

By: Hopson, Cook of Navarro

H.C.R. No. 34

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The State of Texas has customarily recognized a
2 variety of official state symbols as tangible representations of
3 the state's historical and cultural heritage; and

4 WHEREAS, The Texas State Railroad, an East Texas fixture for
5 more than a century, had its origins in the iron-industry boom that
6 East Texas experienced in the 1870s and 1880s; in 1875 the state
7 legislature authorized construction of a new penitentiary near Rusk
8 in order to develop the iron-ore resources of the area, as well as
9 to relieve overcrowding at the penitentiary in Huntsville; the
10 ensuing iron works at the East Texas Penitentiary provided material
11 for the present State Capitol, including the iron that was used in
12 the building's columns and dome; and

13 WHEREAS, To facilitate the transport of iron ore for the
14 smelter and foundries, as well as timber for the prison's sawmill,
15 construction was begun in 1881 on a line known officially as the
16 Texas State Railroad, and by 1909 the road had been extended to
17 Palestine in adjacent Anderson County; and

18 WHEREAS, In addition to hauling raw materials to the
19 penitentiary, the railroad offered regular passenger and freight
20 service from 1907 to 1921; prison inmates, who had constructed the
21 entire line, made up the train crew, except for the engineer, during
22 much of this period; and

23 WHEREAS, The iron works at the prison closed in 1913, and
24 eight years later the state began leasing the track of the Texas

1 State Railroad to private companies; over the next half-century the
2 line served in particular to move lumber and timber products; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1972, after most of the road had remained unused
4 for several years, the Texas Legislature conveyed the line to the
5 Parks and Wildlife Department; at the urging of rail enthusiasts,
6 and after studying the feasibility of such a project, it was decided
7 to restore the line as part of a state historical park and to
8 dedicate the complex to the preservation and interpretation of the
9 country's railroad heritage; and

10 WHEREAS, On July 4, 1976, as part of the nation's
11 Bicentennial celebration, the Texas State Railroad State
12 Historical Park opened to the delight of countless citizens across
13 the state; in 2002, more than 130,000 people visited the park,
14 including 83,000 from outside the area; of those visitors, 41,110
15 took a ride on one of the trains that makes the run through the piney
16 woods and rolling hardwood creek bottoms between Palestine and
17 Rusk; and

18 WHEREAS, A fully self-contained system, the Texas State
19 Railroad operates four steam engines and four antique diesel
20 locomotives; in addition, it maintains a complete steam-engine
21 restoration shop, 29 miles of track, and 24 bridges, including one
22 over the Neches River; and

23 WHEREAS, Included in the railroad's stock are Steam Engine
24 No. 201, donated by the City of Abilene and once used by the Texas &
25 Pacific Railroad; Steam Engine No. 300, donated by Temple
26 Industries in Pineland; Steam Engine No. 400, purchased from the
27 Magma Copper Mine in Magma, Arizona, and once used by the Tremont &

1 Gulf Railway in Central Louisiana; Steam Engine No. 500, owned at
2 one time by the City of San Angelo; and Steam Engine No. 610,
3 operated by the Texas & Pacific between Shreveport and El Paso until
4 1950 and displayed in Fort Worth for a number of years; in the 1970s
5 the publisher and philanthropist Amon G. Carter, Jr., financed the
6 restoration of No. 610, and the engine became one of two that pulled
7 the Freedom Train through Texas during the Bicentennial; and

8 WHEREAS, Over the years, the railroad has received
9 significant attention in many quarters and has been featured in
10 television series, documentaries, commercials, music videos, and
11 full-length films; and

12 WHEREAS, The Texas State Railroad and its historical park
13 have contributed greatly to the prosperity of the surrounding area;
14 in 2002 they injected nearly \$1.5 million into the local economy,
15 generated more than \$4.6 million in sales, and produced a more than
16 \$1.8 million impact on the income of local residents; and

17 WHEREAS, Deeply rooted in the life and industry of East
18 Texas, the Texas State Railroad is today one of the largest steam
19 train operations in the country; through its preservation program,
20 its excursion tours, and a wide variety of educational efforts, the
21 railroad constitutes an outstanding asset to the Lone Star State;
22 now, therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas
24 hereby designate the Texas State Railroad as the official Railroad
25 of Texas.