

CUT BANK DEPOT



The wood frame Cut Bank depot was built by the Great Northern Railway around 1918. Its design is reminiscent of a Swiss chalet, a popular style that influenced the architecture of early lodges and buildings in and around Glacier National Park.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

When Cut Bank Mayor Doug Embody took office in 2010, one of his first initiatives was to re-establish the town's Beautification Committee in a drive to improve public areas. Following the renovation of a downtown park and installation of new sidewalks, attention turned to the condition of the old depot. Located in the center of town and therefore highly visible to travelers, the building "was an eyesore," recalls Embody.

Years of harsh winters and prairie winds led to peeling paint and an overall shabby appearance. Mayor Embody and the Beautification Committee decided to focus on refurbishing the local landmark. "Our community has a lot to offer, but that wasn't reflected in the depot," says Embody. A resident with experience in digital design took a photo of the building and overlaid it with various paint schemes to help the committee visualize the proposed changes.

Since the building is owned by BNSF Railway and next to an active rail line, the city needed permission from the freight railroad to undertake improvements. During an annual meeting with Amtrak Government Affairs staff, Mayor Embody brought up the painting project and made sure to keep in touch over the ensuing months. Amtrak subsequently worked to bring all parties together and determine a plan of action.

REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

As plans progressed, the Cut Bank Chamber of Commerce suggested that the project coincide with

"Repainting and repairing the depot was a community-wide effort; it now creates a favorable impression of our town."

– Cut Bank Mayor Doug Embody

its annual “Make a Difference Day” in October 2010. Residents and business owners joined in by donating time and supplies. In just one day, volunteers scraped and sanded the wood siding in preparation for painting. Professional painters used spray equipment to provide a smooth coat and access hard-to-reach areas. BNSF generously donated the cost of flagging service, a safety requirement for work near active tracks.

When the final coat of paint had dried, the historic depot closely resembled its original appearance. In addition to painting, volunteers also removed metal screens from the windows to create a more inviting atmosphere. Building upon this community momentum, Amtrak installed a new 762-foot long concrete platform the following year.

STATION AS A CATALYST

“The project had an outstanding impact on Cut Bank,” says Mayor Embody, “and positively improved the perception of our town.” To complement the depot, the city moved forward with plans to refurbish adjacent Budd Park. Embody also notes that businesses near the depot have cleaned up their properties.

Mayor Embody often rides the *Empire Builder* to visit family and feels great pride when he overhears passengers remarking favorably on the depot and his town. In the future, Embody hopes the town will be able to purchase the building and pursue redevelopment to possibly include commercial uses.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Grew relationship with Amtrak, which in turn worked with BNSF Railway.
- Drafted a clear plan with specific goals.
- Solicited community support and participation.

INSIDE THE STATION

STATION SERVICE (FY14)

- 2,353 Riders
- \$193,034 in Revenue
- Served by the *Empire Builder*

DEVELOPMENT

- Renewed station has spurred aesthetic improvements by adjoining property owners

KEY FEATURES

- Depot retains historic paint scheme
- Depot is a symbol of community activism and pride

PROJECT FUNDING

- City funds, donations and in-kind services by BNSF

