



HEBER VALLEY HISTORIC RAILROAD AUTHORITY

Why the Heber Valley Historic Railroad Should Remain A Government Entity

In 1992 the Heber Valley Historic Railroad Authority was created by the State Legislature. Its purpose as stated in the enabling legislation: “The authority shall operate and maintain a scenic and historic railroad in and around the Heber Valley.” The HVR has done so since 1992.

The HVR should remain a government entity because:

1. It preserves and protects a unique and important part of Utah and U.S. history for future generations to enjoy.
 - a. It is Utah’s only historic railroad.
 - b. It provides important educational functions to Utah’s students, children, and families. Hundreds of Utah students visit the HVR on railroads each, learning about Utah and railroad history, as well as thousands of visitors from around the world.
 - c. Railroad’s built the West, and Utah. The HVR is the only place in the state to see, touch, and experience that history firsthand. Visiting the depot and train yard is free to the public.
 - d. The HVR is year-round, fully operating railroad, complete with a variety of passenger, locomotive, and even some freight equipment. It has one of best collections of historic (1920’s) passenger cars anywhere in the U.S.
 - e. The HVR includes important historic rail cars and locomotives from Union Pacific and Denver Rio Grande Western – the two primary railroads operating in Utah in 1900.
2. It provides a layer of preservation protection against short-term economic downturns, which might (in private ownership) cause the historic railroad to cease operations.
 - a. Private ownership went bankrupt in 1990 – with the public outcry resulting in the HVR being created in 1992.
 - b. In 2015 Wasatch County loaned the HVR funds for required track repairs.
3. It operates on a State-owned right of way on an important preserved corridor.
 - a. State Parks and UDOT jointly own the right of way and lease it to the HVR.
 - b. There is a trail system being developed next to the tracks in this corridor. This is a great working partnership and will be a significant boost for trail users and the railroad as the trail’s segments are completed. (this would likely be a difficult thing to manage with a private rail operator)
4. The “Independent Entity” model has proved to be a very successful and is a model for others to follow. A Board composed of State, Local, and community leaders has functioned well!
5. It provides important historical, economic, and iconic benefits to the citizens of Utah, and particularly Wasatch County (the fastest growing county in Utah, and one of the fastest growing in the U.S.) The citizens and local governments support the Heber Valley Railroad.
 - a. The HVR is a significant contributor to the Heber Valley economy (employing 150 students, and putting >\$2M back into the Wasatch County economy annually).



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6. It operates on its own and does not receive ongoing operational funding from the State of Utah or any other government source. We have occasionally received appropriated funds from the legislature. These funds have been used for capital improvements, infrastructure projects such as right-of-way maintenance. Recent/current use of appropriated funds includes development of an ADA/handicap access car, and historic bridge repairs.
7. As stated in the legislation, the State of Utah is not liable for debts or obligations of the HVR.
8. As a government entity the HVR has access to government surplus, which is a source for much of our machinery, tools, vehicles, parts, and even some train equipment. The HVR is the "poster child" for efficient and wise use of the government surplus system.

Alternatives:

1. Transfer the HVR to Wasatch County
2. Make the HVR a State Park, or put it under State Parks
3. "Sell" the HVR to a private individual or organization