

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

September 2018



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

Looking to the Future

You probably don't hear much about MSM's Board of Directors. It meets about four times a year. By design, it doesn't manage day-to-day operations, although the Board is responsible for everything that happens at the museum. It delegates all operational matters to the General Superintendent and the other operating officers. The Board's job is to recruit and appoint those people, to approve the annual budget and set major spending priorities. The Board is also responsible for establishing clear organizational goals, avoiding financial turmoil and creating a healthy museum culture that maximizes good will among all our volunteers.



We can't afford a paid Executive Director, and probably never will, so the Board Chair functions as the museum CEO. Although I hold several operational positions (operator, editor, archivist), my responsibility as Chair is to look out for the long term health of the museum.

As your Board Chair and CEO, Here's what I worry about.

1. Will we have enough money to sustain ourselves in the long run?
2. Will we be able to continue to attract enough volunteers to stay in business?

Earning Enough Money

Day-to-day museum operations are self-supporting from fares, merchandise sales and member dues. We raised the basic fare this year from \$2.00 to \$2.50 and there seems to have been no public pushback. That said, ridership is down this year. Is it because of the weather or is this a trend?

If it's trend, we need to do something to fill some of our empty seats. Years ago the Board made a decision not to purchase paid advertising, given our limited resources. However, internet technology has changed the ad game and it's clearly time to take a fresh look at online marketing. To that end, a working group will begin meeting in September to plan for next year.

Our other big financial concern is capital projects. These are big, one-time expenditures that require fund raising above and beyond our normal operating revenues. Since 2004 we've rebuilt the Como-Harriet line (about \$800,000), restored Winona 10 (\$250,000), expanded the Isaacs car barn (\$200,000), rebuilt No. 1300's trucks (\$150,000) and made a number of improvements to the Excelsior car barn (about \$25,000). This year we're building a new Lakewood Cemetery platform (\$20,000) and soon will rebuild No. 1239's trucks (\$150,000). At some point in the future there will be major track and overhead wire repairs, sure to exceed \$100,000.

Recruiting Enough People

Out of a membership of approximately 310, we have to find about 120 volunteers willing to do all the jobs required to stay in operation. You've undoubtedly heard that plenty of nonprofits are struggling to attract volunteers, especially younger ones. If I have one great fear, it's that we will implode someday for lack of new volunteers to replace those who are aging. The Como-Harriet shop crew is a good example. The average age is around 70 and not going down. These folks have sophisticated skills learned through decades of maintaining and repairing our streetcars. If there's one area in which we need to recruit and train replacements, this is it.

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How CHSL performs Winter Maintenance on our Streetcars*John Prestholdt*

Some of our Members have asked us recently why a particular streetcar may not be running after a certain date in our operating season. The intent of the CHSL shop staff and Operations Department is to set up a schedule to give all cars equal time to run during the season. But, in doing this we also need to keep in mind that our winters here in Minnesota sometimes restricts us from shuffling the cars around between the “ready barn” and the shop portion of the George Isaacs Car barn and Shop. So, we need to plan and work on streetcar maintenance with this in mind so we can give all our cars their required “tender loving care.”

We usually try to take our PCC car, TCRT No. 322 out of service right after Labor Day so we can start the maintenance cycle on this streetcar since it requires a lot more time to check the electrical controls and perform maintenance on same. We worked very hard to establish and follow a detailed maintenance procedure for each of our streetcars, along with a complete description of what to check and how to complete that checking. This process on our streetcars usually takes us about eight weeks per streetcar. This seems like a long time, but we only work on Tuesday and Saturday mornings, so the two months time equates to about 20 to 40 shop hours of work. Of course, we have several of our volunteers working on the car so there are many more “man-hours” involved in executing our standard maintenance plan for each streetcar. We then have to decide what car has a big project that needs to be done, like refinishing the wood floor on Duluth No. 265 that we accomplished a couple of years ago. After we finish one streetcar, we then work on another for eight weeks or so. This winter we’ll likely work on No. 265 first then on No. 1300 doing follow-up work on a few minor identified problems from the No. 1300 truck rebuild. With all the work on 1300’s trucks this year, the problems might not be that bad but have occurred because of normal “wear-in” noises that will get better over time.

This is a broad view of the CHSL shop’s winter work schedule. And it will become a bit more complicated when Winona No. 10 is transferred to CHSL. When that happens, we’ll need to fit No. 10 into this schedule and create a maintenance procedure for this streetcar.

If you are interested in helping us with this vital maintenance work on our historic streetcars, please call our Museum’s Volunteer Coordinator, **Pat Cosgrove, 952-953-6559**. Or, you can call me (**John Prestholdt—651-698-1173**) and ask me any questions you may have. No experience is necessary because except for PCC No. 322, the mechanical and electrical work is pretty basic and the tasks we perform to maintain our streetcars can be taught via basic “on-the-job training” (OJT). Bottom line—we really could use **YOU**. ☺



(Above) Basic streetcar maintenance includes such things as periodic repainting of the floor and the seats in No. 1300.

(Top Left) Most of the maintenance tasks we perform require no prior experience or training, for example painting No. 1300’s underframe. **Keith Anderson (L)** and **Mike Miller** are shown here doing this vital work.

(Bottom Left) Some maintenance tasks are somewhat more complicated but can be easily learned. Here we see **Mark Digre** checking the battery and battery charger for PCC No. 322. (*Jim Vaitkunas photos*)

Great Progress at ESL

August was a great month for special events and completing major projects at ESL. Here's a summary of what we've accomplished.

StoryTime Trolley. The August ESL *StoryTime Trolley* was a sold out event. August featured author **Stephen Shaskan** and it was a huge success. The weather was beautiful for a trolley ride and for listening to Stephen read his books while entertaining the young riders. Families departing the trolley were all smiles and giggles, a fun event for all.

Sleepy Time Trolley. The *Sleepy Time Trolley* was a new ESL event. We had a lot of fun planning activities for our young riders. They wore their pajamas, brought their favorite stuffed animals, received a treat and rode the Trolley. The children, with their teddy bears, tigers, cats and assorted other animals, gathered to listen to stories, sing songs and cheer the Trolley on when we pretended it was stalled. **Elaine Love** and **Karen Kertzman** led the fun activities, while wearing pajamas too! **Chuck Anding, John Knox** and **Jim Kertzman** (all in uniform) played along with all the antics and provided a safe ride.

The *Sleepy Time Trolley* was the first ESL event to have ticket sales available online. It was a big success, both rides sold out and we received a lot of compliments from parents. It will definitely be on the 2019 special events calendar. A big thanks to **Ben Franske, Rod Eaton** and **Bill Arends** for working their magic in getting ticket sales online on short notice.

ESL History Wall and Store Renovations. Over the past year and throughout this season there have been a number of improvements to the ESL car barn to update and improve its looks and add functionality. The car barn received a new concrete floor and updated lighting, both inside and out. While not the main purpose, these changes helped to create a more rider friendly environment during car barn tours. To continue to improve the experience, the ESL Tuesday Crew has done a magnificent job rebuilding the History Wall and the store area. While the work is still underway, we are already hearing compliments from our riders. Even with ridership numbers down due to bad weather, store sales are still on par with last year. (*See photos on page 4—Ed.*)

What has been completed?

- The stairs to the storage area are now hinged and can be raised or lowered by remote control. When not in use they remain raised which opens up the entire length of the History Wall and store area below.
- About 50 feet of 48" wide cork has been installed on the wall, allowing for an expanded display of our Streetcar's historical past. The cork also gives us the ability to continually update the pictures, keeping the display fresh for returning riders.
- Bead Board painted in Streetcar Yellow has been installed above and below the cork giving a Streetcar look to the entire area. To complete the trolley motif, the cork has been framed in Streetcar Green with Streetcar Red bordering the top of the entire wall.
- The store itself has been expanded from two to three display cases which allowed merchandise offerings to be increased from 25 to 70 items.
- The end result is a brand new look for our riders while giving them greater exposure to our streetcar history and merchandise.

BIG THANKS to the ESL Tuesday Car barn Crew of **Howie Melco, Scott Heiderich, Dick Zawacki, Carl Floren, Tom McGruder, Dave McCollum, Art Ruder, Mark Brothen, Steve Mages, Mike Kimitch, Art Abrahams** and **Scott Ingram** for their great ideas and all their hard work to make it happen.

You are invited to come ride the Excelsior Streetcar Line and experience these exciting changes. ☺

(From the Front Platform *Continued from page 1*)

I'm less worried about finding new operators. We've been getting plenty of new recruits each spring. Even with a 50 percent washout rate, we're holding our own, including attracting a number of younger folks.

A major area of need is in supervision and administration. Even though we're all-volunteers, this organization has career paths. If you are experienced and have the interest, think about filling a management or staff position. Also, no one is lining up to replace me as historian and editor. If any of these sound interesting, contact me, MSM General Superintendent **Bruce Gustafson** or MSM's Volunteer Coordinator **Pat Cosgrove**. ☺

September 3-----Special Labor Day operations at both ESL and CHSL
 September-----ESL and CHSL goes to weekend-only operations. ESL continues to operate on Tuesdays.
 September 22-----ESL provides service during Excelsior's Apple Days festival.

ESL Photos

Here are a few photos showing the great progress being made at our Museum's Excelsior Streetcar Line.

(All photos taken by Karen Kertzman.)

(RIGHT) Here's a full car loaded with kids and their moms and dads during ESL's StoryTime Trolley in August.



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

The museum's business address and telephone number are:

P.O. Box 16509
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 952-922-1096

Streetcar CURRENTS
September—2018

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor
 Bill Graham—Distribution

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

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Please send items to the editor **Jim Vaitkunas** at the following address:
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The concrete floor, the mezzanine steps up and out of the way and the cork board wall with photos have really made the Excelsior carbarn open, pleasing to the eye and more relevant.



The ESL shop crew did the bulk of the hard work in revising the historical display wall and the store area of the Excelsior carbarn. From left to right: **Scott Heiderich, Mike Kimitch, Carl Floren, Howie Melco and Dick Zawacki.** Others in the shop crew who worked on the improvements not shown in the photo are listed in the article on page three.