

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

November-December 2022



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Wrapping-up The 2022 Season

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

The year 2022 has been a very good one for our Museum's operations. As we approach the end of the operating season (some of the Christmas events are not complete as of this writing) here's a summary of the notable results for this operating season: at CHSL ridership has been strong compared to 2021; at ESL ridership was comparable to 2019; the number of operations volunteers grew 10%+ year-over-year; and, special event activity, which has a significant financial impact to the Museum's overall performance, has been remarkably strong.

The ending roster includes 117 active operators. This compares to 103 in 2021 and 117 in 2019. Through the end of October, over 80% of the certified operators volunteered contributing approximately 3,450 hours. The 80% active volunteers are comparable to prior years. At Como-Harriet we ended the year with 91 active operating personnel compared to 81 in 2021 and 90 in 2019. A group of 13 volunteers—**Bill Pekarna, Rod Eaton, Bill Way, Mike Buck, Bill Arends, Patrick Desbonnet, Jerry Betz, Bruce Allyn, Pat Cosgrove, Andy Jacob, Linda Ridlehuber, Aaron Isaacs, and Louis Hoffman**—collectively contributed 50% of the total CHSL operating hours. At Excelsior we have 34 certified operating personnel compared to 27 in 2021 and 43 in 2019. Like CHSL a small group of volunteers (8) contributed 50% of the total operating hours at ESL. These individuals are **Karen Kertzman, Jim Kertzman, Denny Morrow, Mike Buck, Tim Gephart, John Knox, Gregg Thomas, and Ron Neitzel**.



A lot of volunteers make the special events happen successfully. The work goes well beyond the actual day of operation in planning, set-up, take-down, etc. For example, the Como-Harriet Holly Trolley event required: snow removal by: **Bill Arends, Patrick Desbonnet, Aaron Issacs; Linda Ridlehuber** arranged for the choir to perform; **Bill Arends** delivering Toys for Tots; **Louis Hoffman** coordinated with the boy scouts to operate concessions; **Patrick Desbonnet** helped with planning; and, of course, **Mike Helde** was our Santa on the Holly Trolley. Similarly, at ESL a strong group of volunteers created great memories at the North Pole Trolley event. Fifteen volunteers contributed to the event by organizing and successfully producing the fun family time with planning, entertaining, and operating. The volunteers included **Mary Amsden, Chic Anding, Todd Bender, Pete Cahill, Jerry Draeger, Tom Dulebohn, Tim Gephart, Rich Holz, Charles Karver, Karen Kertzman, Jim Kertzman, John Knox, Elaine Love, Gregg Thomas, and Eric Werner**. (Note: If you are interested - information on the Halloween special events can be found in the General Superintendent report to the November Board meeting. The minutes can be found at our website: [Organizational Documents | Minnesota Streetcar Museum \(trolleyride.org\)](https://www.mnstreetcar.org/organizational-documents)).

I would also like to recognize **Pat Cosgrove** and **Karen Kertzman** for a very strong year of charter activity and the new process changes they implemented. And a big thanks to **Bill Arends** and **Karen Kertzman** for working behind the scenes to support approximately \$25,000 in merchandise sales during the 2022 operating season.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the volunteers for a tremendous year, and on behalf of the Operating Committee, wish everyone a very special and joyous holiday season. 🍀

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From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

The year end financial picture. When the 2022 season began we didn't know if Covid would spike again, or how much of our ridership would return, so we budgeted more conservatively than usual. Thankfully, another shut-down didn't happen. We were able to hold the Halloween and Holly Trolley events at CHSL, and the North Pole Trolley at ESL, even with big crowds and the car windows closed. That makes a real difference in our annual income. Now the season is done and it was a pretty good year, certainly better than we first expected.

Chris Heck has given us notice that five years as Treasurer is enough and he will be stepping down from the position next March at the Annual Meeting.

Chris has done a terrific job and we're indebted to him. **Jim Vaitkunas** put out the call for a replacement and **David Downs**, a first year ESL volunteer, has stepped up. The Board has appointed him Assistant Treasurer and he'll work alongside Chris to learn the Treasurer job over the winter. It's a real luxury to have such an orderly succession. Thanks to both Chris and David.

In other financial news, the Board has hired a financial advisor, **R.J. Devick** of Bond & Devick Wealth Partners. A financial advisor is necessary now because we have funds that are surplus to our immediate needs. They're being eroded by inflation, so we can't let them sit in the bank earning little or no interest. We need to do more than buy low interest CDs. Risk and return are always a tradeoff, so we need professional help. The first step is to approve an investment policy, and that process is just starting. Once completed, it will give Devick a return on investment target and include any other instructions we want to give him. Look for completion around New Years.

More progress and new initiatives. The paving of the rest of the Excelsior carbarn floor is complete. The onset of cold weather delayed the exterior concrete apron until spring. The apron will keep water out of the barn.

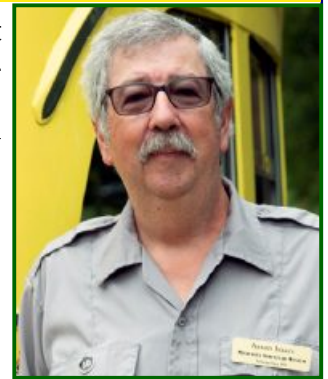
The old CHSL tower car is being donated to the National Capital Trolley Museum, located in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. Our fellow trolley museums try to help each other, and they don't have a tower car. They'll probably come get it next Spring.

A contractor has been hired to lay an underground fiber-optic cable from the Linden Hills station to the George Isaacs carbarn next Spring. The current wireless connection has had reliability issues and lacks the bandwidth to handle the communications load. This impacts the security system, among other things. Thanks to **Keith Anderson** and **Ben Franske** for running this project.

Two years ago **Ben Franske** installed a book scanner in the Russell Olson Library. After much Covid-related delay, the book scanning project is underway. Leading it is **Floyd Child**, assisted by **Sam Woolever** and **Mike Erdahl**. The purpose of the project is to digitize important and unreplaceable paper records. They're starting with the TCRT Schedule Department logbooks. Then they'll move on to **Russ Olson's** research papers, which are the heart of the collection.

Look for two other initiatives to get off the ground next year. For a long time I've wanted some sort of historic reenactor program. The idea would be for costumed reenactors to portray passengers from one of the streetcar decades. It would add another dimension to our experience. **Katie Barron**, her husband and some friends do World War II reenacting and they'll try it out at Como-Harriet.

Thanks to **Leah Harp**, **Steve Simon** and others, our outreach to the neurodiverse (autism) community has expanded and is becoming an established part of what we do. Look for more events next year. Inspired by this effort, **Anja Curiskis** is exploring something similar for hearing impaired people with American Sign Language interpreters. Stay tuned. 🎧



MSM Fall Operations Photo Ops at CHSL and ESL*Bear Bouwman photo**Aaron Isaacs photo**Bill Arends photo*

Our 2022 pumpkin patch at CHSL was another success and our neighborhood supporters turned-out in force to get their pumpkins.

(Above left) Here are the volunteers who did the behind the scenes work to unload the pumpkins at the north platform area. **Sonja Pekarna, Bill Pekarna, Anja Curiskis, Rod Eaton, Bill Arends, Nick Mainguy, Chris Hawver, Aaron Isaacs, and Pat Cosgrove.**

(Above) Here's a photo to the pumpkin patch taken from the north platform.

(Left) The pumpkin patch was a good place to take some photos. That's Lakewood Cemetery in the background on the other side of the fence.

*Rod Eaton photo**Dave Higgins photo*

(Above) **Phillip Brunelle, Nancy Nelson and Don Shelby** were our storytellers on this year's Graveyard Ghost Stories trolley. The event sold out quickly and these three each did an amazing job of reading and dramatizing spooky stories aboard No. 1300 in the dark.

Of special interest, Phillip told us he rode the Minnesota Railfans' Association's charter on June 19, 1954 (cars used were our No. 1300 and No. 1775, later scrapped) following the end of Twin Cities streetcar service. He would have been about 10 years old in June 1954. As a child, he rode streetcars downtown for piano lessons, knew the system by heart, and was adept at riding multiple TCRT streetcar lines on one fare.

(Left) **Don Shelby** is telling a scary ghost story to the folks aboard TCRT No. 1300. Don is a well-known and very respected Twin Cities radio and TV personality.

(Caption and photo by Rod Eaton)



Mary Jo Odegaard photo



Jerry Betz photo

Here are some of our stars at CHSL's Transylvania Trolley Halloween event.

(Above) Here we have "the Count," the star of the Transylvania Trolley. It's Karl Jones all made up to really look the part!

(Left) **Bill Arends, Rose Arends** and **Rod Eaton** were also dressed-up to look great for the Transylvania Trolley.



Bill Arends photo

The weekend after Thanksgiving and the first weekend in December, CHSL's Holly Trolley featuring Santa Claus was another success. TCRT No. 1300 was decorated by some of CHSL's volunteers and is shown at CHSL's north platform.

On the left is Santa Claus a/k/a our own **Mike Helde**.



Rod Eaton photo



Dick Zawacki photo

(Left) Over at the Excelsior Streetcar Line, this photo shows the concrete floor inside the ESL car barn being poured. In the photo the contractor's workers are spreading the concrete being pumped through the large hose. On the right, a worker is using a concrete float to smooth the surface of the recently poured concrete.

On the back wall note some strange looking things on the shelves and below the photo. On the left are electric meters that were salvaged from TCRT's main steam station at St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis. In the center, the unusual objects on the shelves are the decorative tops to TCRT's trolley wire steel support poles that were salvaged from a Minneapolis scrap yard that was being cleaned-out so the property could be redeveloped.

*Karen Kertzman photo*

Here's what the ESL carbarn floor looks like now that the concrete is hard. In the back corner of the barn is the ESL store, historical displays and above all that is the storage mezzanine. During the operating season the hinged stairs to the mezzanine are raised above the floor. And this part of the barn is full of streetcars.

*Karen Kertzman photo*

How's this for a Christmas present? A twenty-three ton interurban carbody! Mesaba No. 10 had to stay outside the Excelsior carbarn for over a week to wait for the concrete just poured on track #3 to cure.

*Karen Kertzman photo*

Here's a rare photo. All of ESL's rolling stock, except for Winona No. 10, had to move outside the "cold barn" to make room for the concrete work on track #3. From front to rear: Duluth No. 265; Mesaba No. 10; tower car; Fairmont speeder; supply wagon; and finally, Duluth No. 78. Winona No. 10 didn't have to be moved outside since it's in the shop portion of the carbarn.

*Karen Kertzman photo*

Here's the North Pole Trolley crew of volunteers ready for their shift to begin: (L to R) **Chic Anding**, **Elaine Love**, **Tom Dulebohn** and **Pete Cahill**. Good looking crew I'd say.

*Jerry Draeger photo*

(Left) It was fun having a variety of charters on the Excelsior Streetcar Line this season. There were wedding parties, surprise birthday parties, family reunions, and business gatherings to name a few. One of the most surprising charters was brought to us by MSM volunteer **Carl Floren**. Carl was featured in a commercial filmed onsite, with Duluth Street Railway No. 265 and a few other volunteers included in the action. Not too hard to guess who produced the commercial—Minnesota health care provider UCare.

(Caption by Karen Kertzman; photo by Jerry Draeger)

2022-2023 Annual Fund Appeal Is Now On-Going

Our museum ran its first streetcar in public service 51 years ago at Lake Harriet, and we began operating in Excelsior in 1998. From running one streetcar (TCRT No. 1300) in 1971 to five streetcars today, and making other improvements to the infrastructure at both railways, we achieved these milestones because of the generosity of our members and friends like you. We plan to continue the work of preserving Minnesota's electric railway heritage by focusing our efforts over the next couple of years on several priority capital improvement projects.

Extend the length of the Como-Harriet Car barn

The Como-Harriet Streetcar Line's George K. Isaacs car barn's unheated "ready barn" can accommodate two TCRT "standard" streetcars and PCC No. 322 with little room to spare. We need to extend the length of the ready barn to allow the museum to move one of the single-truck streetcars currently at ESL sometime in the not-too-distant future. This will then make room in the ESL car barn for the body of Fargo & Moorhead Street Rwy single-truck Birney No. 28. No. 28 currently is stored in a remote (and expensive) storage facility because there's no room for it at Excelsior. The plan is to extend the CHSL ready barn and make other improvements to the car barn complex, such as constructing a new "pre-fab" building under the Linden Hills Blvd bridge to increase storage space. The purpose for the additional storage will allow us to remove shelves, large streetcar parts and parts bins from the unheated ready barn that currently prohibits movement around a streetcar stored there.

ESL Shop Heater Replacement

At the Excelsior Streetcar Line we need to replace the second-hand and inefficient gas heaters (installed in 1998) in the heated shop portion of the car barn. Both heaters broke down in early 2022 with temporary repairs made to them at that time. It's clear that the old heaters have aged and need replacing. The contractor that made the repairs recommended that we install smaller but more efficient heaters for the car barn soon.

Replace The Roof On The Excelsior car barn

The Excelsior car barn building was constructed in 1997-98. While the roof on the car barn is only 25 years old, after inspection it was determined that the roof shingles need to be replaced within the next couple of years. The car barn has a large roof and this will prove to be an expensive job.

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** November-December 2022

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 25, 2023.

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

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E-mail: jvaitkunas@msn.com

Remember—your donation is fully deductible under both federal and state income tax law.

You were sent a flyer in November with a clip-off tab to return with your donation. If you don't wish to use that, or can't now find the flyer, you can donate by going to our website: <https://trolleyride.org/appeal>

Will you help? Thank you!

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 2023 issue. Publication date for the January-February issue will be on or about February 1st. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after that date please contact me at: jvaitkunas@msn.com