

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



May — 2017

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



## Bill the Motorman Says:

- 2017 marks the 46th season our Museum has operated at our Como-Harriet railway. Kudos to those who founded our Museum back in 1962 and began operating historic TCRT No. 1300 at Lake Harriet in 1971.
- Sometimes it appears that we have enough volunteers, but in actuality, we never do. There are projects that don't get done because of lack of volunteers. YOU can help out in many areas throughout our Museum. Call Pat Cosgrove if you want to help out at 952-953-6559.

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**Masthead.** Back in May of 2008, we were getting ready for the coming operating season at Como-Harriet. Here we see Duluth No. 265 and TCRT No. 1300 spotted in front of the George Isaacs carbarn getting their spring cleaning. (Jim Vaitkunas photo)

## Season Opener

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

As we prepare for another season, it is again time to thank the volunteers who help get the museum ready. There is a lot of work to keep the museum in operating conditions: intake and training of new volunteers; maintenance of equipment; review of operating and safety rules; and, preparation of station and grounds. In the paragraphs below I have called out a few individuals, but there are countless others who deserve our recognition and thanks. I would like to thank them and you for your on-going efforts and support.

**T**training. Pat Cosgrove has joined the training process replacing Jim Berry as our Volunteer Coordinator. This position is critical in responding to phone calls or e-mails from volunteer candidates who have expressed an interest in joining the museum. Pat talks with the interested person and directs them to the appropriate contact, generally Dave Higgins, who again is leading our training effort. This year Dave is leading a great group of training leaders including: Bill Graham and Jim and Karen Kertzman at ESL; Fred Beamish (PCC training); and, Rod Eaton and Bill Arends at CHSL. Our training staff are now engaged in training a sizable new class of Operator Candidates. MSM's training philosophy and structure is a continuation of the successful process introduced last year, which splits-out air brake training and intensive practice into its own training phase. Doing this enables Operator trainees to gain greater competency in one of the more challenging aspects of operating the streetcar. Finally, our re-certification training lead by me and Bill Arends at CHSL, and Todd Bender and Jim and Karen Kertzman at ESL, is progressing on schedule to test rule knowledge for all Operators and to recertify second year Operators and some other operating personnel who had limited operating time in 2016.

**M**aintenance. As all of you know, maintaining our historic streetcars is a critical activity for the museum to enable us to carry 30,000+ annual visitors. This year will be very special as car No. 1300 will complete major surgery finishing early this summer and Winona No. 10 will be introduced to service at Excelsior late this summer/early fall. Scott Heiderich, Howie Melco, Karl Jones, Ben Franske, Dick Zawacki and a host of others have put in immeasurable time and effort to keep and expand the car roster.

**P**hysical Plant. Pat Kriske continues to help maintain the buildings with current or recently completed work including a fence along the east side of CHSL's carbarn and a new concrete floor installed in ESL's "ready barn." Ben and Mary Porter have volunteered to manage the Linden Hills station garden at CHSL. Look for invitations throughout the year to help with your green thumb. I would also like to thank Bill Arends, Davis Gustafson, Pat Kriske, Jerry Petersen, Ben Porter, and a number of volunteers from Optum (where I earn a living) who came out in



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## MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



The Minnesota Streetcar Museum is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization with the mission to preserve and communicate to the public the experience of Minnesota's electric street and interurban railway history. To accomplish this mission the Museum operates historic streetcars at two demonstration railways.

**COMO-HARRIET STREETCAR LINE**  
**Excelsior Streetcar Line**

For more information on our Museum, our collection of historic streetcars and our demonstration railways, visit our website: [www.TrolleyRide.org](http://www.TrolleyRide.org)

The museum's business address and telephone number are:

P.O. Box 16509  
 Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509  
 952-922-1096

**Streetcar CURRENTS**  
 May — 2017

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor  
 Bill Graham—Distribution

**Streetcar CURRENTS** is a newsletter published for the members and friends of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

Deadline for submitting items for the next edition of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is May 20, 2017.

Please send items to the editor **Jim Vaitkunas** at the following address:

13326 Huntington Lane  
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9481

You can send input or enquiries by e-mail to: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)


**From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum**

Aaron Isaacs — *MSM Board Chair*

Consider what we accomplish with volunteers. Each season we have to staff about 800 streetcar operating shifts of 2-4 hours each. On top of that we have five active streetcars to maintain, one truck rebuild project under way, a complete car restoration in its last year, and a series of small physical plant improvements to complete this year. We plan and put on special events throughout the year, and run a number of unscheduled streetcar charters. We maintain a library and history archive, publish a monthly newsletter and a quarterly history magazine. Of course there are the admin functions of paying the bills, buying insurance, etc.

To all those functions we must add training, and spring is when it happens. We have slightly over 300 members, of whom about 115 are active volunteers, doing all the tasks listed above. We need about 80 people to operate the streetcars. Every year we lose some, whether to death, disability or loss of interest. Every spring we advertise for new volunteers on our website and place news items in neighborhood newspapers near our sites. A few people also approach us during the rest of the year.

It helps to be located in the middle of a metro area with 3 million people. Despite the fear that our volunteers will age out and we'll implode for lack of recruits, we've always gotten a good response to our news releases and ads. This year 40 people responded. A few years ago we created the job of Volunteer Coordinator who contacts every interested person, learns their areas of interest and does the hand-holding necessary to slot them into a job, whether it's running streetcars or something else. Thanks to **Pat Cosgrove**, our current Volunteer Coordinator.

Most of the new recruits want to run streetcars, but there is always attrition. This year 33 of the 40 showed up for orientation, and three of them decided it wasn't for them and dropped out. To advance beyond orientation we require trainees to join as members, a \$30 obligation. That weeds out some who just want to learn how to drive a streetcar, then disappear.

Next comes what we call Phase 1 training, which is classroom learning and getting acquainted with the basic parts of a streetcar. Now it dawns on some that this is a complicated undertaking that will require a time commitment, and we're down to 24 recruits.

As this is written, the trainees are in Phase 2, on a streetcar learning the basics of running it. This is very hands-on, and it's a big time commitment for the trainers who can only work with a few trainees at a time. Head Trainer **Dave Higgins** is really putting in the hours these days.

Inevitably we discover people who are not able to master operating the streetcar. We invest extra time to give them every opportunity to succeed, but it's not always possible. We have to remember that we're operating potentially dangerous heavy equipment and we can't put our members or the public at risk. Some decide to be depot agents only, and that's fine with us.

Once they achieve basic competence running a streetcar, Phase 3 covers the Sequence of Operations (operating rules, procedures and safety). Running a streetcar is only part of the job. We ask our volunteers to operate a touch screen point of sale system, because we rotate them through the Linden Hills station at CHSL or

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**Goings-On in MSM in Photos**

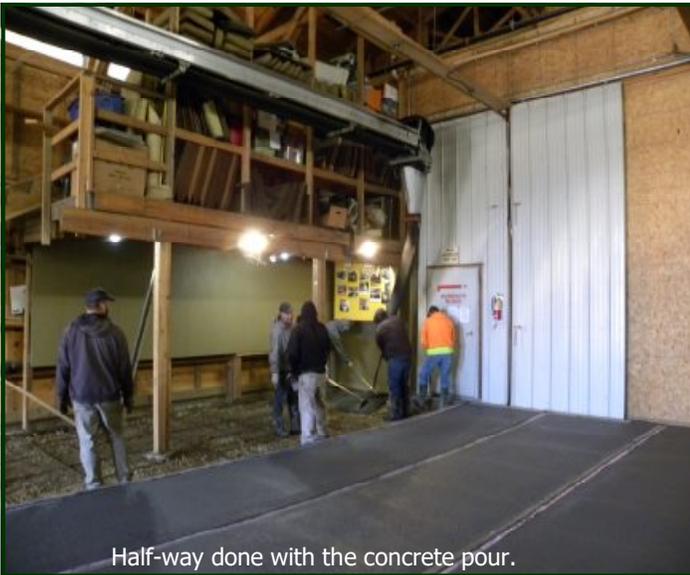
A new concrete floor was poured in part of the ESL "ready barn." The floor provides a safer surface upon which our visitors can walk, keeps the adjacent shop free of dirt & dust and improves the look of the Excelsior carbarn. (Photos by Karen Kertzman)



Remove a few inches of the old dirt floor.



Prepared for the concrete pour.



Half-way done with the concrete pour.



The floor is done and looking good.

(From the Front Platform *Continued from page 2*)

the ticket booth at ESL where they sell fares and merchandise. We also encourage them to learn at least some of the basic streetcar history that we are interpreting. If they're up to it, we ask them to give a brief 2-3 minute talk about the museum and streetcar history during each trip.

When basic training is done, a new operator graduates to Phase 4, working in regular service under the watchful eye of an experienced Foreman, who gives feedback to the trainers. Only when everyone is satisfied that the trainee has it under control is he/she considered qualified and permitted to independently sign up for shifts.

**T**his whole process starts in March with news releases and advertisements and ends in June or July, hopefully with a new group of qualified operators. However, we know that the attrition isn't over. Our operators are supposed to work at least two shifts per month. Some of the recent graduates will pull a couple of shifts and disappear. Others will stay with us for a year or two, then drop off. But every year we seem to get two or three really good volunteers who work a lot of shifts and stay with us for the long term. Many are new retirees. It really takes a couple of years for new Operators to feel comfortable in the job.

**W**ill our museum be able to keep attracting enough new volunteers to stay in business? I edit a national magazine of railway museums. From my perch, it seems as though the museums that are actively recruiting and providing a quality experience are doing OK. MSM is in that group. Let's keep up the good work. ☺

**What's Happening?**

- May 6.....ESL's & CHSL's weekend operations begins
- May 26.....Daily evening service begins at CHSL
- May 29.....CHSL Memorial Day special "early bird" Operations begins at 9:30 AM
- May 29.....ESL Memorial Day Operations follows normal Sunday operating hours
- May 31.....CHSL Wednesday afternoon service begins—1 PM to 4 PM
- June 8.....Story Time Trolley at ESL begins at 5 PM
- June 15.....PJ Trolley special event at CHSL begins at 6 PM



**MSM News & Views — News of our Museum's Administration and Membership**

Jim Vaitkunas — *MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief*

**New Members.** Welcome to the following new MSM Members: Christine Hoffman, Ed & Carolyn Bell, Scott Buck, Monica Cochran, Ted Colburn, Roger Gustafson, Traci Hanson, Walt Heimerdinger, Craig Levang, Michael Malinoff, Jim McCreary, Dan Odegaard, William Pekarna, Tracy Poe, Carl & Amrita Praakashana, Linda Ridlehuber, Winston Yonan, Ronn Botko and Jack Bacon. Most of these new members are enrolled in our Operator training program.

**Annual fund.** We continue to receive donations from our members and friends, and we wish to thank John Thompson, Pat and Denny Morrow and Ted Spear for their donations which are most appreciated and timely.

**Membership Renewals.** For current members, when you renew your membership please use the renewal form sent to you and mail it in, along with you payment, to the Museum's business address shown on the renewal form. Please don't try to save a postage stamp by giving your renewal to the Linden Hills Station Agent or Excelsior ticket booth Agent. Every year we have someone's renewal "lost in the black hole" because the member tried to renew at the station or ticket booth. We also ask you to renew your membership promptly. Doing so saves your Museum a lot of money in printing and postage expense for follow-on reminders. Please renew as soon as you get the notice. Thank you! ☺

**Goings-On at MSM in Photos — Continued**



**(Left)** A concrete loading area has been installed at ESL's Water Street platform. Note also the new permanent bulletin board in front of the ticket booth.  
*(Todd Bender photo)*



**(Right top & bottom)** Security and safety fences were recently installed at CHSL's George K. Isaacs car barn.  
*(Aaron Isaacs photos)*



**(Left)** Here are some of our new trainees going through our training program. They are standing in front of Duluth No. 265.  
*(Jim Vaitkunas photo)*



*(Season Opener Continued from page 1)*

early April and completed the brush cutting and removal along the CHSL right-of-way. This work removed years of growth and cleared all branches within the pole lines.

**Operating and Safety Rules.** Jim Vaitkunas again led a very thorough pre-season review of our operating rules and procedures, and with MSM Superintendent of Safety, John Dillery updated our safety rules and procedures. While there are no major changes, I would ask that all operating member refresh their knowledge of the rules and operating procedures in preparation for the season. ☺