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New Rail Attractions at Union Station Open April 9, 2010

KANSAS CITY, Mo. | Union Station is proud to present a new permanent home for our most popular seasonal attraction. The new Model Rail Gallery will enhance the station's attractions and compliment the KC Rail Experience.

"The railroad story is so tightly woven with local and national history," said Union Station CEO George Guastello, "and our new exhibit on railroads and the national parks will create a lot of 'ah-ha' moments for people who come to see it." The exhibition is titled "Discovering America: Railroads and the National Parks, 1880-1960." Through period photos, advertising, and insightful text, it will examine how the parks were largely the creation of strange political bedfellows like preservationist John Muir and some of America's biggest corporations. As "Discovering America" reveals, park advocates understood that the way to save these irreplaceable landscapes was to draw more people, and that meant railroads. This impressive exhibit was prepared by noted rail historian Peter A. Hansen. Mr. Hansen is the editor of *Railroad History* and a correspondent for *Trains* magazine.

Younger audiences haven't been forgotten, a new model train exhibit – even bigger than the traditional holiday layout in the station's Grand Hall – will open in the Kansas City Power & Light Gallery. "These trains bring out the kid in everyone," said Guastello, "and model railroads are a popular feature at many other restored railroad stations. We had to find a way to expand the popular holiday exhibit and make it permanent." The all-new model train layout is the product of thousands of volunteer person-hours, and, says Guastello, "We simply couldn't have done it without their expertise and dedication."

Union Station will also display the sets that used to operate at Hall's Station in Crown Center. These trains were a popular feature of the store, drawing people in to shop – and to become model railroad addicts themselves. Hall's loaned the displays to Union Station in 2009, and station volunteers have been renovating them. This will be the first time all three layouts have been displayed together in their newly-restored state.

The model train area will also feature interpretive displays explaining different model sizes, and recounting the history of the hobby. A special children's play area will offer a hands-on experience, complete with picture-drawing, and rubbings of historic locomotives.

To open this new gallery, a ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday April 9, 2010. The gallery opening will be honored with the presence of Stephen Fried, author of "Appetite for America," a new and critically-acclaimed history of the Fred Harvey empire.

Harvey invented the chain restaurant concept, and his company was headquartered in Kansas City for over 50 years, making this an important story both locally and nationally. On display will be Harvey House artifacts from the Union Station Kansas City collection.

The Model Rail Gallery and “Discovering America” are free to Union Station members – just two of the many benefits available to them. For non-members, the new attractions will be included at no charge with any ticketed event. If time is an issue, guests are invited to drop in to see the Model Rail Gallery at no charge; with a suggested donation of \$1 for children and seniors and \$2 for adults. The gallery is open during regular attraction hours: Wed-Fri from 10 a.m. to 4p.m.; Sat 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sun 12 noon to 5 p.m.

“Union Station is all about honoring our community,” said Union Station board chairman Mike Haverty, “and railroads did as much to create our community as anyone. We hope these exhibits will connect people of all ages to that shared heritage.”

About Union Station Kansas City, Inc.

Union Station Kansas City is a historical landmark and civic asset renovated and reopened to the public in 1999. The organization, driven by its mission of science and history education and entertainment, features a science center, the KC Rail Experience, the region’s only 3D giant screen movie theater, live theater, shops and restaurants. Visit unionstation.org for details.

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