

# STREETCAR

## CURRENTS

November-December 2020



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Although the Museum has not conducted regular scheduled streetcar operations in 2020, the Museum continues significant behind the scenes work on streetcar maintenance, right-of-way maintenance, and limited charter operations. All the operations have been in accordance with state regulations and CDC/healthcare guidelines. I would like to offer special thanks to those who have continued supporting the operations through these challenging times.

The CHSL maintenance crew continues to make strides in the long-term improvements to TCRT No. 1239 as well as ongoing maintenance to our Museum's other streetcars. Since we restarted after the COVID-19 shutdown, the CHSL carbarn crew includes **Miles Anderson, Jack Bacon, Pat Cosgrove, Russ Isbrandt, Karl Jones, Mike Miller, John Prestholdt, Tom Schram, Dennis Stephens, Pete Connors, Issac Trockman** (our Southwest High School graduate who is now in college in Michigan), and **Jim Wilmore**. Although there have been fewer maintenance sessions and we have imposed a maximum crew size of six people per session, the crews have been productive. On No. 1239 the crew has upgraded the electrical wiring and light fixtures, installed the new Baker heater, made a number of parts for the new trucks that will be installed on the car next year, designed and ordered parts for the new trucks, adjusted the operation of the rear gates, and performed routine maintenance tasks. On TCRT No. 1300 the crew painted the floor and the steps, installed new safety control wiring, repaired several seat cushions and backs, and performed routine maintenance tasks.



**Steve McCulloch** has been driving his dedicated team of CHSL volunteers for the last several months clearing brush, removing leaves and other maintenance activities to keep the right-of-way from getting out of control and to help maintain the existing rail infrastructure. Steve's crew includes **Ben Porter, Luca Gunther, Bruce Allyn** and **John Flynn**.

At ESL **Todd Bender, Jim Kertzman, Karen Kertzman,** and **Scott Heiderich** have been performing grounds work and controlling graffiti to keep the carbarn looking good.

During the fall we were able to operate seven charters, which were primarily birthday parties for small children with guests coming from existing social circles. We received very positive feedback from the charter organizers and guests who not only enjoyed the experience but appreciated the ability to do something that seemed "normal." **Bill Graham, Leah Harp, Scott Heiderich, Louis Hoffman,** and **Brian Krynski** operated the charters and **Chris Heck** and **Ben Franske** created the ability and managed the process to collect credit card payments for our charters.

I know we all missed the excitement of operating the streetcars and the enjoyment we bring to thousands of guests during a normal operating season. In only a couple of months the Operating Committee will begin planning and preparation for the 2021 season, which we hope will once again be close to "normal." Thank you all for your work and continued support of the Museum. ☺

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### Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule

The Streetcar CURRENTS, is now in its winter publication schedule. You'll be receiving the Streetcar CURRENTS every other month until the May 2021 issue is published. Publication dates for these issues will be on or about: February 1<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after those dates please contact me at: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)



## From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

**A**nnual Appeal and Give to the Max Day. Give to the Max Day, designed to help non-profit organizations raise money, was held on Thursday November 19th. It served as the kickoff for our Museum's Annual Appeal fundraising effort. It should be no surprise that we need the money more this year than ever. Covid-19 has shut down streetcar operations, our primary revenue source. That in turn has mostly eliminated merchandise sales, a secondary revenue source. We've lost about \$90,000 in revenue this year!



**W**e still have to pay for insurance and utilities. More than that, we've been depleting our cash reserves to keep several big capital projects on track. They are:

- Building new trucks for streetcar No. 1239, including the completion of two rebuilt motors (in progress).
- Rebuilding Winona No. 10's damaged motor (in progress).
- Replacing 200 crossties at Lake Harriet (completed).
- Realigning the overhead wire at Excelsior (completed).
- Replacing overhead wire poles and realigning the overhead wire at Lake Harriet (pending).

**N**ote that three of these are not yet completed. We've budgeted \$40,000 for the Lake Harriet wire project, but we don't know if that will be enough.

- We've deferred the overhaul of motors 3 and 4 for TCRT No. 1239, a \$52,000 project.
- We've also deferred paving the rest of the Excelsior car barn floor and realigning Track 3, a \$20,000 project.
- I'm worried that the virus will delay the start of the 2021 operating season, resulting in more lost revenue.

With all this in mind, the priorities for this year's Annual Appeal are:

- Rebuilding motors 3 and 4 for car 1239
- Raising additional funds for the overhead wire project
- Paving the rest of the Excelsior car barn floor and realigning Track 3

You've always stepped up when the Museum has needed you. Please do so again.

**M**eanwhile. Even though we're closed to the public, our volunteers are making good things happen. The CHSL shop crew had a car barn cleaning session. **Tom Schramm** carted away a trailer-load of unneeded wood and scrap metal. They're building a jib crane to handle heavy objects inside the Isaacs Car barn and Shop. **Jim Willmore** continues to design components for No. 1239's trucks. **Karl Jones** has been refurbishing No. 1239 and backdating it to its appearance circa 1920. That includes installing an older, larger headlight, installing the Baker heater, adding light fixtures behind the destination signs and some exterior repainting.

Quite a few used railroad books have been donated from the collections of **Barney Olsen**, **Ken Albrecht**, **Aaron Isaacs** and **Louis Hoffman**. MSM's Merchandise Manager **Bill Arends** is selling them with the proceeds going to MSM. Contact Bill if you're interested.

**Dave French** keeps finding historic Minnesota streetcar photos on eBay. He just sent me a package of 39 more. In the last month I've catalogued 75 more photos and artifacts.

Even though we can't do the usual annual event, our Santa Claus **Mike Helde** is holding virtual Santa visits on the scheduled Holly Trolley weekends.

**Stay safe, everyone.** 🍷



**Goings-on at MSM**



Two refurbished motors for TCRT No. 1239 were delivered to the Isaacs Car barn and Shop on November 10, 2020. On the left we see **John Prestholdt** checking to make sure nothing gets bumped by the trailer the motors are on. On the right, one of the two motors is being lifted off the trailer. From the left we see **Jim Willmore, John Prestholdt, Rob Mangels** and **Tom Schramm**. (Dennis Stephens photos)



On September 9, 2020, the weather was a little nicer than it is now (late November). Here is **Russ Isbrandt** painting the rear step well of TCRT No. 1239 with PCC No. 322 in front. (Photo by Jim Vaitkunas)



We ran several charters in 2020 as reported elsewhere in this issue. A special photo-shoot charter was operated at ESL on November 7, 2020 and here is one of the photos from that charter. Duluth No. 265 is spotted adjacent to the M&StL RR depot that now houses the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society's museum. (Photo by Bob Ball)



Here a photo of the new headlight for TCRT gate car No. 1239. The new headlight gives the car it's authentic early 1920s look. (Photo by Jim Vaitkunas)



Motorman Mike (**Rod Eaton**) created several short videos on the electrical workings of our streetcars for the virtual Kids Streetcar Camp in 2020. You can view them on MSM's YouTube channel. While they're geared pretty much towards a 12-year old, there's some neat stuff in all three videos that you will might find informative and interesting.





**Annual Appeal.** In early October, we sent out the flyer to all members soliciting donations to our Museum's 2020-2021 annual appeal. So far we received over \$13,000 in donations, which is terrific! We want to give a big thanks to the following members and friends for their generous donations.

**General Fund:** Anonymous, Keith Anderson, Dennis Fischer, Jim & Jincy Vaitkunas, Baxter Family Foundation, Barb Gacek, Doug Beedon, Larry Coulter, Ron Ehrenberg, Bill Graham, Leah Harp, Tom McGruder, Andy Selden, Dave Venhuizen, Harvey Wiersgalla, John Nordale, Jim Talley, Nils Halker, Pete Cahill, Floyd Child, Dick Holz, John Knox, Jeff Ersbo, Kris Horn-Ginthner, David Jones, Lisa Stevens, Rita Martinez, Dale Severson, John Heintl, Dennis Stephens, Linda Ridlehuber, Bruce Gustafson, Benevity Community Impact, Karen & Jim Kertzman, Cheri Hanna, Mona & Aaron Isaacs, and Mary & Ben Porter.

### 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](http://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 November-December—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 January 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](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)

**Overhead Wire fund, 1239 Motors or ESL Car barn.** Richard Darling (2 donations), Elaine Love, Muriel & Gerry Olsen, Rick Krenske, John Dillery, Russ Isbrandt, Russ Olson, and Mary Jo & Dan Odegaard.

Some of these donations came from our Give to the Max Day solicitation several weeks ago. Again, **MANY THANKS** to all who have donated so far for this year's Annual Appeal. 🍀

### Obituaries

It is with sadness that we report the following MSM family members who have passed. Clark Hoffman passed away a few weeks ago. Clark lived in Alexandria, so he drove over 130 one-way miles to operate our streetcars! His wife Judy commented that: "Driving the street cars at Lake Harriet was one of his most treasured retirement activities. Our grandchildren spent many hours riding with him. Thanks for the memories."

We regret to report the passing of Karen Wardrope, wife of Scott Wardrope. Scott is one of the volunteers in the ESL shop crew.

Also, Kathy Heiderich, wife of our Scott Heiderich, has passed away. Besides being a strong supporter of Scott and MSM, Kathy volunteered for a couple of years selling tokens and merchandise in the Linden Hills station. We'll miss them all.

### The Grinch (COVID-19) Stole our Christmas!

Last year at the Excelsior Streetcar Line's North Pole Trolley we had it all—LOTS of snow, Christmas decorations, candy canes, Santa Claus, and happy riders. Even the Grinch joined in the festivities, operating a festive DSR No. 265 and excitedly helping the little ones visit with Santa. This year it seems the Grinch has reverted to his former "mean one" self. Our North Pole Trolley will not operate due to the pandemic. But children can still visit with Santa through the Minnesota Streetcar Museum's Virtual Visit with Santa Claus. Santa will be on line with us from 12:30 to 4 PM on Saturday and Sunday, November 28 & 29, and December 5 & 6. All you need is Zoom (it's free!) and a reservation (also free!). Visit [TrolleyRide.org](http://TrolleyRide.org) for information: <https://trolleyride.org/special-events/virtual-holly-trolley/> (That's Tom Dulebohn as our resident Grinch—Ed.) (Story & Photo by Karen Kertzman)

