



Reading Eagle: Laura Newberry | In a full conductor's uniform, Nathaniel Guest, president of the Colebrookdale Preservation Trust, the driving force behind the Colebrookdale Spur Railroad, fixes a lantern after the inaugural trip of the restored caboose on the rail line earlier this year.

Berks County agency new owner of Colebrookdale Spur Railroad

By **Mary Young**

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The historic Colebrookdale Spur Railroad now belongs to the Berks County Redevelopment Authority.

Berks County Commissioners Christian Y. Leinbach, Mark C. Scott and Kevin S. Barnhardt approved the ownership transfer Thursday.

They also terminated a lease and an operating agreement with Eastern Berks Gateway Railroad Corp., and gave the authority the right to collect the fees the county had been receiving for billboard advertising along the 8.6-mile line running from Boyertown to Pottstown.

The eventual objective is to give ownership to the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust and the railroad corporation, Leinbach said.

Meanwhile, Eastern Berks, under contract with the authority, will continue to move freight on the line to Pottstown, where Norfolk Southern takes over.

The trust plans to begin providing passenger excursions from Boyertown to Pottstown in fall.

The county bought the rail line in March 2009 for \$1.35 million to save it from abandonment by a former owner.

Since then, the county has replaced missing ties and made other repairs for safety reasons.

Leinbach, the board chairman, said the county has the potential to recoup its \$2 million total investment if the line would be sold at some point. The county used money from its environmental defense fund to buy the railroad, so money from a sale would go back into that fund.

The authority has received a \$952,839 state grant to repair and rehabilitate the track.

Leinbach credited Scott for pushing for preservation of the rail line.

About a year ago, saving the railroad seemed like a speculative venture, and the commissioners were down in the dumps, Scott said.

"I am very excited about this railroad," he said.

The line, which began operation in 1869, starts near the Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles and ends near Pottsgrove Manor, the colonial home of Pottstown founder John Potts.

The route runs through woods and rock formations, with occasional views of businesses and farmhouses. Wildlife such as raptors, deer and foxes often are seen along the tracks.

The line has many types of bridges used on railroads, including a wooden culvert, a trestle bridge and a simple steel bridge.