Chapter 21
Railway Heritage Protection Policy in Hungary

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The Hungarian history of railway heritage protection is made up of three distinct periods. During the first phase, which lasted from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1960s, the safekeeping, collection and presentation of railway objects were performed by a single institution, the Hungarian Royal Museum of Transport.[1] The collection of the museum, which opened on 1 May 1899, consisted of objects displayed at the millennium exhibition in 1896, which had been organised to celebrate the one thousandth anniversary of the Hungarian conquest. Ninety per cent of the exhibits were railway-related and 10 per cent were nautical.[2] In the transportation hall of the millennium exhibition, art collections were displayed to represent the 50 year history of domestic railways.

A series of models showcasing the development of Hungarian railway vehicles were prepared in 1:5 scale and in a special quality, without regard to expenses. Between 1896 and 1942, a total of 119 pieces were manufactured from the 1:5 scale models, which are lifelike to the last bolt. The designers aimed for a perfect structural copy, and the models are, therefore, theoretically operable.[3] In addition to the models, the Museum's exhibitions also featured interlocking equipment, substructure models, track types, communications tools, photos, maps and more. Between 1899 and 1966 the Museum was maintained by the Hungarian State Railways, the Magyar Államvasutak (MÁV), whose directors and their co-workers were railway experts. Due to a lack of space, the museum did not collect out-of-service vehicles. Railway engineers believed that the development of the vehicles was perfectly demonstrated by the impressive models.

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1 Starting in 1945, the official name of the Museum was the Museum of Transport, and since 2008 it has been the Museum of Science, Technology and Transport.

2 Five months later a very similar museum opened in Nuremberg, Germany, the Royal Bavarian Railway Museum. The two museums were the first ones of their kind in the world. See the contribution of Rainer Mertens in this volume.

3 József Soltész, 'A Közlekedési Múzeum 1:5 méretarányú vasúti járműmodell gyűjteménye' (Collection of 1:5 scale railway vehicle models of the Museum of Transport), in András Katona (ed.), *Közlekedési Múzeum* Évkönyve, *vol. 11*: *1996–1998* (Budapest 1999), 81–126, here 93–7, 105–107, 111, 113–16.

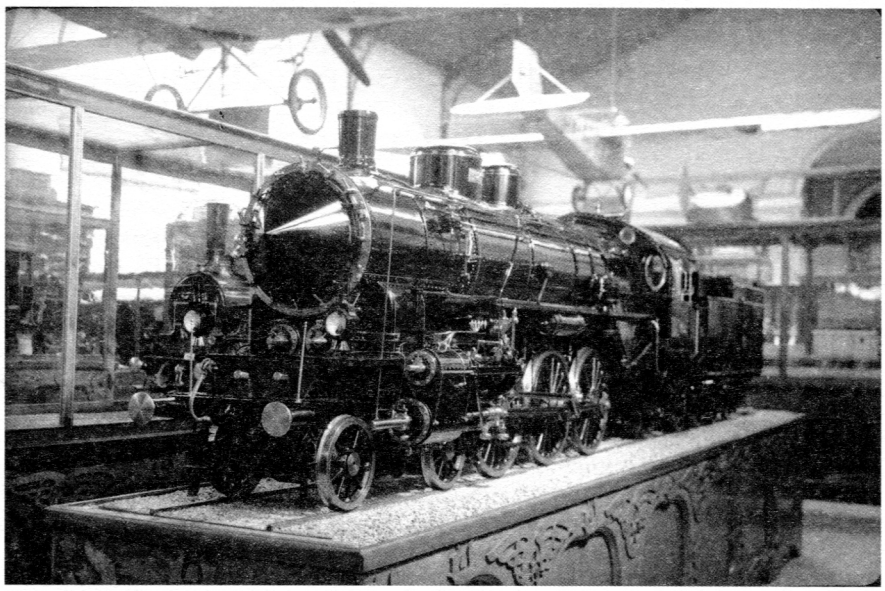

Figure 21.1 Models of a Hungarian Locomotive, 1:5 scale, 1920s
Source: Museum of Science, Technology and Transport, Budapest.

In 1944, the museum building was twice hit by bomb attacks. In addition, the museum suffered not only from the requisitions of the Red Army but also from looting by locals as well. By 1948, the 3,200-piece railway collection had melted away to a mere 560.[4] In the museum, vegetating in a decrepit building closed to the public, the collecting of new railway objects and the replacement of destroyed ones were both out of the question. During the times of the dictatorship in the 1950s, the Museum of Transport offered a relative shelter to a few railway engineers considered to be enemies of the Communist regime. Despite the general poverty and repressive atmosphere, the engineers, who as museum staff were hidden from the watchful eyes of the commissars, performed valuable work that influenced the heritage protection activities of later decades. In the course of the 1950s and 1960s, data-rich handwritten databases were prepared on the vehicles of Hungarian railways, on their development and on other railway equipment. These databases, and the professional knowledge they contained, served as a foundation for the revival and modernisation of the Hungarian railway heritage protection policy.

[4] Ákos Vaszkó, 'A vasúti gyűjtemény' (The Railway Collection), in Béla Czére (ed.), *Közlekedési Múzeum* Évkönyve, *vol. 1: 1896–1971* (Budapest 1971), 55–92, here 63.

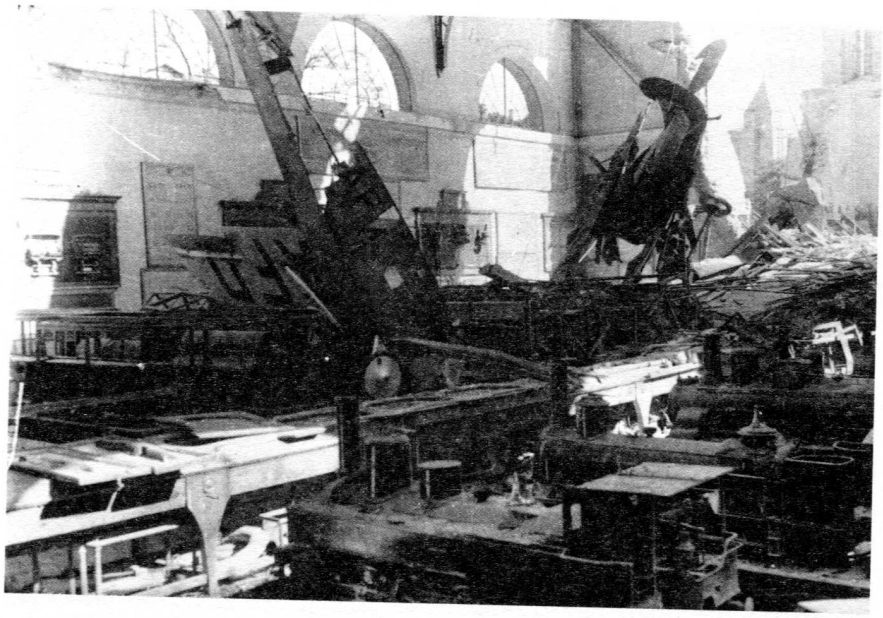

Figure 21.2 Destruction of the Railway Collection, 1944
Source: Museum of Science, Technology and Transport, Budapest.

The Modernisation of Railway Heritage Protection

The second period of railway heritage protection, which began in the 1960s and lasted until 1985, was characterised by theoretical and practical modernisation. The revival of the heritage protection activity cannot be tied to a certain person or institution; nor has it yet been summarised in a single document. The process of modernisation took place in a series of smaller or greater steps and it resulted from everyday practice and the debates taking shape throughout the years. All of this luckily coincided with the state modernisation programme of the Hungarian railways in 1968. Railway heritage preservationists had to find answers to the events accompanying the modernisation of railways: the mass scrapping of steam locomotives, the closure of tracks with low traffic volumes, dieselisation and electrification, etc. Consequently, in this era the museum started to engage in active collection, and gave up its former policy of not acquiring original vehicles.

The Museum of Transport was reopened to the public in 1966. The museum was taken out of the supervision of MÁV and became an independent but state-run institution of national importance, Visitors were faced with a cultural institution which – despite not having recovered from the destruction of Second World War – offered a more youthful tone. The rich pre-war installations in Secession style were not rebuilt, so the spectacle definitely became poorer in a way. However,

Figure 21.3 The reopening of the museum, 1966
Source: Museum of Science, Technology and Transport, Budapest.

the informative quality of the new, permanent exhibition was of a higher standard because the organisers abandoned the pre-war concept that an exhibition was nothing but a group of objects lined up next to one another. The new exhibition presented the technical development of railways chronologically and in historical context. This was definitely a significant step forward, both in terms of approach and methodology. The idea that railways are not purely technological developments but also economic, social and cultural products did not occur to the earlier curators, who had been trained as railway engineers.

The fate of the scrapped railway vehicles was decided as part of an agreement between the Museum of Transport and MÁV in 1970. The experts of the museum and the railway company jointly decided which of the vehicles taken out of service needed to be preserved.[5] However, the museum did not have a large enough warehouse to store the railway vehicles taken into its stock, so the trains remained in MÁV territory and were stored in the open air. Everybody was aware that this was an emergency measure. In the 1970s and 1980s the museum acquired more and more vehicles, and at the turn of the millennium the museum had a total of

[5] Mariann Koltai, 'A hazai nagyvasúti gőzmozdonyok megőrzése' (Preservation of inland steam locomotives), in Béla Czére (ed.), *Közlekedési Múzeum Évkönyve, vol. 4: 1976–1978* (Budapest 1979), 49–74, here 53.

96 of them. The display of old steam locomotives at traffic-heavy railway stations became fashionable. Most often, the local communities of railway employees took care of the maintenance of steam locomotives set up as memorials.

During this period of railway heritage protection, there were no institutions other than the Museum of Transport which would have focused on this task in an organised way. However, several influential experts among the leading officials of MÁV embraced the idea of railway heritage protection. In 1985, railway experts who were strongly committed to the cause formed a work committee within the MÁV, the MÁV History Commission. The heritage protection activity of the next decades was shaped by the work of this commission.

Railway Heritage Policy with Multiple Players

The third period of Hungarian railway heritage protection, which leads us to the present times, is characterised by professionalisation, the activity of multiple players, and an ever-increasing social base. Established in 1985, the MÁV History Commission joined in the cause of railway heritage protection. Its influence, and its ability to enforce its interests, were incomparably greater than those of the Museum of Transport. All this occurred in a way that the Commission did not have any decision-making authority or independent funding, but it functioned as the consulting and advisory board of MÁV, while its members worked as volunteers. The members of the Commission started lobbying to have MÁV restore an occasional vehicle by using its own budget. In the decades to come, the Commission's influence and the results it achieved kept on increasing. The Commission developed a vehicle reconstruction programme. Vehicles were selected for restoration in such a way that they could constitute a complete train. For engines that were restored to operational condition, passenger cars were sought so that their age matched, and in 1987, MÁV's vintage 1870 old-timer train – pulled by a steam locomotive hauling a tender – was featured on the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Austrian Federal Railways (Österreichische Bundesbahn, ÖBB). Participants considered it a great success that the Bogie-type fast railcar 'Árpád' constructed in 1935 and a dining car of the Compagnie internationale des wagons-lits (CIWL) built in 1912 – both restored in less than six months and in operable condition – were also among the vehicles presented at the Wien Nord railway station.

The political transition of 1990 did not have a direct impact on railway heritage protection. In the new economic environment, MÁV founded Nosztalgia Ltd., an independent company, to operate old-timer trains. The economic crisis, the mass layoffs and loss of jobs following the regime change threw into disarray the local workplaces and small communities whose members ensured the conservation of engines displayed at railway stations from time to time. Consequently, the 1990s brought a drastic and spectacular decline in the condition of old-timer railway vehicles stored in the open air.

Figure 21.4 One of the old-timer trains

Note: This train is operated by Nosztalgia Ltd. Its engine was manufactured in 1870.

Source: Hungarian Railway Heritage Park, Budapest.

At the same time, however, the MÁV History Commission placed an increasing premium on vehicle restoration and on assuring the operability of restored vintage vehicles. To this end, János Csárádi, the Chief Executive Officer of MÁV, issued decrees to regulate the traffic and technical conditions of the operation of old-timer vehicles. The Museum of Transport and the MÁV History Commission identified and registered each vehicle and building of historic value and every machine that belonged to the railway infrastructure. Some of the vehicles and equipment were taken under state protection by the Museum of Transport. The museum supported the vehicle restoration programme so that the usage rights of the vehicles – which had became the property of the museum several decades earlier and were stored in the open air – were given to Nosztalgia by the museum free of charge. In exchange, Nosztalgia had to cover the expenses of restoration, operation and maintenance. The ownership of the old-timer railway vehicles did not change, they remained property of the Museum of Transport. The Commission had the vehicles restored as close to their original state as possible.

In 1987 MÁV created a regulation on the protection of historic buildings. It classified protected buildings in three categories. Today MÁV owns a total of 117

Figure 21.5 The permanent exhibition in the Museum of Transport, 1996
Source: Museum of Science, Technology and Transport, Budapest.

protected railway buildings; 25 of them have won the national historic building status, which entitles them to the highest category of protection available.[6]

The events of railway heritage protection did not leave the Museum of Transport unaffected either. The museum's energies had been freed up from the burden of vehicle reconstruction and maintenance, and the museum launched a new, permanent exhibition. In the 1990s, historians accepted that the history of railways must be interpreted and researched from the point of view of economy and social history, and that old-timer vehicles are more than the mere representation of the phases of technical development. So the research staff of the museum examined in detail the exhibitions of the National Railway Museum in York, the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester and the Science Museum in London, and compared them to the exhibition practice in Austria and Germany, mainly to the Deutsches Museum in Munich and the Technisches Museum in Vienna.

In 1996 the new, permanent railway exhibition was opened with a floor space of some 2,400 square metres. As a result of the shift in the approach, the exhibition presented railway history from the point of view of passengers. What was the life

[6] György Heller et al., *Oldtimer Railway Vehicles in Hungary* (Budapest 1990), 55, and István Kummér, 'Műemlékvédelem a magyar vasúton' (The Protection of Monuments in the Hungarian Railway), in Antal Fejes (ed.), *25* éves *a MÁV História Bizottsága 10 éves a Magyar Vasúttörténeti Park Alapítvány* (Budapest 2009), 33–44, here 36.

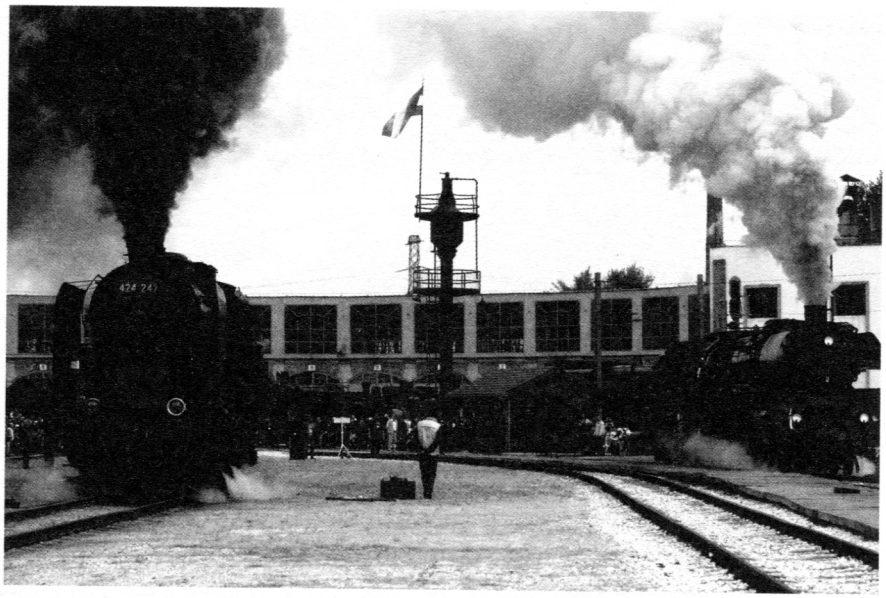

Figure 21.6 Contest of locomotives in Hungarian Railway Heritage Park, 2008
Source: Hungarian Railway Heritage Park, Budapest.

of a small town railway station like, what were the travelling circumstances like for a middle-class woman in the 1880s, how did the railway organise the travelling of the royal family? Moreover, following the English examples, it also reflected visual humour. The exhibition featured a small town railway station; visitors could take a peek into the traffic room or into the ticket office, and were even able to enter the waiting hall. The objective of the exhibition was to present as many relics in their own historical environment as possible. Exhibitors were only able to fit five old-timer railway vehicles into the exhibition space. One of them, a vehicle manufactured in 1861, is the oldest remaining steam locomotive that ran in Hungary. One of the three old-timer passenger cars is open for visitors to step in and look around.

A dream of several decades came true for railway fans when the Hungarian Railway Heritage Park opened in 2000 in honour of the thousandth anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian state. The establishment of this open air railway museum was financed by state funds. But the heritage park was created by the voluntary public work of Hungarian railway employees. The open air museum was set up in Budapest, in the Northern Engine House built between 1909 and 1911. The soil was exchanged on the entire 12-hectare territory of the open air museum. Then came landscaping, afforestation, outdoor lighting, the renewal of public utilities, etc.[7]

[7] Ferenc Holcsik and György Villányi, *Hungarian Railway Heritage Park* (Budapest 2002), 203.

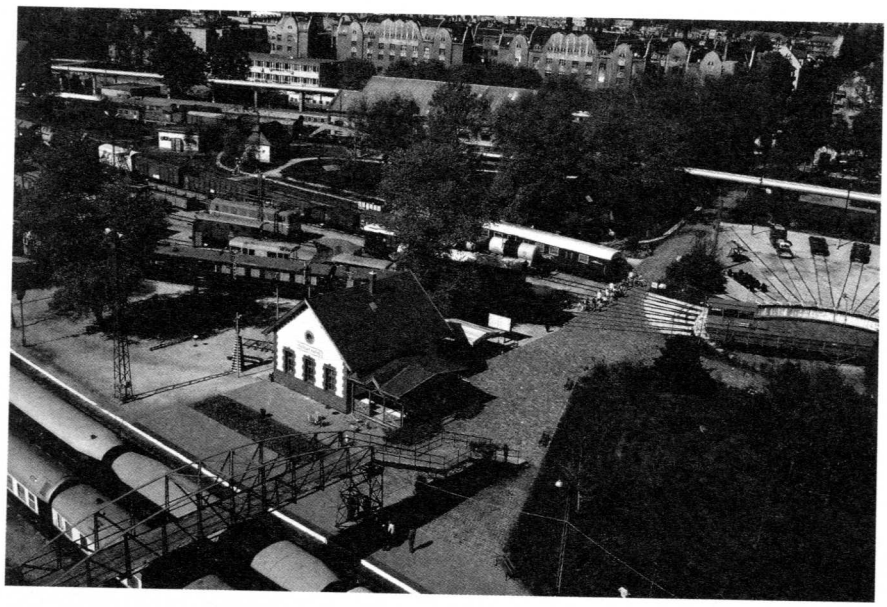

Figure 21.7 The Railway Heritage Park viewed from above
Source: Hungarian Railway Heritage Park, Budapest.

The Hungarian Railway Heritage Park works as a foundation. Operation of the park was mandated by the foundation to the MÁV Nosztalgia Ltd. The foundation takes care of the maintenance and restoration of the exhibited vehicles, organises exhibitions. The foundation, the MÁV and the MÁV Nosztalgia Ltd. arranged their relationship with an agreement of cooperation. The Museum of Transportation signed an agreement with the foundation about issues concerning vehicles owned by the museum but located at the Railway Heritage Park.

In the railway history park in 2000, visitors were able to view 53 restored vehicles. In 2001 the number increased to 66. As a result of the effort to preserve vehicles, the park is able to offer a considerable collection to its visitors.

These days, the following numbers and types of vehicles are in operable condition: 9 steam locomotives, 11 diesel locomotives, 2 electric locomotives, 13 diesel railcars, and 47 passenger cars. The list of vehicles waiting to be restored still contained 180 items in 2010. According to general opinion, due to the technical underdevelopment of Hungarian railways and less discipline, in scrapping many vehicles survived that would have been destroyed a long time before in Western European countries that were developing in a more balanced way. Nowadays old-timer railway trips are organised with various destinations every weekend. However, the operation of old-timer vehicles raises such questions to which the answers are yet to materialise in Hungary: how long are these vehicles supposed

to be used? At present, the interests related to the operation of old-timers are still stronger than those related to the general protection of works of art.

Table 21.1 Collection of vehicles in the Hungarian Railway Heritage Park

	Number	Year
Steam locomotives	31	1870–1956
Diesel locomotives	11	1954–75
Diesel railcars and trailers	12	1927–62
Electric locomotives	7	1914–75
2-wheel passenger cars	18	1854–1931
Bogie-type passenger cars	20	1895–1974
Freight wagons	14	1884–1954
Snow remover machines	6	1929–43
Track construction machines	4	1960–72
Railway cranes	2	1942–43
Rail auto cars and motor draisines	8	1949–73
Draisines	5	?

Source: Holcsik and Villányi, *Hungarian Railway Heritage Park*, 206–19.

The Museum of Science, Technology and Transport and the Hungarian Railway Heritage Park can expand their railway collection only if they can obtain funding for it. The short-term future of the railway heritage protection policy is mostly determined by sponsorship from private capital and the available tendering funds. What will the heritage protection policy look like in the long run? Hungary will probably follow the European railway heritage protection trend, especially that of Germany and Austria because of the traditionally stronger relationship with these two countries and the closer relationship with their museums.

Consequently, the 2000s brought along a significant increase in the efforts to protect our railway heritage. Its mass base has also expanded, and the popularity of the Railway History Park has continued. Nowadays the club of railway fans is organised, strengthened and focused by the Internet. Some fans collect the sounds of railway engines, others take pictures of station buildings and prepare descriptions of railway lines. There are timetable aficionados and, naturally, almost

every locomotive type has its own devotees. The highest quality Internet portal presents the railway stations and train stops of Hungary in a historical context.[8] At the same time, in parallel with the successes of railway heritage protection, the conditions for scientific research have also improved significantly. Hungary's only archive, which is nearly fully digitalised, is in the possession of MÁV.[9] Close to 5,000 railway-related postcards – mostly dated prior to 1944 – can be researched online.[10] The Museum of Transport has taken over MÁV's old technical drawing collection. As a result of the efforts of several decades, the collection comprising some 100,000 drawings is now available for research. It has become extremely useful for vehicle restoration. And today, the museum collections of railway-related objects include more than 7,500 works of art.

Conclusion

The history of the Hungarian railway heritage protection is not an unbroken chain of successes. Today's institutional structure with its multiple players is relatively stable, but there is still a lack of methodical and predictable development in the area of vehicle restoration. That era of the Hungarian railway heritage protection has not yet arrived. Because the state's contributions are unpredictable, and the railway companies are encumbered with debts, planning is impossible even for the short term.

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[8] See http://www.vasutallomasok.hu (last accessed 30 October 2010).

[9] MÁV Central Archives. www.mavintezet.hu/jkp/leveltar_en (last accessed 30 October 2010. In digital format 2.5 million documents are available for research.

[10] Magyar Múzeumi Képeslap Katalógus. http://muzeum.arcanum.hu/kepeslapok/opt/a100525.htm?v=pdf&a=start ((last accessed 30 October 2010.

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