

SOUTHEASTERN RAILWAY MUSEUM



FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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SOUTHEASTERN RAILWAY MUSEUM

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I. BACKGROUND

The mission of the Southeastern Railway Museum is to provide an educational atmosphere that will vividly bring to life the cultural, technological and historical importance of railroads and land transportation to our region. This is accomplished through preservation, conservation, display, and operation of historic equipment, publications, memorabilia and the portrayal of the lives of those people who created and provided that transportation.

The Southeastern Railway Museum (SRM) grew from a “seed” planted over sixty years ago. In 1955, a group of railroad veterans formed the “Save 290 Club” in an effort to preserve the Atlanta & West Point Railroad (A&WP) locomotive #290. The “290” boasted a rich heritage dating to the early 1920’s and was featured in the movie, “Fried Green Tomatoes.” The “Save 290 Club” evolved into the Atlanta Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society (NRHS) in 1959. Significant portions of the SRM collection date from the earliest years of the Atlanta Chapter NRHS. Back then, many of the Museum’s artifacts were housed at a variety of railyards throughout the metro Atlanta area.

The first consolidated Museum site was established in 1966 through a donation by the Southern Railway. Finally, the Atlanta Chapter began collecting rolling stock, memorabilia and artifacts from around metro Atlanta and storing them all on one campus. The Southeastern Railway Museum, operated by the Atlanta Chapter NRHS, was opened to the public in 1970.

In 1998, the Southeastern Railway Museum was moved to its present location in Duluth through a generous donation of thirty acres of land by Mr. Frank Ewing of Washington, DC. Soon thereafter, in 2000, the Georgia legislature approved a resolution designating SRM, “Georgia’s Official Transportation History Museum.”

In 2010, the Atlanta Chapter NRHS established a separate community-based Board of Trustees to operate the Southeastern Railway Museum and transferred the facility and artifacts to the board through a long-term lease. Currently, the Museum includes Buildings #1 and #2 which house most of the museum exhibits. The Duluth Depot, dating to 1871, stands at the entrance of the Museum grounds. The Park Train, a miniature locomotive and cars was originally used at the Birmingham Zoo beginning in 1957. In 2017, the Museum added the Rail Transit Exhibit (RTE) building, a 21,000 square foot shelter for rail cars and busses.

The Southeastern Railway Museum is staffed and operated primarily by volunteers. The Museum annually welcomes more than 25,000 visitors including 5,000 students on field trips.

To move this important venue forward and to expand and enhance its service to the Gwinnett County and the Metro-Atlanta region, the SRM Board of Trustees retained First Community Development (FCD) in March, 2019, to assist the Museum in developing a compelling, long-range Strategic Plan and conducting a comprehensive Feasibility Analysis to determine the efficacy of a Fundraising Campaign to underwrite the costs of a visionary new program for the Museum.

The SRM volunteer leadership, with the assistance of First Community Development, established a Strategic Planning Task Force in April, 2019, composed of corporate and community leaders from throughout the Gwinnett County / North Metro Atlanta area. Over the next seven months, the Task Force carefully crafted their collective vision into a ***Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan 2020-2024.***

The Strategic Planning Task Force unanimously approved the proposed five-year Strategic Plan and Budget in September, 2019. Following a thorough review, the Southeastern Railway Museum's Board of Trustees approved the Strategic Plan and authorized a comprehensive Feasibility Analysis to gauge philosophical and financial support for the proposed Plan throughout the Gwinnett County area.

FCD then initiated a Feasibility Analysis in October, 2019. The results of those Feasibility Analysis interviews is contained in the following Report and Recommendations.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 21, 2019, First Community Development initiated a comprehensive Feasibility Analysis on behalf of the Southeastern Railway Museum (SRM). The FCD Team interviewed forty (40) corporate, government and community leaders. Interviews were completed on February 20, 2020, and the confidential responses of interviewees were used to develop the following report and recommendations.

The Southeastern Railway Museum Feasibility Analysis elicited a wide range of candid responses concerning the three components of the Plan, perceptions of the Museum and potential support for the Plan. In addition to gauging support for the proposed Plan, critical factors that will have a bearing on the success of the plan were also discussed. Some of these key areas of focus include:

1. **Organization Awareness and Perception** Ninety-five percent (95%) of interviewees were “somewhat familiar” or “very familiar” with the Southeastern Railway Museum and its mission. When questioned about the perception among local business leaders regarding the effectiveness of SRM in achieving its mission in the area, twenty percent (20%) consider SRM “very effective” while another seventy percent (70%) consider SRM “somewhat effective.” Ten percent (10%) do not consider SRM effective in achieving its mission in Gwinnett County or the North Metro Atlanta area.
2. **Philosophical Support for the SRM Strategic Plan** Among the leaders interviewed, ninety percent (90%) stated that the SRM Strategic Plan as presented is “excellent, necessary and beneficial.” Two percent (2%) consider the plan “too ambitious.” Another two percent (2%) think the proposed Strategic Plan does not contain enough program. The remaining six percent (6%) were classified in the “other” category, suggesting they were interested in a better understanding of the specific elements of the proposed SRM Strategic Plan.
3. **Campaign Goal and Timing** Provided the recommendations contained in this Feasibility Report are implemented, a fundraising campaign to garner a minimum of \$1 Million from public and private sources in the Gwinnett County and North Metro Atlanta area appears realistic. The SRM campaign should be launched immediately in order to capitalize on the significant interest in the proposed new five-year Plan generated by the Strategic Planning process and this Feasibility Analysis. A five-year goal of \$4,750,000 was tested during the Analysis.
4. **Campaign Leadership and Volunteer Involvement** The Feasibility Analysis interviews did not produce a clear consensus regarding potential and willing leadership for a fundraising campaign. However, a significant number of interviewees ---seventy-three percent (73%) --- are willing to serve or would consider serving in a capital campaign should one be launched.

III. FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Prior to initiating the Feasibility Analysis, First Community Development (FCD) assisted the Southeastern Railway Museum in the development of the proposed new five-year Strategic Plan. FCD prepared a prospectus, “Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan, 2020 - 2024”, (Exhibit A) summarizing the five-year Plan and outlining the elements proposed for funding. The prospectus was reviewed and approved by the Strategic Planning Task Force and ultimately the Southeastern Railway Museum Board of Trustees. The Feasibility Analysis was conducted to address the following three primary areas of interest:

1. Enhance the Education Experience
2. Improve & Expand Museum Exhibits
3. Modernize the Museum for Growth

First Community Development worked with the SRM volunteer leadership to prepare a list of potential Feasibility Analysis interviewees. In October, 2019 seventy-five (75) prominent, influential business and community leaders as well as elected officials were contacted by letter announcing the plans for the SRM Feasibility Analysis and requesting their participation to assist the Southeastern Railway Museum in determining its future course of action.

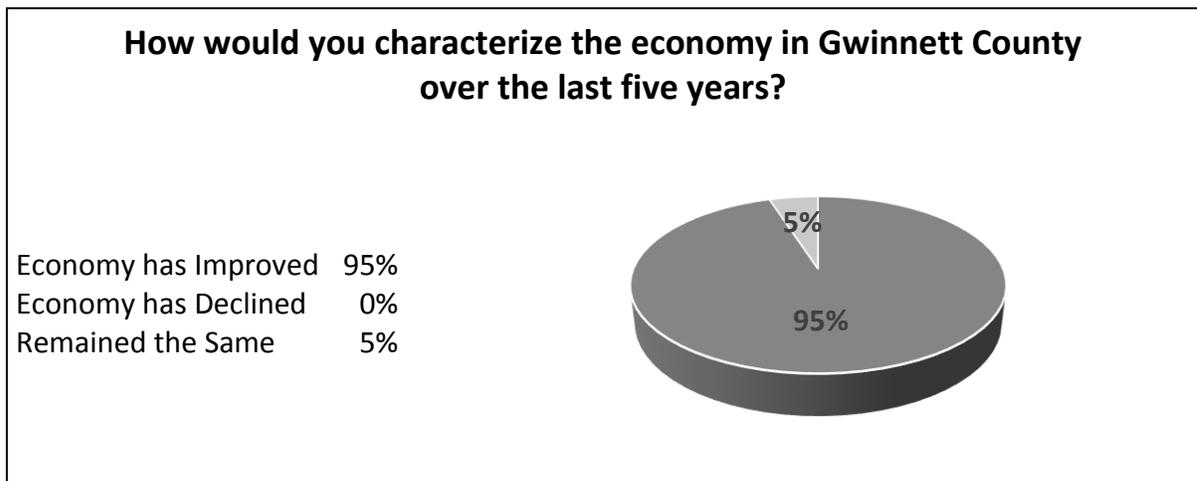
FCD prepared a comprehensive Feasibility Analysis Questionnaire (Exhibit B) to serve as an interview guide and to ensure the uniformity of responses. In theory, confidential and candid responses to a series of targeted questions would produce an accurate overview of opinions that the FCD staff would analyze. Due to scheduling availability, a total of forty (40) business leaders and elected officials (Exhibit C) were interviewed. The average interview lasted approximately forty-five (45) minutes. The shortest interview was concluded in twenty-five (25) minutes, while the longest interview lasted one hour and forty-five (105) minutes. The interviews were conducted at the interviewee’s place of business or at the Southeastern Railway Museum...or at area restaurants and coffee shops...or at the offices of First Community Development. In four cases, at the request of the interviewees, the confidential discussions were conducted by telephone.

In order to elicit candid responses, interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of their opinions and comments. Their responses are reported here in the aggregate only. Unattributed quotations are used where necessary to reflect the flavor of typical comments or in confirmation of the study findings. The recommendations contained in this report are the result of First Community Development’s careful analysis of the collected data.

IV. AWARENESS AMONG COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Opinions Regarding the Economy of Gwinnett County

Opinions were consistent regarding the economy in Gwinnett County during the last five years. Most felt the local economy has improved and shown steady growth. The majority of interviewees felt that Atlanta and Gwinnett County are fully recovered from the Great Recession. They cited significant new construction in both residential and commercial real estate, new business coming to the area and steady improvement in sales throughout the area.

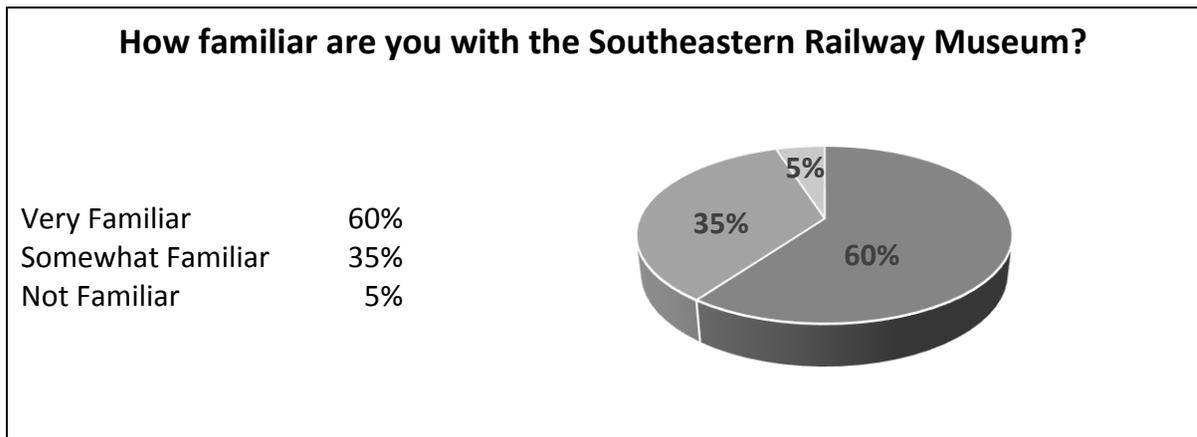


Typical Comments:

- *"Our economy has been booming on all cylinders until this year, but still growing."*
- *"Our population has grown along with our incomes!"*
- *"We've seen new growth with business and retail. Our vacancy rate has decreased every year. All of the indices have trended well."*
- *"We will probably have a bump and reset, but not as bad as 2008."*
- *"Great development in downtown Duluth. However, people are still cautious."*

Awareness of the Southeastern Railway Museum

Interviewees were mixed in their knowledge and understanding of the Southeastern Railway Museum. A majority of the respondents are familiar with the Museum and its location, though some of these interviewees confessed they had not toured the venue. Others were somewhat familiar with the location but not knowledgeable regarding SRM's mission. Some interviewees suggested the Museum could improve its awareness simply by removing some of the trees blocking the view of the Depot. Others suggested improving signage, lighting the Depot at night and even moving a train engine to the shoulder of the access road into the Museum campus. All agreed that the Museum can do a better job of promotion and public awareness.

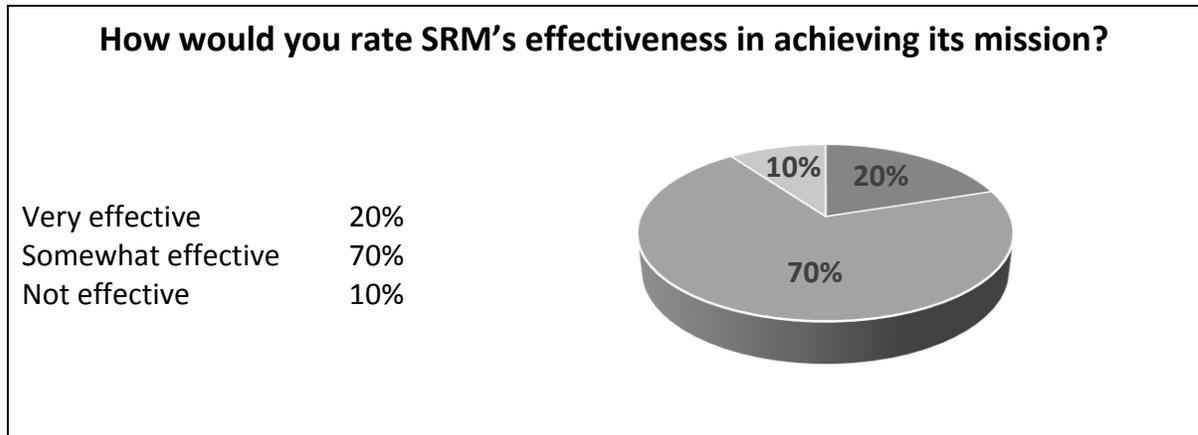


Typical Comments:

- *"I have not visited the museum."*
- *"I've been there a bunch. SRM needs a lot of help in promoting their brand."*
- *"The Southeastern Railway Museum is an unknown in the Gwinnett County community."*
- *"They could use the restoration projects as a way of building local / regional interest in the museum."*
- *"They have to beef up their online presence. I couldn't find anything that I needed when I went online."*

Perception of the Southeastern Railway Museum Among Local Leaders

Interviewees who were aware of specific accomplishments of the Museum, regarded them as being very effective. A common theme among those who perceived SRM as being somewhat effective was the lack of a fulltime paid staff. Their perception was that the Museum's volunteer staff and workforce were doing a credible job, but were unable to accomplish significant progress due to their part time focus. Most of the interviewees (70%) fell into the "somewhat effective" category for this reason. Those who considered the Museum very effective were volunteers themselves and clearly acknowledge all that has been accomplished...behind the scenes...over the years.



Typical Comments:

- *"What is their mission? People don't know what SRM's vision is!"*
- *"I've taken my son there every year. I'm not sure we have expectations of what SRM's mission is."*
- *"They can always get better."*
- *"This is an absolute gift to the community that is virtually unknown."*
- *"They aren't engaged with the movers and shakers in the area."*

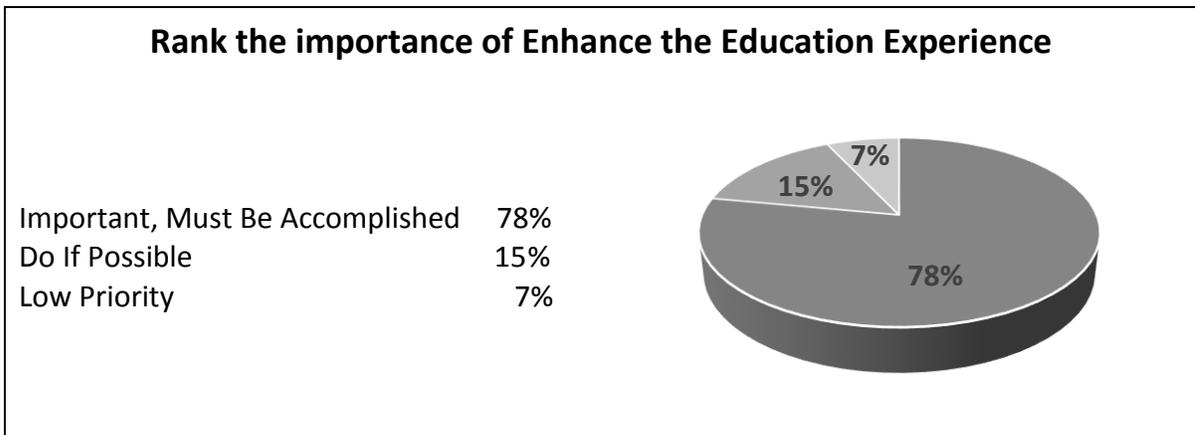
V. COMMUNITY OPINION REGARDING THE SRM STRATEGIC PLAN

Opinions Regarding the Proposed Program

Each interviewee was asked to review the three components of the Southeastern Railway Museum’s proposed five-year Strategic Plan. During their interviews, respondents were asked to rate each of the three program components as either “Important, must be accomplished,” “Do if possible,” or “Low priority.” The interviewees’ opinions regarding each of the Action Plan components are summarized as follows:

I. ENHANCE THE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

A significant majority of those interviewed considered “Enhance the Education Experience” a high priority. Several respondents made a specific point in emphasizing that Education is a “quality of life” component. There is a perceived need to inform and educate children and youth on the historical value of the railroads in building the nation’s economy. Overall the “Enhance the Education Experience” component received substantial support and ranked first among the three components of the Strategic Plan.



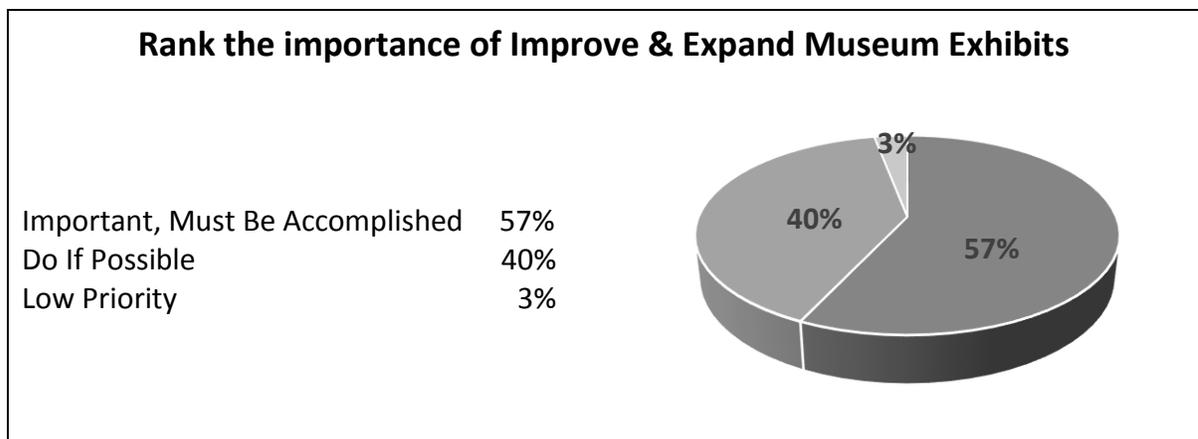
Typical Comments:

- *“This is the public face of the museum and it’s where the public can connect. This is a golden opportunity for students to learn about this mode of transportation.”*
- *“SRM is a unique facility that can tie in historic transportation as well as what we see every day in the railroads.”*
- *“Field trips are a thing of the past. They have to take programs to the schools. They have to innovate.”*
- *“Education is the key. Hardly anyone, even in this area, knows that SRM exists.”*
- *“Railroads are critical to the success of this country. This is huge!”*

II. IMPROVE & EXPAND MUSEUM EXHIBITS

Interviewees' opinions differed regarding the importance of this component of the SRM proposed five-year Plan. While the majority of interviewees were consistent that this is a worthwhile area of focus for the Museum, there was a discrepancy regarding the level of priority SRM should assign to "cleaning up and refurbishing their exhibits. Some interviewees believe the Museum's rolling stock should be returned to its original grandeur while other interviewees prefer it remain dirty and dusty as it likely appeared when in service.

It was generally held that "Improve & Expand Museum Exhibits", while of notable value, was a less important priority than the "Enhance the Education Experience" component and slightly better than the "Modernize the Museum for Growth component of the Plan. This component ranked second among the three components in the Strategic Plan.

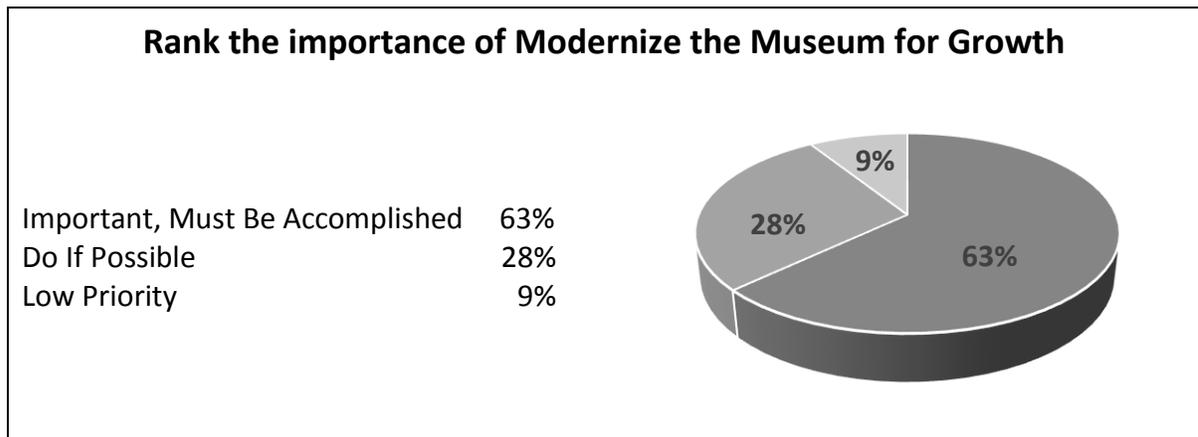


Typical Comments:

- *"This is a high priority, but I would caution against item #2...diluting the museum's primary vision. Let's do railroad and get that done well."*
- *"Improving the exhibits will also improve the education experience. You can't have 'A' without 'B'."*
- *"I think it's cool that it's all old fashioned and should stay that way."*
- *"Those who give won't care if everything is perfect."*
- *"SRM has done a remarkably good job with volunteers. But this museum is dated, dark and tired. Now they need to take it to a true museum-level experience. This needs professional investment and care."*

III. MODERNIZE THE MUSEUM FOR GROWTH

Modernizing the Museum for growth was considered important by a significant majority of interviewees. Some interviewees believed that this component was integrally connected to “Enhance the Education Experience” in a “chicken and egg” relationship. Additionally, there was frequent mentions of the importance of redeveloping the Museum site plan to better tell the Museum’s story. Generally interviewees felt that the Museum has all of the necessary “pieces” of the puzzle. They just need to do a better job of assembling those pieces so that the visitor starts at point “A” and ends at point “Z” and fully understands the overall Museum experience when he finishes the tour. This component ranked third among all plan components.



Typical Comments:

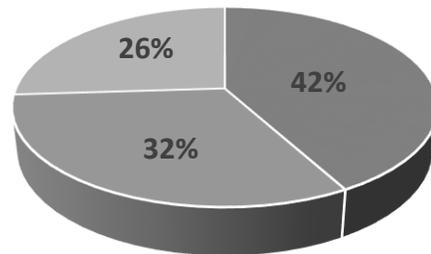
- *“This is a priority but not as important as the other two components.”*
- *“It’s dumpy and needs to look more inviting. This is extremely important visually and from the entry. They need to acquire the Livingston property so you can drive straight in.”*
- *“This is important though hard to prioritize. If you do ‘it’ well, they will forgive this if it’s not perfect.”*
- *“This is important to bring more people in to ‘discover’ the museum.”*
- *“I don’t like ‘modernize.’ We want to make this place sustainable. I love the ruggedness of the museum. Don’t go overboard.”*

Ranking of Individual Program Components

Next, interviewees were asked to rank the relative importance of each of the components of the proposed Strategic Plan. Respondents were asked which of the three Plan components they consider “Top Priority” and, conversely, which of the components they would rank “Least Important.” Despite the bias in favor of the two highest ranked components, all three of the components received strong individual support and therefore should be included in the new five-year Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan.

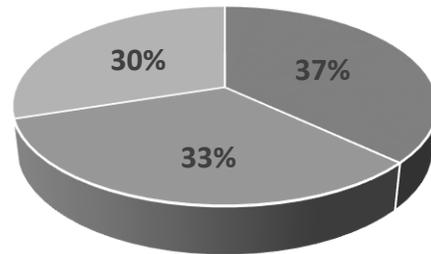
What is the MOST important of the three components of the Plan?

Enhance the Education Experience 42%
Modernize the Museum for Growth 32%
Improve & Expand Museum Exhibits 26%



What is the LEAST important of the three components of the Plan?

Modernize the Museum for Growth 37%
Improve & Expand Museum Exhibits 33%
Enhance the Education Experience 30%



General Assessment of all Components

When combining the “Important, must be accomplished” with the “Do if possible” ratings we see how strongly the interviewees consider each of the three Strategic Plan components. It is clear from these responses that each individual component is considered valuable and worthy of remaining in the *Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan 2020-2024*.

Ranking after combining “must do” and “do if possible” responses

Enhance the Education Experience	93%
Improve & Expand Museum Exhibits	97%
Modernize the Museum for Growth	91%

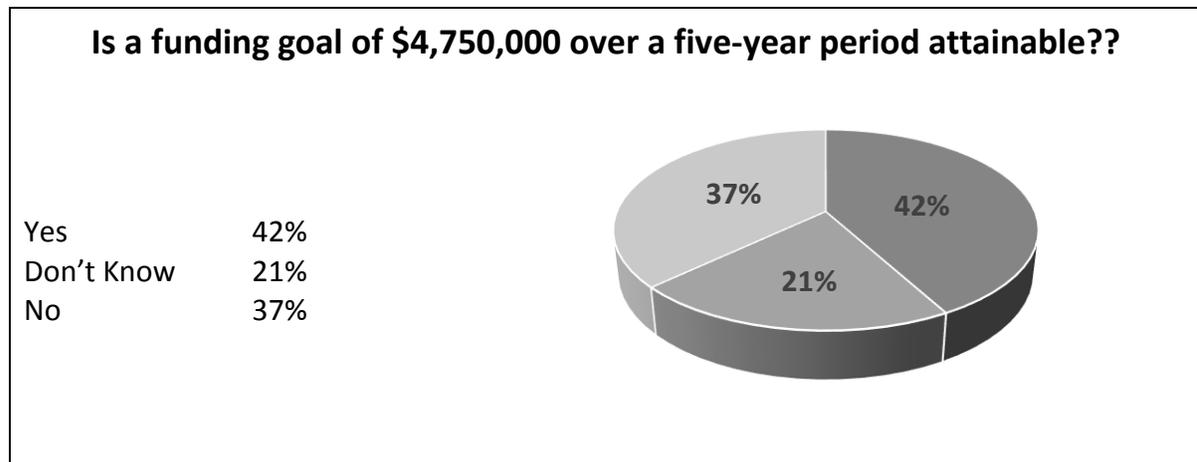
Generally, the Strategic Plan as written enjoys significant philosophical support. There were varied opinions on the individual elements of the three components of the plan, but the overall plan was seen as a logical next step in the evolution of the Southeastern Railway Museum. Interviewees considered the Plan to be challenging, but do-able, and it was assessed to be highly important to the future success of the Southeastern Railway Museum and the area that it serves.

VI. CAMPAIGN POTENTIAL

Funding Potential

When asked if a total funding goal of \$4,750,000 or \$950,000 per year for five years could be obtained through pledges from public and private sources, leaders were generally mixed in their responses. Larger corporations and local foundations were viewed as the expected investment leaders. Many interviewees cautioned that “only those leaders with a connection to the railroad” would likely invest at a significant level. Yet all agreed that, to be successful, the pool of investors needed to be inclusive and passionate about the Southeastern Railway Museum and its impact on Gwinnett County and the North Metro Atlanta area.

A few who considered the \$4,750,000 goal as unattainable cited a limited investor pool and the “over extension” of giving capacity for recent projects in the community. Overall, respondents were quick to point out that “it certainly won’t be easy, but it is possible.” When pressed for a “feasible goal” these respondents suggested a first-time campaign goal in the range of “\$1 Million to \$2.5 Million.”



Typical Comments:

- *“It’s doable. There is a chance you could find someone who could write the check for this.”*
- *“It depends. For something like this, you have to have a foundation that would take this on annually. The Hudgens Center decided not to do a campaign.”*
- *“If it is feasible, I’m not sure where it would come from. There are already a lot of hands out to the corporate leaders in the immediate area.”*
- *“That’s an exponential leap for the museum.”*
- *“This will take a very special kind of donor who is deeply rooted to the area and a train lover.”*

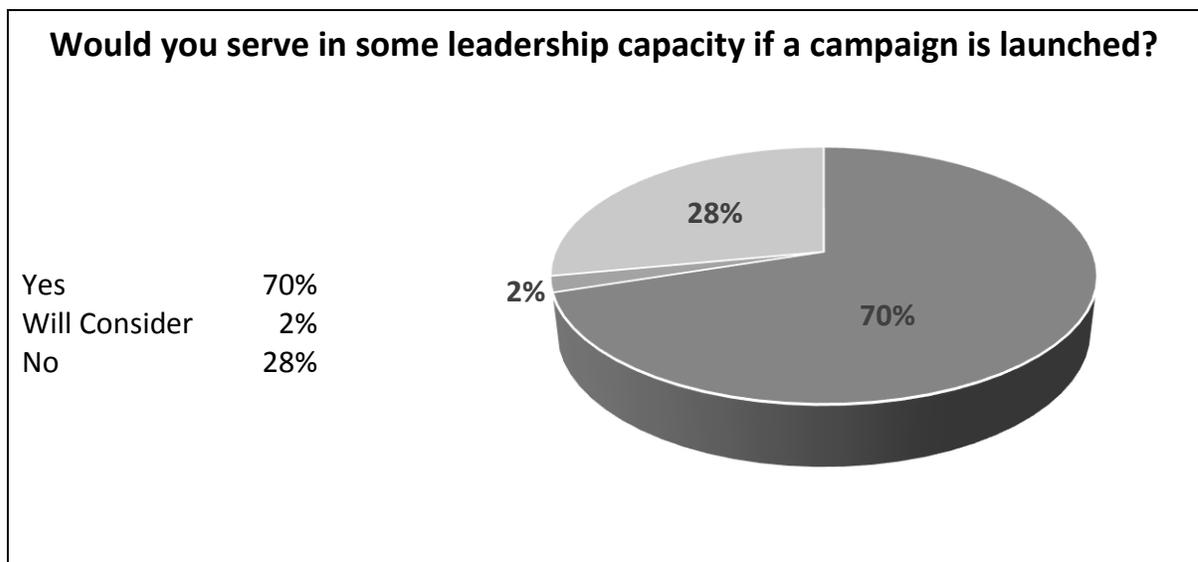
Financial Indications

Interviewees were asked if their firms or organizations would likely invest in the five-year Southeastern Railway Museum campaign to underwrite the proposed Strategic Plan. If they replied in the affirmative, each interviewee was also asked to indicate a potential range of financial support for the proposed program. Individual financial indications ranged from a low of \$1,000 to a high of \$125,000 over the five-year term of the program. Total financial indications ranged from a low of \$407,000 to a high of \$501,000.

It is important to note that these figures are only estimates of giving and do not represent firm commitments to the Southeastern Railway Museum's proposed program. Some of those interviewed (37%) could not or would not indicate a potential range of support at this time because they were not prepared to identify a specific number or they were not the final decision makers on such matters for their business or organization.

Volunteer Campaign Involvement

The level of volunteer leadership in a fundraising campaign of this scale has a significant impact on the opportunity for success. Should a campaign be launched on behalf of the Southeastern Railway Museum, the enlistment of campaign volunteers should not be a concern. When asked if they would personally consider serving in a leadership or worker capacity if a funding campaign to benefit the SRM program is launched, many interviewees (72%) said they would take an active role...or would consider participating...in the campaign. Those declining (28%) were in positions that prohibited them from actively soliciting on behalf of nonprofit organizations or required them to raise funding for other organizations, but said that they would lend their support when appropriate.



VII. POSITIVE / NEGATIVE FACTORS

Negative Factors

There are often factors that bear either positively or negatively on the potential success of a fundraising campaign. These factors may or may not be within the control of the organization sponsoring the campaign. However, it is important to consider any and all variables that may affect a campaign before committing to the project. Following is a list of unfavorable factors that could adversely affect the outcome of the proposed Southeastern Railway Museum fundraising initiative:

- A. During the Feasibility Analysis, interviewees often referred to the Southeastern Railway Museum as a “well-kept secret” in Gwinnett County. Prospective investors would not likely invest in a project that isn’t a prominent, well-known local venue.
- B. Some interviewees questioned the ability of an “all-volunteer led non-profit organization” to successfully implement an aggressive five-year Strategic Plan.
- C. Local leaders expressed concerns that there aren’t enough specifics on “how the goals in the proposed SRM Strategic Plan will be accomplished.”
- D. A number of interviewees questioned whether the \$4.75 Million goal is feasible and wondered aloud just what sum would be feasible for SRM to raise in their first attempt at a significant capital project.

Negative Comments:

- *“I know leaders in the area, but they wouldn’t do this. There is a leadership gap in Gwinnett County.”*
- *“This is a ‘mish-mash’ transportation junkyard. What is your focus?”*
- *“SRM needs a visionary marketing and publicity plan to expose this museum to the masses.”*
- *“SRM suffers because of a lack of ongoing connections to leaders in the region. But they need to start with an incredible executive director fulltime.”*
- *“Based on past fundraising and SRM’s lack of exposure...this (\$4.75 Million goal) wouldn’t be possible.”*

Positive Factors

The following favorable factors could have a positive impact on the proposed Southeastern Railway Museum funding initiative.

- A. The development of the ***Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan 2020-2024*** was praised by numerous interviewees and demonstrates that SRM is taking a proactive approach to enhancing their product as well as growing the local economy.
- B. Refinement of the proposed SRM Strategic Plan will show that the Museum's leadership has listened to the comments, criticisms and recommendations of the area's corporate and community leaders and has acted responsibly in addressing this community-wide initiative.
- C. While no individual was identified during the Feasibility Analysis as the "clear leader" to lead the fundraising campaign, there were a number of individuals who were identified as potential leaders. This should provide the nucleus of a leadership base with which to build a successful fundraising campaign on behalf of the Museum.
- D. There were some interviewees who were noncommittal to a range of financial support for the proposed five-year SRM Plan. They may, nonetheless, support a revised ***Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan 2020-2024*** that is more focused, more specific in terms of goals and objectives and includes a reasonable method by which achievement of these goals and objectives can be measured.
- E. There exists a significant group of corporate and community leaders who will respond to a request to help raise substantial funding for the Southeastern Railway Museum Plan.
- F. Though they questioned the viability of a \$4.75 Million goal, there is still considerable financial and philosophical support among area leaders for the efforts of the Southeastern Railway Museum.
- G. Several supportive corporate leaders identified other potential investors during their Feasibility Analysis interviews. They also indicated that they would lead the effort to "open the doors" to those additional prospective businesses.

Positive Comments:

- *"I brought our grandchildren to SRM and they were mesmerized. Don't overlook the power this museum has to help the next generation appreciate what the railroad has done to develop this country."*
- *"Focus on this project one small step at a time. I'll help any way I can!"*
- *"I give Randy and SRM a lot of credit for doing this Strategic Plan!"*
- *"I'm passionate about the railroad. I went (to SRM) with low expectations and was blown away. I really got caught up in it and it was a lot of fun!"*
- *"It's great that SRM is trying to step out of its comfort zone. They have to think differently about the whole museum experience if they want to compete with all the other museums out there."*

VIII. FCD RECOMMENDATIONS

Feasible Campaign Goal

A minimum campaign goal of One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) to be garnered from public and private sources in the Gwinnett County / North Metro Atlanta area appears to be feasible and realistic. First Community Development's opinion of the funding potential for the SRM campaign is based upon the positive financial indications given by interviewees and our firm's experience in assessing similar funding opportunities.

However, it is recommended that the Southeastern Railway Museum not establish or announce a specific goal until:

- All other available Feasibility Analysis interviews have been completed and the data merged with the forty-two concluded interviews
- Refinement of the SRM Strategic Plan including goals and feasible budget is complete
- Campaign leadership has been enlisted and is in place
- The evaluation of all Advance Division prospects is concluded
- The response of major funding prospects has confirmed their level of financial support

Campaign Timing

In order to capitalize on the interest generated by this Feasibility Analysis, First Community Development recommends that the Southeastern Railway Museum launch a campaign immediately to raise the required funding.

Preparatory campaign organizational work, including refinement of the five-year Strategic Plan, enlistment of top leaders, creation of the campaign identity package, and evaluation of all prospects should be accomplished in March, April and May. Top-level solicitations would begin in June. A formal public kick-off of the Southeastern Railway Museum's campaign would occur in October, 2020.

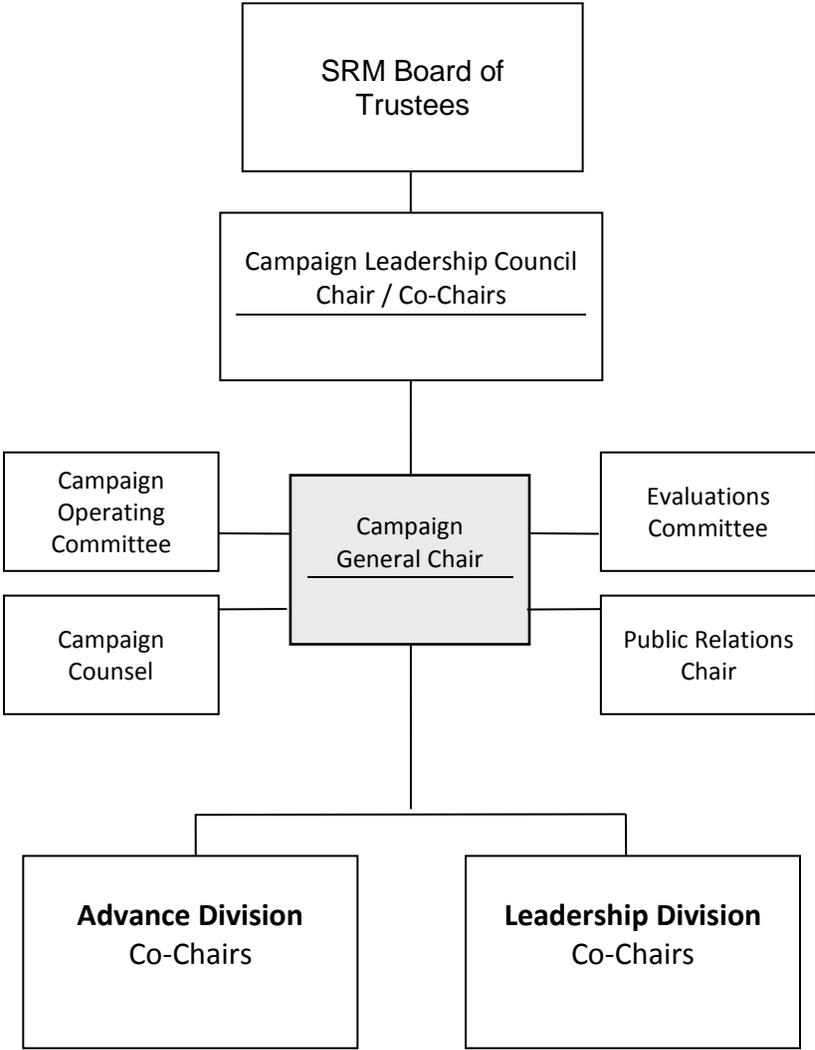
It is estimated that a total of twelve months will be required to reach or exceed the minimum campaign goal.

Campaign Organization

Experience indicates that a campaign utilizing informed and motivated volunteers as top-level leaders and solicitors will achieve maximum results. Five-year pledges, investments and/or commitments should be sought from all prospects to ensure adequate funding for the SRM program. All major prospects in the campaign's Advance Division should be contacted and solicited by the most influential leaders. First Community Development recommends a campaign organization structure and key positions for the Southeastern Railway Museum campaign as shown on the following page.

Southeastern Railway Museum

Proposed Campaign Organization Chart



Campaign Leadership

A successful fundraising campaign in the Gwinnett County North Metro Atlanta area will require volunteer leaders who have wide recognition and appeal as well as considerable influence. The SRM Plan of Campaign will establish a Campaign Leadership Council composed of a geographic cross section of Gwinnett County's most prominent public / private sector leaders.

The **Campaign Leadership Council** is a group of business and community leaders who endorse the goals and objectives of the ***Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan 2020-2024***. It is from this nucleus that leadership for all campaign positions will be recruited.

The Campaign Leadership Council Chair (or Co-Chairs) must occupy a position of respect and considerable influence in the Gwinnett County / North Metro Atlanta corporate community. He/she must be able to readily enlist other key individuals to the initiative through membership in the Campaign Leadership Council.

The Leadership Council is a campaign entity enlisted to serve only for the duration of the fundraising campaign. Though the Council will disband after the campaign goal is achieved and the campaign concluded, its members, by virtue of their status, will likely remain involved in the Museum's program throughout its five-year implementation period.

The **Campaign General Chair** is the chief executive of the fundraising initiative. This individual, more than any other volunteer campaign leader, will have the responsibility and authority to direct the fundraising campaign, in consultation with First Community Development.

The Campaign General Chair must be a corporate head of proven leadership capacity with clearly recognized influence in all sectors, public and private, in the greater Gwinnett County area. The Campaign General Chair will enlist other top-level campaign leaders with the aid of the Campaign Leadership Council Co-Chairs. These individuals will assume full responsibility for achieving the publicly established campaign goal.

The Campaign Leadership Council Co-Chairs will help select and recruit the Campaign General Chair, calling on his/her knowledge of top-level leaders in the greater Gwinnett County area. Leadership recommendations drawn from the FCD Feasibility Analysis will provide guidance for his/her selections.

During the Feasibility Analysis, the following names (listed in alphabetical order) were recommended most often as the logical and most effective candidates for top-level campaign leadership positions:

Marsha Bomar	Nick Massino
Rudy Bowen	Randy Redner
Brooks Coleman	Bill Russell
Nancy Harris	Katherine Willis

Along with these frequently mentioned names, there were thirty-three (33) additional names recommended as potential leaders.

Program Implementation

As a result of the forty (40) interviews conducted during this Feasibility Analysis, First Community Development gained significant insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the Southeastern Railway Museum's proposed five-year Strategic Plan as perceived by potential investors. Furthermore, FCD has many years of experience in designing and implementing effective economic and community development programs for similar non-profit organizations in the southeast. Based on this expertise, First Community Development offers the following observations and recommendations:

- A. **Refine the Plan** To ensure the broadest possible support, a final refinement of the proposed Strategic Plan is advised. Clarification of objectives, refinement of goals, defined budgets and precise timetables for each plan component will give potential investors more confidence in the program and its capacity to effectively stimulate education and the economy of the Gwinnett County area.
- B. **Communicate Results** A program to communicate the results of the prior fundraising campaign for the Southeastern Railway Museum to all members of the board, local elected officials, corporate and community leaders and current investors should be implemented immediately. Such information may be circulated through a special "Feasibility Analysis Executive Summary Report" to volunteers and current investors and will serve to assure the community of the Museum's stewardship.
- C. **Recruit Influential Leadership** Special emphasis must be given to recruiting and enlisting the most influential corporate leaders to serve in leadership positions in the Museum's funding campaign. By their participation and endorsement of the initiative, they will ensure the success of the campaign and effective implementation of the *Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan 2020-2024*.
- D. **Gain Commitment from Volunteers** Committed volunteers are essential to the success of the campaign. In order to gain this commitment it is important that each volunteer understand the value of the SRM Plan and its importance to the future of the greater Gwinnett County / North Metro Atlanta area.
- E. **Gain Support from the Southeastern Railway Museum's Board of Trustees** The early success of this fundraising campaign will be measured by the level of energy and financial support of the current Southeastern Railway Museum's Board of Trustees. Each Director must commit his/her time and resources to ensure that the "best and brightest" leaders throughout the area are quickly committed to the success of this project. The high energy of members of the SRM Board of Trustees and their prompt investment in the campaign will set an example for other local leaders to invest their time and resources as well.
- F. **Be a cheerleader** As often as they can, the Museum's staff and leadership must speak positively of the Southeastern Railway Museum and the funding campaign. Whenever possible, in meetings large and small...local leaders need to hear the "good news" regarding the Southeastern Railway Museum and this important new initiative.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The Southeastern Railway Museum will gain the necessary funding to implement a successful five-year program to enhance both the education, economic development and the quality of life in Gwinnett County and North Metro Atlanta. The need is clear, and corporate and community leaders throughout the area have evidenced their willingness to pledge their philosophical support and financial resources to this new five-year initiative.

This important program will require some refinement and fine-tuning. However, the data collected during the Feasibility Analysis will guide the Southeastern Railway Museum's leadership to make essential modifications that will guarantee broad-based support of the new SRM five-year program.

Success from similarly aggressive programs has been achieved in cities throughout the Southeast where First Community Development has directed fundraising initiatives. This program will not only generate the desired results, it will also ensure more efficient use of the Museum's volunteers and staff, and more meaningful and effective economic and education development in the Gwinnett County / North Metro Atlanta area.

Based on the findings in this Feasibility Report, First Community Development will submit a detailed Plan of Service for the management of a fundraising campaign on behalf of the Southeastern Railway Museum. We appreciate the opportunity to assist the Museum in this important initiative.

First Community Development is grateful for the time and assistance provided by the Southeastern Railway Museum's Board of Trustees and staff during the Feasibility Analysis. We especially want to express our thanks to Randy Pirkle, John Pollock, Allen Rider and others for their efforts on behalf of the FCD Team in scheduling each of the feasibility interviews. They are all to be commended for their professional manner, oversight and attention to detail. Their conscientious efforts made our time on this important project over the past three months much more effective and efficient.

Finally, we thank those who took time out of their busy schedules to be interviewed. Gwinnett County's corporate and community leaders showed us every courtesy and graciously provided their candid responses throughout the feasibility process.



Steve Dorough

X. EXHIBITS

- A. Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan
- B. Confidential Interview Questionnaire
- C. List of Interviewees

EXHIBIT A

Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan



Southeastern Railway Museum

The mission of the Southeastern Railway Museum is to provide an educational atmosphere that will vividly bring to life the cultural, technological and historical importance of railroads and land transportation to our region. This is accomplished through preservation, conservation, display, and operation of historic equipment, publications, memorabilia and the portrayal of the lives of those people who created and provided that transportation.

History

The Southeastern Railway Museum (SRM) grew from a “seed” planted over sixty years ago. In 1955, a group of railroad veterans formed the “Save 290 Club” in an effort to preserve the Atlanta & West Point Railroad (A&WP) locomotive #290. The “290” boasted a rich heritage dating to the early 1920’s and was featured in the movie, “Fried Green Tomatoes.”

The “Save 290 Club” evolved into the Atlanta Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society (NRHS) in 1959. Significant portions of the SRM collection date from the earliest years of the Atlanta Chapter NHRS. Back then, many of the Museum’s artifacts were housed at a variety of railyards throughout the metro Atlanta area.

The first consolidated Museum site was established in 1966 through a donation by the Southern Railway. Finally, the Atlanta Chapter began collecting rolling stock, memorabilia and artifacts from around metro Atlanta and storing them all on one campus. The Southeastern Railway Museum, operated by the Atlanta Chapter NRHS, was opened to the public in 1970.

In 1998, the Southeastern Railway Museum was moved to its present location in Duluth through a generous donation of thirty acres of land by Mr. Frank Ewing of Washington, DC. Soon thereafter, in 2000, the Georgia legislature approved a resolution designating SRM, “Georgia’s Official Transportation History Museum.”

In 2010, the Atlanta Chapter NRHS established a separate community-based Board of Trustees to operate the Southeastern Railway Museum and transferred the facility and artifacts to the board through a long-term lease. Currently, the Museum includes Buildings #1 and #2 which house most of the museum exhibits. The Duluth Depot, dating to 1871, stands at the entrance of the Museum grounds. The Park Train, a miniature locomotive and cars was originally used at the Birmingham Zoo beginning in 1957. In 2017, the Museum added the Rail Transit Exhibit (RTE) building, a 21,000 square foot shelter for rail cars and busses.

The Southeastern Railway Museum is staffed and operated primarily by volunteers. The Museum annually welcomes more than 25,000 visitors including 5,000 students on field trips.

To move this important venue forward and to expand and enhance its service to the Gwinnett County and Metro-Atlanta region, SRM has established a Strategic Planning Task Force composed of corporate and community leaders from throughout the area. Over the last seven months, they have carefully crafted their collective vision into a ***Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan 2020-2024***.

Now, we invite you to read the proposed five-year Southeastern Railway Museum Strategic Plan and join us in this important project:

Southeastern Railway Museum

Strategic Plan

2020 – 2024

I. ENHANCE THE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Education is a key component of the quality of life in every community. How its visitors are engaged, informed and educated defines the sense of place and vitality of a museum. When a museum provides a hands-on experience, it increases the learning opportunities ten-fold. Children, youth and adults will have the opportunity to see and feel and hear what it was like to live and work in an age decades ago. They will learn to appreciate how this country was developed by understanding how its transportation network has evolved through the years. To enhance its education experience, the Southeastern Railway Museum will:

- A. Develop the Museum's new Education facility
 - *The Museum will renovate the modular buildings on site to provide classroom space for visiting school groups as well as offices for the Museum education staff*
- B. Establish the Museum's Library / Archives building
 - *Over the next five years, the Museum will establish an archives facility on site to house and display the collection's archives*
 - *Enhance the Museum's partnership with the Gwinnett County Public Library*
- C. Expand the Museum's education curriculum for area schools
 - *Provide new learning experiences for students in Gwinnett County and the Atlanta metropolitan area*
- D. Enhance Museum learning opportunities for youth and adults
 - *Beginning in 2021, the Museum will offer a minimum of three adult seminars annually*
- E. Host special events to showcase Atlanta's transportation history
 - *Over the next five years, the Museum will host a minimum of three annual events to increase public awareness and showcase Atlanta's transportation history*
- F. Partner with local and state education institutions to engage students in hands on education experiences at the Museum
 - *Beginning in 2022, the Museum will work with its local education partners to provide area students with hands-on instruction and practice in transportation repair, maintenance and renovation as well as museum operations and management*
 - *The Museum will partner with local and regional fire and police departments to provide hands-on instruction and practice for first responders in transportation emergencies*

Annual Cost: \$200,000

Five-Year Cost: \$1,000,000

II. IMPROVE & EXPAND MUSEUM EXHIBITS

In today's "education sphere", visitors want to learn through engaging and immersing themselves completely in the subject matter. A superlative museum offers the visitor / learner the opportunity to hear, understand and absorb their stories. The Southeastern Railway Museum has an abundance of stories to tell about how various modes of transportation molded our country and its economy into a world leader. SRM's visitors will see, hear and experience first-hand what their ancestors experienced before. Refurbishing the trains, passenger and baggage cars is critical to their preservation. It also provides visitors with a more realistic view and understanding of their importance as the country's economy grew. Through this extraordinary initiative, the Southeastern Railway Museum will:

- A. Redevelop the Museum's collection to better tell the story of transportation
 - *Expand the history of transportation in the Atlanta area to include all of the region and how the railroad has helped develop our area*
 - *Expand SRM's scope to include all forms of transportation in addition to trains*
- B. Revitalize and expand the Museum's current exhibits
 - *Over the next five years, the Museum will stabilize the "Superb" (President Warren G. Harding's personal railway passenger car)*
 - *Restore the Southern Railway 6901 locomotive*
 - *Re-assemble and cosmetically restore the Atlanta & West Point 290 steam passenger locomotive*
 - *Restore the Southern Railway 2442 "Thomas Ruffin" passenger sleeping car*
 - *Restore the interior of the Southern Railway 2019 "Tugalo River" passenger sleeping car*
- C. Expand the Museum's train ride experience
 - *The Museum will renovate / upgrade all of the operating trains on site*
- D. Enhance the overall visitor's experience at the Museum
 - *Develop innovative ways to better "tell the story" at each Museum exhibit*
 - *Partner with the City of Duluth to promote the Museum at the city's new train watching platform*
 - *Enhance the Museum's website*

Annual Cost: \$250,000

Five-Year Cost: \$1,250,000

III. MODERNIZE THE MUSEUM FOR GROWTH

The Southeastern Railway Museum, as it showcases the past, must prepare for the future. The Museum's staff and leadership will continue their role as good stewards of this priceless collection of transportation artifacts and memorabilia. At the same time, the Southeastern Railway Museum will carefully redevelop and enhance its campus to deliver a journey through time that is more meaningful, easier to understand and more compelling. The Museum will also update and modernize its grounds and facilities to make SRM more efficient, effective and "visitor friendly." Over the next five years, the Southeastern Railway Museum will:

- A. Develop a new, visionary SRM Master Site Plan
 - *The new Master Site Plan will create a new SRM Visitors' Center for ticket sales and the gift shop*
 - *Expand and enhance the Museum Theatre*
 - *Improve ground level parking*
 - *Develop and implement a landscape / drainage plan*
 - *Create a picnic area and outdoor entertainment venue on the Museum campus*
 - *Install general improvements to Building #1*
 - *Renovate and upgrade the Depot building*
- B. Make the Museum and grounds more "visitor friendly"
 - *Develop a network of handicap accessible walkways throughout the campus*
 - *Install a public address system and Wi-Fi throughout the Museum grounds*
 - *Expand and enhance all public restroom facilities*
 - *Install new wayfinding signage throughout the Museum venue*
- C. Improve Museum safety and security
 - *Install the electrical network and lighting in the RTE building*
 - *Improve the electrical network and lighting in Building #2*
 - *Construct a handicap accessible covered platform for boarding the train*
 - *Add an emergency vehicle exit*

Annual Cost: \$500,000

Five-Year Cost: \$2,500,000

Total Five-Year Cost: \$4,750,000

Conclusion

Our region's corporate and community leaders will drive this new Southeastern Railway Museum initiative and help our community realize this new collaborative vision. Business and industry leaders, public sector officials, private individuals and community partners will help raise the \$4.75 Million necessary to underwrite this important program.

The Southeastern Railway Museum will add significantly to the quality of life in the Gwinnett County / North Metro Atlanta area. The overarching vision for this multi-purpose Museum is to create a venue where the community can come together to meet, to learn, to experience, and to grow. Over the next five years, The Southeastern Railway Museum will truly become a "centerpiece" for education and tourism in the region.

As the Museum expands and enhances its program, it will strengthen its relationship with its education partners to develop unique and compelling opportunities for learning. The Southeastern Railway Museum will also seek new ways to deliver its story of the history of transportation to other museums, schools and other venues in the region. SRM will continue to work closely with its transportation partners...Gwinnett DOT, Georgia DOT, MARTA, Norfolk Southern Railway and CSX Transportation...to tell the story of transportation and its positive impact on economic and community development in the region.

Our long-term success and prosperity requires that every generation must "invest" its own leadership and legacy for successive generations. The Southeastern Railway Museum represents an opportunity for Gwinnett County and Metro Atlanta's corporate and community leaders to do exactly that. If we approach this project from a passive, reactive or complacent mindset, we risk losing out to other communities that either have or are developing aggressive, well-funded community initiatives such as this. We risk both a decline in our economic vitality and in our "quality of place" if we allow our community's destiny to be determined by forces beyond our control or by people for whom this region has no meaning. This extraordinary Strategic Plan represents the most logical, effective way to influence the future we want...and our children and grandchildren deserve. In these times of economic uncertainty, it also represents a tremendous opportunity. Because we have not been as severely impacted by the "ups and downs" of a volatile economy, we can – and should – push forward, while other communities retreat and retrench. Now is the time for the leadership in our region to come together, expand this public / private partnership, and invest in a shared future of growth and prosperity for our cities, county and region.

Strategic Planning Task Force

Lisa Anders

Dave Koch

Ethel Andersen

Rob Marbury

Ken Birmingham*

Randy Minter

Marsha Anderson Bomar

Mary Kay Murphy

Alex Caskey

Brian Philbin

Bert Chu

Randy Pirkle

Brooks Coleman

Jim Pollihronakis

Cally D'Angelo

John Pollock

Andrew Durden

Matt Reeves

William Edwards

James Riker

Kristen Fredriksen

Allen Rider

Don Graab

Scott Sadow

Rick Hewatt

Adam Shumaker

John Irwin

Sim Weeks

Sue Kelly

Karen Winger

*Deceased

Southeastern Railway Museum

Five-Year Pledges Necessary to Achieve a Goal of \$4,750,000

<i>Size</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Cumulative Number</i>	<i>Cumulative Amount</i>
\$500,000	2	\$1,000,000	2	\$1,000,000
350,000	2	700,000	4	1,700,000
250,000	2	500,000	6	2,200,000
200,000	2	400,000	8	2,600,000
100,000	4	400,000	12	3,000,000
75,000	4	300,000	16	3,300,000
50,000	6	300,000	22	3,600,000
25,000	8	200,000	30	3,800,000
20,000	10	200,000	40	4,000,000
10,000	21	210,000	61	4,210,000
7,500	20	150,000	81	4,360,000
5,000	26	130,000	107	4,490,000
3,000	40	120,000	147	4,610,000
1,500	40	60,000	187	4,670,000
1,000	70	70,000	257	4,740,000
Under 1,000		10,000		\$ 4,750,000

EXHIBIT B

Confidential Interview Questionnaire

SOUTHEASTERN RAILWAY MUSEUM
CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Date _____ Time _____ Duration _____ hr. _____ min.

Name _____ Company _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

Affiliation _____

Interviewer's Comments

Attitude: _____ Highly committed _____ Positive _____ Moderate
 _____ Noncommittal _____ Negative

Financial: _____ High _____ Medium _____ Low _____ Zero _____ Noncommittal

Dollar Range: \$ _____ Low _____ High

Personal Involvement: _____ Leader _____ Worker _____ None

Comments: _____

1. How would you characterize the economy in Gwinnett County over the last five years?

Improved_____ Declined_____ Remained the same_____

2. What are the reasons for this?

Comments: _____

3. How familiar are you with the Southeastern Railway Museum and their mission in the area?

Very Familiar_____ Somewhat Familiar_____ Not Familiar_____

4. In general, how would you rate SRM's effectiveness in achieving its mission?

Very Effective_____ Somewhat Effective_____ Not Effective_____

Comments: _____

5. What new initiatives would you recommend the Southeastern Railway Museum undertake in the future?

Comments: _____

6. Recently you received a copy of the Southeastern Railway Museum’s proposed new five-year Strategic Plan. This Plan calls for implementing three important strategies designed to address the needs, challenges and opportunities for this important venue in Gwinnett County.

Please assist us by rating each of the components of this proposed five-year program. You may rate each component as either:

“Important, Must Be Accomplished”, or “Do If Possible”, or “Low Priority”:

I. ENHANCE THE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Important, Must Be Accomplished_____ Do If Possible_____ Low Priority_____

Comments: _____

II. IMPROVE & EXPAND MUSEUM EXHIBITS

Important, Must Be Accomplished_____ Do If Possible_____ Low Priority_____

Comments: _____

III. MODERNIZE THE MUSEUM FOR GROWTH

Important, Must Be Accomplished_____ Do If Possible_____ Low Priority_____

Comments: _____

7. Which of the components in the proposed SRM Strategic Plan do you consider their top priority? Why?

8. Which of the three components in the Plan do you consider least important? Why?

9. What is your overall assessment of the proposed five-year Strategic Plan?

_____Excellent, necessary and beneficial _____Too ambitious

_____Not enough program _____Other

Comments: _____

10. Do you believe a funding goal of \$4,750,000, or \$950,000 per year for five years, from public and private sources in the Gwinnett County / North Metro Atlanta area is attainable for this program?

_____Yes _____No _____Don't Know_____

Comments: _____

11. If you do not consider it feasible, what financial goal do you consider attainable from public and private sources over a five-year period for a program such as this?

12. In your opinion, which firms or organizations can and should provide top level funding for this program?

13. Experience confirms that the following levels of investment are necessary to achieve a goal of \$4,750,000. (PRESENT INVESTMENT TABLE) Within what range might your firm (or organization) consider investing in such a program if it is to your liking and the right people are leading it? Please understand that this is not considered a pledge or financial commitment to the proposed program and your comments are strictly confidential. From "low" to "high" what would be the range of your investment in the Southeastern Railway Museum program over a five-year period?

\$ _____ LOW \$ _____ HIGH

_____ Cannot Or Would Not comment at this time

_____ Cannot Or Will Not consider investing in this program at all

14. Would the final decision about your firm's financial participation in this five-year initiative be made locally or through another office?

Local _____ Other _____ Where _____

15. If you had the responsibility for enlisting the best possible volunteer leader from the private corporate sector to lead a funding campaign like the one envisioned here, who would your top choices be?

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

16. If requested, provided a funding campaign is launched, would you consider serving in some leadership capacity in the fundraising campaign?

Yes_____ No_____ Will Consider_____

17. Are you aware of any other major fundraising initiatives currently underway or contemplated in the Gwinnett County area during the next twelve months?

18. In your opinion, what major obstacle(s) would prevent this fundraising initiative from succeeding?

EXHIBIT C

List of Interviewees

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Lisa Anders

Explore Gwinnett

Ethel Andersen

Andersen Tate & Carr

Elliott Brack

Gwinnett Forum

Hon. Brooks Coleman

Retired State Legislator

William Edwards

Georgia Power Company

Cindy Eidson

*Georgia Department of
Economic Development-
Tourism*

Dave Fox

ACS Solutions

Jeffrey Goldstein

Mass Mutual Insurance

Don Graab

Retired NS Vice President

Ben Harrell

Technology Exec

Nancy Harris

Mayor, City of Duluth

Paige Havens

Gwinnett Medical Center

Rick Hewatt

SRM Board Chair, Checker Cab

Beth Hoffman

Duluth Fall Festival

John Irwin

*Retired NS Director of
Transportation*

K.J. "Kelly" Kelkenberg

Duluth City Council

Brian Kolis

Place Maker Design

Rich Krisak

Former MARTA COO

Stephen Lovett

Norton Real Estate

Rob Marbury

Marbury Creative Group

Warren McClellan

*McClellan & Associates CPAs
LLC*

Matt McCord

Norton Commercial

Annette McIntosh

Duluth Fall Festival

Jackson McQuigg

Atlanta History Center

Kay Montgomery

Duluth Fall Festival

Dr. Mary Kay Murphy

Gwinnett Public Schools

Conner Poe

Norfolk Southern Corporation

John Pollock

SRM Board of Trustees

Cherie Pritchard

NAOS Staffing

Randy Redner

*Community Foundation of
North Georgia*

Matt Reeves

Andersen Tate & Carr

Allen Rider

SRM Board of Trustees

James Riker

Duluth City Administrator

Scott Sadow

SRM Board of Trustees

Adam Shumaker

MARTA

Randy Strunk

Columbia Engineering Services

Monty Watson

Piedmont Bank

Greg Whitlock

The Whitlock Group

Don Williams

Delta, museum tenant

Mark Williams

Printing Trade Co.

Kathryn Willis

Duluth Fall Festival

Karen Winger

Gwinnett Transit