

From the RVC:

In a previous column, I mentioned the idea of getting a group together to travel by train to the Annual Gathering in Dearborn, MI next summer. Several people contacted me to express interest, so I have been doing a little research, and it looks quite feasible. Here's how it would work:

The Texas Eagle leaves San Antonio at 7:00am (probably on Monday, June 28). South Texas Ms could start there and be joined by other Ms in Austin (9:31am), Fort Worth (2:20pm), Dallas, 3:40pm), Longview (6:15pm), and Little Rock (11:34pm). Ms from Oklahoma could leave Oklahoma City on a connecting train to Fort Worth (the Heartland Iyer) that departs at 8:25am. We'd reach Chicago the next afternoon at 1:52pm, and change to the Wolverine, leaving Chicago at 6:00pm and arriving in Dearborn at midnight on Tuesday, June 29.

On the way home, we'd leave Dearborn on Monday, July 5 at 7:11am, and arrive in Chicago at 11:24am, change to the Texas Eagle, departing at 1:45pm, then go through the whole thing in reverse, with groups leaving the train all along the way, and the South Texas contingent arriving back in San Antonio at 10:25pm Tuesday night. The Oklahoma folks would change trains in Fort Worth, with the Eagle arriving at 1:55pm Tuesday and the Flyer leaving at 5:25pm, arriving back in OKC at 9:39pm.

With advance-purchase, folks from West Texas, New Mexico, Houston, and New Orleans who want to join the party can probably fly Southwest to Dallas for under \$100 round-trip, and for \$17.00 Super Shuttle will take you to the Hyatt Regency, which is connected by a pedestrian tunnel to the Amtrak station. has a bus connection directly to the train at Longview.

Amtrak cannot guarantee fares this far in advance, but they say they do not expect any major fare increases between now and next summer. At present-day fare levels, the round-trip coach fare from anywhere in Region 6 would be less than \$300, after the 20% group discount. Amtrak allows passengers to bring their own coolers with beverages and food, and the train has both a club car serving snacks and sandwiches and a dining car serving full meals. The seats are large and comfortable, and recline almost flat for sleeping.

I realize that this would take a few extra days, but on the other hand, it's the equivalent of extending the AG by four days, and the cost is certainly competitive with either flying or driving. In order to pursue this further with Amtrak, I need a headcount to be able to tell them, at a rough guess, how many people would be boarding at each station. I have asked the ever-helpful Howard Prince at the National Office to set up a special e-mail account just for this purpose. If such a trip sounds interesting, please e-mail me at AGTrain@region6.us.mensa.org with your name and the city where you would be boarding. This is just an expression of interest at this time, not a firm commitment. If I get a sufficient number of responses, I'll see about setting up a group account with Amtrak and let you all know what comes next.

