

# **Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.**

## **Strategic Plan Summary**

**June 4, 2008**

*Hidden away in a little-known corner of the southern Rocky Mountains on the border of New Mexico and Colorado is a precious historic artifact of the American west that time forgot. Built in 1880 and little changed since, the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is the finest and most spectacular example of steam era mountain railroading in North America. Its steam locomotives still labor up steep grades carrying visitors over high trestles, through tunnels, and along narrow shelves above yawning gorges with dramatic natural scenery. The equipment, structures and vast landscape exist today as if frozen in the first half of the twentieth century, still infused with a diverse tapestry of Hispanic, Native American and Anglo cultures.*

### **Introduction**

The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad (“C&TS”), originally built by the Denver and Rio Grande Railway in 1880 (“D&RG”), is a 64 mile, fully operational, steam, narrow gauge railroad running between Antonito, Colorado and Chama, New Mexico. A registered state and national historic site, the C&TS is one of America’s premier steam era railroads and an invaluable living museum of railroad heritage and steam technology. The C&TS is also a tourist railway of international repute, and has been named one of the twenty best railway experiences in the world.

The C&TS is owned jointly by the states of Colorado and New Mexico through the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Commission (“Commission”), an interstate agency authorized by Congress in 1974. The Commission, through a private management company, operates the tourist railroad, which serves a vital economic development role in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Responsibility for the museum function of this world class historic treasure is delegated to the Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc. (“Friends”).

### **Purpose**

For more than 20 years the Friends, a non-profit, tax-exempt membership organization, has been dedicated to the historic preservation, restoration, interpretation and continued operation of the C&TS as a living museum. The Friends’ stewardship responsibilities, shared with the Commission, the railroad management company and the local communities, are accomplished in concert with the Commission’s key role of operating this unique historical asset as a tourist railroad. Performance of the Friends’ museum responsibilities supports the important economic development role of the railroad in the region.

### **Vision**

The Friends envisions another century of narrow gauge steam, with the C&TS being widely recognized as: 1) one of the world’s premier “living” museums for historic, steam railroad operation, preservation and interpretation and industrial heritage; and 2) one of the world’s best and most popular tourist steam railroad experiences. Responsibility for and leadership of the historic preservation and museum functions of the C&TS will rest with the Friends, to be known and respected internationally as one of the best non-profit, historic railway preservation/museum organizations in the world.

### **Key Five Year Objectives**

To accomplish its mission of historic preservation, restoration and interpretation of the C&TS as a living museum, the Friends has adopted the following eight strategic objectives as priorities to be accomplished over the next five years:

#### **1. MUSEUM FUNCTION**

In order to more completely demonstrate and interpret the history of the C&TS and the D&RG narrow gauge system, the Friends will plan, fund and complete the first phase of a major interpretive/visitor center in Chama, and develop the C&TS museum into full accreditation pursuant to accepted industry standards, including those of the American Association of Museums. The Friends will perform the museum

functions and the role as custodian of the museum properties with excellence under a written agreement with the Commission.

## 2. RESTORATION PLANS

To ensure the historic integrity of the Railroad, the Friends will develop, maintain and implement preservation and restoration plans for the historic rolling stock, equipment and structures on the C&TS property according to accepted historical preservation standards, and plan, fund and complete railcar restoration and/or storage facilities in Chama and Antonito. The organization will continue to evaluate the need, cost and benefit of off-site restoration facilities and work locations.

## 3. RAILROAD OPERATIONS

The continued operation of the C&TS is vital to the concept of the railroad as a living museum. The Friends will support this objective with funding, leadership and volunteers.

## 4. COMMISSION RELATIONSHIP

Central to the health of the railroad is the continuation of a strong partnership between the Friends, the Commission and the railroad management company. The objective is full recognition by all parties of the Friends' role as an equal partner in the historic preservation and interpretation of C&TS.

## 5. MEMBERSHIP

The most significant challenge facing the Friends as an organization over the next 20 years will be the attraction and recruitment of a new, younger generation of active supporters and volunteers. In order to provide a broader and continuous base of support for its historic preservation, restoration and interpretation activities, The Friends' will grow its membership by 7% per year, from 2,300 in 2008 to 3,200 in 2012, and diversify the demographic and geographic base of members.

## 6. FUNDRAISING

The Friends will invigorate, enhance and focus fundraising efforts as necessary to fund an increased level of operating needs and capital projects for the Friends which benefit the museum properties of the railroad and, where feasible, direct support of C&TS operations through the Commission. This will include the successful completion of the ACNGS II fundraising campaign at \$2 million or more, continued emphasis on grant writing activities and funding of the planned Railroad Visitor Center in Chama. In addition, Friends seek to increase unrestricted operating revenues by at least 10% per year, with a significant part of that growth from diversified sources other than membership dues. A continued focus on an active planned and testamentary giving program is essential to the Friends' long term fundraising program.

## 7. VOLUNTEERS

The Friends will provide the manpower necessary to accomplish its preservation, restoration and interpretation goals by developing and expanding volunteer programs. This will include expanding the demographic and geographic base of the project volunteers to include more local participation and the active engagement of younger members as well as enhancing the volunteer experience to make it more attractive to a wider base of members.

## 8. ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

The Friends seek continual improvement in its organizational effectiveness and governance to assure the organization is in place to implement the strategic plan and to provide a high level of leadership, professionalism, excellence and integrity in all we do.