

# On Track

Steam locomotive moved without a hitch in Abilene

By LINDA MOWERY-DENNING  
*The Salina Journal*

**A**BILENE — The monster black-and-silver locomotive inched its way Monday down the center of Northwest Third Street as dozens of spectators watched from the sidewalks or walked along beside it.

"It kind of gave me a thrill when I first saw it move," said Erna Edmunds of Abilene, who watched with her husband, Floyd.

This was the day the Abilene & Smoky Hill Railroad Association, a volunteer organization that operates a tourist train between Abilene and Enterprise, moved the 1919 steam locomotive that has stood in Eisenhower Park since its retirement in 1955.

With the exception of a flat tire, the relocation of the engine to the association's headquarters, 14 blocks away, went without a hitch.

Jim Davis, the town's director of public safety, worried about the turn out of the park. Then he worried about the locomotive crossing Mud

Creek bridge. Then he worried about another turn onto busy Buckeye Avenue.

The movers, Hultgren Enterprises of White City, completed all three maneuvers in less time than anyone expected.

"It's gone a lot smoother than I thought," said Davis, who had five city workers on locomotive duty. "We think this is really something, but to the movers it's just another job."

Dale L. Martinitz with Salina's Mid Continent Engineers said the Mud Creek bridge, built in 1983, was carefully surveyed before the locomotive left the park.

The 150-ton engine rested in a cradle of steel beams and 58 tires. Martinitz's company prepared detailed drawings of tire placement.

The tires were bunched together on the street and around corners. At the bridge, however, movers stopped and spread the tires to redistribute the weight for a safe crossing.

They were rearranged on the other side before the locomotive continued its trip down Northwest Third to its new home, a journey that took less than four hours.

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Wayne Smith (left) and Joe Minick ride on top of the train as it is being towed across a bridge in Abilene.

## Locomotive / Move proceeds smoothly

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Several spectators joked with Joe Minick, association president, about Monday being April Fool's Day.

"Is this really the best time to do this?" someone asked.

Minick, who rode on the top side of the locomotive as it moved, wasn't concerned.

"This is a beautiful day," he said. "Other than the flat tire, everything has gone on schedule."

Crews didn't even have to drop utility lines. They simply raised them and the locomotive passed underneath.

The locomotive was operated for 36 years in the Southwest by Santa Fe Railroad as a high-speed passenger engine.

It will be on display through the summer at its new home. During that time, volunteers plan to clean the cabin and complete a survey to determine the cost of rebuilding.

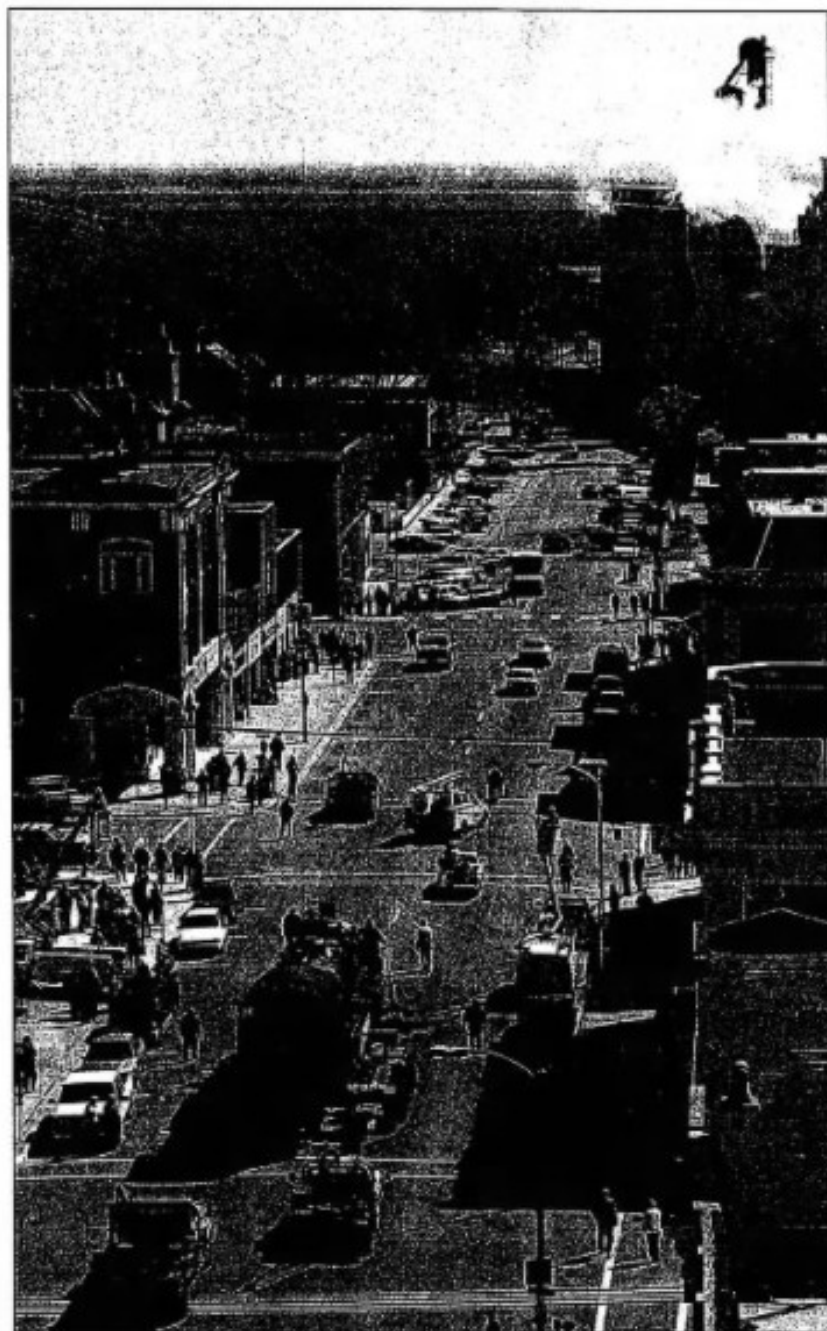
Minick said railroad organizers hope to have the locomotive back in service in two years.

The tinder, which holds fuel and water for the engine, was moved in March.

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

— Matthew 28:20



Photos by DAVIS TURNER/The Salina Journal  
Traffic is diverted in downtown Abilene as steam locomotive is towed to its new home at the Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad Association headquarters on Buckeye Street.