



Texas Triangle Convention Houston-Austin-Dallas/Fort Worth

September 3–8, 2015

For 2015, the ERA returns to Texas after its earlier successful visit in 2005. Known as the Lone Star State, Texas is the nation's second largest state. We will visit the emerging light rail and commuter rail systems that serve Houston, Austin, Dallas and Fort Worth, four of the five cities that comprise the populous "Texas Triangle" mega-region (the fifth city, San Antonio, is well worth a visit on your own but is not in our itinerary). Houston, the nation's fifth largest metropolitan area with 6.3 million people, launched its first 7.5-mile light rail line in 2004, and as of 2014 it carries the nation's third highest volume of passengers per track mile (after Boston and San Francisco's Muni system). By the time of this convention, Houston's METRO network will have expanded from 12.8 miles to 22.7 miles with addition of the new Green and Purple lines.

The Dallas-Fort Worth region's explosive growth has propelled it to the position of the nation's fourth largest metropolitan statistical area with 6.8 million people. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) system is the nation's fastest expanding light rail system. Starting with 11 miles in 1996, the system has expanded to 90 miles on four lines, the nation's largest light rail system in network mileage and the nation's seventh largest in terms of daily ridership (over 90,000 per day). By our September 2015 visit, DART may have additionally opened the new 1.6-mile Downtown-Oak Cliff streetcar. Complementing DART's high speed rail operation is the 4.2-mile McKinney Avenue heritage trolley operation (to be extended another mile in 2015), the 21-mile Denton County A-Train DMU operation opened in 2011, and the 35-mile Trinity Railway Express commuter rail connecting historic Dallas Union Station with Fort Worth.

Our motor coach transfer day between Houston and Dallas includes a ride on Austin's Capital MetroRail light rail DMU line, which started operations in 2010. So mark your calendars for September 3–8, 2015 and plan to join us! **Note: this convention begins Thursday, September 3 in Houston and ends on Tuesday, September 8 in Dallas.**

Houston and Dallas Magnolia Hotels: Convention Headquarters

Houston, Texas: The AAA Four-Diamond Houston Magnolia Hotel is housed in the historic former Houston Post-Dispatch Building. This 23-story historic gem was built in 1926 in downtown Houston and is on the national register of historic buildings. The hotel re-opened in March 2003 after a full renovation. Houston has much to offer, not only for railfans but also spouses with other interests. The Magnolia is centrally located in downtown Houston, steps from the downtown Houston historic district, and features 1800s era architecture, tree-lined streets and lively nightspots. Also near the hotel are the Shops at Houston Center and Greenstreet, the mixed use shopping, entertainment and dining hub and Houston's 8-mile system of underground stores and shops. See www.downtownhouston.org for more information.



The Magnolia is within easy walking and photo-shooting distance from all three METRO light rail lines. The 400-acre Hermann Park and Zoo and the renowned Museum District, featuring the acclaimed Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston and the Health Museum, is a 20-minute METRORail trip. Three regional shopping districts are accessible within one 40- to 60-minute bus ride from the Magnolia: the 2.4 million square foot, 400-store upscale Galleria (the nation's fourth largest), the bargain hunting paradise of Rice Village, and Highland Village.

Finally, Greater Houston is home to the NASA Space Center where you can experience the history of the Apollo manned space program and tour the famous Mission Control Center where the famous words "The Eagle has landed" and "Houston, we have a problem" were first heard. As of March 2015, from approximately 8:30 am to 3 pm, METRO provides hourly bus service to the space center. Travel time one-way is approximately 65 minutes. The full fare is \$4.25 each way. Consult www.ridemetro.org for details on schedules and fares.

The ERA has secured the special rate of \$109 per night (plus 17% tax), single or double occupancy, for check-in from September 3, 2015 through check-out on September 5, 2015 (plus three days prior and post these dates, depending on availability). With this rate, guests will enjoy a package of Magnolia Hotel amenities:

- Complimentary all-American breakfast buffet (6 am to 9 am weekdays; 7 am to 10 am weekends);
- Complimentary guest reception serving beer, wine and soft drinks (5:30 pm to 6:30 pm);
- Complimentary bedtime cookie buffet with milk (8 pm to 10 pm);
- Complimentary Wi-Fi in guestrooms and throughout the hotel;
- Rooftop pool and 24-hour fitness center
- Complimentary towncar service to nearby dining and entertainment destinations

Use the special access code when reviewing the hotel reservation page (last page).

Dallas, Texas: The Dallas Magnolia Hotel is housed in a 400-foot high, 29-story 1922 neo-classical building that at one time was the tallest building west of the Mississippi. The Magnolia Dallas is located close to downtown Dallas attractions and DART light rail. DART's Akard Station, served by all four DART light rail lines, is a five-minute walk from the hotel as is the famous Neiman-Marcus department store headquarters. A short light rail ride on the Green Line takes you to the historic 277-acre Fair Park, a national historic landmark whose Art Deco buildings have been restored to their 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition glory.

Dallas cultural and tourist treasures within a mile from the hotel include the 1890 Romanesque Dallas County Old Red Museum of History and Culture, the Dallas World Aquarium, the Dallas Arts District, the 560-foot tall Reunion Tower for viewing the city's dramatic skyline, historic Union Station, Pioneer Plaza Park/Cemetery (sculpture park of bronze bulls), Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas Museum of Art, the award winning 2012 5.4-acre Klyde-Warren Park decking a freeway, and of course the site of JFK's 1963 assassination, the Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza. Nearby dining and entertainment opportunities abound with the West End entertainment district west of the hotel and uptown Dallas to the east, accessible by nearby DART light rail and the McKinney Avenue heritage "M" streetcar line. By the time of our convention, the "M" line extension to the nearby St. Paul Street DART station should be open.



The ERA has secured the special rate of \$109 per night (plus 15.26% tax) at the Dallas Magnolia, single or double occupancy, for check-in from September 5, 2015 through check-out on September 9, 2015 (plus three days prior and post these dates, depending on availability). With this rate, guests will enjoy an outstanding package of amenities similar to those at the Houston Magnolia:

- Complimentary all-American breakfast buffet (6 am to 9 am weekdays; 7 am to 10 am weekends);
- Complimentary guest reception serving beer, wine and soft drinks (5:30 pm to 6:30 pm);
- Complimentary bedtime cookie buffet with milk (8 pm to 10 pm);
- Complimentary Wi-Fi in guestrooms and throughout the hotel;
- 24-hour fitness center
- Downtown transportation to most area attractions

Use the special access code when reviewing the hotel reservation page (last page).

Given our experience with past conventions, these rooms will be booked quickly and to capacity once this convention flyer reaches our membership. **The cut-off date for reservations is August 15, 2015, OR when our room block has been fully booked, whichever occurs earlier. Accepting reservations after this date is at the discretion of the hotels and is not guaranteed. Avoid disappointment; book as soon as possible!**

Itinerary

Thursday, September 3, 2015

We will be departing on our first excursion early Friday morning, so the ERA urges members to plan on arriving no later than Thursday evening. We have tentatively scheduled a presentation by Houston METRO staff at 7:30 pm at the Magnolia Hotel to discuss METRO's current accomplishments and future plans. Houston METRO's transit network features not only the expanding light rail network, but also a large network of connecting off-street transit center facilities and the nation's most extensive network of HOV lanes, including dedicated freeway on- and off-ramps for faster service.

Friday, September 4, 2015

We will leave the Houston Magnolia Hotel at 9:30 am and board a chartered METRORail light rail train that will tour the entire 22-mile network comprising the Red Line and newly opened Green and Purple lines. A tour of one of the light rail maintenance facilities has also been requested. The tour is anticipated to be completed by 2 pm. The rest of the day and evening is free for you to tour on your own or return to favorite photo spots.

Houston dining is especially known for barbeque, Tex-Mex and Cajun cuisine. Recommended restaurants include numerous selections in Houston's downtown historic district, such as Pappas BBQ in south downtown, Brennan's on Smith Street (a branch of the famous New Orleans restaurant, Cajun), Goode Company Barbecue (further away), El Real Tex-Mex Café, Hugo's and Armando's (all Tex-Mex). If those don't work, take a ride on one of the frequent Westheimer Road buses out of downtown. Traveling down Westheimer Road out of downtown Houston, you'll find a restaurant to fit every ethnic palate.



Saturday, September 5, 2015

You will have the morning on your own in Houston to complete photography, sleep in or enjoy the sites. We will check out of the Magnolia Houston Hotel and leave at 12:30 pm sharp for Austin on our chartered motor coaches provided by Cowtown Bus Charters. Either have lunch beforehand or take it with you on the bus. We will head directly to downtown Austin with brief photo stops at the ornate Capitol Building and the LBJ Presidential Library. We will deadhead to the Austin MetroRail Lakeline station in Jollyville, Texas and then take a one-way ride on the Austin MetroRail DMU operation into downtown Austin.

From downtown Austin, we will be picked up by our charter buses and be taken to our dinner stop at the famous Salt Lick Barbecue Restaurant in Round Rock, Texas. **Dinner will be on your own and should cost under \$35 per person.** Dinner is traditional Texas barbecue served family style. The menu features heaping helpings of beef, sausage and short ribs, served with potato salad, coleslaw, beans, bread, pickles and onions. We will then depart for Dallas and arrive at the Dallas Magnolia Hotel at 11 pm.

Sunday, September 6, 2015

On Sunday we will tour the DART light rail system, with emphasis on the network opened since our 2005 visit. We will leave the Dallas Magnolia Hotel at 10:20 am sharp and proceed to Akard Station. From there, our chartered DART light rail train will operate southeast to Buckner Station on the Green Line. We will pass Fair Park, home to the 1937 Texas Exposition where the line was four-tracks wide. From Buckner, we will travel to the light rail Central Maintenance Facility for both tours of the facility and lunch. The cost of a box lunch is included in today's tour price. Please check off your preference on the reservation page.

After the DART facility tour and lunch, we will continue through downtown and out to North Carrollton on the northwest branch of the Green Line. Then we will travel to Bachman and west on the Orange Line to the latest branch to DFW Airport. This makes Dallas one of the handful of U.S. cities with direct rail-to-airport connections. We will return to downtown Dallas and travel on the Blue Line to the Rowlett terminal opened in 2012. Our train will return via the Blue Line back to Akard Station with an optional drop-off stop at Mockingbird Lane. We anticipate a return to Akard Station by approximately 6:45 pm. **Note: This tour does not cover the pre-2005 Blue Line Ledbetter and Red Line Westmoreland branches; you can optionally cover these branches on your own on Tuesday, September 8 with the regional "T" pass, provided to those who purchase the September 8 event or the full tour package.**

Sunday dinner will be on your own. Select from nearby steak houses, the large selection of barbecue and other cuisine in the Dallas West End, or board the nearby McKinney Avenue trolley for restaurants in uptown Dallas.



Monday, September 7, 2015

We leave the Dallas Magnolia at 9:15 am with DART Day Tickets and take the Red Line to the City of Plano to visit the city's Interurban Railway Museum which will be opened especially for ERA's visit. This museum is housed in a building that served as a primary stop on the Texas Electric Railway that ran from Denison to Dallas from 1908 to 1948. The station remained closed until early 1990 when a complete restoration of the building was completed and the building was converted into a museum by the City of Plano. The museum exhibit contains many artifacts associated with the Interurban Line, including a restored interurban car outside of the station building.

We will return to Cityplace/Uptown station, the only underground DART station and a gateway to uptown Dallas. Uptown is an upscale neighborhood resembling an old East Coast town center with the McKinney Avenue trolley running down its center. You will have many restaurants to choose from in West Village, only two blocks from Cityplace/Uptown Station, or ride an M line trolley to restaurants further down on McKinney Avenue.

ERA has contracted with the McKinney Avenue Transit Authority (MATA) to increase service from two to four cars between 2 pm and 5 pm. MATA trolleys range from early 20th Century Dallas and Melbourne cars to post-war PCC cars, all of which once operated in regular service. MATA's maintenance shop will be open for tours. The increased MATA trolley operation will offer plenty of time to ride and photograph the heritage cars at different settings and enjoy the ambiance of uptown Dallas. You can return to the hotel by taking the trolley to St. Paul station or the Red Line to Akard Station from Cityplace/Uptown station.

Monday Night, September 7, 2015

ERA's Annual Banquet will be held in a private room at the Dallas Magnolia Hotel. An hour-long informal reception and cash bar will begin at 7:00 pm, and dinner will follow promptly at 8:00 pm. Our speaker will be a representative of DART, discussing the planning and development of the nation's largest light rail network in mileage and future light rail and other expansion plans. This is a program not to be missed.

Tuesday, September 8, 2015

We will depart the Dallas Magnolia Hotel at 8 am and take the DART Green Line to Trinity Mills Station. There we will be given an escorted round-trip ride on Denton County Transportation Authority's (DCTA) "A" Train, a 21-mile commuter rail line operated with Stadler DMUs connecting Trinity Mills station with downtown Denton, Texas. Next, we will return to Dallas and board a Trinity Railway Express (TRE) train bound for the Fort Worth transit center, featuring a restored interurban. TRE service is operated with locomotive-hauled Bombardier bi-level coaches supplemented by overhauled Budd Rail Diesel Cars. We will end our final convention tour in Fort Worth, enabling members to enjoy the city's well-known sites before heading back to Dallas (Tuesday tickets include an ERA-provided regional 'T' pass). Fort Worth is home to the Fort Worth Water Gardens, downtown's restored 20-square-block area known as Sundance Square, the 1890s Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District with wooden sidewalks, brick streets and a daily, real-live cattle drive. Other sites include the acclaimed Kimball Art Museum, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.



Other Dallas area traction venues not covered by the convention: Those who are staying additional days in Dallas or do not have time to venture to Fort Worth can ride the new DART 1.6-mile Oak Cliff streetcar from Dallas Union Station which should be open by convention time. Or take DART's Orange line to Las Colinas Urban Center station and ride the fully-automated 1.4-mile Las Colinas People Mover through the futuristic planned community of Las Colinas.

Logistical Information

Reaching the Houston Magnolia Hotel, 1100 Texas Avenue, Downtown Houston

From George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH): Houston METRO route 102 offers bus service from IAH Airport to downtown Houston. As of March 2015, fares were \$1.25 per person; buses run every 20 to 45 minutes depending on time of day. Travel time is just over an hour. For latest fare and schedule information, please consult www.ridemetro.org. While taxi service is available, it can be expensive, exceeding \$50 for a one-way trip, and is primarily useful for group travel or those with lots of luggage.

From Houston Hobby Airport (HOU): As of March 2015, Houston METRO offers direct bus service from Hobby Airport to downtown Houston in approximately 50 minutes. Major schedule and route changes are contemplated in June 2015. Consult www.ridemetro.org for detailed fare and schedule information.

From Houston Amtrak Station: As of March 2015, Houston METRO offers bus service from the front of the Amtrak station directly to the Magnolia Hotel at Fannin Street and Texas Avenue. Major schedule and route changes are contemplated in June 2015. Consult www.ridemetro.org for additional fare and schedule information. The Amtrak station is approximately 1.5 miles from the hotel; taxi fares should be under \$10.

Return to Dallas Fort-Worth Airport (DFW): DFW's Terminal A is served directly by DART's Orange Line at 20 minutes or better frequency. The DFW people mover takes you to other terminals.

Return to Dallas Love Field Airport (DAL): Love Field is served by both the Orange and Green Lines at Inwood/Love Field station. DART shuttle bus 524 runs from the station to the Airport. See www.dart.org.

Please note!

Scheduled times given in this flyer are subject to change. Daily trip itineraries may be changed without prior notice to ensure on-time return at the end of each day. Announcements will be made to update guests on essential information during all ERA events. **Providing your phone number (and email address, if any) on your registration form is important if we need to reach you before, or during the convention.**

If you have questions regarding the itinerary or accommodations, please contact Bob Newhouser, ERA president and convention chairman, by e-mail at bnnyc1955@aol.com or call him at 917-482-4235.

So join us in in Houston and Dallas for Labor Day Weekend 2015!

The 2015 ERA Convention covers four of America's most dynamic metropolitan areas in America's proudest state, Texas. Enjoy these cities' rapidly expanding rail networks and Texas' legendary food and hospitality! **This is a convention not to be missed. Please join us!**



Making Your Magnolia Hotel Houston Reservation by Phone or Online:

ERA is in Houston the nights of September 3rd and 4th, departing on September 5th. You may register by phone by calling the Magnolia Hotel at 1-888-915-1110 and ask for the “**Electric Railroaders’ Association Room Block.**” You may also register at the hotel’s website by copying and pasting the following link into your browser:

<http://bit.ly/1APocao>

Going to this link will automatically bring up the discounted rates of \$109 per night (plus tax) for one or two persons per room. The menus are self-explanatory. The Magnolia Hotel Houston offers two types of accommodations: king room with a single king bed, or a double queen room.

To obtain the discount \$109 single or double occupancy rate (plus tax), please book as soon as possible; all reservations must be guaranteed with a credit card and **cancellation must be received at least 72 hours prior to arrival for full refund.** The room rates are offered for the nights of September 3–5, 2015, as well as three days post and prior, based on availability. These rates expire after August 15, 2015 OR when the ERA room block sells out, **whichever occurs earlier.**

NOTE: The Magnolia Hotel Houston does not accept reservations by mail. Please make your reservation by phone or online.

Making Your Magnolia Hotel Dallas Reservation by Phone or Online:

ERA is in Dallas the nights of September 5th through 8th, departing the 9th. You may register by phone by calling the Magnolia Hotel at 1-888-915-1110 and ask for the “**Electric Railroaders’ Association Room Block.**” You may also register at the hotel’s website by copying and pasting the following link into your browser:

<http://bit.ly/1DUgYIF>

Going to this link will automatically bring up the discounted rates of \$109 per night (plus tax) for one or two persons per room. The menus are self-explanatory. The Magnolia Hotel Dallas offers two types of accommodations: queen room with a single queen bed, or a double queen room.

To obtain the discount \$109 single or double occupancy rate (plus tax), please book as soon as possible; all reservations must be guaranteed with a credit card and **cancellation must be received at least 72 hours prior to arrival for full refund.** The room rates are offered for the nights of September 5–9, 2015, as well as three days post and prior, based on availability. These rates expire after August 15, 2015 OR when the ERA room block sells out, **whichever occurs earlier.**

NOTE: The Magnolia Hotel Dallas does not accept reservations by mail. Please make your reservation by phone or online.



2015 Convention Ticket Order Form

Orders must be received no later than August 15, 2015. Any orders received after that will be filled on a space available basis.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

I / we will be staying at the Magnolia Hotel Houston: Yes No

I / we will be staying at the Magnolia Hotel Dallas: Yes No

If you are not staying at the Magnolia Hotels, please indicate where you are staying below:

I / we live in the Dallas or Houston or are driving in to meet the trip(s). Other Hotels (specify): _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____

Cellphone (if any): _____ Email address: _____

It is important that you provide phone number(s) and email in case so that we can reach you more quickly.

YOUR ERA TICKET ORDER:

Yes, I plan to attend the ERA's 2015 convention in Houston and Dallas. Please send me tickets for the following events:

QTY

_____ Houston METRO Light Rail Charter Fri. September 4 \$35 each: _____

_____ Motor coach: Houston-Dallas, Austin MetroRail one-way trip Sat. September 5 \$95 each: _____

_____ Dallas DART Light Rail Charter Sun. September 6 \$55 each: _____

_____ Box Lunch at Light Rail Depot (please indicate lunch below) Sun. September 6 \$12 each: _____

Turkey Breast Ham Vegetarian (place "1" in box; if two people select same, place "2" in box)

Note: There are no other lunch facilities near the light rail depot.

_____ DART Day Pass, Visits to Interurban Museum, McKinney Line Mon. September 7 \$35 each: _____

_____ Banquet and Presentation (Select one of three entrees below) Mon. September 7 \$65 each: _____

Chicken Salmon Vegetarian (place "1" in box; if two people select same, place "2" in box)

_____ Regional "T" Day Pass Good on all Dallas & Fort Worth transit Tues., September 8 \$ 8 each: _____

_____ OR, **Combination Ticket for all of the above** \$285 each: _____

(Note: Combination ticket is a \$20 savings over purchasing each trip individually) TOTAL _____

Your age: _____ Name: _____ Person #2 age: _____ Name: _____

Mail this form to: Electric Railroaders' Association, Inc., P.O.Box 3323, New York, NY 10163-3323

We no longer need you to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

To Pay by Check: Make check payable to "E.R.A."

To Pay by Credit Card: Select Credit Card: Visa MasterCard Discover

Print your name in CAPITAL LETTERS exactly as it appears on your credit card

Credit Card Number

Expiration Date (mm/yy)

____/____

CVV Number

The CVV number is the rightmost 3 digits on the BACK of your credit card