

# Streetcar CURRENTS EXPRESS

March 5, 2011

## MSM Updates - For Your Information

### MSM Annual Meeting



Here's another reminder that our Museum's annual meeting will be held from 7:00 PM to approximately 8:30 PM on Thursday, March 17, 2011 at the Firefighter's Hall and Museum, 664 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Northeast, Minneapolis, MN 55418. **All** members are invited and encouraged to attend. We'd like to encourage you to come a little early at 6:00 PM. One of the Firefighter's Museum's docents will give us a guided tour of the museum's displays located in the building, which is fascinating. After the formal business meeting **Aaron Isaacs** will present a program on the *Twin Ports Electric*

**Firefighters' Hall & Museum**  
[www.firehallmuseum.org](http://www.firehallmuseum.org)

*Lines*, the streetcar system of Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin. Please come and join us.

### It's Tax Time

I'm sure some of you have already sent in your 2010 tax return. But, for those who didn't, here are some helpful words from the Association of Railway Museum's Executive Director, Suzanne Grace about deductions for Museum-related expenses.

In 2010 you've spent many hours volunteering for your local railway or streetcar museum. Can any of this free labor and expenses you've personally incurred be deductible on your Schedule A?

The answer is YES if your museum is a "qualified organization." Most qualified organizations are 501 c 3's and many museums are organized as such because of their educational purpose.

[NOTE: MSM is a qualified organization.]

If your museum is a qualified organization, what can you deduct?

- § **Did you have to drive or pay for public transportation to the museum in order to volunteer?** If so, you can deduct the cost of your gasoline and oil *for the miles you drove to volunteer at your museum*. Be sure to save those receipts and documentation showing how many trips you made and the distance you drove. If you don't have gas and oil receipts, you can deduct 14 cents a mile. You can also deduct parking fees and tolls. If you took public transportation to and from the museum, you can deduct that cost as well.
- § **Were you a delegate selected by your museum to take part in a conference or meeting of another organization?** You can deduct *unreimbursed* travel expenses, accommodations, and meals that were directly related to being a delegate to the event provided you spent your time fulfilling the duties you were elected to accomplish on behalf of your museum. You cannot deduct any expenses incurred for personal pleasure such as theatre tickets, optional social events, etc. You may NOT deduct travel expenses to attend an event just because you are a member of that organization. You must be a delegate selected by your museum.
- § **Were you required to wear a uniform when you volunteered at your museum?** If so, and if the uniform is not suitable for street wear, you can deduct what you paid for the uniform and its upkeep (cleaning, mending). If all volunteers are told to wear navy polo shirts when on duty, your purchase of a shirt will not qualify. If, however, you must wear an engineer's uniform and hat, that purchase and regular cleaning is deductible.

- § **Did you also pay dues to your museum?** You can deduct your dues even if your membership benefits include free admission to the museum, free parking, receiving a newsletter or magazine and discounts in the museum store. Those benefits are considered token and will not eliminate your deduction.
- § **How much of your personal time did you give to the museum in 2010?** Though your time and your expertise may be very valuable to the museum, you *cannot* deduct its value. Even professionals donating services that they would normally be paid handsomely for cannot deduct the value of their time and service to their museum.

### **It's Volunteer and Operator Recruiting Time.**

About this time each year, we start the process of getting organized for the upcoming operating season. In the next few weeks, you'll be receiving one or two items, and other information, that can be used to recruit volunteer trainees to sign-up for our Operator training program. Training will start in mid-April, but it's never too early to start recruiting those trainees.

Each year, we lose volunteer Operators for a variety of reasons. Some move away while others quit for personal reasons. That's the nature of an all-volunteer Museum like ours. So, each year we need to train a number of new Operators to keep our Operator ranks in the 60-70 range.

Wow! That's a lot of people! Why so many you ask? Well, it's basically a matter of strength in numbers. The more Operators we have on our rolls, the easier it is for our crew schedulers to fill those spaces in our very busy schedule.

Interestingly, during our peak operating season from mid-May until Labor day, our crew requirements are tremendous, requiring more people than any other all-volunteer museum that I know of. To use CHSL as an example, our crew schedulers need to fill 20 to 25 CHSL shifts on weeknights and 32+ shifts on weekends and holidays. At CHSL we require four persons per shift so you can see that the task of filling those shifts with the optimum number of four crewmembers is a daunting task. Add to this already difficult task the fact that some only volunteer once a month and many take vacation that means they might not be able to volunteer in a given month.

We've experienced problems in the last several years when our Operator numbers dipped below 55. That created a great strain on our meeting our operating schedule and resulted in some shifts having only three operating personnel. We can operate with three, but it's better for everyone if we can fill the crew to its full size of four.

So, what's the point of all this rambling? We need your help. When you get the recruiting flyers and posters, please post them where they can be seen by as many people as possible. Talk to your friends and neighbors and encourage them to join and help us operate our streetcars. If we all pitch in, we can be sure of having a very successful recruiting season again in 2011.

Thanks!

