

What is HRA?

HRA is a volunteer-based, non-profit association of organizations interested in and promoting railway heritage, including street railways. It is headquartered in the USA but has a significant number of Canadian members. HRA's mission statement reads: "Heritage Rail promotes the common interests of entities engaged in the business of tourist, scenic, historic or excursion railroading, railway and trolley museums."

What sort of organizations are in HRA?

All organizations that have an association with railway heritage are welcome to join. This includes railway museums—large and small, private and public, operating tourist train lines, preservation societies, and historical interest groups. There are also commercial members of HRA who provide products and services of use to the members, including parts, expertise, ticketing services, specialized contractors, etc.

What is the idea behind HRA?

People working in the same general area often have similar interests and similar challenges. HRA exists to promote communication and dialogue between people to make them aware of best practices, opportunities, solutions to problems, and very importantly, provide inspiration and example.

What else does HRA do?

HRA maintains a website (www.heritagerail.org) which is regularly updated with news, stories, testimonials, and other useful information such as recommended practices for safety, operating, and so on.

Do HRA members ever get together?

One of the main features of HRA is the two annual conferences. The spring and fall conferences move to different member venues, where the host gets to show their stuff, and where HRA members get together for three to four days to visit the local installations, take in other railway sites of interest, attend seminars on many relevant topics, and generally socialize and have a good time. Spousal programs are often part of the conferences, and many lasting friendships are forged during these get-togethers.

Special note: In the near term, these conferences are being discontinued due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we are considering offering online conferences in the interim to serve our community of members.

Where are the HRA conferences held?

Conferences move to different places to spread the required travel amongst members and to offer a greater variety of locales. In 2019 the two conferences were in California and British Columbia. The 2020 conferences were scheduled to be held in Arkansas and Connecticut, but unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic forced the cancellation of both of these and their tentative deferral to 2022. The 2023 conferences will be held in the spring and then back in Canada in Montreal in the fall.

Who runs HRA?

HRA is a volunteer-based association run by its Board of Directors, all of whom are active in the railway heritage community. A few part-time paid employees handle administration and communications. There is Canadian representation on the Board.

What Canadian organizations belong to HRA?

Railway groups from every province from British Columbia to Quebec belong. A full list can be seen on the HRA website at <https://heritagerail.org/visit/member-directory/#canada>

What are the benefits to Canadian members of the HRA?

HRA's Canada Council supports and connects Canadian members in several ways. First, at the semi-annual conferences, there is a separate session attended only by Canadians. Second, there is an "HRA Canada" on-line discussion group where Canadian HRA members can post information, ask questions, make suggestions, etc. The group also meets online monthly. One of the virtual online meetings focused primarily on discussing and sharing information about the issues arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic and how they are approaching the challenges we all face.

What does it cost to join HRA?

Annual membership dues are different depending on the size of the member organization. Small organizations, with less than \$200,000 of annual revenue, pay \$100 per year (Canadian dollars). Organizations with \$200,000 or more revenue pay \$200 (Canadian dollars). Because of the current Covid-19 Pandemic situation HRA is offering those organizations who feel they cannot afford the full dues to pay only half of the above amounts for this year.

How do I join?

Go to the HRA website and download an application form, fill it out and send it by mail with a Canadian dollar cheque for the appropriate amount of payment to the address given. (If you make use of the website's facility to join online, you will pay by credit card in US dollars and at US rates, which are higher than the Canadian rates.). Please also advise Russ Milland, our HRA Canada discussion group administrator, that you have submitted your application so that he can invite you to join the discussion group. Reach him at russmilland@trha.ca