

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



August—2017

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



### Bill the Motorman Says:

- **GS Bruce Gustafson would like your feedback on MSM and your volunteer experience. Please drop him a line or give him a call.**
- **Come down to the Isaacs carbarn at Lake Harriet some Saturday morning and take a look at the great progress being made in the carbarn.**
- **Remember that your MSM membership gives you unlimited free rides on both ESL and CHSL.**

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**Masthead.** Work continues on Winona No. 10. The streetcar is still in the shop and final work is being done to ready the car for passenger service. You'll read more about Winona No. 10 in a special photo supplement to be issued sometime in August.  
(Howie Melco photo)

## Volunteering Part II—Help Us Help You

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.



In the July issue of the *Currents*, I talked about volunteering and the many different opportunities the Museum has to offer. Our Museum is not particularly big, but does require a significant amount of volunteer support to keep the cars, track and grounds maintained, enabling the schedule to operate smoothly and our historic streetcars to operate safely. I would like to tell you about two trends that have developed over the last several years, that we would like to get your input on to make improvements.

The first trend is that a disproportionate amount of our Museum's volunteer work is done by a small group of volunteers. This is especially noticeable when we analyze the Humanity/ShiftPlanning report which shows volunteer hours pulled for streetcar operations. In a recent report I created, year-to-date through the end of June, twenty percent (20%) of our Operators operated 56% of the scheduled hours. What we want to know is how to better engage the "silent majority" of our Operators.

Over the next week or two we will be contacting many of you to get your input and feedback on how to make volunteering easier and more attractive. We are open to your ideas—big or small.

The second trend I want to highlight is the tendency for some (many?) volunteers to sign up late for operating shifts. Ideally, we would all sign up for 2 shifts per month 3-4 weeks out. This would make it very easy for us in the Operations Department to see where we have gaps that need to be filled. We do recognize that we all have busy and fluid life styles making far-off commitments hard sometimes. As a result, what we have today are schedules (particularly certain shifts) that are filled late, often within 24 hours of the start-time of the shift. This puts a lot of pressure on the small group of volunteers who make it a personal goal to fill those last minute schedule gaps, those gaps which put a shift in the red zone. As we know a red zone shifts means a shift is in danger of being cancelled because of lack of a minimum number of crewmembers. Simply put, we have way too many red zone shifts occurring within 2-5 days of the shift in question.

We have been fortunate that only one shift has been cancelled this season because we had a short crew, but we have been close on several others, and it was only someone in the small group of "vacuum fillers" that kept those from being cancelled. As you can imagine, cancelling a shift as a result of a crew shortage is not a good thing.

As I mentioned last month, if you have a few minutes time and are willing to share your thoughts, I really am interested in knowing what motivates you to volunteer and what inhibits your willingness to volunteer more. Send me your thoughts to: [bruce.gustafson@optum.com](mailto:bruce.gustafson@optum.com).

## 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**  
**August—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 August 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*

**S**peeder shed track almost complete. Laying the track into the speeder shed portion of the expanded Isaacs Car barn turned out to be somewhat more complicated than originally expected. It's been a long process. But thanks to the efforts of **Dennis Stephens, Scott Heiderich, Dick Zawacki, John Prestholdt, Keith Anderson, Ben Franske, Pat Kriske, Pete Connors, Tom Schramm, Jim Willmore, Jack Bacon, Steve McCulloch** and **Mike Doyle**, it has been completed, almost. Among the challenges were the curvature outside approaching the doorway, the transition into the building so as not to foul the overhead door, the approach to the curve to prevent derailments and finding the right substitute for rails inside the building. Once the switch stand is installed where it meets the shop track, the speeder and flats can move into the speeder shed, where they will be available without having to move two streetcars out of the way.



The tower car will remain in the ready barn because it's too tall to fit through the speeder shed door. We knew that going in because of the Park Board requirement of a lower roofline for the speeder shed. Sometime in the next year we either have to modify the current car or acquire a new tower car that will fit.

**S**peaking of speeders. **Tom Schramm** was contacted by a railfan in Florida who owns a Fairmont speeder that he has converted to battery power. The owner will transport it to Minnesota for free, so the Board has approved the acquisition. It's powered by a golf cart motor and reportedly has more oomph than little ETS1, our current CHSL speeder. That will be helpful for climbing the hills at CHSL. For that reason, ETS1 will probably go to Excelsior, where the track is more level. That will make the current ESL gas speeder surplus.

**A**pprenticeships for the future. It's no secret that our volunteer base is aging. My great fear is that we will not be replaced by enough new volunteers who can carry on our mission. We have been successful in attracting newly retired people, who do a great job, but young people are in short supply, especially in the shop.

I've been wondering if we could create a shop apprenticeship program in cooperation with one of the local voc-techs. Our shop work is heavy on reverse engineering (how did they used to do this?) and creating custom fixes, as opposed to straightforward change-outs. Exposure to that kind of work strikes me as a useful real-world opportunity for education, as well as a way to attract new blood.

Therefore I'm appealing to all the *Currents* readers--do you have any contacts at the voc-techs? Would you be willing to help get an apprenticeship program off the ground? If you work in the shop, would you be willing to help mentor an apprentice?

This is a new idea, but I believe the long term viability of our museum requires that we try to do something like this. I welcome your comments and insights. Contact me at [aaronmona@aol.com](mailto:aaronmona@aol.com). ☺

**STREETCAR CLEANERS NEEDED**

At CHSL, once a month a dedicated group of volunteers sets out to wipe away a month's worth of dust, dirt and finger prints. The cleaning takes about two hours and starts promptly at 8:30am. The next cleaning session will be Saturday, August 5. If you have any questions please contact: Jerry Peterson: 651-698-5490 [geraldpp1@msn.com](mailto:geraldpp1@msn.com)

At ESL call Todd Bender at 952-334-4065. No experience is necessary and this is the perfect way for you and your family to support your Museum in a tangible way and to meet your fellow Museum volunteers and members.





## Excelsior Streetcar Line Update

Todd Bender — Superintendent

At the Excelsior Streetcar Line, we continue to try new ideas to promote MSM and increase our ridership. During the Fourth of July, our operating crews observed that interest in the streetcar was much higher when a streetcar was present at Water Street. Activity would pickup when the streetcar returned from a trip, only to drop off once the streetcar departed. We needed to try something different.

A suggestion was made to try running a four-person crew during the next special event, with one streetcar permanently stationed at Water Street while the other conducted runs to the car barn. Here's how it would work:

- 1) The Ticket Booth Agent would sell tickets from the Water Street Ticket Booth. Once tickets were sold, passengers would be directed to board TCRT No. 1239, permanently stationed at Water Street for the day.
- 2) As passengers gathered on No. 1239, the Agent on that car would introduce riders to our museum and provide historical information regarding No. 1239 and Duluth No. 78.
- 3) After No. 78 returned from a run and unloaded, passengers from No. 1239 would transfer to No. 78 for the normal car barn run. The No. 78 crew (two Operators) would conduct the normal run with an abbreviated car barn tour. The car barn tour is shortened as the normal car barn talking points were now split between the No. 1239 Agent and the No. 78 operating crew.

We just wrapped up Excelsior Crazy Days running a four-person crew for the entire event. So, how did we do? First, let's look at last year's numbers. The 2016 Crazy Days weather wasn't good. We were still able to run a full shift Thursday, Friday, and Sunday, but the shifts on Saturday were cut short due to rain. Ridership numbers for 2016 were: Thursday—6; Friday—8; Saturday—8 (rain shortened); Sunday—47. Total—69 riders. In 2017, the weather was great, and so were our numbers: Thursday—87; Friday—101; Saturday—254; Sunday—127. Total—569 riders

Nicer weather has a positive impact on our numbers, but an 87% boost in ridership? I'm pretty confident in stating the four-person crew with the extra streetcar had a huge impact on our numbers. We plan to continue this in the future, but only for special events as it takes a lot of work to run a four-person crew. Thanks to the volunteers that made this the best Crazy Days ever! **Greg Thomas** (2 shifts), **Richard Holz**, **Roger Gustafson**, **Jim Kertzman** (3 shifts), **Dave McCollum** (2 shifts), **Jeff Ersbo**, **Elaine Love**, **Karen Kertzman** (3 shifts), **Ted Spear**, **Tim Crain**, **Ron Neitzel**, **Larry Kappel**, **Chuck Anding**, and **Mark Brothen**.

### Story Time Trolley at ESL—By Karen Kertzman

The July ESL StoryTime Trolley was a huge success! Although both runs were sold out, we managed to squeeze in a few additional folks so no one was turned away. The special author was **Belinda Jensen**, from KARE 11-TV. She read some of her weather themed children's books and thrilled everyone on the ride when she demonstrated what makes the noise in thunder. To top off the night she formed a cloud using a bottle of boiling hot water and ice cubes. It was quite a treat for everyone. We'd like to thank our StoryTime Trolley partner, **Ann Nye** of Excelsior Bay Books, for her diligence in selecting great children's authors. We're looking forward to the August 10th StoryTime Trolley and another great author, **Rick Chrustowski**.



Belinda reading a story to the children.



The ESL StoryTime Trolley Team: **Chuck Anding**, **Denny Morrow**, **Belinda Jensen**, **Ann Nye**, **Karen Kertzman**, **Jim Kertzman** and **Elaine Love**.

**What's Happening?**

- August 5----- Streetcar cleaning session at CHSL. Session runs from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM
- August 5----- Owl service at CHSL — 9 PM to 12-midnight
- August 10----- Streetcar camp for kids at CHSL starts at 9 AM
- August 10----- Story time trolley at ESL starts at 5 PM
- September 4----- Labor Day operations at both CHSL and ESL.



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

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

**N**ew members. We are please to welcome the following new MSM members who have joined our Museum since the last issue of this newsletter: Steve Glischinski, George Sawyer and Rhea Ford. Welcome to the MSM family!

**S**ad news. Three former volunteers of our Museum recently passed on to that station (carbarn) in the sky. **Carl Barthelemy** was a very active volunteer at CHSL, both on our streetcars and as a member of the shop's "Tuesday crew." Carl was a professor at UW Madison in their medical school, a specialist in urogenital cancers. When he retired and was looking for something to do, he came to us and became a valuable contributing member. He liked the shop and worked on things like rebuilding windows, repairing seats and the like. He was a regular at CHSL and always cheerful and busy.

**Hilmar Wagner** was an active volunteer at CHSL in the 1990s. Besides operating our streetcars, Hilmar helped Stationmaster Louis Hoffman with tasks in the Linden Hills station and for a number of years helped with distributing rack cards in various places around the Twin Cities.

**Gary Neunsinger.** *Bill Graham writes...*Back in 1975, when our track ended at the William Berry Parkway Bridge, Museum President Frank Sandberg had the idea of extending it farther north. We named it our "Northern Extension" after The Milwaukee Road's Pacific Extension to Seattle. Member Gary Neunsinger was a surveyor with the City of Minneapolis Engineering Department. He surveyed the alignment for the extension from the Berry Bridge to our current end of track, and I held the rod for him. Track ended at the edge of a dense woods and proceeded down into a swamp beside the archery range. Avoiding a bunch of natural and man-made obstacles, Gary located a suitable route that avoided the obstacles. He also calculated how much fill we would need to bring his route up to the current track level. He also determined that the needed fill could be had for free from Lakewood Cemetery's mountain of grave dirt.

Using a survey transit and rod originally from TCRT's track department, Gary started his survey from the top of the fire hydrant at 42nd and Queen Avenues. We worked our way north locating the center of the curves and setting stakes. Gary had studied-up on TCRT's curvature standards for various car speeds and laid out our proposed extension for a 20 mph maximum track speed. Our late Museum member, Bill Marshall, string-lined and staked each of the curves after the dirt was hauled and graded. Gary presented his painstakingly prepared survey drawings to the City of Minneapolis and the Park Board engineering staff, who quickly approved them. Our Northern Extension was laid promptly that summer, a testament to Gary's work. ☺

**Como-Harriet Volunteers**

On a typical Wednesday afternoon in June, July or August you could have on your crew...(Bill Graham photos)



**Linda Ridlehuber** ready to make a run on No. 265.



**Jim Otto** faithfully guarding the 42nd Street crossing.