



Photo Credit: Jeff Terry

## MSM Operations Newsletter

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### SEASON RECAP

By the time this issue of the Operations Newsletter reaches you the season will essentially be over with only the Christmas-themed events remaining. 2019 was a good year. While we did not break any all-time attendance records, complete new equipment acquisitions, or extend our track we remain a popular destination and a financially sound volunteer organization. What continues to motivate and excite me is the dedication and creativity of you, our operating volunteers. A couple of examples come to mind:

- During the year volunteer operators provided 2,369 hours at CHSL and 908 hours at ESL. This does not count the tireless efforts of those who maintain the equipment, buildings, and right-of-way, those who clean cars, and those who perform the critical behind the scenes activities (i.e., cashiers, finance, event planning, etc.) required to keep the Museum operating smoothly.
- Labor Day was a complete wash out. With low temperatures and ceaseless rain, Andy Jacobs and his crew (Phil Epstein, Russ Isbrandt, Rose Arends, and Kyle Olson), who had made an initial run to the cemetery, continued to operate with the PCC until all the riders were able to return to the depot before ending operations.
- Following in the footsteps of ESL's motorette crew (Karen Kertzman, Elaine Love and Mary Amsden) and CHSL's past motorette crews (headed by Kathy Prestholdt), CHSL had an all-motorette crew in September (organized by Linda Ridlehuber, including Barb Gacek, Kathleen Graber, and Leah Harp), which was a huge success and attracted the attention of the Star Tribune.
- According to our records the Museum (ESL and CHSL) we are 3,677 riders away from our 2 millionth rider since the Museum opened. We have an outside shot at closing the year over 2 million riders, but it is more likely early next year. Wow!!

There are only a few operating days left. If you have the opportunity, please take advantage of the holiday events at ESL and CHSL and bring your friend and family down and celebrate the holidays and your hard work. As always I want to thank you for your dedication and hard work making our Museum the special place that it is. See you next year.

### YEAR-TO-DATE OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

#### CHSL

Through October ridership at CHSL was down 7% from 2018. What is interesting is that for the year (excluding the Christmas events) CHSL is down 1,752 riders. Through July, Como-Harriet was down approximately 2,600 riders (18%), with charters off 44% (620 riders) and regular service off 15% (2,400 riders), much of this due to the previously noted washout of Memorial Day. Given the yearend performance we saw a favorable lift in the second half of the season.

CHSL Ridership - Through October 31 (No. of Riders)

	2017	2018	2019	Year-over-Year Variance	
Revenue	26,287	22,960	21,585	(1,375)	-6%
Charter	2,025	2,040	1,663	(377)	-18%
Total	28,312	25,000	23,248	(1,752)	-7%

## ESL

ESL saw a 4% increase in regular season ridership. In 2019 there were 4,252 riders from May to mid-October compared to 4,087 for the same period in 2018. Special event numbers were negatively impacted by weather. For example July Crazy Days was down ~300 riders due to weather and the July and August Story Time and August Sleepy Time events were not as well attend as in the past.

- DSR #265 was a hit with our riders. For many returning guests it was a new experience, for those who had ridden #265 at CHSL it was an opportunity to share their past experiences on the car and for the remaining riders it was an opportunity to enjoy the larger MSM rolling stock fleet.
- Partnerships with other Excelsior organizations had a positive impact on ridership – Chamber of Commerce promoted charters (120+ riders), Friends of Excelsior Library (47 riders), and ELMHS Minnehaha Shuttle (240 riders).
- One important note, ESL was able to maintain a 3 person crew for all operating shifts and there were no shift cancelations due to staffing issues. Sad to say, there were a number of cancelations due to bad weather, some of which were special events days.

Store merchandise sales in 2019 totaled through mid-October was \$2,992, compared to \$2,435 in 2018. Total sales could increase with the sales of #1300 & Winona 10 Ornaments at the North Pole Trolley in November.

## SAFETY REMINDERS

With the winter season approaching and the potential for inclement weather during our holiday events it is important to remember to be safe and look where you and our guests are likely to step. Platforms, steps, and other surfaces can become treacherous with a little snow and ice.

## ENGINEERING UPDATE – KEITH ANDERSON

Keith has been installing gauge bars at CHSL and has addressed all locations with a gauge excess of 1/2", or more. He plans to repeat the exercise next year to ensure that we do not get any spots where the gauge is too wide. Keith has indicated that the gauge bar installation is quick, relatively easy, and effective and will hold us until we do the track project to replace worn-out ties. That project will be programmed for 2021.

Keith is not concerned about poor ties that are isolated. Adjacent ties, and gauge bars, will keep those spots safe. However, there are a few spots where bad ties are clustered. He will identify them before next spring, and will watch them to be sure they do not become problematic.

For the 2020 project, we are focusing on the overhead. Keith is developing a scope of work that we can use to get some competitive quotes for that work, which will use a combination of grant and annual appeal funding.

## SPECIAL EVENTS (CHSL) – ROD EATON

Below is a recap of some of the fall-winter CHSL special events.

**Farmer Ken and Jan's Pumpkin Patch (Oct. 12 & 13).** Steve Simon coordinated this event and everything went very well. We had what's become an annual Autism Society of Minnesota charter in the morning. Saturday was a fairly cold day and attendance was below expectations. But Sunday rebounded. MSM bought 400 pumpkins. We wound up selling 300+ at \$6 each during the event and realized a profit for the weekend. (Subsequent to the weekend we sold most of our remaining inventory at the station or to members.)

**Transylvania Trolley (Oct. 19).** Count Karl did a bang-up job working the platform for this child-friendly event. Total ridership exceeded 500 at our regular fare — better than last year. The day was mild and sunny.

**Trick 'r Trolley (Oct. 20).** Our Wild Rumpus Books co-sponsored event sold out three trips — in about half a day through our own ticketing system. We sell 60 tickets per trip at \$5 each passenger. Barb Gacek coordinated on a very nice afternoon. This is always a terrific event.

**Ghost Trolley (Oct. 25 & 26).** Another disappointing year for our oldest event. Friday's ridership was barely over 100; Saturday we did better with 200+. The Fare is \$4. Ridership has declined steadily for several years. Over the winter we'll be taking a hard look at Ghost Trolley — perhaps it needs to be a one night event.

**Graveyard Ghost Stories (Oct. 26).** New this year, Graveyard Ghost stories is our first literary event for adults. Senator Scott Dibble, author/illustrator Nancy Nelson, and Guthrie performer Nat Fuller each read a classic ghost story while we sat by Lakewood Cemetery. They performed to a full car of attentive listeners. The Fare was \$15 and we sold out 44 seats fairly quickly — surprising considering it was our first time out. It isn't easy to recruit readers, but the event is certainly worth repeating — maybe at a higher Fare. It also suggests that more events aimed at adults could be successful.

**The Late Show (Oct. 27).** Dave French, Bill Arends, and I once again make fools of ourselves for the Museum. This event is the ridiculous to Graveyard Ghost Stories' sublime. We sold out two shows — 44 tickets each at \$7:50 (although we had a surprising number of no-shows). We told the story of the Phantom Trolley using appropriate visual aids. Most people left laughing.

**Holly Trolley (Nov. 30, Dec. 1, 7, 8).** The trolley provides a direct link to Mr. and Mrs. Claus. Station serves as a collection point for Toys for Tots, carolers entertain the passengers, and a local Boy Scout Troop provides a warm fire and some food options. CHSL is also planning to use a new ticketing system where tickets are sold for particular ride times. This along with some portable heaters on the platform is intended to reduce wait times and make the remaining wait time more comfortable.

**Vinternatt (Dec. 7).** Festival of lights held on Saturday night. If you have not had the opportunity to see the glen lit up with luminaire and colorful lights take advantage of this once a season event.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS (ESL) — TODD BENDER/ KAREN KERTZMAN**

Below is a recap of the ESL fall-winter special events.

**Trick R' Trolley (Oct. 19).** The event sold out. Beautiful weather, children in a wide array of colorful costumes, and entertainment provided by Ms. Debra, of Excelsior Bay Books, made the day fun for all, children and parents alike.

**Ghost Trolley (Oct. 25 and 26).** The success of the event is dependent on 2 things, good weather and lots of volunteers. While we have not had good weather over the past 2 years we have been lucky enough to fill the volunteer positions with members and members' family. A big "Thank You" to all who are participating this year. The format remains the same as the past 3 years. Ride the Ghost Trolley to the carbarn, play games, win prizes, hear Ghost Stories, be enchanted on the Harry Potter Trolley, visit the Spooky Graveyard, see the Haunted Trolley, and much more before returning to Water Street on the Ghost Trolley.

**North Pole Trolley (Nov. 28 and 29, Dec. 30)** is part of the Excelsior Christkindlsmarkt event held November and early December. There are rides every 30 minutes, each child is given the opportunity to visit with Santa and provide him with their all-important wish list. The North Pole Trolley is the biggest ESL special event of the year so let's all wish for good weather!

### **EQUIPMENT REPORT — DICK ZAWACKI**

**TCRT 1300**

We have received a quote from L&S Electric for about \$24,500 to repair car 1300's motor. We are seeking other quotes to verify that it is competitive. If we contract with L&S, they have quoted that the work will take 6 to 7 weeks to complete. The car continues to operate on 2 motors, as opposed to its normal compliment of 4 motors. This means that it has a little less power, but, otherwise, the car doesn't exhibit any major problems because of this change.

### **TCRT 1239**

The car is permanently out of service until further notice. During operations in August, the car derailed and was successfully re-railed by the operating crew. However, because the car is being prepared to have its trucks refurbished, it was decided that there was no need to put the car in further jeopardy and it was taken out of operation.

### **TCRT 322**

The car continues to operate in conjunction with 1300 to comprise the CHSL operating fleet. The car is operating well with no major problems.

### **DSR 78**

The car is permanently out of service until further notice. During operations in June, an electrical short occurred in the "B end" controller. It was found that wires coming into the controller touched edges and sharp corners as they came through the floor of the car. In addition, the controller was not firmly anchored to the floor. Over time, the vibration resulting from normal operation abraded the wire's insulation, exposing the bare wire and causing an electrical short. The controller is currently being rebuilt to eliminate as many causes of abrasion and potential shorts as can be identified. We are also consulting with other museums to learn from their experience with the K10 controller.

### **DSR 265**

The car continues to serve as the operational car at ESL. Normal maintenance is performed on the car as it is needed.

### **Fargo-Moorhead 28**

After storing the car body in the ESL car barn for several months, it became apparent that time and the need to respond to other events (e.g., the electrical short in DSR 78's controller) would make it very difficult for the crew to complete its original plan to move the car to track 3 for the winter. Through contacts from the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society we found a boat storage facility that was willing to store the car body for several years. On Friday, October 4, the car body was moved to a storage shed on a farm just south of Watertown, MN. We plan to keep it there for at least 2 years when the ESL barn will be in a better position to store the car body. The crew helping to move FM #28 included: Howie Melco, Steve Mages, Carl Floren, Dave McCollum, Scott Heiderich, Mark Brothen, Jim Kertzman, Karen Kertzman, Tom Dulebohn, Gregg Taylor, and Scott Wardrope.

### **Winona 10**

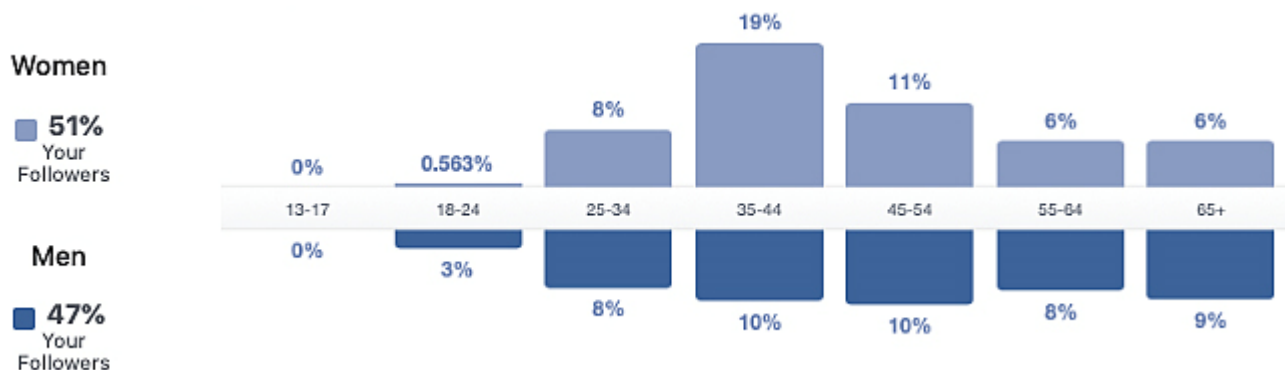
The motor has arrived at AC Electric in Bangor, Maine. They are evaluating the motor and we are awaiting a report and quote from them for the work needed.

### **Mesaba 10**

The ESL crew continues to remove and store or scrap all the stuff that is currently stored in and under this car. When the car is cleaned out, the ESL crew will determine how to safely position the car body on the two trucks that are under it and prepare it for later restoration work.

## **MARKETING — ROD EATON**

To attempt to increase ridership the Museum is exploring several options. One of those is the relaunch of MSM's Facebook page. As of September, the Museum had slightly more the 2,000 followers most of which live in the greater metro area, although there are nearly 100 that live outside the U.S. The chart below shows the demographic breakdown.



We can increase our numbers by inviting our Facebook friends to follow us. Additionally, by sharing our posts we can greatly extend our marketing reach — a couple of our posts have found an audience of a few thousand. For example a post about the Owl Service reached 3,000+ through 23 shares. The current Facebook support team is Chris Heck, Brian Long, and me (Rod Eaton).

### **POS (CHSL) – ROSE ARENDS**

At the end of our first full year with the SQUARE POS we have all learned a lot about how useful and intuitive the system is to use. THANKS to those of you who had POS questions during your shift and called for advice. We are always happy to walk you through something with which you are not familiar.

As for next year - you will be hearing from me in the spring to schedule the required POS Refresher Course sessions. As always, I will be happy to conduct extra sessions or hang out with you during one of your shifts if you are not feeling comfortable with the POS.

### **GROUPS AND BUILDINGS (CHSL) - STEVE MCCULLOCH**

Electrical work for the Linden Hills Station has been completed. Improvements includes:

- A hardwired space heater behind the counter
- An extra outlet behind the counter
- A switch inside the depot to control the spot lights
- Remove the exterior spot light switches
- Install two outlets up by the spot lights to use for plugging in Christmas lights
- A new motion detector light for the north side of the depot

### **GROUPS AND BUILDINGS (ESL) – TODD BENDER, KAREN KERTZMAN**

Security fencing is planned for the ESL car barn to provide better security and protection from graffiti taggers.