



Riverside Historical Society  
PO Box 246  
Riverside, CA 92502-0246

July 14, 2025

Riverside Parks, Recreation & Community Services Department  
6927 Magnolia Avenue  
Riverside, CA 92506

Dear Pamela Galera, Parks Director:

At the recent meeting on July 12 of the Riverside Historical Society Board of Directors, there was a discussion on some of the proposed changes at the Historic Fairmount Park. We talked about the possible removal of the Union Pacific #6051 steam locomotive. A resolution was unanimously passed by the board advocating for the preservation at Fairmount Park of this historic steam locomotive.

To understand our advocacy of the preservation of the locomotive, here is a brief history of the engine coming to Riverside.

In March 1954, the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society ran a special excursion train with 550 passengers pulled by a Union Pacific steam locomotive from Los Angeles to Riverside, commemorating the Salt Lake Route Railroad coming to Riverside fifty years previously on March 12, 1904. Tim Hays, on that occasion, wrote an editorial, "The End of an Era," lamenting the passing of the steam locomotive and the fact that Riverside did not have an engine like so many other cities. He penned the following: "We'd like to see the bright symbol of the Santa Fe, the UP or the SP emblazoned on the side of a retired locomotive, standing through the years as a symbol of a romantic era in transportation." The Union Pacific quickly responded with the gift of engine #6051. Columnist George Rix waxed sentimentally: "It's fitting that old No. 6051 should end its services as a memorial to the golden days of the rails here in Riverside, because it must have thundered through our town...hauling the world's merchandise east and west and north and south"

In 1993, the Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris attempted to purchase the locomotive from Riverside and move it to their grounds. The citizens of Riverside rose and protested. E. F. "Sandy" Sanderson of the Riverside Cultural Heritage Board compared the idea to the celebrated theft of a steam locomotive by Union soldiers during the Civil War. Tom Patteerson wrote: "At

It would be a shame to see this vital part of Riverside's rich railroad heritage disappear. Instead, Union Pacific #6051 needs to be restored with a good paint job and possibly interpretive panels installed telling the railroad history connected to Riverside.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Lech". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a stylized "L".

Steve Lech  
President, Riverside Historical Society Board

cc: Riverside Park Commissioners, Scott Watson, Mayor Patricia Locke-Dawson, Philip Falcone

Attachment – early Riverside newspaper articles