

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

March-April 2020



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Season Postponed!

To put it mildly, this is and will be an unusual season for our Museum. The COVID-19 virus now governs our daily social interactions. Even before the state's "Shelter in Place" order became effective, the MSM Board and the Operations Committee had discussed cancelling operations for May, which the Board did at its meeting last weekend. At this time, we do not know when the season will begin. The Museum will continue to monitor the situation and make a decision for the following months whether it is safe for our volunteers and our guests to operate and ride with us. For those of you who attend or read the Board meeting minutes, you know that the Museum is in a very strong financial position and is prepared to weather the financial impact of COVID-19 on this year's operational and financial performance.



When the decision to start the season is made, we will need a couple of weeks to perform our normal start up activities (check rides, POS (cash register) training, PCC training, etc.) and will inform our volunteers of the schedule at that time. On a more positive note, I thought it might be interesting to give you some previews of changes we have planned for the 2020 operating season.

- At CHSL, Monday evening operations are cancelled replaced by a Friday afternoon schedule (June thru August). We hope that this schedule addition will result in the same good ridership as our very popular Wednesday afternoon operations.
- At CHSL, regular service is extended through the 3rd weekend in October.
- At ESL, scheduled operation is added for the Friday of MEA weekend.

Rod Eaton and **Karen Kertzman** are developing some new, creative options for special events.

In these times of uncertainty **be safe**. Thank you for your interest in and support of our Museum. ☺

FLASHBACK!

Here are a couple of "moldy-oldie" photos from the Museum's photo archive and from Jeff Braun.



Twenty-one Years Ago! In 1999, the ex-Chicago Transit Authority trucks that are currently being rebuilt for TCRT gate car No. 1239 were removed from under Duluth No. 265 so that car could get the newly arrived Brill 27-E1 trucks it currently has. Here we see a crew comprised of (L to R) **Jim Vaitkunas**, **Karl Jones**, **Jim Otto**, **Roy Harvey** and **Carl Barthelemy** leaning into one of the 15,000 pound trucks to get it into the Isaacs carbarn. (MSM Archives)



Forty Years Ago! After an eight-year restoration done at the Northern Pacific Railroad's Como Shops in St. Paul, Duluth No. 265 was delivered to the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. Taken on September 19, 1980 this photo shows No. 265 almost off the transporter with the rear truck on Como-Harriet rails. No. 1300 is seen in the rear easing No. 265 onto the rails. No. 265 was moved from CHSL to the Excelsior Streetcar Line in 2019 and now provides basic service on ESL.

(Bernie Braun photo courtesy of Jeff Braun)



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum


Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

My column this issue was going to include several museum news items. Then along came Covid-19 and everything changed. New Operator training, Foremen's meetings and Operator recertifications are on hold. All regular shop work sessions have been canceled for the duration. There is no higher priority than our personal health and safety.

At its March 28th meeting (which was held online via Zoom) the MSM Board voted to delay the start of streetcar service on both railways until at least June 1. This includes charters. The MSM Annual Meeting, scheduled for April 25, will be held online. Look for a notice elsewhere in this issue.

Nobody knows how long the emergency will last and there's no question we will lose revenue. The good news is that there is sufficient cash on hand to complete the major capital projects scheduled for this year. They include: (1) Rebuilding TCRT No. 1239's trucks; (2) Rebuilding Winona No. 10's motor; and, (3) Major overhead wire repairs, hopefully both at CHSL and ESL.

Although they've been approved in the capital budget, for now we need to hold up paving the rest of the ESL car barn and realigning the ESL car barn tracks until we know when revenue service is going to re-start.

While we won't be running for awhile, we can still bring streetcar history to the public via the internet. That effort started last year, but now we're going to increase it. We'll do more posting on Facebook, and create a series of history videos for YouTube. We'll also initiate some new online activities for children. See Rod Eaton's article below for more information. 



Increasing MSM's online presence

By Rod Eaton

By the time our season ended last year we were posting five days a week on Facebook and had increased the number of Facebook followers by over 45 percent. Each day had a theme.

- Monday was ***This Week***—hours, schedules, and events at both lines.
- Tuesday featured ***ESL***—special events and other happenings at Excelsior.
- Wednesday was ***Feature Day***—a rotation of Bill the Motorman Sez, Operator Training, Streetcar Camp for Kids, Featured Item, and Car Cards. Each of these features has a distinct graphic identity.
- Thursday was ***Como-Harriet Day***—special events and other happenings at that line.
- And Friday was ***Looking Back***—containing historic photos from our archives.

The goal has been to post content for a variety of interests in trolleys, how they are operated, streetcar history, and the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

When our operating season ended we dropped Monday's *This Week*. And when ESL or CHSL have nothing to report Tuesdays and Thursdays have also gone without posts (which happens more frequently with Como-Harriet than it does with Excelsior). Our Facebook Team consists of **Chris Heck, Brian Long, Karen Kertzman**, and me (**Rod Eaton**).

On a daily basis, we reach between 500 and more than 1,000 people. Our all-time high was reached last December 30th when we posted a photo of No. 1300 when it split the Linden Hills Station switch and straddled two tracks. It was shared 25 times and reached over 5,500 people. Another metric is engagement—how many people “like”, click on, or comment on a post. A discussion of wheel profile reached 1,100 with 145 engagements. A photo of ESL shop guys painting a prop Halloween coffin had a reach of 1,292. Our call for volunteer operators on February 20 was shared by 27 people and reached almost 3,400. A photo lineup of streetcars at the East Side Station reached 1,200 with close to 300 engagements. And a three car Spring lineup at ESL reached over 1,800 with more than 300 engagements.

On Thursday, March 26th we posted a link to a short video of Duluth No. 265 running along the Como-Harriet line a few years back. It wasn't the first time we've posted a video, but it wasn't something we did very often. It was shared 7 times, reached 600 people and had 100 engagements.

(Continued on page 4)

Goings-on In MSM



MSM Donates 150 N-95 face masks to Minnesota Nurses Association

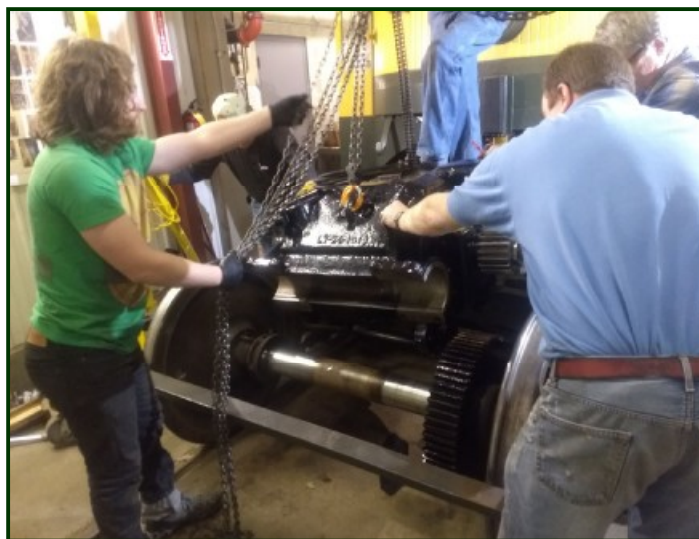
Our Museum did it's part in helping local health-care professionals cope with the Covid-19 virus by donating 150 N-95 face masks. Here's a recap of how we donated the masks as reported by MSM member **Steve McCulloch** (shown in his car while dropping off the masks).

"This all started because I watched a news story concerning the shortage of face masks for local medical professionals. My wife is a nurse and she confirmed the shortage. It occurred to me that we might have masks in the car barns at CHSL and ESL. I emailed **Aaron Isaacs** indicating that I would be happy to deliver any masks we might have to medical professionals in need. Aaron lent his support. **Jim Kertzman** and **John Prestholdt** helped me line up about 150 N95 masks which I took to the Minnesota Nurses Association office for distribution. When I dropped them off, I acknowledged that 150 masks wasn't a huge number. The woman that accepted the donation reminded me that our donation meant that 150 medical professionals would now have a needed mask. She was very thankful for our donation."

(Photo courtesy of Minnesota Nurses Association)



Bill and Rose Arends cleaned up the Russel Olson library located in the Isaacs carbarn. They found better places for most of the clutter on top of the file cabinets and mounted the framed photos on the walls. In the photo on the right, in the corner is the new book scanner assembled by **Ben Franske** and **Jim Willmore**. *(Aaron Isaacs photos)*



Just before the shop was forced to shut-down because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the shop guys went to work and installed the rebuilt motor in No. 1300's front truck and made several test runs; the motor and car tested-out fine. Photo on the left shows **Rob Mangels**, **Mark Digre**, **Ben Franske** and **Isaac**, an apprentice from Southwest High School, lowering the motor onto the axle. Not shown are **Karl Jones** and **John Prestholdt** also on the March 7th shop crew. On the right, No. 1300 on one of the test runs, rests at the BdeMaKaSka (Lake Calhoun) platform.

(Karl Jones photos)

April 25-----MSM Annual member's meeting, 10 AM . Teleconference using the Zoom application

(Continued from page 2)

Besides Facebook, our website is out there for the public. In February 2019, 511 individuals viewed our historic photos online. Of those, 85 percent were doing so for the first time. That's pretty typical. We're attracting new viewers all the time. They accessed 580 individual photos. However, there were 6,079 page views. How can that be when only 580 photos were viewed? That's because 198 of the photos were viewed anywhere from twice to 175 times.

N*ew material.* We have a rather short list of existing videos we can post. These include some YouTube videos made by our riders over the past few years. Additionally we have four hour-long seminars on YouTube produced by us featuring Aaron narrating PowerPoint presentations. Aaron has several other PP presentations in the can; they lack narration which he is working to add. And he's finished with a 42-minute video program, utilizing historic film and photos, taking us on a ride on the Como-Harriet line from downtown St. Paul through Minneapolis to Edina and Hopkins. It will be posted on YouTube and we'll promote it and the other long videos on Facebook.

K*ids' Clubs.* Just prior to the onset of this pandemic, **Louis Hoffman, Leah Harp** and I had contacted the majority of families who participated in our Streetcar Camp over the years. We told them about our plans to initiate two clubs, the Car barn Club for kids 6 to 11, and the Clerestory Crew for those 12 to 15. We received about a dozen positive responses from moms with children in both age groups. We planned to get the clubs underway—and then everything stopped!

In the next couple of weeks we plan to let families know that our clubs will get organized and accept members. For the foreseeable future we'll operate virtually. Since we can't get together we'll share information online, either through TrolleyRide.org, our Facebook page, or a new Streetcar Clubs Facebook page. It certainly isn't ideal, but it is a way to get started and keep those interested engaged.

We have some existing content from our Streetcar Camp which can be repurposed. But we'll need lots of new material, too. Anyone interested in working with us is welcome. ☺

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** March-April 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 April 20, 2020.

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

13326 Huntington Lane
Apple Valley, MN 55124-9481

E-mail: jvaitkunas@msn.com

MSM Annual Member's Meeting

Our Museum is required by law, and our By-Laws, to hold an annual member's meeting to elect Directors and report on the state of the Museum. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic we can't have members in one room for the foreseeable future. Cancelling the meeting wasn't an option we decided, so the Museum will convene a virtual annual meeting starting at 10 AM on Saturday, April 25th. The meeting will be held using the **Zoom** computer-conference application. Members will be given specific information on how to download and use **Zoom** approximately 10 days prior to the annual meeting.

Member Renewals During the Covid-19 Emergency

If your MSM membership expires in the next three months, we ask that you renew on-line rather than mail-in your renewal dues. Right now MSM has approximately 320 members. In March and April alone, 100 memberships are due for renewal, with 25 renewals in May and 22 in June. That's a total of around 45-percent of our members that need to renew from March to June! Until the Minnesota Governor's stay-at-home order is lifted, we won't be checking the Museum's mail. So please help us out by going to our website and renewing there:

<https://trolleyride.org/about/become-a-member/>