

PUBLIC COMMENT – September 27, 2023
Commission for the Reconstruction of the V&T Railway

Dave,

Good morning.

I will not be able to attend the Commission meeting this week as I will be cruising in the Caribbean.

It is my understanding that the Commission has received proposals from two different photographers for Santa photos at the Depot during Polar Express. In REI's Polar Express Manual under the Required Elements Section, it talks specifically about photography of Santa or his Elves. It states, "Santa or his Elves must not be used for photography before they are revealed at the North Pole". Rail Events has always allowed our event, and others, to have access to photos with Santa at the Depot with the condition these characters are not to be seen in costume outside of photo area. This practice helps maintain the mystique for passengers that they are being whisked off to the North Pole where the train picks up Santa. Unless the family has chosen to have their photos taken with the Depot Santa, seeing Santa at the North Pole is the first time they see him. I take great pride in doing all I can to make sure all my cast Santa's are not seen by passengers before or after the train is at the Eastgate Depot. Thus, maintaining the mystique about him and the overall ambiance of The Polar Express Train Ride experience.

Prior to 2021 the Event Manager and I always agreed the Depot Photo Santa was to wear clothing under their Santa suit allowing them to take the suit off should they need to go through the area to use the restroom. This never seemed to be an issue for the photo Santa's. This practice ensured anonymity and maintained the mystique for all attendees at the event. As our event uses real bearded Santa's, use of a cape, or something similar, to be worn over the Santa suit runs the risk of portions of their red suit being seen thus breaking the belief Santa is being picked up at the North Pole.

I would like to respectfully request when considering the photographer for the Depot Santa photos that the Commission advise the two who are submitting to provide these services understand this aspect the artistic value of this practice at the event. I ask the Commission when considering the potential photographer, they can provide a Santa who has the ability to wear clothing under their suit so giving them the ability to remove their suit in the event they need to leave the photograph area.

Thank you for your consideration.

Carla Wilson

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