

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



October 2005

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

We've Seen Some Changes!

- MSM officially became independent in August
- We received our non-profit status from the IRS in record time
- Our season was cut short by the track rebuilding project
- We resumed operating on August 20th.
- We have had a successful fall season
- Halloween ghost trolley is coming up this week
- Holly trolley will run on weekends right after Thanksgiving

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Masthead Photo: A pair of beauties. This photo of No. 265 (left) and No. 1300 was taken in the mid-1980s right after the restoration of No. 265 was finished. This track looks a lot different now.
Mike Buck photo

CHANGE!

I think we'd all agree that change is inevitable. And, I think we all would also agree that we've had a lot of change these past few months. What we may not agree on is whether change is good or bad.

The two biggest changes that have happened this year have been gaining our new independent status as the Minnesota Streetcar Museum and the rebuilding of our track. Neither of these changes was accomplished quickly or easily. And although we're still working through a few "sticky" things here and there, I believe the majority of us agree that both of these changes are good.

Big changes also create lots of smaller changes. Our new passing siding has changed the way we operate. All cars now use the siding to unload and load then depart northward, whether we're operating one or two cars. Our new status as an independent non-profit organization requires more oversight on our expenses and income.

With cooperative weather we still have several weeks of operation left this year, including our first Holly Trolley. And over the winter, more things will probably change as we prepare for next season. I suspect that, for some folks, almost any change is seen as a bad thing. But I also think that, as a group, we've accepted a lot of big changes in a very positive way.

This has been a difficult and sometimes confusing year. There were lots of changes, some good, some not so good. But we made it through in good shape. Thanks to everyone for your hard work, dedication, understanding, cooperation, and contribution.

Rod Eaton — GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

LINDEN HILLS SIDING IS NOW IN SERVICE

We took another big step in getting our railroad put back together on Saturday, October 22nd, when we started using the Linden Hills passing siding for regular and special streetcar operations. A team led by **Ken Albrecht** took the temporary platforms we have used since August, placed them against the siding track and put railings on them (see photo below and on page 4). Ken was ably assisted by **John Prestholdt**, **Roy Harvey**, and **Jim Otto**.

Many thanks to **Howie Melco**, "Electric" **Mike Miller**, **Jim Willmore**, **Dennis Stephens**, **Tom Fairbairn**, **Russ Isbrandt** and **Scott Heiderich** who have been working hard on fixing the two switches, installing the guard rails and adjusting the overhead trolley wire. Thanks guys for a job well done!



The new platforms look good!
John Prestholdt Photo

From the Front Platform *Jim Vaitekunas*—CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Now that we've reopened Como-Harriet and have more than a month of operations on our new railroad under our belt, we've learned a lot about it. First, it's a lot smoother. Smooth doesn't mean that we can run at unlimited speed, however. Except for a handful of days, like Memorial Day, demand isn't so great that we need to power up to shorten the trip to get the next load of passengers. And we still have to pay Xcel Energy for power—the more we use the bigger our bill.

Second, there's lots of work still to be done that we hope will be done before the ground freezes and the snow flies. If you're asked to help, lend a hand. If you're not, find out how you can. There's a lot that's temporary that needs to be made permanent and a lot of adjustments here and there to be made.

Third, there are a lot of subtle changes that will require flexibility, learning, and patience on the part of

our crews. For example, the new situation at the Linden Hills Station makes it advantageous to operate through the siding even during one-car operations. And it makes sense to leave the station northward. What so many of us have been used to for so long has changed. After so many years, and a nearly three month construction-imposed layoff, some of these changes are hard to get used to—and even controversial. Let's all remember that this is a work in progress. Let's consider all ideas and consider them respectfully and thoughtfully as we re-examine operations at Como-Harriet.

If all goes well, and we anticipate that it will, 2006 will be a banner year at Como-Harriet and for your Museum. Please be part of it. When the volunteer survey comes sometime after the first of the year, pitch in and help – become part of the excitement!

MSM News Update – *Louis Hoffman* — SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT

More new members and donors recognized. Welcome to new member **David Buchosky**, **Norm Carlson**, President of the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society (and thanks for his donation to “The Founders Fund”), **Christopher Heck**, longtime friend **John Larkin**, President of the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad, **Adam Platt**, and **Lowell Wood**. We also thank **Gordon Geddes** for his donation in memory of longtime member **Norm Podas**, **Nancy Joseph Gould** for her donation in honor of the marriage of volunteers **Bud Goldstein** and **Angela Frerichs**, and **Michael Miller** and **Mary Olk** for their donation to the “Founders Fund.” MSM now has 178 memberships, who have paid \$11,830 in dues and made \$2,388.30 in additional donations to the “Founders Fund” for total membership income of \$13,788.38.

Annual Appeal Roundup. This Annual Appeal's proceeds will help fund the installation of a security system at the Excelsior Car barn, water service to the Linden Hills Car barn, and fire suppression systems for the Excelsior and Linden Hills Car barns and the ongoing restoration of Winona No. 10. Total donations are \$7,810.00. Your tax-deductible donations to the Annual Appeal may be sent to: The Minnesota Streetcar Museum, Annual Appeal, P. O. Box 14467, University Station, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414-0467.

Association of Railway Museums Fall Conference. **Aken Albrecht**, **Louis Hoffman**, and **Jim Vaitekunas** represented MSM (at their expense) at the ARM fall conference from October 5 to 9 hosted by the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg, Pennsylvania, with Jim being the Museum's delegate to the October 9

annual meeting. In addition to an informative slate of seminars, we visited a variety of rail and history attractions in Philadelphia including the Franklin Institute, Juniata Terminal, and 30th Street Station; the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania and Strasburg Railroad in Strasburg; and, the East Broad Top Railroad and Rockhill Trolley Museum to the west in Orbisonia. Look for more information in next month's *Streetcar Currents*. And getting there was half the fun – we took the Empire Builder, the Capitol Limited, and the Pennsylvanian to Lancaster, the nearest station to the Netherlands Inn, the convention hotel.

MSM and Boy Scouts to start joint program. The Museum has joined with the Northern Star Council of the Boy Scouts of America on a program to promote the Museum's two streetcar lines to the Scouts and families in the Northern Star Council. Northern Star Council includes the entire Twin Cities metropolitan area, four counties in western Wisconsin, and west central Minnesota west to South Dakota. Under this program, every Tuesday will be Scout Tuesday at Como-Harriet and every Saturday will be Scout Saturday at Excelsior. On these days, Scouts in uniform or with a BSA membership card may ride for free with a paying passenger. Also, all Scout units may charter streetcars for a \$10.00 discount (\$15.00 for charter with car barn tour). This venture will be in the January issue of the Northern Star Navigator, which goes to all Scouting families in the Council's service area. Thanks to Senior Superintendent (and Pack 120 Cubmaster) **Louis Hoffman** and North Star Council's **Kent York**

(Continued on page 3)

(MSM News Update *Continued from page 2)*
for making this possible.

Tip of the Motorman's Cap Department. This is what customer service is all about: "THANK YOU! Enclosed is our payment for our ride on Sunday. We didn't have cash or our checkbook with us. One of the volunteers overheard our dilemma and issued an IOU so that we could ride. We decided to contribute an extra \$8 so that another family (who is forgetful) could ride on another day! Sincerely, Mary, Mitch, Luci, James, & Bridgid."

COMO-HARRIET NOTES

Thank you to new TEA-21 donors. A special thanks to **Greg Kirby** and **Praxair Distribution, Inc.** for the donation of welding gas for the crews who welded on rail bonds needed to resume streetcar operations.

KARE-11, MPR, and Star Tribune cover CHSL reopening. Thanks to KARE-11 television and photographer and MSM member **Charles Barthold** for covering the August 20 reopening of the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line on the 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. news that day and for featuring the event as the number three item on the station's website.

The August 23 Star Tribune featured a color photograph above the masthead on page one with the headline "BACK ON THE TRACK Como-Harriet line is running again" with a detailed story, featuring a black and white picture, on page three of the Metro/State section. Thanks to General Superintendent **Rod Eaton** for working with the Star Tribune and to our friends at the Star Tribune, including reporter **Bill McAuliffe**.

We've also heard reports of coverage on Minnesota Public Radio.

Fall ridership information. Needless to say, having been closed for most of the summer for construction, ridership numbers for 2005 are nothing to crow about. For May, which was a complete month, we carried 4,044 passengers in regular service plus 277 charter passengers for a total of 4,321 passengers. In August, with service starting on the 20th, the numbers were 3,315, 75, and 3,390. In September, a full month but with daily service ending on the 11th, the numbers were 3,053, 128, and 3,181. Total ridership through September 30 was 10,412 in regular service, 480 in charter service, for a total of 11,092 total passengers.

EXCELSIOR NOTES

Work on No. 1239 continues. Work continues on repairs to No. 1239. As we've all read, the flange on the rear, pole-side wheel on No. 1239's rear truck broke on a training run last spring. The first issue was how to repair it, including discussions of whether it could be welded back together. The second issue was

the cost, estimated to be about \$8,000, which the Board approved spending. The third issue, once how to do it and how to pay for it were resolved, was a labor shortage caused by diverting all MSM forces to the work needed to be done to start service at Como-Harriet. For example, Ken Albrecht and Jim Willmore, two principals of the No. 1239 project, were also instrumental in the frenzied work going on at Lake Harriet in the days leading up to reopening – and in the ongoing work after reopening.

As of today, No. 1239 has been jacked up and is sitting on wooden cribbing. The trucks are out from under her. The motorized axles on both trucks have been removed (many thanks to the City of Excelsior's Public Works Department for assisting with lifting and turning the trucks). The two wheel sets were prepared for safe shipment to NRE in Milwaukee. The wheel sets are now at NRE, courtesy of **Jim Willmore**, where the axles will be bathed in acid and inspected, including the bull gears. The broken wheels will be removed and new ones pressed on. As this is written, it's doubtful that they'll be returned and No. 1239 will be put back together in time for the Excelsior Halloween Ghost Trolley. But we can for sure look forward to trundling through the back streets of Excelsior next May.

As part of this process, the extra set of Baldwin trucks, extra wheels, and the TCRT line truck have been removed from the Jackson Street Roundhouse. These items were the last of MSM's property remaining in MTM custody except for the remaining TEA-21 funds, which will be released once all the "i's" have been dotted and the "t's" have been crossed by the Federal Highway Administration and MnDOT. This money, about \$28,000 after the consulting engineer's bill for construction supervision is paid, will be the foundation of the Car barn Sprinkler Fund, which will have about \$36,000 in it.

Through Winter's Wonderland
Holly Trolley

Enjoy

- ♥ Music of the Season
- ♥ Hot Apple Cider
- ♥ Holiday Cookies
- ♥ Seasonal Cheer
- ♥ Candy Canes

Como-Harriet Streetcar Line
Saturdays & Sundays
November 26 - December 18
12:30 - 4:30 PM
Adults \$4 Children \$1

www.trolleyride.org
952.922.1096

Streetcar **CURRENTS** October 2005

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

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ITEMS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE **Streetcar CURRENTS** IS NOVEMBER 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



MINNESOTA STREETCAR
MUSEUM

COMO-HARRIET
STREETCAR LINE

EXCELSIOR STREETCAR LINE

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- October 28-31 Halloween Ghost trolley at CHSL
- October 28 & 29 Halloween ghost trolley at ESL
- November 12 MSM Board meeting
- Nov & Dec Holly trolley operations
- December 7 Annual holiday party, 7:00 PM—Linden Hills carbarn



Our new temporary platforms
John Prestholdt photo

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN!

The following is a summary from a couple of articles that appeared in the Minneapolis Star newspaper on February 23, 1953. (And we thought that bus rapid transit was a new concept.—Ed)

The headline read: "Plans for Lake Harriet Diagonal—bus, auto roadway would handle heavy traffic to south-west."

"If buses replace streetcars on the Lake Harriet line the city planning commission has ready for consideration a \$1,100,000 plan for a new southwest diagonal roadway to follow the old streetcar line."

'The streetcar right-of-way from Thirty first street and Irving Avenue S. would be paved and used for buses, only.

'The southwest roadway (for both auto and bus traffic) from Thirty sixth to Forty-fourth and the France would have two eleven-foot driving lanes in each direction separated by a two foot concrete divider."

'It is expected that such a road would handle about 14,000 cars a day."

There was even discussion that it might be extended all the way to Hopkins along the RofW." Frightening—and it could have happened.

Many thanks to John Diers who discovered this as he was doing some research and for reporting this interesting bit of trivia.

A WORD TO MSM MEMBERS ABOUT THE **Streetcar CURRENTS**

Until this year (2005) the primary purpose of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** was to inform our active volunteers and friends of the Como-Harriet and Excelsior Streetcar Lines of immediate news and time-sensitive streetcar operational information. It was published on an irregular basis from October to March and monthly from April to September. News of general interest to our members was included in the article found in MTM's newsmagazine, the *Minnegazette*.

Now that the Museum is separate from MTM we have provided, and will continue to provide, general news to our members through the **Streetcar CURRENTS**. This is now done via the *MSM News Update* column now found on pages two and three of the **CURRENTS**. **Louis Hoffman** has agreed to continue to write the news update. Louis does an excellent job compiling and summarizing all the various activities occurring throughout your Museum into an easily readable article.

This winter we plan to continue the relaxed publication schedule that we followed in past years. So don't be concerned if you don't receive an issue every month over the winter. In the next few months we will take a look at the **CURRENTS** publication schedule and other areas of the **CURRENTS**. If you have any thoughts on this, please call me or send an e-mail to: jvaitkunas@msn.com. Thanks!