

**Mount Beacon Incline Railway
Restoration Society**
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MOUNT BEACON

INCLINE RAILWAY
SINCE 1902

Executive Summary

The Mount Beacon Incline Railway Restoration Society is working to restore one of the Hudson Valley's preeminent attractions and landmarks by the summer of 2013. The Incline Railway is listed on both the New York State and National Historic Registers. Located in the City of Beacon and the Town of Fishkill, this classic mountaintop funicular ascends Mount Beacon, a landmark in its own right and the very mountain adorning the shield of New York State's great seal. Built by the Otis Elevator Company in 1902, the 108 year-old incline was once the steepest passenger railway in the world, thrilling over 110,000 visitors annually. It remains the steepest passenger incline on the East Coast and second steepest in the United States, with a maximum gradient of 74 percent.

The Incline Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, formed in 1996. It immediately began a campaign to preserve the railway's ruins and establish a heritage railway museum to oversee its return to service. Chartered by the New York State Education Board in 1998, the Society supported the efforts of Scenic Hudson, Inc. to protect the railway and its immediate environs from commercial development. After Scenic Hudson acquired the railway property in a series of purchases between 1995 and 1998, it created Mount Beacon Park. In 2002, Scenic Hudson and the Incline Society signed a park co-management agreement, which remains in force today. Scenic Hudson agrees in principle to the railway's restoration and has applauded "the Incline Society's vision to build a new incline as a vehicle to connect people to the Hudson River Valley and its important landscapes and to make the summit accessible for people of all abilities."

After years of grassroots activism, in 2009 the Incline Society adopted a more business-oriented posture. Inspired by the success of Walkway Over the Hudson, a project which faced similar challenges, the Society sought to expand its professional associations and increase its organizational capabilities. It secured membership in the Environmental Consortium of Hudson River Colleges (EC), as well as the Association of Railway Museums (ARM). The Society also selected Michael Colarusso, a retired Army officer and West Point's former Director of Operations, as its first Chief Operating Officer. Additionally, two new members were appointed to its Board of Advisors, David Reel and Sara Pasti. Reel is currently the Director and Curator of the West Point Museum, the oldest federal museum in the United States. Pasti is currently the Neil C. Trager Director of the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz.

Both municipalities in which the railway is located are committed to the Society's efforts. Beacon's Comprehensive Plan explicitly supports restoring the railway to service, and Steve Gold, Mayor of the City of Beacon, is co-founder and current Vice-President of the Incline Society. Joan Pagonis, Supervisor of the Town of Fishkill, also supports the restoration and joined the Incline Society's Board of Trustees in 2009. Several other distinguished community members became Trustees in 2010, to include Fred Schaeffer, Chairman of Walkway Over the Hudson, and Clara Lou Gould, Beacon's former mayor. In 2010, the Society also expanded its professional associations by joining the Greater Southern Dutchess Chamber of Commerce (GSDCC), the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce (DCRCOC), the Museum Association of New York (MANY), and the American Association of Museums (AAM).

Site inspections by civil engineers have determined that the incline's rails are in remarkably good shape and that its powerhouse can be stabilized and preserved as well. Other elements of the railway, to include its upper and lower stations, require reconstruction. The Society has completed a detailed topographic survey of the railway site and has also received reconstruction proposals from multiple railroad construction companies in the tri-state area. As the restoration will embody best practices in both historic preservation and sustainability, the Society has also consulted with LEED certified engineers, architects and environmental professionals regarding the design of the railway's facilities. ADA compliancy will be a key design feature as well. Based upon proposals received to date, the total cost to establish the museum and restore the railway is estimated at **\$18.7 million**.

Current plans call for the railway and its parent museum to be economically self-sustaining, generating revenue through ticket sales and concessions, as well as through continued donations and fundraising efforts. In May 2010, an economic and fiscal impact analysis of the restoration effort was completed at West Point, New York, identified by Forbes magazine as the best college in the United States. The study concluded that the railway will draw up to **415,000 visitors** annually, generating **\$68 million in regional economic activity** each year. That translates into roughly **1,100 jobs**. The direct and indirect spending associated with the railway will also generate additional tax revenue for local, county and state governments.

Having identified the costs and benefits of the reconstruction, the Incline Society is now postured to begin a diligent fundraising and development campaign. The Society is seeking funding through a combination of membership contributions, private donations, fundraising events, corporate and government grants, and financing. Because the purpose of the railway is to put the beautiful vistas of the Hudson River Valley within the reach of as many people as possible, the Incline Society has a goal of securing at least 80 percent of project funding before opening the railway, ensuring that construction costs are not passed on to visitors.

The Society's immediate development and fundraising efforts are focused upon the hiring of professional staff members, as well as the opening of its heritage railway museum in the City of Beacon. The museum and its staff will provide the organizational framework needed to move the restoration project from the planning to the execution phase. It will also serve as the headquarters for the Society and railway.