

THE TALE OF GG-1 4859

By Fred Wertz

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After years of discussions, speculation, hopes, concerns and opinions, it now appears that a solution has been found for the relocation of GG1 4859 and cabin car 980016 in the Hbg Amtrak station. The move is required to accommodate work being done under the heading of the State Interlocking improvement project, a federally-funded, PennDOT-channeled project designed to improve track speeds in the station area and provide more platform space.

Some work has been done on signals and wiring, but this year the track and platform work will begin, and our two display pieces are in the way. Specifically in that regard, Track 5, where our equipment now sits, will be changed to a through track by reconnecting the west end. Other track changes are being made over the next three years, with Amtrak doing the work.

After several options were investigated among PennDOT, Amtrak, HNTB Engineering consultants and a chapter committee of John Smith, Al DiCenso and Fred Wertz, a plan has evolved. Subject to Amtrak approval, the GG1 and cabin car (separately) will be pulled backward by an Amtrak engine off Track 5 eastwardly, switched over to Track 4 and shoved westward past Harris Tower and over the switch on to the Market Street Running Track. They will be shoved on out the Runner past North Street and the parking garage to a spot some 600 feet west of the switch, allowing for a six-car Amtrak train still to use the Runner as a tail track. Once spotted, a barricade will be erected to protect them from normal moves on the Runner.

For the long term, PennDOT has agreed to fund the construction of a plastic wrapper over each piece to protect them from weather, vandals and other concerns. The wrap will not contact the painted surfaces directly, as a form will be built around them first. The covers will be black, with logos of the involved organizations applied to them. Also, several solar-powered fans with battery backups will be installed to provide air circulation. PennDOT has agreed to arrange for periodic inspection of the equipment to check that fans are working and the wrapper stays intact.

This set-up will remain to the end of the project, which could run to 2017. After that, the cover will be removed, and the two pieces will be moved back under the train shed, but to a new spot on Track 6 (one track farther away from the head house). Track 6 is adjacent to an existing high-level platform, but will be stub-ended as part of the project and used mainly by Amtrak for train storage and work such as car cleaning. Again, a barricade will be installed to protect our equipment. The arrangement will be as prior—GG1 on the west and cabin car on the east. The cabin car will locate next to the high

level platform, and we think access will be easier for visitors by using a connecting ramp (no steps). The GG1 will be spotted past the end of the high-level platform so the running gear should be visible. There is a ramp in that area which connects a low-level platform with the high-level one. While the GG1 may be subject to a little more weather than where it was before, the committee feels that it is better to give the wooden cabin car the most exposure protection.

This move was scheduled for April 5, beginning at 7 am, a date and time selected by Amtrak. PennDOT issued a press release on the event. Prime public viewing of the move for us railfans is available at the parking lot near Harris Tower and from the State Street Bridge. So, if you've never taken a picture of a GG1 on the move (albeit pushed by another locomotive), this may be your best chance for a long while. Yes, the pantographs will not be up, the headlight will not be lit and there should be a conductor on the front or walking along, but it will be a cabin car and a GG1 moving under catenary past a genuine ex-Pennsy tower. We hope that all members and others will be able to enjoy the experience of seeing this unusual move. Harrisburg Chapter owes a huge thank you to Jenn Granger of PennDOT and her boss PennDOT Deputy Secretary Toby Fauver for orchestrating this special move and funding the covering of both pieces of equipment.