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## **Freight runs, funding possibilities boost Colebrookdale Railroad's plans**

**By Evan Brandt, The Mercury**

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**POTTSTOWN — Drivers on King Street and Route 100 should keep their eyes peeled for the next couple of months because freight rail traffic will again travel on the Colebrookdale Railroad spur that crosses both roads.**

**The rail line, which runs between Pottstown and Boyertown and for which an historic excursion tourist railroad is planned, crosses King Street near Pottsgrove Manor and Route 100 just north of the Shoemaker Road intersection. ([map](#))**

**The hauling of freight by rail not only “takes trucks off the road and provides transportation through an environmentally friendly means, it also will create jobs and keep Pottstown and Boyertown competitive in attracting new business and retaining existing business,” Nathaniel Guest wrote in an email to The Mercury on behalf of the [Colebrookdale Railroad Trust](#).**

**The trust plans to establish an excursion railroad along the line.**

**Called “The Secret Valley Line,” the project would feature a steam locomotive and historic rail cars, similar to the [Strasburg Railroad](#) in Lancaster County.**

**In fact the first of those cars is due to arrive shortly.**

**Last month, [the trust announced that a completely restored Pennsylvania Railroad “cabin car”](#) was being donated by a nonprofit organization in Virginia.**

**The Pennsylvania Railroad cabin car (known as a “caboose” on other railroads) #477768 was built in Altoona in 1941.**

**For the last six years, members of the Rivanna Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) have been restoring it at a location in Virginia, far from the car's home. Now it is being donated to the nonprofit Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust.**

**But the project has more than just a restored rail car going for it.**

**Pottstown Borough Council Member Stephen Toroney reported Wednesday night that on New Year's Eve he was joined by officials from Boyertown, Berks County, the trust, Pottstown Area Industrial Development Authority and other interested stakeholders in a meeting with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.**

**The meeting was about \$2 million that had been set aside for a project in Berks County that was not going forward.**

**"We were there to see if that money could be applied to the Colebrookdale Railroad project," Toroney said.**

**Additionally, a business plan for the project has been written and is being used to apply for an additional round of grant funding in 2014.**

**"All total, we are jointly seeking \$5 million to move this forward," Toroney said.**

**"We were well received and I think the officials were impressed we could muster so many community leaders to this meeting one day before New Year's," Toroney said with a laugh.**

**There are still obstacles to overcome, mostly funding obstacles.**

**"The grant is a 50 percent match, but Nathaniel is confident he has a source identified and they remain confident they can open in October," Toroney said.**

**Part of that funding could come from the revenue for the additional freight traffic, which is supplying a customer in Pine Forge.**

**If successful, [the projections for the railroad](#) indicate it will attract between 20,000 to 30,000 visitors a year.**

**Creating the railroad would create 270 jobs through the various implementation phases and 80, new, sustained jobs afterward.**

**The local economic impact of implementing the railroad could range from \$7.2 million to \$18.2 million, depending on the equipment and infrastructure used.**

**The overall annual economic impact from railroad spending is estimated at \$980,000 with an additional \$1.8 million economic impact from spending by visitors to the railroad, according to the feasibility study.**

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