



NEWS RELEASE

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March 6, 2008

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New Hermann Park Mini-Train Takes to the Tracks for Inaugural Run

All aboard! for the New Hermann Park Mini-Train's inaugural run around Hermann Park! Mayor Bill White, The Houston Parks and Recreation Department and the Hermann Park Conservancy will kick off the Spring Break season by unveiling the New Hermann Park Mini-Train on Friday, March 7th at 11:00 a.m.

"I can't think of a better way to see the park than by taking a ride on the New Hermann Park Mini-Train," said Mayor Bill White. "We're confident that riders of all ages will continue to pass on from generation to generation a favorite Houston tradition of going to the park and riding the train."

The New Hermann Park Mini-Train will begin regular operation on March 8th at 10:00 a.m.

"We are very excited that the new mini-train has arrived in time for Spring Break," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "We know that it will be a really popular attraction for everyone who visits Hermann during the Spring Break season."

The New Hermann Park Mini-Train will be operated by the Hermann Park Conservancy and is the first part of a \$15 million dollar Hermann Park improvement proposal.

"The new mini-train is only the Phase I portion of the improvements we have planned for Lake Plaza," said Doreen Stoller, Executive Director, Hermann Park Conservancy. "When the project is completed, not only will access to the train be improved but Lake Plaza will double in size and have many more trees and flowers as well as a café. Other park attractions like the pedal boats will also be improved."

During Phase I construction the new train route was expanded to 1.8 miles and a new larger 24 gauge train track was installed. Phase II construction, which is under way, will involve the completion of a new train depot, the expansion of Lake Plaza and the addition of satellite train stops at the Museum of Natural Science and Miller Theatre, the METRORail stop at Hermann Park/Rice University, and the Texas Medical Center, giving riders options for boarding and debarking.

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The New Hermann Park Mini-Train will have 6 cars and was manufactured by Chance Morgan. It is a scale replica of the famous 19th century C.P. Huntington 4-2-4T steam locomotive currently on static display at the California State Railroad Museum.

The Hermann Park Conservancy will operate the mini-train concession and will provide 22% of the train rides' gross revenue to the City. The mini-train's net revenue will be used solely for the maintenance of Hermann Park in keeping with the Conservancy's current concession agreement to improve quality of service while increasing revenue for the Park.

The contract adding the mini-train concession to the Hermann Park Conservancy was reviewed by the Quality of Life Committee on March 18 and again on April 12, 2007. All new improvements are consistent with the City-approved Master Plan for Hermann Park. The old mini-train concession contract with Buffalo Rides expired on September 30, 2007. Buffalo Rides continued to operate the Hermann Park Train Concession through December 2007 under a separate contract with the Hermann Park Conservancy.

The Hermann Park Mini-Train was out of operation for two months while final construction of the new rail line was completed. The Hermann Park Mini-Train will be open to the public on March 8, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. Ticket prices will be \$2.50 per ride. The temporary Train Depot will be at the northwest corner of the central parking lot.

Hermann Park Conservancy is a non-profit citizens' organization dedicated to the stewardship and improvement of Hermann Park today and for generations to come. Through a public-private partnership with the City of Houston, the Conservancy supports the ongoing maintenance and development of Hermann Park. For more information on the Hermann Park Conservancy, call (713) 524-5876 or visit www.hermannpark.org.

For additional information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department call (713) 845-1135 or visit our web site at www.houstonparks.org.