

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

August 2021



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Mid-Season Recap

With a late opening it is even harder than usual to believe that summer is more than half over. It is, however, a lot more fun than last year. We are continuing with an abbreviated schedule, but have extended the Wednesday and Friday mid-day service past Labor Day into October to see if there is public support for the extended hours. If the test is successful, we will look to repeat it next year.

I am pleased to report that early traffic reports show that the total system number of visitors for July is comparable to the July 2019 volume and revenue numbers. The results are particularly impressive given that we are not operating evening shifts Tuesday through Thursday and one fewer Sunday shift at Como-Harriet. Preliminary July ESL volumes are show a nice increase (20%) year-over-year increase. Interestingly, the number of season passes sold in July is more than double the 2019 sales, although this likely reflects the lack of sales earlier in the year.



As of July 30, we have 103 operation volunteers (including station agents and helpers), of which 60 have operating hours. The number of volunteers is impressive given the environment and is down only slightly (~10 people) from prior years.

Dave Higgins, Bill Pekarna, and Linda Ridlehuber continue to move forward with the new operator training. Of the nine new volunteers (7 committed to CHSL, 2 to ESL) who started the program six have completed the advanced training portion of the program, of which three are in revenue training and three have graduated and are fully certified.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a very talented and thoughtful group of volunteers. During a season there are numerous examples of where our members go above and beyond what is expected from a volunteer group. I am excited to relay a couple of recent examples.

The operations at Como-Harriet had quite a scare earlier in July as both the PCC and car No. 1300 had mechanical failures in the same week taking them both out of action and putting the entire CHSL operation at risk. Fortunately, thanks to the creativity and diligence of Mark Digre and others, the mechanical mishaps were quickly rectified resulting in no service cancellations.

Karen Kertzman at ESL passed this item on to me: "We all know it's the volunteers who make MSM great. Sometimes they make it amazingly great." After a shift as Foreman Denny Morrow was closing down the carbarn there was a knock at the door. Outside was a man who, with his family had earlier ridden the streetcar. The man handed Denny \$56 and said they had the greatest time ever and we should have charged them \$100. That says a lot about Denny and his crew. What an asset they are to MSM.

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As always, I would like to thank all of the returning volunteers for their time and effort and for making the Museum a very special place.

Be safe! 🚦





From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

Fifty years ago on August 28, 1971, our reborn Como-Harriet Streetcar Line made its first trip for the public. Our museum had been organized in 1962 to save streetcar No. 1300, which was slowly deteriorating on a siding outside the Minneapolis-Moline plant in Hopkins, Minnesota. It was trucked to the Minnesota Transfer Railroad's roundhouse in the Midway section of St. Paul, where a small group of volunteers cleaned it up, replaced rotted wood siding, installed a new canvas roof and went over the electricals. To power it they created the "goat", a hand-car carrying a gas engine and a 300-volt (DC) Duluth trolley bus motor. To everyone's satisfaction it ran.



In May 1963 they took No. 1300 out into the MT RR's Midway railroad yards and began running half-mile shuttle trips. The public, still nostalgic for streetcars, came out and rode by the thousands. Fourteen-year-old me was there and I remember everyone being amazed at what we had tapped into. That was when we resolved to become an operating museum.

That dream took years to achieve. We looked at sites all over the metro area. None panned out. Then in 1969 member **Paul Joyce** suggested we approach the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and ask if we could use the abandoned TCRT right of way at Lake Harriet in Southwest Minneapolis. The Park Board agreed to a lease.

The year 1970 was spent clearing the right of way, erecting the first single carbarn under the Linden Hills Boulevard bridge and starting to lay track. Why under the bridge? We were inserting a railroad into an affluent neighborhood, so we wanted to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Interrupted by winter, track laying resumed in Spring 1971. It was almost entirely done by hand, using surplus rails from the Minnesota Transfer. Milwaukee Road track foreman **Herb Pinske** had joined us, and he taught everyone the basics.

By June 9, 1971 the tracks had reached, but not crossed, 42nd Street. That day No. 1300 was trucked to Lake Harriet. The countdown to the projected August 28 start-date went as follows:

- July 10-11 — Fabricate track sections for 42nd Street grade crossing
- July 15-16 — Contractor excavates 42nd Street
- July 17-18 — Track installed in grade crossing
- July 19-20 — Grade crossing paved
- July 24-25 — Grade station area and lay down ties
- July 31-August 1 — Lay track in station area
- August 7-8 & 14-15 — Ballast, align and tamp track
- August 21-22 — Trim track and clean up
- August 28 — Dedication

Two years later the track had reached the William Berry Road bridge and the overhead wire was up. By 1977 the track reached its full length. A lot more has happened since then, and you can read about it in the next issue of *Twin City Lines*, due in your mailbox soon.

Fifty years!—we have a lot to be proud of. 🍷

You Are Invited to Help Us Celebrate 50 Years at Lake Harriet

As announced on the next page, we plan to hold a short ceremony on Saturday, August 28th at 4:30 PM. The ceremony will be preceded by a group photo of all MSM volunteers. We cordially invite all current and former CHSL & ESL volunteers to come and help us celebrate. For active volunteers, please wear your standard uniform and we ask that all who wish to be included in the photo shoot be at the Linden Hills station at 4:00 PM.

SAVE THE DATE
CHSL MARKS FIFTY YEARS ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 28th

By Louis Hoffman



On Saturday, August 28, 1971, Richard Nixon was president. The Twins and the Vikings played at Metropolitan Stadium. It had only been two years since humans set foot on the Moon. And seventeen years since the last streetcars ran in Minneapolis. Twin City Lines ran bus service with substantially the same fleet of buses that replaced the streetcars. At Lake Harriet that day, Twin City Rapid Transit Company streetcar No. 1300, powered by an engine on a cart, operated for the first time from the single-car Linden Hills Car barn to just across 42nd Street. The Minnesota Transportation Museum's first regular operations had begun.

Fifty years later, much has changed:

- The George K. Isaacs Car barn is a bustling complex. An extensive library and office augment the well-equipped, fire and security-protected maintenance and restoration complex stocked with supplies and tools and even the comforts of a bathroom with running water and a refrigerator!
- The line goes to the end of the existing right-of-way at the William Berry Parkway Bridge and then continues on a new right-of-way to the Lakewood Cemetery platform. No need for external power – there's overhead wire. A spring switch equipped passing siding allows for multiple car operations.
- The days of selling tokens on the platform and postcards from the rear of the car are also long-gone. The Linden Hills Station, a reproduction of the original 1900 station, is chock full of historic exhibits and souvenir items and tokens are sold by the magic of our POS system that's let us dispense with cash and cashiers! There's a boarding stop at William Berry Parkway and a platform at Lakewood Cemetery.
- There's a second streetcar line, the Excelsior Streetcar Line that runs on the old Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad's right-of-way from Water Street to Old Excelsior Road with a car barn capable of holding four streetcars and featuring extensive exhibits and a gift shop.
- The fleet has expanded too. Duluth No. 265 represents the Duluth Street Railway's fleet of Twin City Lines-built streetcars. Duluth No. 78 represents the first generation of electric streetcars in Minnesota. Twin City Lines No. 1239 represents the basic TCRT design as-built with rear gates. Twin City Lines PCC No. 322 represents TCRT's modern, streamlined era. Winona No. 10 and Fargo and Moorhead No. 28 represent the smaller streetcars that operated in a number of Minnesota cities. And Mesaba Electric No. 10 represents the few interurban electric railways that served Minnesota.
- The line has been rebuilt, expanded, and other physical plant and rolling stock improvements have been made with several rounds of Federal grants, foundation grants, and the strong support of members and friends.
- And, most important, several generations of volunteers have made this all possible, some of whom were there on August 28, 1971. What we've accomplished above is impressive. But what's most impressive is that it's all been done with volunteers.

And so we celebrate!

All members and volunteers are invited to join us at 4:30 PM at the Linden Hills Station for a fiftieth anniversary group photo. This will be like herding cats, so please arrive no later than 4 PM.

There'll be very brief remarks at the Station right after the group photo event at 4:30 PM, including recognizing our most senior volunteers.

Regular two-car service with No. 1300 & No. 322 will start at 12:30 PM and continue to 8:30 PM.

Ride—reconnect—and visit. Bring a lunch. Enjoy the lake. And celebrate. 🍴



It Began in 1954...



Photos of No. 1300 in the 1950s and early 1960s. All photos from MSM's photo archive.



TRCT No. 1300 is seen here while still in TCRT service on Como Avenue in St. Paul, ca. 1952.



It's June 19, 1954 and No. 1300 and No. 1775 are in the door of Eastside Station ready for the Minnesota Railfan Association's fan trip touring all the TCRT streetcar lines abandoned the previous day.



TCRT threatened to burn No. 1300 unless the car was removed from their property. Luckily, it didn't burn. No. 1300 arrives in Hopkins on its own wheels in a Milwaukee Road train from TCRT's Snelling Shops.



No. 1300 stayed outside for eight years at the Minneapolis-Moline plant in Hopkins. Most years it was covered with plastic.



In August, 1962 No. 1300 was trucked from Hopkins to St. Paul and placed inside the Minnesota Transfer Railroad's roundhouse. For the next year a group of men restored the car. Here we see No. 1300 resting on the roundhouse turntable.



July 1963, No. 1300 is ready for a run on the Minnesota Transfer Railroad's yard tracks in St. Paul. Note the portable power supply, affectionally dubbed the "goat," made up from a gasoline engine and a 300-volt DC motor from a recently scrapped Duluth trolley bus.



No. 1300 getting its monthly cleaning from young volunteer Augie. (Louis Hoffman photo)



On August 3rd, MSM volunteer **Ben Porter** chartered No. 322 and No. 1300 for his family. Besides streetcar rides they had a guided history tour of CHSL and **Aaron Isaacs** gave a narrated tour in the George Isaacs carbarn. (Mike Buck photo)



During Excelsior's Crazy Days festival, ESL creates a photo opportunity for our riders with an actual (almost) cow on Duluth No. 265's "cow catcher." Here we see crew Foreman **Elaine Love** with a family creating a lasting memory of their ride. Although Crazy Days was a quieter event this year due to the pandemic, ESL has had great ridership and sold a lot of merchandise. Thanks to all the MSM/ESL volunteers who filled all operating shifts.



Sunday July 26th was Motorette Day at ESL. Pictured are (L to R) **Elaine Love, Karen Kertzman** and **Mary Amsden**. The poster depicts TCRT Motorettes in action and Elaine, Karen and Mary had fun sharing stories about the role Motorettes played in the history of Twin Cities streetcar service.



This family, celebrating their Mom's 70th birthday, came equipped with a birthday banner for the family picture. It was a day of surprises for the birthday girl, which included a ride on the streetcar and a carbarn tour.

- August 19 & 25-----CHSL Streetcar Camp
- August 21-----CHSL Owl service. Streetcar rides from 9 PM to 12-midnight
- August 25-----CHSL last day for Wednesday afternoon service
- August 26-----CHSL Special Service honoring 101st anniversary of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution. The special Thursday streetcar service will feature an all-Motorette crew
- August 27-----CHSL last day of Friday afternoon and evening service
- August 28-----CHSL streetcar cleaning—9 AM to 11 AM. Family & friends are always invited
- August 28-----CHSL 50th anniversary celebration at the Linden Hills station-brief ceremony at 4:30 PM
- September 4-----ESL & CHSL Labor Day service

Join us at the Lake Harriet Depot August 26th with an all motorette crew. On the platform, learn how women's suffrage and motorettes are opposite sides of the same coin. On one side is the expansion of women's rights under the law. On the other side is the loosening of society's restrictions on the roles of women. There will be displays on the platform.

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—2021**

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor
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Deadline for submitting items for the next edition of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is August 20, 2021.

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

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Editor's Note. The flyer on this page, the 50th anniversary graphic on page 1 and the 50-year logo and pin shown on pages 3 and 4 were produced by our Museum's very own Rod Eaton. Rod really has the talent for making these posters and flyers and when you see him next, thank him for his great work.