

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

August 2020



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

While regular streetcar operations are cancelled for this year, there are other opportunities to support the Museum through volunteer activities. These non-operating and behind the scenes activities have or are planning to restart, and include ongoing mechanical work as well as seasonal activity maintaining and improving our buildings, gardens, and the right-of-way (i.e., track maintenance, brush cutting, etc.).

Like all other businesses, MSM has to govern its operations and activities under the COVID-19 cloud. To operate safely the Museum has developed policies and procedures for our non operating activities:

- **Indoor activities**—MSM Policy No. 11 – COVID-19 Reopening of MSM Car barn Maintenance Facilities 5-27-2020; and
- **Outdoor activities**—Policy for Outdoor Work During COVID-19, 7-24-2020.

These policies adhere to Minnesota's guidelines regarding group gatherings as well as CDC policies and practices used or suggested by other museums. If you plan on volunteering, you must read these and comply with the instructions. All of MSM's policies are on our website:

<https://trolleyride.org/member-resources/organizational-documents/>

I encourage you to consider helping in some of the regularly scheduled work in the car barn or the one-time projects. We will communicate any one-time events well in advance of the work dates so that you can fit the events into your calendar. Listed below are the key contacts by type of work.

Car barns – car maintenance – **Dick Zawacki**

Yard work/right-of-way clean-up CHSL – **Steve McCulloch**

Gardening CHSL – **Ben Porter**

Track maintenance – **Keith Anderson**

Overhead trolley wire work - **Chris Heck**

ESL Activities – **Todd Bender/Karen Kertzman**

In these uncertain times, be safe. Thank you for your ongoing interest in and support of the Museum. ☺



TCRT un-standard car No. 1230 On the Fort Snelling Shuttle.

Museum member **H. Dutton Foster** loves to paint railroad scenes and TCRT streetcars, among other things. The March-April 2014 issue of the *Streetcar Currents* featured his painting of a TCRT streetcar on the Mahtomedi line. This time he painted a nice rendition of TCRT No. 1230 operating on the one-mile Fort Snelling shuttle. No. 1230 is shown passing behind two officer's houses. TCRT No. 1230 (the "un-standard" car) was one of only a handful of TCRT streetcars that were double-end cars. It had controls at both ends and two trolley poles but the doors remained on the "gate side" of the car.

The Fort Snelling shuttle was abandoned in 1952.

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From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

Work continues despite the Corona virus. If you haven't already heard, streetcar operations for the public are cancelled for the rest of the year. We left the door open a crack for two possible exceptions, a family charter where the riders don't have to social distance, and maybe something at ESL for Christkindlsmarkt.

Shop work continues in the Isaacs carbarn. L&S Electric has completed the rebuilding of the first two motors for TCRT gate car No. 1239. Next comes the completion of truck component fabrication and the eventual assembly of the new trucks. We have to say "new trucks" because only the wheels, axles and journal boxes are being reused. When finished they will closely resemble 1239's original Baldwin #5 trucks.



While we're shut down it seemed like a good idea to do some other maintenance projects. Grounds Manager **Steve McCulloch** has organized a painting crew to repaint the depot platform and benches. They will also paint the metal railings at the pedestrian underpass. We now have a policy for Covid-19 precautions while working outdoors. Steve has also been doing a good job alerting the Minneapolis Park Board about the graffiti tagging that has occurred at CHSL. The Park Board has been very responsive as noted in the photo on Page 3 of this *Streetcar Currents* issue.

Dennis Stephens reports that the floor of No. 1300 has been scraped, scrubbed and repainted. **Karl Jones** painted the steps. (See the photos on page 3.)

Overhead realignment and tie replacement. The Museum has hired Killmer Electric to do the overhead wire realignment at Excelsior. Chief Engineer **Keith Anderson** and **Jim Vaitkunas** met with them recently to finalize the work plan. MSM's overhead Foreman, **Chris Heck** will be in overall charge of the project. Meanwhile, the overhead wire components that we purchased from the Northern Ohio Railway Museum have arrived and they're in good condition. Pull-offs will be installed on the curves so the wire is centered over the track. Currently the trolley wire is nearly over the inside rail in several places. Installing the pull-offs should also tighten the wire which sags somewhat. Backbone wires and down-guy wires will be installed on poles as needed. In addition, the wire will be raised through the Lyman Lumber Company office area west of Morse Avenue. These improvements will lessen wear on the trolley wheels and overhead trolley wire, eliminate the trolley wheel squeal in certain areas and reduce the chance of de-wirement.

Our volunteers will work on the yard tracks outside the Excelsior carbarn. Relocating the wire frogs in relation to the track switches and tightening the overhead should stop the problem with dewirements in the yard.

MSM's Board of Directors has approved a budget amendment to fund the replacement of 200 ties along the Como-Harriet line. A recent survey found 312 rotted ties. That's normally not enough to justify a replacement project, but there were bad ties under about 20 rail joints and that's not a good thing (see photo on right). We sized the project at 200 ties to get reasonable economies of scale without drawing down our cash reserves too far. Like the overhead wire project, we might as well do it while we're closed down.



Wednesday Zoom sessions. Missing your fellow streetcar volunteers? Rod Eaton hosts an informal weekly Zoom meeting Wednesdays at noon. I usually lead off with some old photos to get the conversation started. Contact Rod if you want to join us. 🍷

MSM Photo Ops



Because of the pandemic, our volunteers at the Isaacs car barn had been idle from March through May. When Minnesota's governor allowed partial opening of some activities, some of our George Isaacs car barn and shop volunteers at CHSL have returned to the shop and have been busy with a few projects. The floor of TCRT No. 1300 has been scraped, sanded and repainted by **Karl Jones** and **Dennis Stephens**. The stepwells on No. 1300 have also been repainted by **Karl Jones**. (John Prestholdt photos)



A lack of homeless shelters in Minneapolis has caused some of these people to set up campsites in Minneapolis' city parks. A small one was established just down the hill from the Linden Hills station. (Ben Porter photo)



The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has been doing a super job in covering the graffiti that has been a problem on the bridge abutment next to the Isaacs car barn on the right. (Aaron Isaacs photo)



While COVID-19 has caused ESL's car barn and shop work to cease, the outside work still needs to be done. Here we see **Ken Blake** cutting the grass on the south side of the ESL car barn tracks. (MSM photo archive)



How about this!
MSM's "mother car," TCRT No. 1300 is featured on a Minnesota Lottery \$5 scratch-off card.



Jim Otto—Faithful MSM Volunteer—Passes

By Bill Arends

The Minnesota Streetcar Museum suffered a big loss with the passing of Jim Otto. Jim was a very dedicated volunteer for many years—at least 25. He was very special to all the volunteers of MSM with whom he came in contact and MSM was very special to Jim. Something I picked up knowing Jim tells me he would not want someone to write an obituary about him. So let's not do that. Let's just remember Jim.

Jim was a regular member of the Tuesday and Saturday Car barn Crews at Como-Harriet. They're the folks who keep the streetcars running at CHSL. Jim would be the first to admit—No, Jim would tell you he knew nothing about the mechanical or electrical workings of a streetcar. There were others to do that. But he would be the first in line to keep things neat. Sort nuts, bolts, screws; clean up in and around the grounds. The first to greet new volunteers and visitors to the car barn and riders at the Linden Hills depot.

When I let the Car barn Crew know about his passing a comment made by one of the crew who worked with him for years said: "Jim—such a complex, intelligent guy." This is so true. I've been told he was a very good cook. I thought Really??? He could take a stale car barn donut and nuke it in the microwave and make it unrecognizable.

For many years Jim was the crew caller for MSM. He was the guy who was responsible for contacting volunteers and making sure all shifts were filled. I don't know what his system was but it worked very well and I know that no Excel spreadsheet was involved.

Jim was a complex, intelligent guy: From public schools in the south side of Chicago; to college in Lexington, Kentucky; to a PHD history program at St. Cloud State; to studying in London; to a Masters in Library Science at the University of Minnesota; to a Metro Transit bus driver; to crossing guard for MSM at 42nd Street. What a life! We were fortunate to have had him as a volunteer and a friend.

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:

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Streetcar **CURRENTS** August — 2020

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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Besides his work in the Isaacs car barn, Jim helped out the weekend crews, and sometimes the Wednesday afternoon crews, by flagging the 42nd Street crossing at CHSL. This photo shows Jim posing with the tools of his trade and doing his job in 2017.

(Bill Graham photo)



Here's Jim and **Phil Settergren**, who was another of CHSL's great Isaacs car barn volunteers who has passed, discussing some item of import, no doubt. TCRT PCC car No. 322 serves as a perfect backdrop for this photo.

(Dennis Stephens photo)