

VIRGINIA
SCENIC
RAILWAY



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Roanoke, VA — The Virginia Museum of Transportation Inc. (VMT), in partnership with the Virginia Scenic Railway and the Steam Railroading Institute, is pleased to announce that the legendary Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 will operate a limited series of summer steam excursions in June and July 2026 on the Virginia Scenic Railway.

Beginning June 12, 2026, the 611 will power passenger excursions departing from Staunton and Louisa, Virginia, offering riders a rare opportunity to experience mainline steam railroading in the Commonwealth.

The sleek and powerful locomotive, designed and built in Roanoke by the Norfolk & Western Railway, has long been regarded as one of the finest steam locomotives ever constructed. Built in 1950, Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 is the sole surviving member of the 14 Class J 4-8-4 locomotives produced. After entering service in 1950, the locomotive hauled passenger trains until its retirement in 1959. It later returned to service for Norfolk Southern's excursion program from 1982 to 1994. Restored to operation again in 2015, the 611 has continued to serve as a premier ambassador for steam railroading. Today, it is owned and operated by the Virginia Museum of Transportation Inc. as a traveling exhibit.

The 611 holds numerous distinctions, including designation as the Official Steam Locomotive of the Commonwealth of Virginia, recognition as a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark, and listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

“We are thrilled to bring the 611 back to the rails for summer excursions in partnership with the Virginia Scenic Railway and the Steam Railroading Institute,” said Mendy Flynn, Executive Director of the Virginia Museum of Transportation. “This collaboration allows us to share the power and beauty of steam railroading with new audiences while honoring Virginia’s rich rail heritage.”

The Steam Railroading Institute and the Virginia Scenic Railway are providing passenger coaches. Prices and seating options will vary, and will include the following classes of service: Coach, Premium Coach, Table Class, and Dome Class.

Specific details about the schedule, price, and route descriptions are available on the Virginia Scenic Railway website. Tickets are expected to be released on April 15, 2026. To stay up to date with the Summer of Steam and other special Railway events, subscribe to the e-newsletter on the Virginia Scenic Railway website.

About the Virginia Scenic Railway / Buckingham Branch Railroad

The Virginia Scenic Railway began service in 2022 and offers the state's only regularly scheduled sightseeing excursion service. The railway is owned and operated by the Buckingham Branch Railroad, the largest short-line railroad in Virginia, operating four divisions across 280 miles of track. Learn more at VirginiaScenicRailway.com.

About the Virginia Museum of Transportation

The Virginia Museum of Transportation, Inc., located in Roanoke, is the Commonwealth of Virginia's official transportation museum. The organization is a 501(c)(3) independent nonprofit dedicated to preserving, promoting, and protecting all modes of Virginia's transportation history and industry. Through education and stewardship, the museum safeguards America's transportation heritage for future generations. Its collections include significant rail, automotive, aviation, and maritime exhibits. Learn more at www.vmt.org.

About the Steam Railroading Institute

Based in Owosso, Michigan, the Steam Railroading Institute is dedicated to educating the public about steam-era railroading in Michigan and the Great Lakes region. The organization preserves the skills and technology required to maintain and operate steam locomotives by providing authentic, hands-on experiences. In addition to its fleet of passenger equipment, SRI owns and operates Pere Marquette No. 1225, famously known as the inspiration for "The Polar Express." Learn more at <https://michigansteamtrain.com/>.