



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Motorcar Operators West wrap up Railroad tour *ARRC hosts convoy historic track maintenance vehicles Sept. 8-23*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - People living and working along the railroad tracks may have noticed about two dozen small unique vehicles putting along the tracks over the past couple of weeks. They are part of the Motorcar Operators West's (MOW) Annual Tour, occurring on the Alaska Railroad (ARRC) Sept. 8 - 23, 2018. The group is spending nine days on the track, while exploring railbelt communities along the way.

Members of the non-profit organization are rail fans and hobbyists who restore and operate historic railroad motorcars (also known as track speeders), which were used by track inspectors and work crews to move quickly between work sites. By the late 1980s, most speeders were replaced by trucks outfitted with flanged steel wheels (known as hyrail vehicles) that enable travel by road and rail. Obsolete motorcars are now often collected and refurbished by hobbyists, such the MOW group.

The 2018 tour involves 22 motorcars traveling 500 feet apart and operating 25 mph on average (maximum 35 mph). Alaska Railroad track maintenance employees Gene Lewis and Shaun Sanderlin are escorting the convoy by hyrail vehicle. The group is paying for railroad resources involved in ensuring a safe trip, and the tour activity does not interfere with regular Alaska Railroad operations. The 2018 tour brings economic benefit during the tourism shoulder season, with spending expected to total several hundred thousand dollars on fees, airfare, lodging, tours, dining and retail sales.

Typically, the group selects low-use sections of rail in Lower 48 states, but every few years they arrange a special tour in Alaska. The first time was in 2004. This year's tour itinerary:

- September 8 - Set on track, inspection and orientation
- September 9 - Anchorage (ARRC MP 114) to Talkeetna (MP 227)
- September 10 - Talkeetna to Healy (MP 359)
- September 11-12 - Layover Days in Denali
- September 13 - Healy to Fairbanks (MP 470)
- September 14-15 - Layover Days in Fairbanks

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- September 16 – Fairbanks to Healy
- September 17 – Healy to Talkeetna
- September 18 – Layover Day in Talkeetna
- September 19 – Talkeetna to Wasilla (MP 160)
- September 20 – Wasilla to Girdwood (MP 74)
- September 21 – Girdwood to Portage (MP 64) to Whittier to Portage to Seward (MP 0)
- September 22 – Layover Day in Seward
- September 23 – Seward to Anchorage
- September 24 – trip over

Members of the public who are interested in viewing these historic vehicles are reminded to remain outside of the railroad right-of-way (ROW), which is 100 feet on either side of the track.

More information about Motorcar Operators West is available online at www.mowonline.org. The tour's coordinator is Dave Balestreri, dbalestreri@sofftcom.net, Phone 916-531-7536

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The group of "speeder cars" leaves the Anchorage Yard about 1 p.m. Sept. 20, 2018, headed south to Girdwood as the next stop in their tour of Alaska via the Alaska Railroad. (photo by Stephenie Wheeler)