

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

March-April 2023



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Unlocking Another Great Year

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

As noted in other museum communications, 2022 was a really, really good year. Regular ridership, charters, and special events generally compared on par with our pre-pandemic activity of 2019. This puts us in a good position to have a strong 2023. Maybe it is the record snow fall, but I am excited to start the 2023 operating season, which is less than four weeks away—Saturday, April 29. We are again planning a full slate of special events, which contributes a significant portion of our operating income, enhancing some and adding a few new ones including participation in **Doors Open Minneapolis** and a trial event leveraging the skills of an American Sign Language interpreter.



There is a lot of work required to start operations safely and on-time. Highlighted below are some of the start-up activities that have or will begin shortly. Please note all requirements. If you have any questions, please contact me bruce.gustafson@optum.com

Recruitment, led by **Pat Cosgrove**, has identified a strong cadre of 20 potential operators that attended orientation meetings.

Training this year is being led by **Bill Pekarna**, who will be supported **Linda Ridlehuber**, **David Higgins**, **Andy Jacob**, and **Jerry Betz** at CHSL. At ESL **Karen Kertzman**, **Jim Kertzman** and **Gregg Thomas** will conduct training. The program will be similar to the last few years with basic streetcar operation training done as a group and final, line-specific training done by location.

Operator Recertification training/check rides will start in mid-April. **Bill Arends**, **Rod Eaton**, **Bruce Gustafson**, **Aaron Isaacs**, **Karen Kertzman**, and **Bill Pekarna** will provide the necessary training.

Fred Beamish has volunteered to lead PCC training.

Keith Anderson and **Miles Anderson** are planning to inspect and repair as necessary rail joints, switch points, and other track infrastructure to ensure readiness for the opening. Keith is looking for volunteers to help with this and ongoing track maintenance.

Jerry Betz and **Jerry Draeger** have volunteered to fill the open Grounds Foreman positions at CHSL and ESL, respectively.

Louis Hoffman is leading car cleaning at CHSL and is looking for some help to make sure the cars are ready for our guests. Car cleaning generally occurs on the last Saturday morning of the month. For April car cleaning will be on Saturday April 29.

In addition, **Dick Zawacki** has indicated that No. 1300 and No. 322 are ready at CHSL and No. 78 and No. 265 are ready at ESL. Thank you, Dick, and the CHSL and ESL mechanical crews.

If you are interested in training on the PCC or in helping for any of the activities, please contact the leader mentioned in the above paragraphs.

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In summary, it looks like it's a great year ahead and I hope you are as excited as I am to operate our cars or come and ride them. I would like to thank everyone in advance for their continued interest and participation in the Museum—whether that is cleaning cars, cutting branches, maintaining the cars or track structure, or operating. Be safe. 🚦



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

N*ew event policy.* Every once in awhile we find ourselves faced with a complicated policy decision. It happened this winter when a new event for Pride Week was proposed. Was this appropriate for us? The IRS has designated us a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit. The law explicitly says it's illegal to lobby for legislation or to be involved directly or indirectly in a political candidate's campaign. It is not illegal for us to be involved, or even to take a position on social issues or other political controversies. The question is, should we?

We never had a policy to cover such a situation, and it became clear that the Board would need to create one. What followed was quite a bit of discussion as we weighed the pros and cons of appearing to take sides on a social issue. In the end we decided on a guiding principle, "We welcome everyone, but we don't advocate."

Our mission is to preserve Minnesota's streetcar history and to educate the public on that history. Whatever our personal beliefs, it's not our mission to take an advocacy position on any political or social issue. We should be neutral. When the public thinks about us, it should be for our history work, not our politics.

Therefore the Board has approved the following policy for events.

1. To be approved, an event must do one of the following.
 - a. Educate the public on Minnesota's streetcar history.
 - b. Expand the museum's audience and public outreach.
2. Having satisfied one of the above criteria, an event should at least break even to move beyond the experimental stage.
3. Criteria for denying events.
 - a. The Minnesota Streetcar Museum will not be involved in any way in a candidate's campaign for office, or to lobby for legislation.
 - b. No museum events will be conducted on museum streetcars or grounds that actively or passively promote or can be construed to promote an advocacy position on a political or social issue.

To repeat, "We welcome everyone, but we don't advocate."

N*ew event for the hearing impaired.* On Sunday May 21 first shift, we'll try a new event for hearing impaired persons. This is an example of the new event policy that expands the museum's audience. An American Sign Language interpreter and an extra MSM guide will meet hearing impaired passengers at the depot at 1, 2, 3 and 4 PM. They'll ride the streetcar, get off at the car barn for a car barn tour, and return to the depot on the next streetcar. The goal is to give hearing impaired people an opportunity to better understand what we're doing and the history behind it. Thanks to [Anja Curiskis](#) for putting this event together.

There will be a second event later this year, but it will be structured differently. Instead of hourly tours, the interpreter will simply be available to help as needed. We're applying for a couple of grants to fund this event in the future. ☺

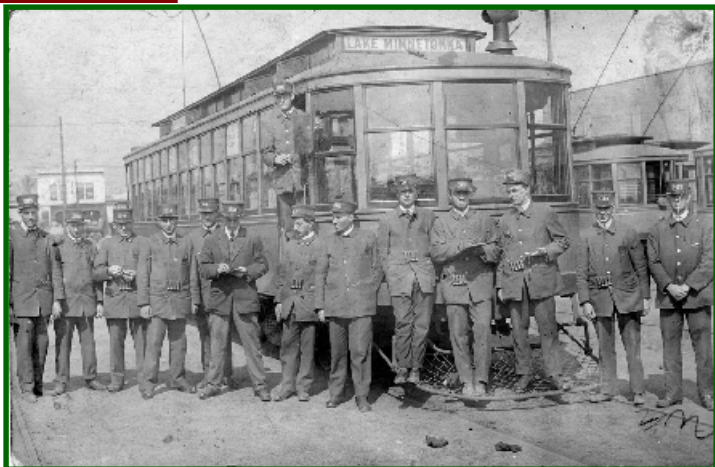
This is an unusual perspective taken some years ago of the streetcars on the Excelsior Streetcar Line. Lined-up and waiting for passengers to arrive are Twin City Rapid Transit No. 1239 built in 1907, Mississippi Valley Public Service No. 10 built in 1913, and the oldest car in the Minnesota Streetcar Museum's fleet, Duluth Street Railway No. 78 built in 1893.
(Caption & photo by Karen Kertzman)



Back In The Day!



Here we see some TCRT operating personnel in front of two standard cars. They are assigned to the Midway station on University Avenue in St Paul which closed in 1907. The destination sign on the car on the left reads MIDWAY STATION while the sign on the right reads MINNEAPOLIS & ST PAUL. TCRT referred to this line as the INTER-URBAN line, the first intercity line between the two cities.



Here are some LAKE MINNETONKA line crewmembers. Since the Lake Minnetonka cars operated out of Nicollet Station, that's likely where this photo was taken. But this isn't a regular LAKE MINNETONKA car as it doesn't have the "steam locomotive" style pilot that those cars had. The crewmembers hat badges show that Motormen had odd number hat badges while Conductors had even numbered hat badges.



You think this past winter was bad? Here's a St. Paul Southern Rwy interurban car on Second Street in Hastings. Brrrr!



A Mankato Electric Traction Company car is shown on Front Street in downtown Mankato. I'll bet it wasn't much fun operating a light single-truck car in these conditions.



Before and After. The line to Lake Harriet was improved in the late 1890s and on the left is a photo of a TCRT standard car at the Cottage City stop pre-1906. Yes, that's the stop that our historic Como-Harriet line streetcars pass each time on a regular run. When TCRT improved the old 3-foot gauge line to Excelsior in 1905-06 by building the double-track high-speed line, the company lowered the grade under the Cottage City bridge to allow the proposed double-deck cars to pass under. Note the large concrete footings in the photo on the right.

What's Happening?

- April 29-----Beginning of ESL's & CHSL's weekend operations
 May 13 & 14-----Special **Doors Open Minneapolis** weekend at CHSL—10 AM to 5 PM
 May 29-----Memorial Day operations at CHSL 9:30 AM to 8:30 PM
 May 29-----Memorial Day operations at ESL 10 AM to 4 PM—Veterans ride free with their family

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

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

MSM's Annual Meeting. The annual meeting of the Museum's members was held on Thursday, March 9th. The meeting was held using the Zoom application and over 55 members attended the meeting. The minutes of the meeting and the reports from the museum officers and other leaders will be posted on MSM's website very soon.

Patrick Desbonnet Passes. It's it with much sorrow that we report the sudden passing of Patrick Desbonnet. Patrick was a veteran volunteer with MSM and he quickly became an active operating Foreman. Pat also was active in non-operating, behind the scenes activities especially the Christmas events. He will be greatly missed.

Car Cleaning Volunteers are Needed and Very Important.

The first impression our passengers should get when they come to ride our historic streetcars is a clean, well-kept platform, a tidy station with a friendly station agent, and once they're ticketed, our lovely gardens and grounds. Then the streetcar arrives. Is it clean? Are there sticky fingerprints and snotty nose prints on the windows? Bits of popcorn and food debris on the floor?

Our streetcars at CHSL are cleaned on the last Saturday of each month from 9:00 to 11:00 am starting on April 29. This includes a mandatory one-half hour coffee break with a cornucopia of delicious baked goods!

Why am I telling you this? The truth is that two—yes—two volunteers is the typical turnout. This is usually supplemented by youth and their parents from our Car barn Club. So we clean the windows and seats, sweep the floors, and occasionally, get wood polished. The floors don't get mopped very often. And the brass? Not polished in years. We're lucky to do a basic cleaning of No. 322. And we rarely do the exterior.

If every operator came just once, our streetcars would look as clean as the day they came out of Snelling Shops and the St. Louis Car Company. Please consider helping out your museum.

And we extend a sincere welcome to any member and their family and friends to come and lend a hand. This important task is not only for our operating volunteers. Any member can help out.

If nothing else, there's a cleaning kit aboard each streetcar. Please use it to clean windows and wipe down seats as needed during your shift. And please, please sweep the car out as needed and always at the end of the day. Thanks! ☺

**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:

P.O. Box 16509
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**Streetcar CURRENTS
March-April 2023**

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor
 Bill Graham—Distribution

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