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## Mini 'park train' in Pottstown eyed in connection with Colebrookdale project

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The train to which the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust has access once ran at Point Pleasant, N.J. (Photo supplied)

POTTSTOWN — As an implementation study examining the viability of a tourist railroad between Pottstown and Boyertown moves forward, the man trying to establish that route along the little-used Colebrookdale Spur had a question for borough council Wednesday.

What would you think about a pint-sized “park train” in Memorial Park?

Nathaniel Guest is proposing the “park train” to council as a way to create another attraction for the nine-mile tourist rail, called “The Secret Valley Line,” and to connect the tourist rail to the Carousel at Pottstown, located on King Street across from Memorial Park.

“We have a park train that has been made available to us, and also the rail,” Guest said.

“We can get the train, we can restore it and we can run it,” he said.

However, although they did not say no, borough council was apparently not yet read to say yes.

“I’m for this project, I don’t see a whole lot of downside,” said Borough Council President Stephen Toroney.

However, he said, the matter must first be taken up by the borough staff to determine if the park can accommodate the mini-train and if installing it would put any of the grant funding the borough has received

to upgrade the park in jeopardy.

Council Vice President Jeff Chomnuk said he would be cautious about getting another project started in the borough when several remain unfinished.

“The carousel is not up and running yet, the mini-golf course hasn’t been completed,” he said. “I applaud your vision, but I think we need to get some of our other projects completed and running before we start another.”

“I think it’s a wonderful idea,” said Mayor Bonnie Heath. “We just need the staff to tell us if its feasible.”

“I would live to see that train, even if it goes down the middle of High Street,” said Councilman Dan Weand.

Guest said a similar small train has just been installed along the Strasburg Railroad in Lancaster County and that is has proven to be popular there.

Guest, a 1994 Pottsgrove High School graduate, thinks the Colebrookdale Spur rail line is [an excellent candidate to become a tourist attraction](#) in much the same way tourist railroads in Strasburg and New Hope operate.

Three other tourist railroads which operate in southeastern Pennsylvania: the world-famous [Strasburg Railroad](#) in Lancaster County; the [New Hope and Ivyland Railroad](#) in Bucks County; and the [Wanamaker, Kempton & Southern Railroad](#) in Lehigh and Berks counties can serve as models for what the [Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust](#) hopes to establish here.

Two of those railroads operate all year-round and all offer amenities, such as historic passenger cars, dining and some even offer liquor service.

The Strasburg has roughly 375,000 riders annually; the New Hope line carries 80,000 annually and the Wanamaker roughly 15,000 annually.

Starting small, running weekends and in conjunction with special events, Guest believes the Colebrookdale line could attract as many as 10,000 riders in its first year.

He explained that one reason a park train may be beneficial is that initial indications are that the loading station on the Pottstown end of the Secret Valley Line might have to be deep into Memorial Park, behind the Trilogy Park BMX track near Maaco road, off Shoemaker Road.

That’s because there is a “passing siding” there that would allow the engine to move from the front of the train to the rear of the train to head back in the opposite direction, Guest explained.

Because one of the primary benefits to the tourist rail line is to have it boost attendance and interest in other Pottstown attractions, that location could make one of those attractions less visible and not provide optimum “connectivity” to things like the carousel, the mini-golf course and Pottsgrove Manor, Guest explained.

The mini train could serve not only as a “people mover” to connect the Secret Valley line with those other attractions, the mini train “will be an attraction in and of itself,” Guest’s summary concluded.

“Trains of this sort were once found in municipal parks, amusement parks and private gardens across the country,” the summary noted.

He stressed that the idea of a park train is being looked at as an amenity and will not hinder the efforts to move forward with the full-sized Secret Valley Line Railroad itself.

“We think it would be a nice complement,” Guest said, but added that the full-scale project would going forward regardless of whether the park train proves feasible or not.

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