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**MOUNT BEACON**  

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**INCLINE RAILWAY**  
SINCE 1902

## **Frequently Asked Questions, Mount Beacon Incline Railway**

### **Why reconstruct the Mount Beacon Incline Railway?**

The Mount Beacon Incline was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. It was an important part of America's industrial, leisure and transportation history. When returned to operation it will be within the range of thousands of travelers due to its readily accessible location in southern Dutchess County, New York. Situated within the City of Beacon and the Town of Fishkill, the railway site is within minutes of Routes 9 and 9D, as well as Interstate 84 and the Metro-North Railroad. The views from the future upper terminus of the railway are simply spectacular. On a clear day, visitors to Mount Beacon can see south to Manhattan Island and north to the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge. The cities of Beacon, Newburgh and Poughkeepsie are clearly in view, as are as dozens of smaller Hudson Valley communities and the mighty river itself. Once at the summit of Mount Beacon, passengers will have immediate access to several scenic outlooks, historic sites, and dozens of miles of pristine hiking trails. The leisurely ride up the mountainside will be nothing less than breathtaking, yet passengers will remain comfortably seated during the trip due to the design of the railway's cars. Both the journey AND the destination will be part of the incline experience.

### **What is an incline railway?**

Incline railways, also known as funiculars, have been around for hundreds of years. Simply put, they combine the technology of a railway with that of an elevator. Steel wheels and track reduce friction to a minimum. The railway cars do not have their own power, but instead function like elevator cars — they are raised and lowered on a track way by steel cables. The cable runs from one car to the other through a powerhouse at the top of the mountain. Because both cars are connected to hoisting machinery by the same cable, they create a balanced system whereby the descending car helps the other to ascend, and the ascending car acts as a brake upon the descending car, ensuring a safe, controlled descent. Redundant braking systems are found on each car and in the railway's powerhouse.

### **Are incline railways safe?**

Yes, incredibly so! The Mount Beacon Incline carried over 3.5 million passengers from 1902 to 1978 and had a perfect passenger safety record. The reconstruction will enhance the already tested safety systems of the previous railway with state-of-the-art technologies.

**What are the length, height, gradient and speed of the Incline Railway?**

The railway is 2,200 feet long. The upper station will sit upon the summit of Mount Beacon, 1,540 feet above sea-level. When returned to service in the summer of 2013, the railway will be the steepest passenger incline on the Eastern Seaboard, second steepest in the United States and third steepest in the world. The railway's average gradient will be 65 percent, and its maximum gradient an impressive 74 percent. It will take approximately 4 minutes and 30 seconds to reach the summit, which translates into a normal operating speed of 500 feet per minute (about 5.6 miles per hour).

**What is the current status of the project?**

The project remains in the planning phase for a scheduled completion in July 2013, the centennial year of the City of Beacon, New York. Detailed topographic surveys of the railway site have been completed. Bids are being solicited from multiple railroad construction companies. Consultation with architectural and site design firms is also underway. Current plans also call for the opening of an Incline Railway museum by the end of 2010 in the City of Beacon. The museum will provide the organizational framework and staff to move the restoration project from the planning to execution phase. It will serve as the headquarters for the railway.

**What are the economic benefits of the project?**

An economic impact study is being conducted by members of the economics faculty of the United States Military Academy. When completed, it will likely reveal millions of dollars in direct spending by thousands of new visitors to Putnam, Dutchess and Orange counties. These visitors will also generate millions of dollars more in indirect spending, both regionally and statewide. Preservation and reconstruction of the railway will create hundreds of new jobs as well. Lastly, the increases in direct and indirect spending associated with the attraction will of course generate significant tax revenue for local, county and state governments.

**How many annual visitors are anticipated?**

This depends upon a variety of factors, all of which are being considered in the ongoing economic impact study. During its heyday as a May to October attraction, the railway was the number one tourist destination in the Hudson Valley, carrying up to 110,000 passengers a year. Given that the reconstructed railway will have all-season capability and will also be more accessible to potential visitors than ever before, 110,000 annual fares may be a conservative number.

**What will the total cost of the railway be?**

The final cost of the project will be determined after the submission of contractor bids and the completion of the economic impact study. More information will follow soon.

**How will reconstruction costs be funded?**

The railway will be funded through a combination of membership dues, private donations, fundraising events, corporate and government grants, and financing.

**Will the railway become a tax burden?**

No. The railway will generate its own revenue and will be financially self-sustaining.

**Does that mean there will be a charge to ride the Incline?**

Yes. Round trip or one way tickets will be available (as visitors may elect to hike up or down the mountain for one leg of their visit). 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, fares will be kept as moderate as possible. This is why the Incline Society has a goal of securing at least 70 percent of project funding before opening the railway—so that construction costs are not passed on to guests.

**How much will a ticket cost?**

It's a bit too early to determine, but the goal is to make it the most affordable attraction of its type in the United States. There will be graduated pricing, with reduced costs for retirees, children, students, servicemen and women, groups, etc. There will likely be packaged pricing as well, creating savings for guests who visit multiple attractions in the region. Special programs with reduced prices will also be offered on select days throughout the year.

**Will the railway run seasonally or year-round?**

The Incline Railway is being designed for year-round use, but will close during periods of extreme inclement weather. These include extremely high winds, heavy snowfall, or violent electrical storms. However, given the climatology of the area, we anticipate that the railway will operate from 320-350 days a year. Cars will be heated for passenger comfort in the winter and natural ventilation will keep them cool in the summer.

**What will the operating hours be?**

The railway will operate in Mount Beacon Park, which is owned by Scenic Hudson and co-managed by that organization and the Incline Society. Current park hours are dawn to dusk year-round, and no change is anticipated.

**Where will I be able to purchase tickets?**

Tickets will be available online or at the Main Street museum.

**Where will visitors park?**

Satellite parking locations will be developed in more detail as the design progresses in the months ahead. The goal is for all satellite parking to be within four minutes of the lower station.

**Will the railway be accessible via public transit?**

Current planning calls for the use of hybrid-electric trolley buses to move visitors to and from the lower incline railway station. These trolley buses will be an incline railway asset and will provide service from the Main Street museum, satellite parking areas, and the Metro-North station in Beacon, New York. Buses will be ADA-compliant.

**Should the local community anticipate increased traffic, parking and noise?**

A regional attraction of this type will bring more people to the area, but current reconstruction plans mitigate the need for new roads or parking at the mountain's base. This is for two reasons: to maintain the character of the current Gateway to Mount Beacon Park as a hiker's destination; and to protect the railway's neighbors from increased noise or congestion. The Incline Railway is being reconstructed to put people in touch with our history and our natural environment—it must provide access to both without harming either.

**How loud will the railway be when it operates?**

It will be incredibly quiet. The incline will have a continuous steel track-way, meaning that there are no noisy seams for the steel wheels to pass over. The ride will be

incredibly smooth. There is no engine on board either of the railway cars – power will come from very quiet electrical machinery at the top of the mountain. It will be so quiet, in fact, that visitors on the mountaintop will be unable to hear the machinery operating inside the powerhouse. Noise is a type of pollution, and the Incline Society is committed to protecting the railway’s environment from pollution of all kinds.

**Will the Incline Railway be open at night? Will the track-way be lit?**

During the evenings, the railway will appear just as it does today (dark). Operations after dusk may take place on special occasions. These could include the observation of July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks in the Hudson Valley, or the viewing of celestial events such as lunar eclipses or the Perseid meteor shower. The track-way will have energy-efficient lighting in place for such contingencies (as well as for emergencies). That lighting will provide the minimal amount of track-way illumination required for safe railway operations. It is not for decorative purposes.

**Will pets be allowed on the Incline Railway?**

Yes. One leashed dog per visitor will be allowed on the railway. Pet owners will be responsible for the behavior of their animals, as well as for the removal and proper disposal of pet waste. Railway staff will reserve the right not to allow pets on board if they appear to be a hazard to other pets or passengers.

**Will restrooms be available?**

Yes. There will be restrooms at the Railway’s Main Street museum, as well as at its lower and upper passenger stations.

**Will there be refuse bins, or will this be a carry-in, carry-out attraction?**

The practice of carry-in, carry-out will be strongly encouraged. However, solar-compacting refuse bins will be strategically placed on the mountain’s summit, and refuse points will be provided at the museum, within each passenger station, and in restrooms.

**When completed, what will the Incline Railway look like?**

This question can be better answered when the design phase of the project is completed, but because the railway is on the National Register of Historic Places, its restoration and preservation will architecturally honor the period of its greatest historical significance (1900-1924). It will of course incorporate modern technologies throughout.

**What steps are being taken to ensure the railway is eco-friendly?**

The Incline Society’s goal is for the railway to epitomize best practices in both historic preservation and sustainable design. Upper and lower stations will receive LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. Structures and landscapes will incorporate elements such as: solar / wind power; geothermal heating / cooling; composting facilities; sun tube lighting; radiant heating; adaptive reuse of materials; natural ventilation; permeable ground surfaces; and high Albedo (reflective) roofing, to name a few. Buildings are one of the heaviest consumers of natural resources and account for a significant portion of the greenhouse gas emissions that affect climate change. The Incline Railway’s design will keep its carbon footprint to an absolute minimum.

**I read your history and saw that fire was a constant challenge for the old railway. How will the restored railway deal with this potential threat?**

The old railway was constantly threatened by fire for two reasons: first, it was constructed of pitch-soaked yellow pine, a highly flammable material; and second, brush adjacent to the railway was not sufficiently cut back. Modern building materials (such as fiber cement) and diligent land management will eliminate the threat of fire to the reconstructed railway. Additionally, the design will incorporate chemically-free, sensor-activated fire suppression technology to protect the railway from fire without harming the environment.

**What is the best way for the public to contribute to the organization?**

Become a member, volunteer, or contributor by visiting [www.inclinerailway.org](http://www.inclinerailway.org) today!