



P.O. Box 425

Lake Forest, Illinois

60045-0425

Phone: 847-295-8497

Web: shore-line.org

October 2016

Dear Member:

Since our last annual report in October 2015, Shore Line has enjoyed an exceptional year. We had a record number of page sponsors and wonderful comments about the quality of the four issues of *First & Fastest* published during the past year. We also published Dispatch 6, *Chicago Surface Lines: The Big 5 Routes and 5 Others* and Dispatch 7, *A Transportation Miracle*. Our members have been exceedingly gracious in their compliments. Many praised Dispatch 6, including George Canary's description of traveling across Chicago on the Halsted streetcar, giving insight into Chicago's diverse neighborhoods and their cultures. *A Transportation Miracle* received comments such as "extraordinary" and "very well researched, written, and illustrated."

It's Time To Renew Your Shore Line Membership for 2017

Thank you for being a Shore Line member in 2016! We are pleased to announce that there will be NO increase in dues for 2017 memberships. There is a \$5 incentive to pay your 2017 dues before December 31, 2016. Dues for 2017 regular memberships paid before December 31, 2016 are \$32. After that date, regular dues are \$37. Shore Line is passing on to you the cost savings between bulk mailing and normal mailing rates. Please renew early, as it is costly and time consuming to mail individual copies of the magazine to those who pay dues later in 2017.

Thank You for Your Support of Shore Line in 2016

Shore Line is in the enviable position of having wonderful support from its members. We wish to thank the 63 members who contributed sponsorships for 76 pages, an all-time record number. Since each issue of *First & Fastest* is 80 pages, the financial value of page sponsorships from these 63 people is significant. Bottom line: they essentially paid for the fourth issue for the benefit of all members. Our challenge goal for 2017 is 80 sponsored pages — a complete issue!

In the Autumn 2016 issue of *First & Fastest*, we published the names of 509 members who participated in premium membership categories. More came in after July 1st, and unfortunately their names are not listed. In addition, 357 members contributed to Dispatch 7, *A Transportation Miracle*. Please consider participating in the premium membership categories or making a donation in 2017. Your memberships and contributions provide Shore Line with a successful financial model and the ability to keep the regular membership rate low. This has allowed us to sustain 80-page issues, more pages per issue than virtually all other railroad historical society publications. This model also provides significant funding for our Dispatch series.

Shore Line also wishes to send a sincere thank-you to all the people who contribute their time and effort in creating articles, taking photographs, and providing news. *First & Fastest* and the Dispatch series are the result of the talents of many people who work together very effectively as a great team. This includes the people at North Shore Printers who assemble, print and bind our publications, Concerted Systems who provide electronic and membership services, United Graphics and Mailing who provide mailing services, and Mary Carlson, who provides membership services. Their names are in the table of contents of each issue of *First & Fastest* and in the acknowledgments in Dispatch publications.

Sustaining and Growing Our Membership

For the last four years, we have experienced a slightly declining membership. There are two principal factors: an aging population of members and young people who use social media in lieu of other electronic or printed material to pursue their interest in railroads. From an editorial perspective, there is a constant tension between historic topics that appeal to virtually all

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Shore Line Membership Letter *(continued)*

members and current topics and news that, hopefully, could attract younger people to join Shore Line. As we have said before, balancing these competing interests is key to the long-term sustainability of Shore Line.

Our challenge, long term, is to attract young people immersed in electronic media to join and support Shore Line. Your ideas would be appreciated. In the meantime, we ask every member to encourage a family member or friend who might be interested in our publications to become a member of Shore Line or to purchase an individual issue or Dispatch. Dispatch 7, *A Transportation Miracle*, in either the hardbound or softbound version, would make an excellent holiday gift. Gift memberships are also a great way to attract new members to Shore Line and present a gift to a friend. Any assistance that you can provide that will increase our membership will be truly appreciated. We project a membership approaching 1,900 people in 2016. We would like to return to having 2,000 or more members.

What Lies Ahead In 2017

There was such a great response to Dispatch 6 that we are going to continue to publish material on Chicago Surface Lines. Richard Begley is working with George Canary and Walter Keevil on the editorial development of Dispatch 8, which has the working title of *Chicago Surface Lines: Linking Chicago's Neighborhoods*. We hope to publish this Dispatch late in 2017. Please stay tuned for an announcement of this publication.

The 2017 Membership Renewal Process

Again, for 2017, we ask you to specify how you wish to receive *First & Fastest*. You may choose either the traditional **PRINT** format, **DIGITAL** format, or **BOTH** print and digital formats. Here are the instructions to follow:

- If you wish to receive *First & Fastest* in its traditional PRINT format, you may renew either by:
 - Returning the printed form with your check or money order, or
 - Renewing online on our website shore-line.org with your credit card.
- If you wish to receive *First & Fastest* in DIGITAL format, **you MUST renew your membership online at shore-line.org.**
- If you wish to receive *First & Fastest* in **BOTH** print and digital formats, our combination offer, **you MUST renew your membership online at shore-line.org.** There is an extra charge of \$10 to receive both the print and digital formats for all membership categories **except for Page Sponsors.**

For our international members ... if you decide to receive *First & Fastest* in digital format, your membership dues will be \$32 before December 31, 2016 and \$37 thereafter. Dues for the print format are \$69 due to the high cost of international postage.

We are also asking all members to provide us with their email addresses when they renew, so that we may use electronic communication to send donation receipts, gift announcements, and other notices. We do not share your email address with any other organization. If you have any questions, please contact us at info@shore-line.org. Please give us a few days to respond as we often cannot answer emails on a daily basis.

Thank you again for your ongoing support. We look forward to the upcoming year and continuing to publish the premier magazine in its field.

With best regards,
Your Shore Line Board of Directors

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