

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

March-April 2021



Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Slow Rolling the Season Opener!

I am very pleased to report that we plan to operate at both CHSL and ESL in 2021. Based on discussions with the Museum's leadership and the Operations Committee, we are plan to open the first weekend in July. While more information will be sent to you shortly, I am highlighting below some of the activities we're working on now to prepare for opening day.

Pat Cosgrove, our Volunteer manager and recruiter, has identified around 15 Operator candidates who are still interested in training in 2021 from the list he developed in 2020. Initial orientation and training meetings (using the Zoom app) were held the last weekend in March.

Dave Higgins and **Bill Pekarna** are refining the training program to take full advantage of online training options prior to moving to the in-person training.

Chris Heck has volunteered to lead PCC training. PCC recertification and new training will begin in late May.

Steve McCulloch is assembling his dedicated team to begin brush cutting and other maintenance activities along the right-of way to get our railways ready for the coming operating season. **Keith Anderson** is also looking for volunteers to help with basic track maintenance. (See box on page 4—new volunteers needed—Ed).

In addition, Chief mechanical Officer **Dick Zawacki** reports that streetcars No. 1300 and No. 322 are ready for service at CHSL and Duluth No. 265 is ready at ESL. While work continues on No. 78's controller, Dick estimates that No. 78 will be available for the start of the season in July.

In the next couple of weeks, I will send to all operating personnel who were on the roster in 2019 the recertification quiz and information on check rides, which will be required for all operators. At that time, I will also ask all operating personnel to express their interest and intent to operate in 2021. The results from this survey will help us establish the basic operating schedule for 2021. The bottom line is our schedules at both ESL and CHSL will be determined by our museum's volunteer members willing to operate. For special events **Rod Eaton** and **Karen Kertzman** have developed a reduced schedule that does not include some long-time favorites (e.g., Murder Mysteries, PJ Parties) because of decisions by our participating partners to opt out of these events in 2021.

Needless to say, the continuing impact of COVID-19 will be the primary factor in what we do and how we do it in 2021. Our operating plan and internal procedures will adhere to the regulations, policies, and recommendations of the State of Minnesota and the CDC. Our internal procedures are being developed by **Rod Eaton** and others and will be released once we are closer to the opening day and have a clearer picture of the prevailing conditions and health requirements.

As we look forward to the start of our 2021 operating season, and as we help each other with all the preparations necessary for a shortened operating season, I want to thank all our volunteers and members in advance for your continued interest and participation in our Museum, whether that involves cleaning cars, cutting branches, maintaining the cars or track structure, or operating. Be safe. ☺



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From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

We have a tentative date to restart streetcar operations. It's Friday, July 2nd. With the large majority of seniors now vaccinated, that means many of our operators are as well. In Minnesota, everyone over age 16 is now eligible to be vaccinated. Given the current rate, it looks like everyone who wants it will get the shots by sometime in early June.

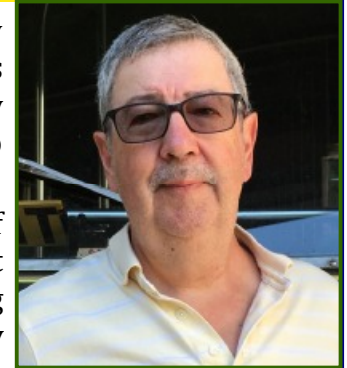
Starting back up after such a long hiatus is no small undertaking. It's part of the reason we won't start until July. We're all rusty, so every operator must recertify which will include a check-ride. That will take a month or two. The big unknown is how many of our Operators will return. Once we know how many people we have, the operating schedule will be set. Don't be surprised if it's less than we've run in the past.

At first we weren't going to train new operators this year, but that has changed and there are currently about a dozen candidates that have started the process. Thanks to **Pat Cosgrove** for coordinating the new recruits.

Only streetcars No. 1300 and No. 322 will be available at CHSL-Lake Harriet this year. The truck rebuild project for gate-car No. 1239 is progressing but has a long way to go. While that's happening, **Karl Jones** is doing significant work to backdate No. 1239 to the year 1921 and generally fix everything that can be fixed. At Excelsior we're hoping that Duluth No. 78 will be available to back up No. 265.

April will see the first big CHSL overhead wire maintenance project since it was installed in the 1970s. We've hired Kilmer Electric who did last year's wire project at Excelsior. They'll replace 19 rotted overhead wire poles, re-tension and tighten the wire, and add pull-offs between the poles on curves to better center the wire and eliminate kinks. That will reduce trolley wheel wear and the potential for de-wirements. Thanks to **Keith Anderson**, **Chris Heck**, and **Jim Vaitkunas** for making this happen.

Thanks to **Ben Franske** and **Karl Jones**, we now have video cameras monitoring the area around the George Isaacs carbarn at CHSL. The goal is to deter graffiti and other vandalism. Maybe we'll even catch a perpetrator. Video is being shared with the Park Police and posted on *Nextdoor Linden Hills*. Maybe the neighbors can ID the bad guys. 🕸



No. 1300 was out stretching her legs recently at CHSL for the first time in quite a while. While the move was somewhat utilitarian (a trash run), it was good to get the car out and spark along rubbing some of that rust off the top of the rails.

Here we see No. 1300 at the north end of CHSL's line at the Bde MaKa Ska (former Lake Calhoun) platform on Tuesday, March 30, 2021. (Rod Eaton photo)



Photo Update



(ABOVE) Jack Bacon, Russ Isbrandt and John Prestholdt are putting new rattan on a bench seat for gate car No. 1239. They're doing this to return No. 1239 to its early 1920s look that we're striving for. This seat will remain natural and will be varnished rather than painted, which TCRT began to do in the 1920s. (LEFT) Here's the new Baker heater in its approximate location in the cab of No. 1239. You'll get the whole story on that perforated shield around the heater's smoke flue in an up-coming photo supplement. (Photos by Dennis Stephens)



(LEFT) Twin City Rapid Transit had larger-than-normal trolley wheels which required larger trolley harps. The harp on the bottom is an original and the one on top is a plastic replica created by a 3D printer. We'll use the plastic harp as a pattern to cast a new harp in bronze or iron using the investment casting (lost wax) method. (Photo by Dennis Stephens)



(ABOVE) We have some of the window "screens" that were mounted on the "pole side" of TCRT's standard cars so passengers couldn't stick arms or heads outside the car. Recently Karl Jones put one on No. 265 to show what they looked like and how they were mounted to the window posts. We don't put them on our cars primarily because they're ugly and we don't have enough of them for even one car. Note the winter storm window mounted on No. 265 to the right of the screen. (Photo by Karen Kertzman)



(LEFT) No. 265 had de-wired running through a switch at ESL, and the crew of Dick Zawacki and Jim Kertzman are in the process of re-setting the retriever which pulled the trolley pole down when it de-wired. Resetting a retriever is a two-person job sometimes. (Photo by Karen Kertzman)

May-June -----CHSL & ESL new operator recruiting and training—schedule to be determined
 May-June -----ESL & CHSL Operator Recertification testing and check-ride—schedule to be announced
 July 2 -----Beginning of ESL's & CHSL's 2021 Operating Season (See MSM Website for Details)



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

Jim Vaitkunas — *MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief*

MSM's Annual Meeting. Our annual meeting of the Museum's members was held on Saturday, April 3, 2021. As in 2020, the member's annual meeting was conducted virtually using the Zoom application. The total number of Museum members attending was 41 members. The State of the Museum report was rendered by Chair **Aaron Isaacs**, and Treasurer **Chris Heck** and several other Museum officers and Superintendents gave their reports. The minutes of the meeting will be posted on the Museum's website soon. Check it out.

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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 952-922-1096

**Streetcar CURRENTS
 March-April 2021**

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 May 20, 2021.

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

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One statistic that came out of the annual meeting was that for the first time in over ten years, the Museum's membership dipped below 300 members. While we have no known reason for this decrease, I think it's likely that no operations in 2020 and we didn't conduct training for new Operators are, resulted in the decline. We hope that now that we'll be operating in 2021 that members will renew their membership and that we have a good training class in 2021.

Obituary. We regret to report the passing of one of our "behind the scenes" volunteers, **George Kotsonas**. George was a faithful operator for several years and more importantly he was one of our cashiers who collected our daily cash receipts at CHSL and deposited it in the bank. RIP George.



This was a TCRT motorman's office. In his case were the tools, transfers, forms, documents, and information he needed to do his job. Prominently positioned in the center is his changer. The extralong tube held tokens. This was a custom add-on, probably done by another operator as a side business. To the left is a transfer punch. As he issued each transfer he'd indicate—with a series of punches—the streetcar's direction and the transfer's expiration time, usually one hour after the furthest transfer point was passed. Bundles of transfers are to the right in the cover compartment. Also stuffed into the compartment are various forms and instructions; more are located in the big section bottom left. Hidden is a folder containing accident reporting forms. At the end of the day the motorman had to hand in and account for the remaining change and transfers he had checked out at the start of his run. The motorman's job involved a lot more than simply operating the streetcar. He was a small businessman in a big yellow trolley.

(Photo and caption by Aaron Isaacs)

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Since we will be operating this year, we'll need to start getting the ESL and CHSL grounds and the track in shape. Here's where we need some help.

Steve McCulloch is looking for volunteers to help with brush trimming and removal and mowing along the right-of way. We have all of the needed tools. Our mission is to keep mother nature away from the trolley and keep the grounds neat and tidy for our guests. Shifts are generally each week in the morning for two to three hours. You don't have to commit to volunteering every week. No experience is necessary. Interested or questions? Contact Steve at muck53@outlook.com or call him at 952-237-5095.

Keith Anderson is looking for volunteers to help with track maintenance. It's important work that includes tightening track bolts, driving down spikes and maintaining and lubricating track switches. It's not hard work and no experience is necessary. Tools are provided. If you are interested in volunteering for this work or have questions, contact Keith at keith.j.anderson@gmail.com

Remember, you can bring a family member or friend with you while you are on a work crew. We welcome all able-bodied volunteers!