

## For new locomotive facility, site is a real squeeze

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Backing up a nearly 70-year-old steam locomotive is impossible, according to Doyle McCormack, president of the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation. So when the foundation moves its three historic steam locomotives to a new facility near OMSI, a 100-foot-diameter turntable will join them.



“Imagine a giant lazy Susan,” said Doyle McCormack, president of the ORHF. “Steam engines aren’t like diesel engines. They like to go forward and that’s about it. When you go on a trip, you have to turn it around on the turntable.”

Planning new digs for the massive engines has been a challenge for staff at Shiels Oblatz Johnsen and Hennebery Eddy Architects due to the size of the turntable, the facilities and the trains themselves.

After ORHF agreed to swap sites with TriMet for a new site beneath the Martin Luther King Jr. viaduct, Kim Knox of Shiels Oblatz Johnsen had to make sure everything would fit. The three-acre site is sandwiched between a planned east-side streetcar line and the future Portland-to-Milwaukie light-rail line. The site also will need to accommodate the turntable, a 19,000-to-20,000-square-foot maintenance building and an interpretive facility.

“Our investigation so far has been to see if we can fit a maintenance structure on the site and if there’s room left over for the turntable and a public interpretive facility,” Knox said.

Hennebery Eddy Architects has completed pre-development design for the site, and in January will begin design of the maintenance facility. Principal Tim Eddy says that while certain elements at the site - such as light-rail and streetcar tracks - will benefit the facility in the future, planning around them involves a lot of moving parts.

"The site is a triangle, and getting all the pieces to fit is a challenge," Eddy said. "It sits in the middle of lots of infrastructure. There are active rail lines on all sides. We're trying to provide the ability to move the locomotives on the turntable with their turning radius constraints."

Because financing for the \$3.5 million facility has not been secured yet, McCormack says the plan is for a phased development. The new maintenance building is considered the most pressing need. The ORHF needs to have its engines and related equipment relocated by January 2012 so that Union Pacific can redevelop that site.

"This is not a good climate to ask for money, and I think that raising the money will be the biggest challenge," McCormack said. "The most immediate need is a building to move the engines to. We don't want them open to vandals and the elements."

After the maintenance facility is constructed, the plan is to build an interpretive facility on the site. First, Eddy plans to design a visibility element for the maintenance building so that the public can check out the locomotives.

"We want the opportunity for people to know what's going on," Eddy said. "We're working with ORHF on how the public can do that before the interpretive facility is constructed. This facility will be far more visible and accessible than the original."

Construction on the project will begin in mid-2011.

There is one simple element to the move, according to McCormack.

"When we move the engines, we'll just drive them down there," he said. "They do have wheels under them you know."