



## **Reading T-1 no. 2100 to debut as the American Freedom Train 250**

**Cleveland, OH, October 31, 2023** – The restoration of Reading T1 4-8-4 no. 2100 by the American Steam Railroad Preservation Association (ASR), a 501c3 non-profit, will debut in a near identical American Freedom Train paint and detail scheme that was applied to T1 no. 2101 in 1976 as it toured the Northeast as AFT 1.

“Our initial plan was to debut the 2100 in the original black Reading freight scheme, and then apply the AFT scheme as we drew closer to 2026. However, with ASR working towards the goal of having the restoration completed by the end of 2024 and break in running occurring in the spring of 2025, it didn’t make sense to have the Reading scheme paint job applied for only one year, and then to completely redo it for America’s 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration in 2026”, says Rob Gardner, President of ASR. “The 200<sup>th</sup> bicentennial American Freedom Train began its tour on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1975, so for ASR to debut the 2100 in the American Freedom Train scheme in 2025 is also repeating the AFT 1’s preceding year debut”. Mr. Gardner continues, “The main change ASR will be making is on the front number plate and the flying number boards, which will now carry the number 250 as opposed to number 1. The original steam powered AFT had three steam locomotives used in 1975-1976 each with their own number, and we thought it fitting, especially given the announcement from the B&O museum that AFT 1 will be receiving a full cosmetic restoration, that AFT 1 remain with ex-Reading T1 no. 2101, with the 2100 carrying on the T1 AFT legacy as AFT 250 for 2025-2026 and possibly beyond. We are all very pleased that AFT 1 will emerge as a magnificent display for those that visit the B&O museum in Baltimore, with AFT 250 being the traveling American Freedom Train locomotive to take the AFT steam locomotive experience to the people, which was another reason we made the decision to convert to burning recycled oil.”

Mr. Ross Rowland states, “As the Founder & CEO of the American Freedom Train Foundation I am very pleased that the American Steam Railroad Preservation Association has decided to have this magnificent steam locomotive carry the American Freedom Train paint scheme when she soon returns to service. This will allow thousands to enjoy seeing her in the paint scheme carried throughout the nation in 1975-76 by her sister locomotive AFT 1 as it pulled the Freedom Train throughout the northeastern USA. Thank you American Steam Railroad, and here's wishing you many miles of trouble free steaming!”

Steve Wickersham, retired CMO on 2101 states “I think it is a fitting tribute to both AFT 1 and the United States to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bicentennial American Freedom Train. 2100 and 2101 were saved from the scrapper by Ed Striegel and oblivion by Ross Rowland for use on the Bicentennial train. 2100 had a contributing role in ‘backing up’ sister 2101 with vital parts for both the AFT and the Chessie Steam Special. Critical parts from 2101 were then donated to 2100 for her restoration in the 1980’s. It can be said that a bit of 2101 can live on the nation’s sestercentennial with 2100. Numbering 2100 ‘250’ for this commemoration is appropriate in preserving AFT 1 for her unique and special role, while 2100 carries the tradition forward of Reading T-1 locomotives and their historic role in preserving and celebrating American history.”

“The key to this is raising the final funds needed to complete the 2100 / AFT 250’s restoration”, states Forrest Nace, Treasurer of ASR. “As many like to say in railway preservation, these projects move at the speed of money. While we have achieved many significant milestones in 2023, \$170,000 is still needed so we can continue non-stop throughout 2024. We have our professional contractors and parts suppliers all waiting for us to say we have the funds on hand so they can begin the work and ship the items needed, with our volunteers continuing to perform tasks such as cleaning the tender’s cistern and reinstalling the oil bunker to stay on schedule.”

Tax-deductible donations towards the restoration of the Reading T1 no. 2100 / AFT 250 can be mailed to American Steam Railroad Preservation Association, 2800 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Cleveland, OH 44113, or made online at [www.americansteamrailroad.org](http://www.americansteamrailroad.org).