

COMMUNITY

times

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Website, process upgrades boost online ticket sales

End-of-year tallies show more customers are buying train tickets online, presumably because website purchasing is more intuitive, faster and easier than ever. Thanks to technology and process upgrades in 2016 and 2017, about 6,750 more seats were sold online in 2016 than in 2015; and 5,234 more seats were sold in 2017 compared to 2016.

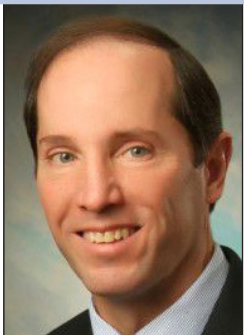
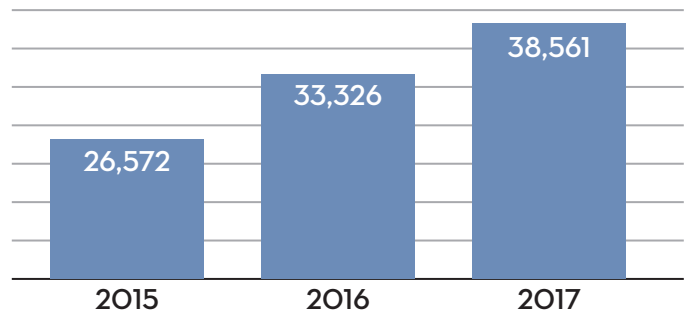
In 2016, ARRC rolled out a fresh, inviting and mobile-friendly design for AlaskaRailroad.com. The site also switched to an open source web server that runs on any platform. We brought the online booking process in-house to enable faster upgrades, tweaks and fixes. By mid-July, the new site was not only more accessible and easier to use, the time needed to book travel dropped dramatically – from 2-3 minutes to 12-20 seconds!

Tour operators and travel agents are important travel trade partners (TTPs) for the Alaska Railroad. In 2017, we tested a TTP portal on AlaskaRailroad.com, allowing a select group of partners to book rail travel directly online. The efforts have streamlined sales for these travel trade partners,

and allowed our reservations agents to spend more time helping direct customers with their travel plans.

The growth in online booking bodes well for upgrades planned for 2018. An even better TTP portal will allow more travel trade partners to book online. Plus, we'll introduce an online booking shopping cart that allows booking of more than one trip at a time, so customers and TTPs can avoid re-entering information and separate payment. ●

Passenger Train Seats Sold Online



ARRC Board welcomes new commissioner

The Alaska Railroad Board of Directors welcomed new Alaska Dept. of Commerce, Community and Economic Development Commissioner Mike Navarre, who replaced Chris Hladick in November. As Kenai Peninsula Borough mayor for the last six years, Commissioner Navarre is familiar with the railroad's south end operations and infrastructure, which includes freight and passenger docks and terminals in Seward. The governor appoints ARRC board members, with the exception of the state's Commerce and Transportation commissioners, who serve automatically. ●

ARRC promotes VP engineering to chief ops officer

The Alaska Railroad's chief operating officer (COO) is a critical post charged with safe train movements, well-engineered infrastructure, well-maintained tracks and bridges, and mechanically sound locomotives, railcars, equipment and vehicles. Over the past several years, third-generation railroader Doug Engebretson has done a great job as COO and 22-year railroad infrastructure veteran Clark Hopp has done a great job as vice president of engineering. As the New Year began, Engebretson retired and Hopp moved up to become COO.

Hopp has led the railroad's Engineering Department since February 2013. He joined ARRC in 2001 as a capital



Clark Hopp

projects manager, and in 2003, he became manager of civil projects. In 2011, Hopp was promoted to director of special projects, overseeing the two mega rail extension projects – Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and Northern Rail Extension, Phase One.

Before joining ARRC, Hopp worked for Transystems Corporation, a nationwide engineering consulting firm based in Nebraska. From 1995 to 2001, Hopp provided project management services to Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific (UP) railroads. He earned a degree

in Construction Engineering Technology from Iowa Western College. Read the [release](#). ●

Tim Sullivan heads ARRC External Affairs

Tim Sullivan, Jr., was recently promoted to director of external affairs, overseeing a five-member department responsible for corporate affairs and communication, corporate administration, government/media/public relations, and charitable giving. In his new role, Sullivan takes on some responsibilities previously handled by the chief of administration position, which was held by Wendy Lindskoog until October, when she left the railroad to pursue opportunities in the oil and gas sector.

Sullivan joined the railroad in May 2011 as external affairs manager. He came to ARRC by way of the Alaska's Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), where he was a DED business development officer. Previously, Sullivan spent six years as a legislative aide and 11 years as a government relations and resource development consultant. A fifth-generation Alaskan, Sullivan has lived in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Gonzaga University in Spokane. ●



Former railroader wins Catch the Train photo contest

Former railroad employee and impressive amateur photographer David Blazejewski won the grand prize for the



Alaska Railroad's Catch the Train photo contest. The public selected Blazejewski's photograph through voting on the Alaska Railroad Facebook page. His image of a passenger train parked next to the Alaska State Fairgrounds garnered more than 1,000 votes, and will grace the cover of ARRC's 12-month 2019 calendar. Blazejewski also wins \$1,500, and a rail travel and lodging package for four.

Each of the 12 finalist's photo will be featured as a month of the 2019 calendar as well as displayed in the Alaska Railroad's 2018 Panoramas onboard magazine. Finalists also receive travel for two on the Alaska Railroad route of their choice. Finalist photos can be viewed at www.facebook.com/alaskarailroad. For details about the photo contest, visit www.alaskarailroad.com/catchthetrain. ●