

Engine 557 Most commonly asked questions.

- 1. What is Engine 557 Restoration Company?** An Alaskan not for profit corporation founded in 2012 to organize, fund and complete restoration to operation of the last steam locomotive on the Alaska Railroad #557
- 2. What kind of locomotive is it?** 557 is one of the 2120 identical S-160 Consolidation (that's the wheel arrangement 2-8-0) engines built for the U.S. Army Transportation Corp during World War II. The three major loco builders in the U.S. ALCO, Baldwin and Lima were all building the same military spec loco under contract with the Army. All but 18 units were shipped, three at a time in Liberty and Victory ships across the Atlantic. 12 of the 18 remaining in North America were sent to the Alaska Railroad to become the 550 class.
- 3. How old is the loco?** It came out of the Baldwin Shops in September 1944. It was sent new to Alaska and was retired here in 1967 and sold for scrap. Monte Holm of Moses Lake, Washington saved 557 from the scrap line. On Monte's passing it was purchased by the Jansen family and eventually donated back to the Alaska Railroad for restoration in 2011. In 2012 it was transferred to Engine 557 Restoration Company and the process began.
- 4. What fuel does it burn?** Originally a coal burner, it was converted to burn used oil in 1954. U.S. Ecology has generously offered to donate used oil for the first few seasons to keep 557 steaming.
- 5. Who does the work?** While we have a paid professional engineer preparing the Form 4, and an onsite consultant, most of the work and all the administration is performed by volunteers. Machinist, welders, labor, electricians, pharmacist, aviation mechanics, accountants, civil engineers are just samples of the committed volunteer cadre who have expended over 200,000 hours bringing 557 back to life over the past 11 years.
- 6. Where does the funding come from? NO Government grants at any level, have been solicited or received over the life of the project.** Private individual donations represent about 60 percent of our funding. Our most recent 2023 Year End 557 Fund Raiser had a goal of \$85,000. Five individuals provided about 70 percent of that total. Several hundred smaller donations completed the campaign. Major funding for specific projects has come from the following organizations; Rasmuson Foundation, Atwood Foundation, John H. Emery Rail Heritage Trust, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Matanuska Electric Association Charitable Foundation, Daily Foundation, Kenai Mountains Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area. To date we have raised 1.6 million dollars. We started with one locomotive and an empty building 11 years ago.
- 7. What support comes from the community?** Since our first days on the job the Alaskan Business community has been very generous. Value is approximate as in many occasions there are no invoices covering donation of products and services. IN-KIND-DONATIONS are estimated at \$1,000,000. We consider these folks business partners making major investments in 557 allowing our volunteers to move the project forward. Some of the major supporting vendors joined us on our first days in 2012. In their order of appearance: Lynden Transport, Alaska Industrial Hardware, Greatland Welding and Machine, Alaska Railroad Corp, Independent Truck Lift, Central Environmental Services, Steel Fabricators, Glacier Glass, Enstar, Grainger, Slaydon Plumbing and Heating, Alaska Rubber & Rigging, U.S. Ecology, Inlet Energy, Alaska Airlines. There are many more worthy of mention!
- 8. When will 557 be finished?** Restorations are never really finished. There are always repairs or upgrades that keep the schedule going. The better question is; "When will it be ready for service?" Our goal is to be available in 2025.
- 9. What is left to do?** Major milestones remaining are: Completion of Boiler Hydro test. Reassembly of fire pan, burner and superheater to allow first firing test. Installation of boiler lagging and Jacket. Preparing crossheads and installing drive rods. Completion of wiring and lubricator delivery lines. Note that many of these items have already been remanufactured and dry fit. They were then removed for access to all the boiler penetrations to conduct the Hydro test.
- 10. Do you need Positive Train Control (PTC) to operate on the Alaska Railroad?** Yes and Engine 557 is being equipped with PTC monitors and LEAP TC to operate in conjunction with an Alaska Railroad locomotive which is PTC compliant. This is the same solution originally employed by Union Pacific on the "Big Boy" No. 4014.

11. **When and where will 557 be operated?** In conjunction with the Alaska Railroad Corporation a memorandum of understanding is being prepared to allow for special trains to be operated behind Engine 557 in the spring and fall before and after the the rush of the summer tourist season. These Steam Specials will provide a major attraction in the "shoulder seasons" on the Alaska Railroad. With experience more extensive trips will be considered.



More questions? visit our web site at 557.alaskarails.org.



Engine 557 Restoration Company
P.O. Box 875360
Wasilla, AK 99687-5360
Phone (907) 350-4340