

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

January-February 2020



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

2019 Summary

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

With 2019 successfully behind us I thought it would be interesting to look back at the season and point out some of our successes and some of our opportunities that we will address in 2020. Ridership, which suffered from some poorly timed weather issues (you may recall a total washout of Memorial Day and several weekend days), made a strong recovery during the second half of the season and substantially closed the gap compared to 2018. Regular operations ridership continues to be heavily weighted toward the weekends (Friday–Sunday) and CHSL's Wednesday afternoon offering. Special events, with the exception of some specific Halloween activities, are also growing both in ridership and as a percent of revenue. The Operations Committee, which will meet in early February, will consider special event fare increases and some tweaking to the CHSL operating schedule to capture more riders.



There were 108 active operators in 2019 contributing approximately 3,500 volunteer hours. CHSL had 84 active operators and ESL 30 (with 6 volunteers operating at both locations). These numbers are essentially the same as 2017 and 2018. Also in 2019, our training team led by **Dave Higgins** graduated 11 new operators. While this number is smaller than the previous two years, nine of the graduates **Louis Hoffman, Pete Cahill, Tim Flemming, Leah Harp, Kathleen Graber, Al Hallas, Jeremy Stomberg, Richard Hadley, and Zach Osmundson** contributed 210 hours, 6% of the total operating hours.

During the year we had six reportable incidents involving streetcars or personal injury to our operators. With a goal of zero incidents, the level of incidents in 2019 is not acceptable. Several corrective actions were launched in 2019, focusing on track maintenance. Led by **Keith Anderson** a team of volunteers corrected the track gauge at a dozen locations at CHSL. **Dennis Stephens** inspected and fixed the spring switch at the CHSL passing siding. For 2020, we will conduct a thorough review of the track and overhead prior to the start of the operating season. To address injuries to our operators **John Dillery** will review our safety procedures, training, and communication practices.

While ridership was down from prior years, revenue from operations continued to be strong and was above a seven-year average. Revenue is slightly over \$100,000 and includes revenue from fares (46% of total), special events (31%), merchandise (18%), and charters (4%). The importance of special events is apparent in the revenue statistics, but is even more significant when you consider the relatively small amount of time we operate the special events. Next time you have the opportunity to set-up or operate in one of the Museum's special events, please consider volunteering.

The start of the 2020 season is less than two months away as we will start our Foremen and Operator meetings in early April.

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In closing, on behalf of the Museum's leadership team I would like to thank you for your efforts in 2019 and for your continued support of the Museum and your interest in making 2020 a great year.

Thank you for all you do.



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

Winter activities. Carrying the public is over for 2019, but museum work doesn't stop in the winter. TCRT No. 1300's bad motor is in the final stages of repair and should return soon for installation. Once it's done, work will start in earnest on the motors and trucks for car 1239.

Karl Jones is re-wiring 1239's ceiling lights as has been done with Nos. 1300 and 265. This will minimize the possibility of an electrical fire. In the process of taking down the ceiling panel, Karl came across an historic detail that had gone unnoticed. We're backdating No. 1239 to its 1922 gate-car configuration, with interior lights projecting from the walls above the windows. We've discovered from old photos and Russ Olson's research that six light fixtures were missing, mounted on the ceiling in pairs behind the three destination signs to make them visible at night. No wonder TCRT went to ceiling-mounted fixtures above the aisle and white ceilings when they rebuilt the cars for one-man operation. It reduced the number of light fixtures in the passenger compartment from 16 to 8, while still illuminating the destination signs.



The long time air leak in No. 1300's air compressor is being repaired.

At Excelsior, **Howie Melco** is rebuilding Duluth No. 78's damaged controller. A 120-volt generator is being rebuilt for rail bonding. The cleanup of the area around Mesaba 10 and the upstairs storage area continues. A charging station for the Point of Sale (POS) components is being installed. Additional work on the history wall is underway. Special events are being revamped because of changes in the Excelsior Farmer's Market schedule, the sale of Excelsior Bay Books and the uncertainty surrounding the steamboat Minnehaha's future.

It's not all good news on the restoration front. Winona No. 10's motor project has suffered a setback. The motor that failed dates from 1894. AC Electric can't figure out how to rewind it and is returning it. The car can't run with just one motor. Unless a vendor can be found to rebuild the motor, it's back to the drawing board to determine if new motors should be installed. That's a really big, complex job and it will take research and design work before it can happen.

At CHSL the new electric speeder progresses toward completion, as does the new CHSL tower car. The electric scissors lift has been mounted by **Dennis Stephens** on a heavy speeder flat that will become the tower car. The next step is to cut off the top of the existing tower car and mount it on the scissors lift.

Ben Franske and **Jim Willmore** have assembled from kit form our new book scanner. Once complete, we'll begin scanning the archival material in the library, starting with Russ Olson's research notebooks.

I'm continuing to work with video editor **Bill Olexy** on video tours of the different streetcar lines using vintage 1950s video and still photos. At the annual meeting I'm hoping to premier the Como-Harriet line video, which will then be uploaded to YouTube for everyone to see.

Thanks to the efforts of **Rod Eaton** and **Brian Long**, we've greatly increased our Facebook presence, and it's making a difference. Our followers have increased 45 percent in the last year.

As this is written, the annual Operations Committee meeting is a week away, and that will set the schedule for 2020.

Outgoing bookkeeper **Tim Crain** and his successor **Mona Isaacs** are putting together the year end financial statements and tax filing, a big job that gets little notice. Many thanks to Tim for his fine work over the last several years. Mona's also making more streetcar token jewelry for sale next Spring.

The work never ends, but our great volunteers see that it gets done. My thanks to all of you. 🍀



Bill The Motorman Says: TCRT Was Prepared for Winter

Folks, now that we're into our Minnesota winter, back in my day TCRT's operating and maintenance departments were ready for winter operations. And, by golly, the company certainly was prepared for what lay ahead of it. There were a lot of things that the operating, station and Snelling Shop folks did to get ready for the winter season. Of course, all the coal stoves in the streetcars were cleaned and repaired and made ready. The supply cars also made the rounds to all the stations and other locations on the lines throughout the system stocking the coal and sand bins with their supply to start off the winter. Of course, major preparations were made with the company's fleet of snow plows.

Now while I have spent many an hour operating snow plows, I was curious as to the history of TCRT's snow plowing so I went to visit an old friend of mine at the Snelling Shops, Ole Johnson, who has worked for the company since the mid-1890s. Ole went into the shop's equipment files and here's what he came up with.

As of January 1893 Minneapolis and St. Paul had 37 snow plows and 2 snow sweepers. As of September 1904 TCRT owned 1 double-truck conveyor plow, 19 regular double-truck snow plows and 1 single-truck sweeper (built by the McGuire-Cummings Company). The 19 plows originally did not have a cab for the crew; the controls were out in the open. Brrr! That must have been cold! Later a large cab was built on the front end to house the controls and crew. Later, when the TCRT-built the steel underframe plows, some of the 19 remained as plows, but some were converted to work cars.

From 1906 thru 1910 the TCRT shops built 10 large steel-underframe snow plows. Four were conventional single-end snow plows, but six were combination snow plow-sweepers. Ole showed me an article in a 1909 *Electric Railway Journal* that had a photo and description of No. 30. Major items mentioned—steel broom 52" in diameter with wing plows on both sides of the car. The plow is normally the forward end. The plow and wings remove most of the snow and the broom removes the remainder. With side wings extended the car will remove snow from a strip 19 ft. wide including the strip between the tracks, and will throw snow out 12 ft. from the outside rail. If heavy drifts are encountered the car is operated from the broom end and the steel broom cuts through them. The broom assemblies and "pole side" wing assemblies were removed in 1942.

During the winter of 1917-1918 eight additional regular snow plows were built in the company shops. This brought the total number of snow plows in service to 18. These were used until the end of streetcar operations in 1953-1954. The trucks, motors and controls from 18 of the 42 high-speed suburban cars were removed and installed on the 18 snow plows each winter (and removed each spring). (Reduced winter traffic required less cars on the Lake Minnetonka line.) After the Lake Minnetonka and Stillwater lines were abandoned in 1932 the high-speed trucks, motors and controls remained on the snow plows all year. The 18 snow plows were assigned to the various car stations. As of 1921 East Side Station had four (one for the Lake Minnetonka line), Nicollet Station had three, Lake St. Station had two, North Side Station had two, Snelling Station had four, Duluth Ave. Station had two, and Owen St. Station (Stillwater) had one. There were fixed snow plow routes at each station.

Regular motormen operated the snow plows 'tho the company's rule books only hints at this. The TCRT's rulebook effective 11-1-1921, states: "52—Trainmen engaged in the operation of work cars or any other special equipment shall be under the same supervision and governed by all rules the same as in passenger service."

Another friend of mine, and one of your old-time MSM members, Kirt Blewett, who was a regular motorman, told me he also operated snow plows. "All of the snow plows that I worked out of Nicollet Station were of the 75-82 series [probably 77 and 78]. On the plows I worked, and probably on all of them, both the plow and wing blades were air raised and gravity lowered. The wing was pulled out by a motorized winch and chains, pulled in by a rope block and tackle. Due to the short truck centers on the plows all of the normal underbody equipment was placed inside the carbody. Therefore if the reverser failed to throw from the controller, you would just go

back in the car and throw it with the manual lever on the reverser. Plows had a three-man crew, consisting of motorman, wingman and trolleyman." Kirt also mentioned: "There was a lever [operated by the motorman] that controlled the slides on the bottom of the salt bunkers to drop salt on the track switches when going over them. The linkage was under the raised motorman's platform."

At the end of Twin City streetcar service 12 Snow Plows were dismantled and burned in 1953. The bodies of the remaining six snow plows were sold in 1954.



In 1905 a TCRT plow stops for a few minutes for the photographer on Nicollet Avenue just south of 31st Street in front of Nicollet Station. Everett C. Jones, a TCRT employee, is the Motorman shown in the cab. TCRT was required by its franchise to plow the streets on which it operated. A few years later the company built a fleet of more powerful and fully enclosed snow plows, capable of clearing a street in two passes. Note the open body where the wingman and Foreman must stand while operating—brrrrr. And, the front plow is made of wood slats!.

March-April----- CHSL & ESL new operator recruiting and training
 April 24-----MSM Annual member's meeting, 7 PM. Location is the historic Como-Park streetcar station.
 May 2-----Beginning of CHSL's weekend operations and ESL's Saturday-only operations
 May 25-----Memorial Day operations at ESL and CHSL
 May 26-----Beginning of ESL's Tuesday afternoon operations



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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief

Annual fund. We have sent out the flyer to all members soliciting donations to our Museum's 2019-2020 annual fund. Focus for this year's annual fund is rehabilitating the overhead trolley wire system at CHSL and ESL. The response from members and several foundations has been wonderful. Many thanks to the following members and friends who have donated to our annual appeal so far.

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
 Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509
 952-922-1096

Streetcar CURRENTS
January-February—2020

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 March 20, 2020.

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

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 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9481

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OVERHEAD WIRE FUND.

Doug Anderson	Doug Beedon	Ray Benson, Jr.	Peter Cahill
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20th Century Electric Railway Foundation

GENERAL FUND

John Cartwright	Steve Collin	Pat Cosgrove	Dutton Foster
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John Jones	Thomas Lowery	Linda Ridlehuber	Hon. James Rogers
Jim Talley	Eric Tratner	Kit Wilson	Head Fam. Found.

MSM's Facebook History Posts

The history posts on the MSM Facebook page have become a well-liked feature. Since November 2018, when regular history posts began, some larger themes covered have included the many streetcar lines that were in the Twin Cities, the different Twin City Lines streetcar types, other streetcar lines that used to operate in Minnesota, and then-and-now comparisons between the streetcar days and our time. Another popular feature has been the "Take a guess..." posts where our followers are asked to guess the location depicted in a photo. Along the way, many of our Facebook followers have shared their own stories or knowledge of the streetcar days in response to these posts, which further brings the history and memory of the streetcar era to life! Overall, not only have the history posts contributed to an increase in our follower count on our Facebook page, our presence on social media has provided another avenue in furthering our mission of keeping the streetcar era alive. **Brian Long**

Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule

The Streetcar CURRENTS, is now in its winter publication schedule. You've been receiving the Streetcar CURRENTS every other month since November 2019. Publication date for the next issue will be on or about April 1st. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after that date please contact me at: jvaitkunas@msn.com