



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2026

Media Contact:

mediarelations@fwzoo.com

260.427.6800

Fort Wayne Zoo Unveils New Electric Train

Fort Wayne, IN – The Fort Wayne Zoo has officially unveiled its new electric train engine, marking an exciting new chapter for one of the Zoo’s most beloved attractions, the Z.O.&O. Railroad.

After more than 60 years of faithful service to members and guests, the Zoo’s original diesel engine was no longer able to keep up with its demanding schedule and needed to be replaced.

The Zoo launched a fundraising campaign to help replace the train engine and refurbish the existing train carriages. A new electric engine was built earlier this year at the Chance Rides factory in Wichita, Kansas. The transition to electric power is expected to save approximately \$34,000 annually on energy costs while reducing the Zoo’s environmental footprint.

“This incredible upgrade ensures the Z.O.&O. Railroad remains a cherished part of the Zoo experience for generations to come,” said Rick Schuiteman, Executive Director & CEO of the Fort Wayne Zoo. “Thanks to the generosity of our donors and partners, we’re honoring the history of this attraction while moving it forward in a more sustainable way.”

The new engine has been seamlessly paired with the original train cars through custom electrical, brake, and air systems designed by the Zoo’s ride maintenance team. Guests will also notice refreshed train car colors featuring the Zoo’s updated blue and green branding.

Just over \$475,000 was donated to support the “All Aboard Campaign” to replace & refurbish the train and its carriages. Lead donors include Steel Dynamics, Inc. and the Indiana Michigan Power Foundation, along with numerous local foundations, families, and donors. Other key donors include Tom & Susan Ellis, the Charles Kuhne Charitable Foundation, the Owen & Jean Pritchard Foundation, PNC Charitable Trusts, and the Surack Family Foundation. A small ceremony was held last night with key supporters of the project who were able to enjoy the first official ride on the new train.

Z.O.&O. Railroad is a welcoming option for all families visiting the Zoo. With wheelchair accessibility available and comfortable seating for guests can all ages, everyone can enjoy a scenic ride for only \$4 per guest or upgrade to our Ride Wristband, which allows unlimited rides all day. Guests can purchase tickets within the Zoo or by visiting fwzoo.com.

Photos of the reception & new train can be found [here](#).

#

About the Fort Wayne Zoo: The Fort Wayne Zoo is northeast Indiana’s largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 650,000 guests annually. The Zoo is home to Red Panda Ridge named #6 in USA Today 10Best Zoo Exhibits for 2024. In 2021, the Zoo was voted Visit Indiana’s “Summer Bucket List Top Attraction” and is consistently named one of the nation’s Top Ten Zoos for Kids by national media outlets.

The Zoo is a conservation leader, investing annually in local, regional, and international efforts to protect wildlife and their habitats. The Zoo cares for more than 1,500 animals and participates in 41 cooperative species survival plan programs and 42 taxon advisory groups, which are critical to supporting threatened species. As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Zoo receives no tax dollars for daily operations, unlike most accredited zoos where those dollars fund approximately 40% of their

annual operating budgets. The Zoo's mission is made possible thanks to support derived from admissions, memberships, donations, group picnics, special ticketed events, and other visitation-related activities.