

Addendum

to the

Travel Town Master Plan

of September 1987



November 1991

Prepared by Griffith Region Administrative Services
in Cooperation with the Travel Town Site and Facilities Planning Commission

In the Fall of 1990, the architectural firm of Brenda Levin and Associates, Inc., under contract with the Department of Recreation and Parks, began work on plans for the first of several projected capital improvements for Travel Town: the Trainshed. In the preliminary planning stages, the architects asked questions about other future changes to the site to which vague answers about building a museum or about adding display track were insufficient. With major track rehabilitation already underway and plans for the trainshed project proceeding on schedule, the subjects of track additions, a museum, a depot for the excursion railroad, and related visitor circulation and existing building use required further definition. This addendum advances general parameters for a museum, work shop facilities, track additions, and a new entrance; its vision is of a future Travel Town which is no longer a fantastic dream.

Construction subjects:

Trainshed {including Bridge crane, tool room, work shop area}
Track repair and additions
Museum
Gift Shop
Railroad
New passenger station

The Travel Town Trainshed, at about 27,000 square feet, covers four tracks for about three-hundred feet on the east end of the site. Facilities include an inspection pit, abundant utility stations with electrical and compressed air outlets, and the structural ability to add a bridge crane in the future. The principal purposes of the trainshed are protection of pieces from the Travel Town Collection and provision of improved display space; in the short term, some portions serve as restoration work space pending availability of permanent shop and tool storage facilities.

Initial track repair work began when the first operational locomotive arrived in 1988. The first track addition, a 300-hundred-foot spur to the southeast, was made in 1989; the second addition of track space was made by lengthening the northeast-most spur by about 200-hundred-feet. All work was accomplished by volunteers using mostly donated materials. Another spur will be constructed below the 1988 addition to the southeast, initially to hold equipment during on-going rehabilitation of existing track, eventually to connect with the demonstration railway to the Zoo; extension of this spur to the foot of the hillside will require engineering and installing a safe crossover of the 16" gauge railroad track. Additional track leads may be added off the southeast extension, or through the sparse grass area to the northwest.

To afford the best interpretive opportunities, a museum building will include some track for the display of full-size railroad equipment. This will require significant space allocation; combined with the need for office space, restrooms, a library, secure storage with environmental controls, and gallery space for exhibits other than equipment, the museum will require 30,000 square feet or more. To best reflect southwestern U.S. railroading, as distinct from the appearance of railroad architectural in other regions, the museum building will affect a mission-revival style, perhaps modelled directly from local railroad stations built in the 1910's-1930's. To counter-balance the placement of the Trainshed, thus positioning distinct anchors at either end of the oval-shaped Travel Town site, the museum building will be located in the northwest corner, covering two or three tracks.

Although a gift shop opened in 1990 in a factory-built building, the new museum building, or a structure appurtenant to the museum, will be the best location for a gift shop as development continues.

A museum building takes precedence in the overall scheme of development, because of urgent need in the areas of education and artifact security. But the most animating aspect of the plans for Travel Town remains the demonstration railway from Travel Town to the Los Angeles Zoo and Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum. No quantity of historic equipment on display, no sound recording or videotape, no high-quality interpretive exhibit, can possibly equal the

instructive value and pure thrill of recreating a local branch line operation in Griffith Park. The first segment of the line, named the Crystal Springs & Cahuenga Valley Railway, will be laid along the old Crystal Springs Road alignment at the toe of the hills south of Travel Town. Careful engineering will guide the standard gauge line along this natural right-of-way towards and past the Los Angeles Live Steamers Club premises without fatally displacing the Club. Once a demonstration ride has proven its safety and popularity on this abbreviated route, support and funding should be available to continue to the Zoo parking lot. At the Travel Town terminus, the demonstration train will pull in for loading and unloading parallel to the existing parking lot, where a new ticket-selling station with covered waiting area will be constructed near the historic Arcadia Depot. A second parallel track, called a run-around, will permit the motive power of the train to move from one end of the train to the other. Demolition of an unused garage structure, relocation of the oil pumping plant exhibit, and other changes to the service yard area may be needed to accommodate the track, or already have been accomplished as a result of trainshed construction demands. The Travel Town portion of this track plan may be partially constructed along with the additional spurs inside Travel Town described above, to allow easy delivery of newly acquired railroad exhibits.

The scale train ride concession will continue, since it will likely remain as popular or even more favored by children than would be the full-size equipment ride. Although the scale train ride may still use a portion of the area for ticket-selling and train ride boarding, the wasteful utilization of the Arcadia Depot as an entrance-way will cease. Instead, a new entrance, opening from the bus loading turnout in the parking lot, will use Travel Town's natural grades to bridge safely over the train ride and bring visitors into a now-underutilized greenspace. The new grand entrance will be designed to provide a spacious warm welcome to visitors. Shifting of equipment exhibits, various landscape changes, and the completion of the Trainshed will assist in steering visitors to move in an oval pattern from the new entrance, to the concession areas on the east, around through the Trainshed, then westward through the outdoor exhibits back to the entrance; construction of the museum will further facilitate the new visitor flow pattern. The new entrance may be constructed after the Trainshed or in conjunction with the museum building development. Completion of the entrance will permit interpretive use of the Arcadia Depot, such as setting up a mock depot office and perhaps a living history exhibit.

A further development with existing buildings will be the transformation of the Butler building to shop space for restoration activities and operational equipment maintenance. This Butler building, designed to be disassembled and rebuilt, will be moved to the east-most portion of the former airplane display space, after the Los Angeles Fire Department has proceeded far enough in their own museum plans to request transfer of the fire-fighting equipment. Space will again be allocated in the re-located building for the scale train ride's equipment storage, and if desired, the East Valley Lines model railroad club. Access by automobile or truck for the transfer of tools and materials will be accommodated among three standard gauge work tracks. The building appearance may be improved by replacing plain panels on the front with architectural panels, and a viewing section will be inserted from which visitors could watch restoration work or see the model train layout. Ultimately, such facilities as a tool room and restroom for workers could be added to the building. An eighty-five foot turntable assembled in front of the shop building will permit easy movement of equipment into the building or over to the demonstration railroad, and for turning equipment.

