

# STREETCAR

## CURRENTS

October 2023



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

### Thank YOU!

As we shift from the busy summer schedule to the special event laden fall activities, it's a good time to reflect on the 2023 operating season. The year 2023 has been a successful year, with robust ridership at both locations. We have a very strong contingent of operations volunteers (111) including a large group of newly trained Operators. Vigorous store and online sales continue to exceed expectations.

The Museum owes all of you a sincere "Thank You", because the Museum could not exist and would not be as successful as it is without you. The strength and dedication of the volunteers showed through in some of the following 2023 accomplishments and planned activities.



- MSM graduated 17 new operators and station agents. At CHSL **Britta Carlson, Marion Garcia, Jennifer Gascoigne, Andy Kockelman, Griffin Lawrence, Tony Lebda, Robert Leininger, Thomas Lind-Macmillan, Glenda Marsh, Tom May, Karen Noll, Ted Rich, Steve Rush, Faith Vickers,** and **Serge Zenisek**. At ESL **Ryan Hackbarth**. Thank you to the new volunteers and the training crew of **Bill Pekarna, Linda Ridlehuber, Jerry Betz, Andy Jacob, Dave Higgins, Jim & Karen Kertzman, Tom Dulebohn** and others.
- Thru September operated almost 3,400 volunteer hours. Special thanks to **Rod Eaton, Griffin Lawrence, Bill Way, Aaron Isaacs, Linda Ridlehuber, Bruce Allyn, Pat Cosgrove, Bill Arends, Mike Buck, Tom Lind-MacMillan, Jerry Betz, Tom May, Mark Mitchell, Louis Hoffman, Ted Rich,** and **Anja Curiskis** at CHSL and **Tim Gephart, Charles Karver, John Knox, Mike Buck, David Downs, Karen Kertzman,** and **Pete Cahill** at ESL, who collectively contributed 50% of the total hours at their respective operating railways.
- The mechanical crews at Como-Harriet and Excelsior did a remarkable job in keeping the fleet mechanically sound and safe. At CHSL the shop crew consist of **Jerry Betz, Mark Digre, Ben Franske, Karl Jones, Russ Isbrandt, Mike Miller, John Prestholdt, Tom Schramm, Dennis Stephens,** and **Jim Willmore**. At ESL the shop crew includes **Jerry Draeger, Carl Floren, Chris Hawver, Tom Heimer, Jim Kertzman, Mike Kimitch, Steve Mages, Dave McCollum, Howie Melco, Scott Wardrope** and **Dick Zawacki**.
- **Bill Arends** and **Karen Kertzman** who manage the store sales at Como-Harriet and Excelsior have helped generate almost \$20,000 in sales (including on-line sales of \$728), which represents a significant part of the museum's overall operating revenues.
- In its second year, the charter system managed by **Pat Cosgrove** for CHSL and **Karen Kertzman** for ESL continues to produce very strong results.
- Looking forward to the balance of the year, **Rod Eaton** has a full slate of fall activities including the return of Santa Claus. At ESL, **Karen Kertzman** is working on an event that doesn't require a large TCRT standard streetcar like No. 265.

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In closing, thank you all for your work and continued support of the Museum. It is through your hard work and dedication that our equipment and track operate well, our buildings and right-of-way look inviting, and our guests have an enjoyable experience.



## From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

**Excelsior insurance settlement finalized.** Earlier this summer we had an unfortunate accident at the Excelsior car barn. Duluth No. 265 hit the rear car barn wall, suffered major damage to its rear platform and punched a hole in the wall. Fortunately, no one was hurt. The issue now is repairing the damage and paying for it. Thankfully, our insurance will cover it. We contacted Lester Buildings, who designed and built the car barn in 1998. It was a pleasant surprise to learn that they had all the original plans. They prepared a proposal to repair the wall. The insurance estimator concurred with Lester's estimate.

Now it's a race to get the wall repaired before winter. ESL Grounds Foreman **Jerry Draeger** has been our contact with the insurance company and we've just learned that they will pay the claim. As this is written, the next step is to sign a contract with Lester to do the repairs. Also working on the project are **Karen Kertzman** and **Jim Vaitkunas**.

As part of the settlement we're receiving a payment to repair the damage to No. 265.

**A single landlord for CHSL.** Back in 2005 we discovered that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, our landlord since 1970, didn't own the former TCRT Como-Harriet right of way where we operate. The City of Minneapolis owns it. They bought it from TCRT in 1954 intending to build a road on it. That never happened (*thank God—Ed.*). The only Park Board land we occupy is under the depot, under the newest portion of the car barn (speeder shed, machine shop and library), and under our track from just north of the William Berry Parkway bridge to just south of the north end of the line. The northernmost 400 feet or so feet of track curves back onto the City-owned original right of way.

Since 2005 we've had separate leases with the Park Board and the City. Those leases have different end dates and contract language. With the Park Board lease set to expire in 2020, I approached both landlords to request that they somehow arrange for us to deal with a single landlord. Thanks to City Council Member **Linea Palmisano** and Park Board Planning Director **Cliff Swenson**, they agreed on a solution. The City would lease its right of way to the Park Board, who would in turn sublease it to us, along with leasing us the Park Board land we occupy. Thus we will have a single agreement with the Park Board. That makes sense, because we have regular operational dealings with Park Board staff, but virtually none with the City. It will extend our lease until 2043, with an option to extend for an additional 10 years.

Due to bureaucratic delay by the Park Board legal department, the new lease is only now being finalized. I'm about to sign off on it, then it has to be formally approved by them. It should be in place by the end of this year.



Work to repair the damage to Duluth No. 265 has already begun. Most of the work will be done by the shop volunteers at the ESL car barn, headed by **Howie Melco** (Left). **Scott Wardrope** is shown on the right starting the process of shoring-up the rear platform roof and removing the damaged woodwork. Built by TCRT in 1915 and numbered 1791, in 1916 the car was sold to the Duluth Street Railway and renumbered 265. The car was rebuilt in 1929 for one-man operation. When the last of the Duluth lines were abandoned in 1939, No. 265 was sold and set-up as a cabin in Solon Springs, Wisconsin. MSM rescued the car in 1973 and after nine years of restoration work, the car entered service at CHSL in 1982. In 2018 No. 265 was transferred to the museum's Excelsior Streetcar Line.

(Karren Kertzman photo)

MSM Photo Ops



(Left) A wedding party recently chartered Duluth No. 78 to take some photos to celebrate a couple's wedding. Here the wedding party poses for photos and a streetcar ride. (Karen Kertzman photo)



(Above) We recently had a charter for a group of "furrries," a group of people who like to dress up as a furry animal. (Leah Harp photo)



(Left) It's not what it looks like! **Howie Melco**, **Karen Kertzman** and **Dick Zawacki** aren't disagreeing with what **Chris Hawver** (left) had to say, they just got the signal that the newly installed speeder horn was about to be tested. (Jim Kertzman photo)



(Above) Work on rebuilding TCRT No. 1239's truck is progressing. Here we see **Tom Schramm** working on gringing out rough spots on two of the brake slack adjusters. (Aaron Isaacs photo)



(Right) Outside work is never done. Doing the behind-the-scenes work are **Bill Pekarna** & **Jerry Betz** (both not shown) who recently did some major tree trimming along the CHSL right-of-way. The new tower car was put to good use in trimming branches in the glen area of Como-Harriet that were getting too close to the overhead trolley wire. (Bill Pekarna photo)

**What's Happening?**

- October 14 & 15-----Farmer Jan's & Ken's **PUMPKIN PATCH** at CHSL
- October 21-----**Transylvania Trolley** at CHSL featuring the Count
- October 22-----All Aboard trick or treat for neurodiverse folks—10 AM to 12-noon
- October 27-----**THE LATE SHOW** at CHSL 7 PM & 8:30 PM—Reservations/ticket required
- October 28-----**STREETCAR NAMED EXPIRE** at CHSL—7 PM to 10 PM (no reservations required)
- October 28-----**Trick o' Treat** at ESL—10 AM to 4 PM
- November 24-26-----**North Pole Trolley** at ESL—12 PM to 4 PM Carols, candy canes, and letters to Santa
- Nov 25 & 26 & Dec 2&3---**HOLLY TROLLEY** at CHSL featuring Santa Claus
- November 26-----All Aboard for the Holidays for neurodiverse folks—10 AM to 11:30 AM
- December 2-----**Vinternatt** at CHSL—6 PM to 8:30 PM

**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 e-mail address are:

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**Streetcar CURRENTS  
October-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 November 20, 2023.

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HALLOWEEN IS COMING TO THE MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM. VISIT A PUMPKIN PATCH, ATTEND A COSTUME PARTY, TAKE A SCARY RIDE IN THE DARK, TRICK 'R TREAT ON WATER STREET. THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE THIS OCTOBER. FOR ALL THE DETAILS GO TO: [TROLLEYRIDE.ORG/SPECIAL-EVENTS/](http://TROLLEYRIDE.ORG/SPECIAL-EVENTS/)



This 1953 publicity photo shows the passenger-carrying equipment operated at the time by Twin City Lines. This line-up at Snelling Station in Saint Paul shows, from left to right, a General Motors GMC 5105 bus, a Mack bus, a Presidents' Conference Committee (PCC) streetcar, and a home-built Twin City Lines standard streetcar. The PCC streetcars would be taken out of service by the end of that year and sold to different operators in the United States and Mexico, and the standard streetcars would be

out of use the following year with the abandonment of all streetcar service. The Mack bus was added to the Twin City Lines roster as part of an order of buses in 1938, but it was not until a mass order of GMC buses in 1951 that allowed Twin City Lines to quickly transition to bus-only service. In 1951, General Motors offered to finance 525 buses, so the new management of Twin City Lines was quick to accept the financing and accelerate the conversion from streetcars to buses. Doing so allowed for Twin City Lines to reduce many costs of running the streetcar system, because a bus-only system meant no more track or overhead wires to maintain, no more street paving between and around the rails, and no more plowing snow at no cost to either city along the streetcar routes! However, despite the intense desire to get rid of the streetcars in the early-1950s, we now know the transit picture in the Twin Cities would once again incorporate rail transit with the opening of the Hiawatha Line (now Blue Line) in 2004, the Green Line in 2013, and now more lines in varying stages of planning and construction. (Caption by Brian A. Long; photo from MSM archives)

**Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule**

The **Streetcar CURRENTS**, is now in its winter publication schedule. Starting in November and until May 2023, you'll receive the **Streetcar CURRENTS** every other month. Publication date for the next issue will be on or about December 1<sup>st</sup>. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after that date please contact me at: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)