



Streetcar  
CURRENTS



June 2005

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

TEA-21 Track  
Project

- CHSL Will suspend service on June 1, 2005
- CHSL will be shut-down for 60 days most likely
- We plan to have the Linden Hills station open during CHSL's regular operating hours
- We are going to encourage our visitors at CHSL to ride the Excelsior Streetcar Line
- We will hold a project completion ceremony when the track project is finished.

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**Masthead Photo:** Beautiful No. 322 is approaching the Lake Calhoun platform in October 2004. Bill Graham photo

COMO-HARRIET SET TO SHUT-DOWN ON JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup>

As this issue of the Streetcar CURRENTS is being written, it appears very likely that the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line will be shut down for the track-work on or very shortly after June 1, 2005.

According to the latest information provided to us, the contract for the track work has been officially awarded to the firm of Engineering and Construction Innovations, Inc. We have a preliminary construction schedule that shows that ECI intends to begin work on June 2nd with the start of the removal of the Lake Harriet pedestrian underpass bridge deck. At that point we won't be able to operate. We may be able to operate on June 1st but typically with these types of projects, once the contractor arrives for on-site work, then all other non-construction personnel are not allowed on the property, primarily for safety and liability reasons.

When will the project be finished? The contractor estimates that it will take the full two months to complete the work. We surmise that the contractor has been conservative in the construction schedule. The contract says that the contractor has two months to complete the job and, not surprisingly, the contractor says that that's how much time they'll need! If the work goes well, and especially if the weather dries out a little, the work may be completed earlier of course. But right now, we have to assume the worse—that CHSL won't be able to operate until around August 1st.

Of course, this shut down will have a very significant affect on MSM. No operation equals no revenue—for two whole months most likely. Over the last five years CHSL carried on average 5,200 paying passengers in June and 6,500 paying passengers in July. Multiply those numbers by our \$2.00 fare and the economic impact becomes painfully obvious. Did we want to be shut down in June and July? Of course not! The rejection of the first bids delayed the entire process by approximately two months, so here we are. Please read page 2 to see how we'll try to keep our visibility while shut down.

How does the shut-down affect us as MSM volunteers and operators? Obviously, you won't be able to operate at CHSL in June and July. **BUMMER!** But, there is hope, fellow operators. We have made provisions for all who want to operate streetcars to do so at the Excelsior Streetcar Line. We plan to increase crew sizes at Excelsior which will, hopefully accommodate all of you who do not like to take a forced vacation from streetcar operations and you'll hear more of this in the coming weeks.

How can you help through all of this? Simply put, we'll need some real commitment and unusual effort on the part of most of us to see us through the next difficult two months. Very soon you may be contacted by me, or someone calling on my behalf, to arrange volunteer work parties. Since we don't know the exact dates of the removal activities, we may need to get work parties scheduled for several dates. We think that this "construction preparation" work should take precedence over other ongoing volunteer activities, such as maintenance work in the carbarns. We'll need to be prepared to move quickly when the time comes because we can't be in a position of delaying the startup of the Contractor's work. That would make us vulnerable to extra costs and change orders related to delays, which we can't afford.

Keith Anderson—Chief Engineering Officer

## Como-Harriet Shut Down Continuity of Operations Plan

Now that we know when CHSL will shut down for the track construction work we will need to activate our contingency plan on what we plan to do while we can't operate at Lake Harriet. I touched on these plans in the last issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**. I would like to repeat them here as we enter into the execution mode now that we know when construction will start.

Here are the steps we'll be taking to continue our operations and presence while CHSL is shut down.

- We will have our Linden Hills Station staffed daily during our normal operating hours. We're doing this so people who have come to ride can have a friendly person explain to them why we're shut down and to answer questions they might have. We would like to have two people staff the station for safety and security reasons but if we have to we'll get by with one.
- We're going to send out news releases to all the local media explaining what's happening.
- We're going to distribute a special informational letter to all our neighbors in the Linden Hills neighborhood telling them what's going on.
- We're going to strongly encourage people to go out and ride the Excelsior Streetcar Line.
- We're going to have a handout for visitors who come to the Linden Hills station. The handout will have ESL's schedule, a map showing where ESL is located and a short list of the other nice features that the visi-

tors can find in Excelsior.

- We're going to encourage charter business to have their charter at ESL if that's possible.
- We're reducing the cost of the season pass to \$35.
- We prepared a bare-bones 2005 budget with the shut-down in mind.

What this means to you, our faithful volunteer, is that while we won't be operating at Como-Harriet for two months, we'll still have a presence there by having one or two people staff the Linden Hills station (two people is better for security/safety reasons). We'll be asking one or two of you per shift who already are scheduled for June to come down and staff the station during this time. We know it won't be as much fun as operating the streetcar but it will be extremely important in maintaining our good will and presence in the neighborhood and among our passengers.

As I mentioned last issue, this will certainly be a stressful time for all of us. Our passengers probably won't understand why our line is shut down, especially when they drove all the way from Apple Valley or Roseville or some such remote location, just to ride our streetcars. That's why it'll be doubly important to have someone at the Linden Hills station during normal operating hours. It'll be an important task. Please help us.

*Thanks!*

*Jim Vaitkunas—Chair of the MSM Board*

## BILL THE MOTORMAN The "Joys" of Operating a TCRT Streetcar



I'm willin' to bet that some of you volunteers at the Como-Harriet and Excelsior Streetcar Lines daydream from time to time thinking how great it would have been to go back 70 or 80 years to be a Motorman for the TCRT, or as we called it, the "Comp'ny." Yep, I reckon it would have been great to be at the corner of Hennepin Avenue and 6th Street in 1920 to watch the big yellow cars go by one by one, every few seconds. Wouldn't it be great to go back to that year, camera in hand, and take those photos of cars and places that we can't find photos of now?

But, how about running the cars back then? Well, let me tell ya, that's a different kettle of fish for sure. First off, the pay wasn't really all that great. Sure, it put bread on the table, but barely. First I'll give ya a quick run-down on how our union and the pay worked out. Then I'll cover the working conditions.

Startin' in 1934, employees at TCRT were represented by Division 1005 of the Amalgamated Association of Street, Electric Railway, and Motor Coach Operators of America, known as the Amalgamated for short. (Employees at Metro Transit are now represented by Local 1005 of the United Transportation Union, a successor to AASERMCOA). The Amalgamated had a monthly magazine called "The Motorman, Conductor, and Motor Coach Operator," and issues from that era stated that Division 1005 replaced a "company union" at TCRT. There was an earlier effort to organize TCRT in the 1890's when Division 26 was formed, but apparently that local folded sometime later.

The Amalgamated published an annual Contract Review which was a summary of around 400 agreements with managements in the US and Canada. The 1940 issue has a pretty good snap-shot about Division 1005 and the Comp'ny:

- 32% of the runs are on 2-man cars and 68% are 1-man car or bus.

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Bill the Motorman — Continued from page 2)

- 2-man car wages are 59 cents/hour the first year, 62 cents the second year, and 65 cents thereafter.
- 1-man car and bus wages are 68 cents the first year, 71 cents the second year, and 75 cents thereafter.
- 8 hour day, 48 hour week, time and a half after scheduled run, two weeks maximum vacation, contract covers all departments, semi-closed shop.
- Group Insurance: Members pay 60 cents per \$1,000 up to \$2,500. Policy covers death and total disability if age 60 years or under.
- Pensions: Company pays maximum allowance of \$30 a month to employees who were 60 years or over on 1/2/36. Retirement is voluntary at 65, mandatory at 70.
- For comparison, 59 cents in 1940 is worth approximately \$8.16 today, 75 cents is \$10.37, and \$30 is \$414.87

Now, how about the working conditions? What was it like to run the streetcars? Of course, the Comp'ny was in the business to make money both for the stockholders and to maintain the streetcars and buses, as well as provide transportation, so they pinched pennies everywhere they could. The best and easiest place to do that was with the employees. Their work rules were, by your modern standards, pretty severe. The Comp'ny wanted you to work and if you didn't you were gone. The Comp'ny's heavy handed policies finally resulted in us platform men joining the Amalgamated as I mentioned above. We did hold a strike in 1917 because of the treatment we were getting but the Comp'ny was all powerful and got the State to intervene—it was the Great War ya know. It took us another 15 years before we got to form our own independent union and could negotiate a contract.

But, even with the Comp'ny coming down hard on us, the work itself was long, hard and tiring. Until you reached around 20-25 years of seniority you basically had to work the runs the Comp'ny gave you. Only those old heads got to choose the nice, quiet mid-day runs, and were able to mark-off on the holidays or take a short summer vacation. Most of the new-comers, that is those who had less than 15-20 years of seniority, worked the "split-shift" which typically meant reporting for the first run at around 5:00 or 5:30 AM, operate until 10:30 AM or so and then you were off duty until mid-afternoon so you could work the evening rush. What you did during the mid-day was up to you but you surely didn't get paid for that time. Many fellows stayed upstairs in the crew room of the car station they worked out of and socialized, played cards or took a nap. Holidays were scarce and the Comp'ny's inspectors were always out and about making sure you kept on schedule and weren't short-changing the Comp'ny. In the winters it was damned cold on those front platforms, especially in the old cars that had those coal stoves under the cars. So, many of us bundled up with our union suits, sweaters, etc., to keep warm. Even if you worked out of Eastside station which meant you had a car with electric heat, it still was cold on the front platform.

Yep, it was a tough job being a platform man. You guys have it easy now.

### **HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO GET A PIECE OF GENUINE TCRT HISTORY**



We have a limited supply of genuine Twin City Rapid Transit Company Conductor hat badges. If you don't have a suitable badge for your uniform cap, we have fifteen authentic TCRT "CONDUCTOR" badges available for \$15 each. These are original badges, not the reproductions that have been available for many years but which are now in very short supply. They're available in the Linden Hills Station during regular operating hours.

### ***WE NEED YOU!***

Before the contractor begins work, there are a few items of work that must be performed by Museum volunteers. This includes removal of brick pavers from the platform at 42nd Street and from the track area north of the carbarns; and the removal of rail bonds from the existing track. We have already removed most of the bonds from the east rail. The remaining bonds on the west rail, and all of the pavers, will have to be removed after we cease operations. Since we want to operate as long as possible before the construction begins, these final removal activities probably will be squeezed into a day or two.

Museum forces will have to re-install the pavers at the 42nd Street Depot; weld rail bonds to the new track; adjust the overhead to accommodate minor changes in track alignment and new locations of switches; construct a new platform at the north end of the line; and other minor work. Again, this will be a major effort for our volunteers which probably will occur in late July or early August."



## Streetcar **CURRENTS** June 2005

Streetcar **CURRENTS** IS A PERIODIC NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ITEMS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE **Streetcar CURRENTS** IS JUNE 20, 2005.

PLEASE SEND ITEMS TO JIM VAITKUNAS AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

155 CHAPARRAL DR.

APPLE VALLEY, MN 55124-9774

YOU CAN SEND INPUT OR INQUIRIES BY

E-MAIL TO: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)



MINNESOTA STREETCAR  
MUSEUM

COMO-HARRIET  
STREETCAR LINE

EXCELSIOR STREETCAR LINE

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- May 27 & 28 Special Operations for the *Central Electric Railfans' Association* at CHSL (27th) and ESL (28th)
- May 30 Special Memorial Day "Early Bird" service to Lake wood Cemetery begins at 9:00 AM at CHSL
- June 1 CHSL is shut-down for track construction work
- July 4 Special July 4th service in Excelsior
- August 1 CHSL resumes regular service

## June Operations Schedule Cancelled at Como-Harriet Streetcar Line

Because the TEA-21 track reconstruction work at CHSL starts on June 1st, the full June CHSL operations schedule is cancelled and, therefore, no June CHSL Operations schedule is included with this newsletter. We will contact you to schedule one or two-person shifts to staff the Linden Hills Station while CHSL is shut down.

## JUNE 2005 SCHEDULE OF OPERATIONS

Included with this mailing is the June 2005 ESL Schedule of Operations. If you see a vacancy that needs filling, please contact Jim Otto.

If you would still like to volunteer to operate on a shift even though there is a full crew shown on the schedule of operations, please call the Foreman and talk with him/her about it. We can especially use you on

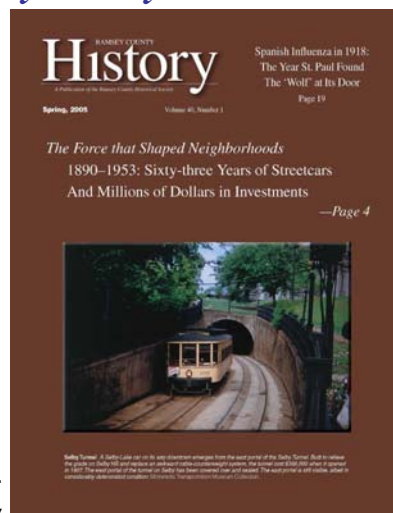
those busy weekend shifts. We feel sure that no Foreman would deny you the chance to help out on a shift, especially a weekend shift. So call and sign-up!

**Remember** that you must inform your Foreman of all substitutions or if you are forced to cancel your shift and **please** inform **both Foremen** if you swap shifts

## SPRING 2005 Ramsey County History FEATURES TCRT HISTORY ARTICLE

The Spring 2005 issue of *Ramsey County History*, the journal of the Ramsey County Historical Society, features an excellent article on the history of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company in St. Paul. Titled *The Force that Shaped neighborhoods, 1890-1953: Sixty-three Years of Streetcars and Millions of Dollars in Investments*, it was written by John Diers. John is a former Chair of the MTM Board, long-time member of MTM and soon to be member of MSM.

The well-written article goes beyond being just a St. Paul story and addresses the overall history of the regional transit system that was TCRT. It also contains a very good summary of the meddling by state and city governments. Finally the history summarizes how the system fell into decline and eventual abandonment of streetcar service in 1953 in St. Paul and 1954 in Minneapolis.



The article describes the working conditions of the company's "platform" employees, the Motormen and Conductors. Some of us daydream on what it would have been like to work for the TCRT as we operate our shifts at Lake Harriet or Excelsior. The reality was that the hours were bad, working conditions not great and the pay was not great either.

The article is highly recommended to all who want a concise and good history of the TCRT in general, with emphasis on the history of TCRT in St. Paul. The issue would also serve as an excellent

primer to those of us who are new to the Minnesota Streetcar Museum and to seasoned veterans who might learn a new bit of info contained in the article.

You can get a copy of the Spring 2005 Issue of *Ramsey County History* by going to their website [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com) or call 651-222-0701.