Dresser, Wisconsin.

Owned and operated by the Minnesota Transportation Museum (MTM), located in Saint Paul, the OSCVR operates passenger service from May through October on the “Withrow Sub” rail line that is owned by the Canadian National Railway. At the time of the first train ride, the line was owned by the Wisconsin Central. “The commercial railroads have been supportive and generous partners,” said Wayne Merchant, MTM Chairman. “Their partnership has helped keep the experience of passenger railroading alive for future generations and contributed to the growth of tourism in the region,” he said.

“Partnership has been at the heart of the OSCVR operation since the start,” said Scott Hippert, MTM/OSCVR Executive Director. “We partner with the local business communities in Osceola, Dresser, St. Croix Falls, and Marine on St. Croix to service the operation and provide amenities to our passengers,” he said. “The State of Wisconsin has also been a strong partner,” said Hippert. Over the past couple of years, in particular, *Travel Wisconsin* has supported joint marketing efforts for the railway and business community. Hippert noted that a partnership with the Osceola Historical Society, which owns the historic depot, has also been central to the operation’s success.

The Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway is a completely volunteer run operation. Over the past thirty years, professionally trained volunteers have served as locomotive engineers, conductors,

brakemen(women), car hosts, and maintenance crews. “Where else can one volunteer their time to operate a full-scale train, develop such a strong bond with other volunteers, and meet thousands of wonderful people,” said Nick Modders, longtime OSCVR locomotive engineer and retired airline pilot. “All of us volunteers have so much fun riding the train all summer long,” he said. “We are a family of not just railroad enthusiasts. We are people who love being with people, love the St. Croix Valley, and get great satisfaction from the history we present and the smiles we see on our passengers faces,” he said.

The OSCVR is always welcoming new volunteers. “Right now, we are looking for people who love trains and people, would enjoy being trained in railroad operations and enjoy spending the 2023 season on the rails,” said executive director Hippert. Anyone interested can inquire at the Osceola Depot on weekends through October, or contact Hippert at director@trainride.org or call 651-228-0263.

Celebration:

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway, there will be a ceremony on the Osceola Depot boarding platform, 114 Depot Road in Osceola on Sunday, September 18th at 3:30. It will be followed by a 90-minute round-trip train ride through the St. Croix River Valley to Marine on St. Croix. Refreshments will be served at the depot.

Anyone interested in riding the anniversary excursion, or any scheduled excursion through October 23rd, including the popular Pumpkin Express on the weekend of October 21-23, can book reservations at www.trainride.org.

The Minnesota Transportation Museum is a nonprofit community organization that has been offering interpretations, education, historic restorations, and vintage railway experiences for the past 60 years. Those experiences include operations of the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway and the Museum at Jackson Street Roundhouse. The organization is almost entirely volunteer led and relies on ticket sales and charitable contributions to support its operations. Donations can be made through www.trainride.org.