



The New York tourist railroad received funding to improve its terminal, build a new engine house and upgrade an RS-1 to burn bio-fuel. Photo by Otto Vondrak.

Catskill Mountain Railroad Secures \$4.4 Million in Grants

By Railfan & Railroad Staff

A New York tourist railroad has secured a series of grants totaling \$4.4 million that will help it build a new terminal and engine house, as well as re-engine one of its Alco RS-1 locomotives. The Catskill Mountain Railroad received three grants from the New York State Department of Transportation's Passenger and Freight Rail Assistance Program, part of a combined \$111.1 million program to invest in rail infrastructure state-wide.

Launched in 1982 to lease and operate a 38-mile former New York Central branch line, Catskill Mountain Railroad currently operates a five-mile route based out of Kingston, N.Y. That run will be extended with the construction of the new Basin Road Rail Terminal, which will bring the railroad to the trailhead of the Ashokan Rail Trail. The terminal will include a station and parking lot and will be built thanks to a \$667,000 grant. The railroad will also build a new engine house and connecting track as a result of a \$1.5 million grant.

Finally, the railroad has received a \$2.3 million grant to re-engine out-of-service Alco RS-1 400 (ex-Soo Line 2361). The conversion will help the railroad reduce emissions as well as reduce operating costs. Ernie Hunt, president of the CMRR, said the locomotive currently has a cracked block so the entire engine will be swapped out for a lower-emission one, but the traction motors and trucks will remain. The railroad is also experimenting with burning bio-diesel in its other Alco road switcher, RS-1 401 (ex-Green Mountain 401).

After years of challenges to its operation by local politicians, culminating in the termination of its Phoenicia operation and the removal of 11 miles of track for conversion to a rail trail, the tourist railroad appears to be turning its fortunes around. In 2021, it secured a new lease with the rail line's owner to continue operating through 2028, and last year it carried a record 51,610 passengers.

"We wish to thank NYSDOT for their strong endorsement of our plans to extend the CMRR and build a terminal at Basin Road and connect to the Ashokan Rail Trail. This connection will combine the CMRR and the Ashokan Rail Trail to be a regional attraction for Ulster County and allow the City Kingston to be directly connected to the trail via the CMRR," Hunt said.

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