

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

May-June 2021



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Opening Day is July 2

Operator recertification activity is underway!! With the first scheduled operating day in over two years less than a month away, recertification activity is in full swing. I would like to thank **Bill Arends, Todd Bender, Rod Eaton, Louis Hoffman, Aaron Isaacs, Jim Vaitkunas, Karen Kertzman,** and **Bill Pekarna** for their help in planning and executing the recertification check rides. At this point we have around 80 Foremen and Operators at both CHSL and ESL who have taken the recertification quiz and indicated a willingness to operate in regular and/or charter service. While the final count is not in, most of the 80+/- have completed or are scheduled to complete a check ride, which is required for all operating volunteers. If you are an Operator and cannot make one of the scheduled check ride dates, please contact me (bruce.gustafson@optum.com) to arrange one as we want everyone to be able to operate.



For PCC Operators **Chris Heck** and **Fred Beamish** will be leading the PCC recertification check rides, which will begin in mid-June. Separate communication has been sent with specific dates and times. As with the standard car check rides, sign-up will be through ShiftPlanning as a trainee.

At CHSL, POS recertification is required for all volunteers. This again will be led by **Rose Arends** for June 8-12. An e-mail has been sent to all CHSL operating personnel with the schedule.

Dave Higgins and **Bill Pekarna** are leading the new operator training class of nine trainees (7 at CHSL & 2 at ESL). As Dave noted in his recent training report, the smaller class size is probably a good thing given the later-than-normal starting date. Because of the smaller class size, Dave, Bill, and the ESL team of **Karen Kertzman** and **Todd Bender** will be able to spend more time with the trainees and get them into revenue service quicker. In addition, two of the trainees are very interested in working in our shops and other maintenance activities, which is a higher than normal percentage.

There are a few big changes in our operations for the 2021 season.

After many years of managing the Museum's charter operations, **Jerry** and **Muriel Olsen** have decided to step down from the position. I would like to thank them both for their time and great work efforts in managing a function that has generated a lot of income and goodwill for the Museum. **Karen Kertzman** and **Pat Cosgrove** have volunteered to take the charter reigns for ESL and CHSL, respectively. **Rod Eaton** and **Ben Franske** are collaborating to update the Museum's website and payment process to support our charter activity.

Due to the reduced number of volunteer Operators, the CHSL schedule has been reduced to 4 shifts per week – Wednesday afternoon, Friday evening, and one shift on Saturday and Sunday, with the Sunday shift using PCC No. 322. The schedule may be increased if there is sufficient volunteer interest.

In response to COVID and to ease the burden on the cashiers having to process cash, cash transactions are being discouraged. All merchandise purchases will be credit card only, which will also allow us to account the taxable sales easier.

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Finally, I would like to thank all of those returning volunteers in advance for their time and effort. For those of you unable to return this season, I look forward to working with you in 2022. ☺



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

As General Superintendent **Bruce Gustafson's** column relates in more detail, the wheels are in motion to start regular streetcar service on Friday July 2nd. As this is written, about 46 of our veteran Operators have been taken the recertification test and the check-ride. That's out of about 100 Operators on our CHSL and ESL rosters in 2019. Fewer volunteers means less service, so we're starting with operations only on weekends, plus Wednesday afternoons and Friday evening at Lake Harriet. ESL's schedule will stay the same as in 2019. Hopefully the number of days will increase as new operators graduate from our training program and our veteran Operators return.

The rebuilding of TCRT No. 1239's trucks took another step forward with the delivery of large new truck components. They were cut for free by **Jim Truax** at his Truax Company machine shop. **Truax** has been a great friend to the museum, also cutting truck parts for No. 1300 and saving us thousands of dollars in the process.

The CHSL overhead wire project is complete. Nineteen wood support poles were replaced. It turns out that only two were rotten. That's good news. We won't have to replace any more for years to come. We also discovered that the rot is concentrated in the first foot beneath the ground and not lower. We'll know how to examine them in the future. Our volunteer crew will make a few minor adjustments, but our overhead is in its best shape in many years. The good news is that the project came in under budget. The unused money will allow us to hire Kilmer Electric one more time to correct the sagging wire and incorrectly located frogs in the Excelsior carbarn yard, our last real overhead issue.

The wood platform at the Linden Hills Depot is built on top of the original surviving TCRT concrete platform. Why is that necessary? The federally-funded 2005 rebuild of CHSL's track unexpectedly raised the height of the track several inches and the concrete platform was too low in relation to the first step into the streetcar. **Ken Albrecht** designed and oversaw construction of the wood platform to overcome that problem. In the process he added the long bench seats, a nice amenity for passengers. Unfortunately portions of the platform are starting to rot out. The most recent are the steps on the north side of the depot. A crew including **Damon Riddle**, **Pat Cosgrove**, **Nick Mainguy** and **Karl Jones** has replaced them and made other repairs. We're likely to see the entire platform being replaced in the next few years.

Our outreach efforts continue. We've recently made available historic photos for a City of Coon Rapids streetcar display, and an ambitious online Stillwater history project. I've given Zoom talks to Minneapolis Community Education and the City of Columbia Heights. **Rod Eaton** and I are recording a series of presentations for posting on YouTube. 📺



The Kilmer Electric Company crew replaced nineteen overhead line poles on the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. They also adjusted the overhead and tightened it up, especially north of the William Berry Parkway bridge. There are still some adjustments to be made by our line crew led by **Chris Heck**, but with this work the overhead at CHSL is much improved. The informal 10mph speed restriction for cars headed south from the Lakewood Cemetery platform has been rescinded because of this work. (Bill Arends photo)

Goings-on at ESL and CHSL



(Left) At the Excelsior Streetcar Line a special birthday charter was arranged by the three sons of a 90-year old father. Here we see **Jim Kertzman** gives instructions before dad takes hold of the controller handle to operate the car. *(Karen Kertzman photo)*
(Center) **Carl Floren**, a member of the ESL shop crew, made a model of the Excelsior carbarn front to be used as a decorative backdrop for the model of a TCRT gate car built by **Bill Olson** (deceased). *(Karen Kertzman photo)*
(Right) The K-10 controller rebuilt by **Howie Melco** has been installed in Duluth No. 78. Wiring the controller has begun. *(Dick Zawacki photo)*



(Above Left) **Bill Pekarna** (right), one of our training managers, along with Training Chief **Dave Higgins**, is seen giving instruction on streetcar operating procedures to Operator trainee **Damon Riddle**. Right now there are nine Operator candidates in training. *(Photo by Dave Higgins)*
(Above Right) Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, all of our Operators had not operated a streetcar in 18 months, give or take. So, each of us had to re-qualify on the sequence of operations at both railways and re-familiarize us with the operational characteristics of our historic streetcars. In this photo, **Bill Arends** (left) is seen with **Erik Schwartzkopf** at the controls of TCRT No. 1300, our Museum's "mother car." *(Jim Vaitkunas photo)*
(Left) Time and weather has taken its toll on the Linden Hills station's platform, with some of the platform wood rotted. To get the platform back into shape and safe for use, a team comprised of **Pat Cosgrove** (right), **Damon Riddle** and **Karl Jones** and **Nick Mainguy** (both not shown) have been working on replacing the wood where necessary. Here we see Pat and Damon repairing the steps and the hand railings up to the platform. That's Lake Harriet peeking through the trees in the background. *(Rod Eaton photo)*

June-----Operator training and recertification continues
 July 2-----Start of CHSL's operating season with the 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM evening shift
 July 3-----Start of ESL's operating season



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

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

New Members. It has been a year since we recognized our newest members who have joined the MSM family. To correct that glaring oversight, here are our new members: Scott Briggs, William Doyle, Nicole Falk, Ginny Halloran, Sam Woolever, Randal Nord, Lori Dockendorf-Nudd, Christina Giese, Nick Mainguy, Geoffrey Meyer, Sara Sha, Brian Voss, Lisa Rottach, Robert Geiser, Damon and Carla Riddle, Anja Kuriskis, Bruce Chamberlain, and Joel Miller. 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:

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Streetcar CURRENTS
 May-June 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 July 20, 2021.

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

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Getting Ready for the 2021 Operating Season

The Covid-shortened 2021 season is upon us, and in the last few weeks MSM volunteers have been in the shop and out on the line getting both railways ready for the start of the operating season. Some of the critical tasks that need to be done each year is the maintenance of our infrastructure. Here we see one of our track maintenance volunteers **Paul Nelson** using his maul to get a spike back down where it belongs. On this particular day, the track crew consisted of Paul, **Keith Anderson** and **Pat Cosgrove**. Pat's and Keith's task this day was to tighten the bolts on the joint bars that join the two rail ends. (Keith Anderson photo)

Making Our Grounds Beautiful

One of the great things about our CHSL garden crew is their hard work to make our Linden Hills station grounds look beautiful. Here we see **Linda Ridlehuber** (left), and **Mary and Ben Porter** taking a quick break from their great work to make the garden across the track from the Linden Hills Station beautiful and one of the noticeable and notable attributes of our Museum. (Steve Mosborg photo)

