

New Additions	Research and Education	6012	8/27/2021	Mississippi Coast Model Railroad Museum/Tourism/Economic Development/Infrastructure	<p>The Mississippi Coast Model Railroad Museum Project (Tourism/Economic Development/Infrastructure) Requesting \$1.5M</p> <p>The Mississippi Model Railroad Museum project is being developed at the intersection of Hewes Avenue and Pass Road on a piece of property that was once plots #6-18 in the neighborhood of Manhattan Addition, established in 1905. The project supports the Tourism, Economic Development and Infrastructure categories of the RESTORE plan.</p> <p>The current property at 615 Pass Road, sits mostly in the Pat Harrison Waterway in Harrison County on the corner of the first intersection guests typically stop at as they leave the Gulfport Airport going toward the beaches. Transforming the existing property into the world-class model railroad museum it can become will attract tourists, build economic development in the area, and can also spark revitalization interest of the established businesses currently there.</p> <p>But this museum will not only simulate economic development or attract tourists and locals, it will also educate guests that visit. In keeping with the mission of the museum, visitors will learn about the history of trains in Mississippi and in the United States, their value to our past communities, and those in the present. Additionally, this museum will also provide an attractive that brings families together to laugh and learn, parents and children, grandparents and children, and teachers' students.</p> <p>The museum, however, will not stop with those elements. Another element that will be strongly incorporated into the experience throughout the museum will introduce Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) activities to encourage guests to explore STEM areas through modeling concepts.</p> <p>The funding request from RESTORE would support the \$1.5M needed to design, fabricate, and install STEM interactive displays throughout the museum. These displays would highlight STEM educational elements that build scientific knowledge grows through model railroading.</p> <p>Additionally, the museum will drive the creation of programming and activities that build workforce development skills also through STEM engagement concepts developed through building display models. These interactive displays will teach elements of electricity, CAD design, architecture, engineering, design, geography, physics, and math which are heavily drawn upon when creating model displays. Throughout the museum, interactive displays will be designed and installed to allow guests hands-on experiences in all these areas.</p> <p>If guests that want to create their own model railroad displays at home, they can also attend #atRail Classroom in the museum's workshop. They may even visit the #atRail Library to research rail history or modeling here-to's while at the museum.</p> <p>Upon completion, the model railroad museum in Gulfport, Mississippi, will be recognized as the largest model railroad museum currently in the United States. That distinction alone will put the state of Mississippi out front of the model railroad competition. Hosting the largest model railroad museum in the United States will attract visitors from around the state of Mississippi, but it could also draw tourists and model railroad enthusiasts from across the country, or even the world.</p> <p>Currently this construction project has been privately underwritten by community donors, Richard Mueller and Glenn Mueller (founders of RPM Plaza on 5th Street, Gulfport, MS) to bring in intricate model railroad displays. One currently under production for the museum will cost over \$1M alone. It will present landmarks that move, light up, or spin across the display board from Mobile Bay to Canal Street in New Orleans. The history of the coast will also be presented through train exhibits, so that #atRailheads of all ages will learn about the importance of the railroads and how that value continues today. Additional layouts already received total over \$2M in value for a total of \$3M (cash/brand) making these museum displays some of the most interactive, educational exhibits of model railroads that can be found. No other funding sources have been secured to date.</p> <p>Establishing a world-class model railroad museum will be a strong attraction site for tourists coming to the Coast of Mississippi. But the Mississippi Coast Model Railroad Museum will also impact economic development in South Mississippi when it opens in 2023. The Museum projects hiring professionals to fill 5 1.0 FTE and 4 5 FTE positions in guest services within 30 days of opening in January of 2023. Additionally, preferred caterers will be selected for group rentals and events along with others to enhance the experience in areas such as birthday parties, party characters, balloon designers, florists, and bakeries that will expand the economic impact of the Museum. Through supporting other community professionals, the overall budget of the Museum is projected to send almost \$700,000 back into the local economy during the first year of operation.</p> <p>The Railroad Museum Project is designed to also serve as a catalyst for community revitalization of Pass Road, an area that has slipped more toward decay than inspiration. The staff is already working with the City of Gulfport to provide missing sidewalks around the museum property and improve interactions for pedestrians. The parking lot of the Museum has been drawn to include green spaces while adding attractive outdoor lighting, and landscapes that will include new sidewalks bordering it.</p> <p>A member of the Pass Road Merchants' Association, the staff will be collaboratively working with other merchant members to upgrade their own properties or storefronts. Once begun, the changes will also encourage new merchants to locate to Pass Road. Then as new merchants move into Gulfport, property values should begin to increase the tax base in that area for the city.</p> <p>The far-reaching effects of completing the \$6,500,000 Mississippi Coast Model Railroad Museum project has the potential to create a premiere tourist destination for the coast of South Mississippi that will bring new tourists and revenue. The museum currently has \$4,100,000 invested in the first phase of the project.</p>	Harrison	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes		Yes		\$ 8,500,000.00	\$4,100,000.00
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