

# STREETCAR

## CURRENTS

August 2023



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

### Safety is Everyone's Business!

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Accidents do happen! The Museum has rules, policies, and procedures to ensure safe operations and avoid or minimize the impact of accidents, and these rules are continuously updated. The articulation of good safety practices are included in the museum's rule book, standard operating procedures, Foremen checklists, and operations and safety bulletins, all of which can be found on the members section of the Museum's website. New operators are extensively trained and tested on the rules and procedures to ensure they can safely operate following our rules. For returning operators we have relied on an operating rules test and, in the case of operators with less than 10 hours of service the prior year, an on-the-car check ride. There are lots of rules and procedures that are essential to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for the volunteers and the public and a few merit mention here, as there have been instances this year where they have been misapplied or not followed.



- Air brake test requirements.
- Procedures to put a car away in the car barn at the end of the day's operations or any other special movement.
- Crossing guard responsibilities at CHSL

If you are not familiar with the specifics on the rules governing the activities listed above, or any others for which that you may have questions, I ask that you first review the rule book, operations and safety bulletins and any of the other online materials. If you have any questions or need clarification on any safety rule, ask your Foreman or contact me.

We have been fortunate in that we have not had a serious accident in several years prior to this last month, when we had two streetcar incidents, which Board Chair **Aaron Isaacs** described in a recent email to you, our museum's members. The severity of the incidents has resulted in two significant actions. First, we are making the Safety Committee a permanent on-going working group. Historically, this group functioned in an ad hoc fashion to periodically review operational rules and procedures. Going forward this group, led by Superintendent for Safety **John Dillery**, will include **Mike Buck**, **Dave French**, **Steve Rush**, and **Dick Zawacki**. They will address safety issues immediately and revise and update policies, procedures, and rules this operating season if necessary. They will also work with the superintendents: **Bruce Gustafson**, Operations Superintendent; **Todd Bender** Excelsior Streetcar Line Superintendent; and, **Bill Pekarna** Training Superintendent. The goal of the group is to review current safety rules and procedures and, as necessary update current policy. The group also will insert safety information into our Operator training and recertification programs. The second change will occur in the Spring of 2024 as we prepare for the 2024 operating season. Any specific safety requirements, which will be finalized after this season, will be included and emphasized during mandatory rule and safety meetings for all Foremen at the beginning of the operating season.

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A renewed focus on safety will protect our historic streetcars, ensure our ability to continue running a strong operation and provide an enjoyable, family-friendly activity. As always thank you for your continuing interest and participation in the Minnesota Streetcar Museum. ☺



## From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

**M**ore artifacts. You wouldn't think there was more streetcar stuff left to find, but it keeps coming in. Recently Leah Harp was visiting Jackson Street Roundhouse. The MTM folks have been doing some house cleaning and gave her a big box containing thousands of TCRT streetcar transfers. They appear to have been collected by two long deceased trolley fans and museum members, **Gene Corbey** and **Art Rusterholz**. They must have gotten into the TCRT offices, because most of the transfers are pristine complete pads from the 1940s and 50s for most of the lines in the system. Among them are some real rarities circa 1900. There are so many of the complete pads that we're going to offer them for sale.



We recently were donated a number of original TCRT shop drawings that had somehow found their way to New Mexico. Among them is the plan for a streetcar fender, plus others on work car components. All are new to us. They've been digitized by **Floyd Child**, who is also working his way through scanning Russ Olson's research notes.

Although we try to stay on top of what's in the car barn, a pair of TCRT signs were recently found in odd corners. One is cast iron and warns the public to stay off the streetcar private right of way. Turns out there were five of these along our Como-Harriet line:

- north of the Linden Hills Blvd. bridge
- south of 42nd Street
- north of the pedestrian underpass
- in both directions at Cottage City

The shop crew has restored the sign and it will be mounted at the historic location south of 42nd Street. (See photos on page 4—Ed.)

Also discovered in the car barn is a wood sign that warns the public to stay away from a car house and car barn (station in TCRT parlance) yard. (See photo below—Ed.)

**T**alking to seniors. I've been giving history talks to senior citizen groups, four of them so far this year. The most recent was at Presbyterian Homes in Bloomington. The coordinator there liked it and passed my contact info onto all the other Presbyterian Homes. As a result I have five more dates scheduled. I'll also be speaking to the Sons of Norway Torsk Society and the Minnesota Historical Society. In every case I ask that an honorarium be paid to MSM, so it's a bit of a profit center.

It's fun talking to seniors who remember riding the streetcars when they were young. They share their memories and I learn a thing or two. The Bloomington talk was to their men's group. I asked how many of them had pulled the trolley rope to de-wire the car. About a half dozen raised their hands. Several remembered placing rolls of cap pistol caps on the track. They made a pretty loud bang when

the streetcar rolled over them. One guy admitted to putting .22 bullets on the track. Another proudly confessed that he greased the rails on the Xerxes Avenue hill between 46th and 47th Streets. Another told how he and his buddies would tie an old pair of shoes together, stand on the Linden Hills Blvd. bridge, and drop them onto the overhead wire as the streetcar was passing underneath. If done right with the string centered on the wire, the shoes would swing back and forth and knock the trolley wheel off the wire. Historic juvenile delinquency. I told them the statute of limitations had expired. ☺



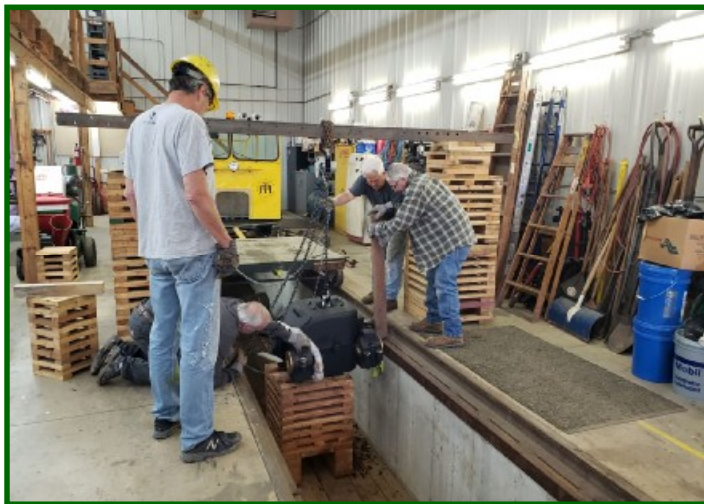
**MSM Photo Ops**



Duluth No. 265 celebrating fireworks on the Fourth of July.  
(Photo by Todd Bender)



It's like Christmas! After four-and-a-half years, Mississippi Valley Public Service No.10's motor is back. (L to R) Truck Driver, **Tom Heimer, Chris Hawver, Dick Zawacki, Carl Floren, Michael Kimitch, David McCollum, Howie Melco, Scott Wardrope, Jim Kertzman.**  
(Photo by Karen Kertzman)



Lowering MVPS No. 10's motor onto the cribbing in the shop pit. The challenge here was to align the motor to fit it in the pit so when No. 10 is rolled into the shop, the motor can be easily raised up to fit onto the axle and mounting brackets. The shop crew consisted of (L to R) **Carl Floren, Jim Kertzman, Howie Melco and Scott Wardrope.**  
(Photo by Karen Kertzman)



ESL celebrated the 80th anniversary of the hiring of the first TCRT Motorette which occurred in July 1943. (L to R) Motorettes **Elaine Love, Paula Callies, Mary Amsden, and Karen Kertzman.**  
(Photo by Jim Kertzman)

**Streetcar Maintenance is never ending!**  
It's hard and sometimes dirty work, but luckily we have volunteers in our shop who like it! This is senior maintenance tech **Karl Jones** underneath TCRT No. 1300. The car is over the pit in the George Isaacs carbarn, and Karl is in the pit doing one of those necessary maintenance tasks that are so important in keeping our fleet of historic streetcars in good mechanical condition. What Karl is doing is using a special lubricant on the electrical contacts located underneath the streetcar. Other necessary tasks that need to be done while the car is over the pit include lubricating the electric motor armature bearings, the motor axle support bearings, air compressor bearings and the brake linkages. It's tough work, but we're lucky to have Karl and others in the pit doing good work.  
(Photo by Jerry Betz)



- August 5----- Owl Service at CHSL—9:00 PM to midnight
- August 11, 12 & 13----- Streetcar Murder Mystery at CHSL—9:00 PM
- August 13----- Grandma's Day at ESL. Grandma & grandpa ride free with family—12-noon to 3:00 PM
- August 29----- **ALL ABOARD** event at CHSL for neurodiverse folks, their families and friends—5:30 to 7:30 PM
- September 4----- Labor Day special operations at both ESL and CHSL

**Our Mission: To Preserve and Educate**

Our museum's basic mission statement is included in the text box on the last page of each issue of this newsletter. Reading it reminds us of why our museum exists: to preserve Minnesota's electric railway history and to educate our visitors on that history. The most obvious way we do that is by restoring and maintaining our historic streetcar fleet and operating them for our visitors. We do that pretty well, but we also do other things to accomplish our mission and those activities are sometimes not noticed. Here are a few photos showing how we accomplish one aspect of our mission. ☺

**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](http://www.TrolleyRide.org)

The museum's business address and telephone number are:

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**Streetcar CURRENTS  
 August—2023**

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 August 20, 2023.

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Found in the proverbial "back of the barn," this is what we started with to restore the sign.



One of the signs is shown in the right center of this photo taken looking south on the COMO-HARRIET right-of-way at West 42nd Street. Lake Harriet is seen on the left. Judging by the shabby look of the streetcar, the photo was probably taken in the winter of 1953-1954. Streetcar service in the Twin Cities ceased in June 1954.

Here we see long-time member **Mike Miller** who is responsible for restoring the sign.



And, the final product looks great!



**STREETCAR CLEANING - MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION**

A reminder that we clean the streetcars at the Isaacs Car barn at 9:00 a.m. on the last Saturday of the month. August 26th and September 30th are currently scheduled. Dates to clean up after our Halloween special events and to prepare for our Christmas special events will be announced later. Doughnuts and coffee are served at 10:00 a.m. No experience or training needed.

By the way, we encourage and welcome our non-operating members and their families and friends to come and help us make our historic streetcars clean and ready for service. Many hands make for quick work!