

# STREETCAR

## CURRENTS

January-February 2024



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

### Prep Time!

Bruce Gustafson—General Superintendent

To me this is always a fun time of year as our Museum begins its journey out of hibernation and develops plans for the coming operating season. While most of the Museum volunteers have been pursuing other interests over the winter, some needed work has been happening. **Dick Zawacki** and his team of miracle workers in both CHSL's and ESL's maintenance shops, have been busy making repairs and performing annual maintenance to the streetcar fleet. Additionally, the Finance Committee, led by **Dave Downs**, have developed operating and capital budgets that include the necessary funding for equipment maintenance, special events, and improvements to the Museum's physical plant. The fiscal year 2024 budget was approved by the Museum's Board of Directors in early January.



The MSM Railway Operations Committee is comprised of MSM's Superintendents and managers. Members are **Keith Anderson, Bill Arends, Pat Cosgrove, John Dillery, Rod Eaton, Aaron Isaacs, Karen Kertzman, Bill Pekarna, Jim Vaitkunas, Dick Zawacki**, and me. We will meet in mid-February to discuss plans for the upcoming 2024 operating season. At this point, I do not see any major changes for 2024 although the Committee will be reviewing key practices such as the Standard Operating Procedures, schedule, and safety protocols.

**Schedule.** The 2024 schedule will look a lot like 2023's with minor tweaks in timing. We plan to continue some activities which were successfully tested in 2023, such as the American Sign Language and Doors Open Minneapolis events as well as other ongoing contributors, including many special events like the PJ Party in partnership with Wild Rumpus Books in Linden Hills and the Streetcar Camps for kids. Due to calendar specifics, 2024 schedule operations will begin the first weekend in May (May 4th). Our regular full schedule will end on Labor Day Monday September 2nd, which is a week shorter on both ends compared to 2023. I plan to provide a more comprehensive view of our special events in a future Currents column, along with a more complete view of our schedule.

**Recruitment and Training.** Given the extensive recruitment success resulting from **Pat Cosgrove's** efforts last year, it looks like we already have a strong candidate pool for the Class of 2024. You may recall that last year we had interest from over 80 candidates, which is 2-3 times what we normally have seen and far more than can be considered for training in any single year. This year's training is again led by **Bill Pekarna** assisted by a good crew of trainers: **Katie Baron; Fred Beamish; Jerry Betz; Andy Jacob; Marion Garcia; Karen** and **Jim Kertzman**; and, **Linda Ridlehuber**. The group will meet in mid-February to adjust and fine tune the curriculum. For returning crew members, recertification training will be done as in past years. This year we will add focused Foremen training to reinforce key responsibilities and expectations. Training and recertification information to these groups will be provided to them separately.

In closing, on behalf of the Museum's leadership team I would like to thank you for your continued support of the Museum and your interest in making 2024 a great year.

**Thank you for all you do for our museum!**

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## From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

We can check some items off the MSM to-do list.

- For CHSL, the single landlord lease with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has been signed, so we're set until the year 2043.
- The damaged Excelsior carbarn wall has been repaired.
- The new ESL carbarn furnaces have been installed. Thanks to **Jerry Draeger**, **Howie Melco** and **Karen Kertzman** for making the latter two projects happen.

**MSM 2024 budget highlights.** This year is going to be a big year for capital expenditures, and we're going to draw down some of our cash reserves in the process.

Thanks to mild weather, our volunteers were able to remove the Linden Hills depot platform in December, so we're ahead of schedule on that project. As soon as Spring arrives we'll have a concrete contractor repair the deteriorated retaining wall around the east and north sides of the historic 1912 platform, and lay an extension at the north end of the platform.

Once that work is done, we'll replicate a portion of the historic 1912 canopy over the platform, from the steps next to the depot to the north railing. Finally there will be shade for our passengers and volunteers, and the whole setup will be more historically accurate. Thanks to architect and MSM member **Joe Metzler** for donating the design work and **Keith Anderson** for arranging contractors.

We're planning to replace another 150 or so ties at Como-Harriet. While the track contractor is there, we'll have them install a railed runoff ramp at the north end of the line.

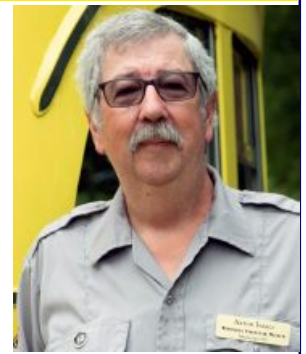
The truck rebuilding project for TCRT No. 1239 continues. The next big step is to get the gears made. Other funded projects include:

- Install window shades in Mississippi Valley Public Service (Winona lines) No. 10.
- Repair and upgrade the Water Street ticket booth at Excelsior.
- Contract tree trimming around the ESL carbarn.
- Convert ESL carbarn lighting to LEDs.
- Build a storage shed at the ESL carbarn
- Replace two ESL overhead wire poles.

Elsewhere in the budget, the CHSL groundskeeping is going all-electric. Thanks to **Karl Jones** for donating a battery lawn mower. That is being supplemented with a battery powered snow blower, chain saw, leaf blower, pole saw and weed whacker, all running off a common set of battery packs. **Jerry Betz** is doing the acquisition. **Dennis Stephens** is exploring converting the gas generator-powered tower car scissors lift to battery. The goal is to eliminate gas engines and gasoline from the Isaacs carbarn.

**Minnegazettes and Twin City Lines now online.** A trove of MTM/MSM history and Minnesota streetcar, railroad and steamboat history is now available on trolleyride.org under Historic Resources, then Publications. From its founding in 1962, the Minnesota Transportation Museum published a newsletter to keep its members informed. In 1970 the newsletter was expanded and renamed the *Minnegazette*. It turned into a slick paper magazine in 1981, and grew into an even bigger quarterly in 1990, featuring museum news, history features and lots of photos. With the advent of division newsletters, including the *Streetcar Currents*, the *Minnegazette* became history-only in 2005. MSM split-off from MTM that year, but both museums continued the *Minnegazette* as a joint publication.

(Continued on next page)



**(From the Front Platform—Continued from page 2)**

That ended in 2007, when I resigned as the editor and started *Twin City Lines*, a history magazine focused on streetcars.

Because the early newsletters and the *Minnegazette* document the 1962-2005 history of our museum, plus lots of other good reading, we wanted them available to the membership and the public. To accomplish that, **Dennis Stephens**, **Andy Stephens** and I scanned them some years ago. Now **Ben Franske** has posted them on the website for anyone to see, read and enjoy.

The 2015-2021 issues of *Twin City Lines* have also been posted. Please note that there will be a two-year lag so only museum members see new issues. It will be awhile before we can post the 2007-2014 issues because of a 2015 software change. Thanks to **Ben Franske** for finding an old version of the software so we can open the files. He set it up on an old computer in the Russell Olson Library and our University of Minnesota intern **Meghan Dziengel** is creating pdf's for the website. ☺



**(Above Left)** Fulfilling our museum's education mission, **Aaron Isaacs** is shown in January 2024 making a presentation on the history of Minnesota's streetcars to a group from the Minnesota Historical Society. *(Bill Pekarna photo)*

**(Above Right)** Out with the old and in with the new. Here we see one of the old furnaces in the Excelsior "warm barn" being removed (photo on left) and the new furnace being installed. The other furnace was installed as well. *(Jim Kertzman photos)*

**(Left)** Looking like new here's the rebuilt exterior to the Excelsior car barn. The door is new. Interestingly, in the process of rebuilding this portion of the car barn, a treated wood support column was found to be damaged by carpenter bees. Who knew there were carpenter bees! They can be a major problem apparently. Luckily the problem was identified and fixed so no major structural damage occurred.

*(Jerry Draeger photo)*

**Around the Museum**



(Above) **Dennis Stephens** is seen here working on one of the motor support bearings for TCRT No. 1239.

(Jerry Betz photo)



(Above Right) **Mike Miller** is giving the Linden Hills station sign a nice fresh look. (Aaron Isaacs photo)

Tokens, Tokens! This photos shows only a portion of the streetcar tokens recovered from underneath the now gone Linden Hills station's wood platform. These were dropped on the platform and literally fell through the cracks by kids excited to ride the streetcar. They'll be recycled into our supply for use during our operating season.

Note the two designs. Most are marked for the Minneapolis Street Railway and a few others are marked with an "S" for the St Paul City Railway, both subsidiaries of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company. (Dennis Stephens photo)



**Our Bookstore has Out-of-Print Railroad and Streetcar History Books For Sale**

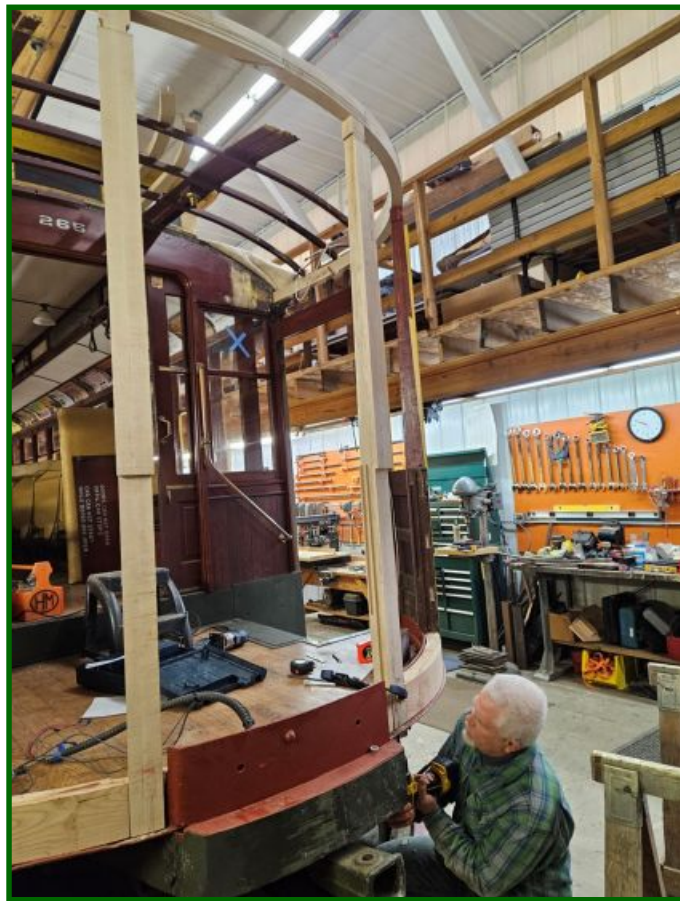
As you all know it takes a lot of revenue to maintain and restore historic streetcars. This revenue comes from a number of different sources—donations, grants, membership dues, fares and more. One of the other sources of

revenue is from MSM's Webstore merchandise sales. WHAT? We have a WEBSTORE? Yes, MSM has a webstore. And it has a good selection of pre-owned trolley and train books. Thanks to book donations by members and the heirs of former members, these books are available at very reasonable prices. Many of the books are in "like new" condition. To see a complete list of books that are available click here <https://trolleyride.org/product-category/books/> or go to the MSM website [trolleyride.org](https://trolleyride.org). Any books \$20 or more are shipped free.





(L to R) Here's **Jim Willmore, Mark Digre, Dennis Stephens** and **Russ Isbrandt** working on the truck for PCC No. 322.  
 (Bill Arends photo)



**Howie Melco** continued work on the repairs to No. 265's rear platform. The new top header board took over 80 hours to fabricate. A pattern was made by glueing the damaged pieces, big and small, together. (Karen Kertzman photo)



Here are three photos of the Linden Hills Station's platform canopy taken in 1954. The left and middle photos were taken on June 19, 1954 when the Minnesota Railfans' Association's charter toured all existing TCRT track that still had 600-volts in the overhead wire the day following the end of Minneapolis streetcar service. (St. Paul service was abandoned in 1953.) Our No. 1300 is shown in the left photo at the far end of the platform with No. 1775 in the foreground. Note the much wider stairs leading down from the platform in the center photo.

Taken a couple of months after June 1954, the right photo shows the platform canopy in the process of being removed. Note the pile of debris just below the concrete platform. That's what was left of the beautiful chalet station shown in the center photo. How sad! (MSM photo archives)

### Streetcar Operators Wanted

Are you interested in operating our historic streetcars? If so, our museum's 2024 operator training class will begin in late March, 2024. The class lasts about six weeks and the schedule is flexible. Requirements are the operator candidate must be a museum member, have a valid state driver's license and be in good health. If you are interested, you can express interest by filling out the volunteer form on our website. <https://trolleyride.org/about/volunteer/>

March ----- MSM Annual member's meeting—date and time to be announced  
 March-May ----- CHSL & ESL new operator recruiting and training  
 May 4 ----- Beginning of ESL's & CHSL's weekend operations for 2024



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

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

**M**SM's Annual Meeting. Our annual meeting of the Museum's members will be held in March, 2024. For this year the Board has decided that it's best to continue to hold the annual meeting using the Zoom application. It's easier to conduct and actually increases attendance at the meeting. The date and time for the meeting will be announced in mid-February.

**A**nnual fund. We have received many donations to our annual appeal for which we are very grateful. *Many thanks* to the following members and friends who have donated so far. ☺

**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:

P.O. Box 16509  
 Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509

**Streetcar **CURRENTS**  
 January-February—2024**

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor  
 Bill Graham—Distribution

Streetcar **CURRENTS** is published for the members and friends of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

Deadline for submitting items for the next edition of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is March 20, 2024.

Please send items to the editor **Jim Vaitkunas** to the following e-mail address:

[jim.vaitkunas@trolleyride.org](mailto:jim.vaitkunas@trolleyride.org)

- |                        |                        |                     |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
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**Kids' Club Help Wanted**

The MSM Kid's Club is a way for us to reach out to the community and get a younger generation interested in streetcar history and in our museum.

**Louis Hoffman, Rod Eaton and Leah Harp** are making club plans for this year and they could really use an extra hand or two with club activities, which includes the two streetcar camps we run annually. If you would like to be involved with the kids' club, send an email to Leah at:

[leahharp@gmail.com](mailto:leahharp@gmail.com).

**Streetcar **CURRENTS** Winter Publication Schedule**

The **Streetcar CURRENTS**, is now in its winter publication schedule. You've been receiving the **Streetcar CURRENTS** every other month since November. Publication date for the next issue will be on or about April 1<sup>st</sup>. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after that date please contact me at: [jim.vaitkunas@trolleyride.org](mailto:jim.vaitkunas@trolleyride.org)