

HERMANN STATION



Known for its beautiful natural setting, rich German cultural heritage, numerous vineyards and walkable downtown, Hermann attracts visitors from across the Midwest. Daily Amtrak service via the *Missouri River Runner* figures prominently in the community's tourism promotion efforts.



Downtown Hermann features many late 19th century buildings.

In September 2014, the city dedicated a new depot near the riverfront to replace a small shelter. It offers a comfortable waiting room, restroom and space for displays tracing the area's transportation history, with a focus on the Missouri River, railroads and roadways.

SUPPORTING LOCAL TOURISM

"Tourism is the city's most important industry," says Hermann Director of Tourism Elias McDonald. The community boasts a compact core of historic buildings that contribute to what McDonald describes as its "quaint, unique" atmosphere. The new depot creates a welcoming first impression for visitors who can find restaurants, shops and cultural attractions within walking distance.

In the surrounding countryside, vineyards, many reinvented in the last few decades, attract wine connoisseurs from across the region. Bed and breakfasts offer lodging at a wide variety of price points.

Throughout the year, festivals focused on German culture attract tens of thousands of visitors; many were first celebrated in the late 19th century and thus are known to generations of Missourians.

The scheduling of the four daily trains allows visitors to easily plan a day, overnight or weekend trip to Hermann. Once in town, visitors may take advantage of the privately-operated Hermann Trolley, which provides door-to-door service between lodging places, wineries and other attractions.

Owner Kevin Sanderlin believes that "Amtrak is a great service for Hermann," and during the autumn high season, the company often collects more than 150 Amtrak passengers per day. When starting his business, Sanderlin drove along Amtrak routes in Missouri and Illinois, stopping to distribute flyers at stations to promote his trolley service to rail passengers.

TAKING A REGIONAL APPROACH

The *Missouri River Runner* is financed primarily through funds made available by the Missouri Department

"Amtrak has done great things for our tourism industry...passenger rail service is an invaluable asset."

– Elias McDonald, Hermann Director of Tourism

of Transportation (MoDOT). It sponsors the Missouri Rail Passenger Advisory Committee, which through quarterly meetings brings together key stakeholders from along the route to discuss common issues, including promotion of train service. MoDOT also offers stipends for station improvements and marketing and runs a *Missouri River Runner* Facebook page.



The *Missouri River Runner* stops at the new Hermann depot.

One side effect of this collaborative approach is that the towns support one another by stocking marketing materials and promoting visits to all communities. They have also cooperated on a radio campaign in which each town purchased three weeks of airplay that concluded with a local prize package giveaway.

In 2014, the chamber of commerce in nearby Kirkwood, Mo., organized a “Wine Express” fundraiser. Amtrak worked to reserve a block of seats on the regular trains for participants, who received a round trip Kirkwood-Hermann fare, all-day Hermann Trolleys pass, snacks and souvenirs.

The Amtrak Marketing department also sponsors events along the route including Washington’s Town and Country Fair and Kirkwood’s Green Tree Festival.

McDonald notes that word-of-mouth advertising for local attractions, festivals and *Missouri River Runner* service has been crucial to Hermann’s success in drawing a large and varied visitor pool.

INSIDE THE STATION

STATION SERVICE (FY14)

- 20,414 Riders
- \$493,242 in Revenue
- Served by the *Missouri River Runner*

DEVELOPMENT

- Train frequencies and the depot’s proximity to downtown attractions encourage tourism

KEY FEATURES

- New depot offers enhanced passenger amenities and local history display space
- *Missouri River Runner* communities cooperate in promoting one another

PROJECT FUNDING (DEPOT)

- Transportation Enhancement Program (FHWA)
- City of Hermann
- Non-profit Dierberg Educational Foundation

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- New depot offers improved passenger amenities such as a waiting room and restroom.
- Promotion of rail service as an alternative to driving.
- Availability of local transportation for accessing wineries and attractions.
- Regional cooperation among the state and *Missouri River Runner* communities to promote tourism.

Thank-you to Elias McDonald of the city of Hermann for his assistance with this case study. Aerial image courtesy of Tony Carosella; station image courtesy of the city of Hermann.