

# STREETCAR

## CURRENTS

March-April 2024



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

**W**hen the minutes of our just concluded annual members' meeting is posted on the MSM website (*it'll be about 7-10 days—Ed*), please read it to see that 2023 was a very strong operating year. However on the downside, too many operational incidents occurred during the year that were caused by failure to comply with MSM's operating rules and procedures and standard safety practices. It was a wake-up call to the operating leadership that we have been too lax on communicating, training, and enforcing good safety policies and procedures.



**A**s a result we are committed to instilling a culture of safety throughout the museum whether our volunteers are operating a streetcar, performing maintenance on our equipment, working on the track and right-of-way, and in handling the 25,000+ guests we have each year. Safety, safety, safety. To that end we have launched several initiatives to start the season which we'll emphasize throughout the year.

**N***ew Safety Policy.* Led by Safety Superintendent **John Dillery**, the Safety Committee—**Dave French**, **Steve Rush**, **Jim Vaitkunas** and **Dick Zawacki**—have created a draft safety policy for the museum. I have reviewed it and forwarded on to the Board for approval. It contains both general rules and procedures, as well as specific requirements addressing the riskier activities conducted by Museum volunteers.

**R***ecertification Quiz.* The recertification quiz, which all operators are required to complete, also emphasizes safety. To ensure the key messages are communicated to all members I am making two changes to the safety quiz.

1. The quiz will be administered in person. All operating volunteers must attend an onsite meeting at CHSL or ESL to take the quiz. This is to ensure that everyone hears questions/answers and understands the context.
2. ALL operating personnel including station agents must take the quiz. While many of the questions do not apply directly to the station agent position, many of the questions relate to broader safety issues—both prevention and response.

**P***osting Safety Procedures.* **John Dillery** will work with leaders at both CHSL and ESL to ensure that key safety procedures are visible and available in the appropriate locations—on the streetcars, in the shops, or in the station and ticket booth areas.

**S***afety Meetings.* John and I will be sending out periodic messages to the Foremen to provide them with common messages and topics for the pre-shift safety meetings led by the shift Foreman.

**T***rack Work.* The Board has approved in our 2024 capital spending to extend the track at the north end of the Como-Harriet line to allow the track to run straight into the ground and eliminate the current drop-off at the end of the track should a streetcar not stop because of a brake failure.

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**F***OCUS.* If you see something, say something. Preventing or avoiding a problem is better than fixing one that has happened. Focus on knowing the rules and procedures. Focus on being watchful to your

*(Continued on page 4)*



## From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

### **SAFETY FIRST!**

**T**his year we're putting special emphasis on operational and industrial safety. Over the last few years we've experienced a series of incidents that should not have happened, and experienced volunteers were involved in all of them. It's time to take corrective action.

The goal is to create a culture of safety throughout the museum, and the first step is to formalize that with written policies and procedures. That means a formal Safety Policy that goes beyond the generalities in our rule book. Over the winter **John Dillery** chaired a committee that drafted the Policy. General Superintendent **Bruce Gustafson** has finalized it after a comment period, but it's a living document and will be fine-tuned as we move forward. It will soon be approved by the Board of Directors.

**T**he policy starts with the general admonition: "When in doubt, always take the safe course." That means when you're confronted by a situation, especially an unexpected situation, stop and think before you act. The goal should always be to prevent an accident.

**D**uring streetcar operations it starts with the shift Foreman. Before turning on the power, is the controller key out of the streetcar and the pole off the wire? When putting it away, is the power shut off, the pole off the wire, the wheels chocked and the brake control set to the front end? If a crew member did some of that for you, did you check their work?

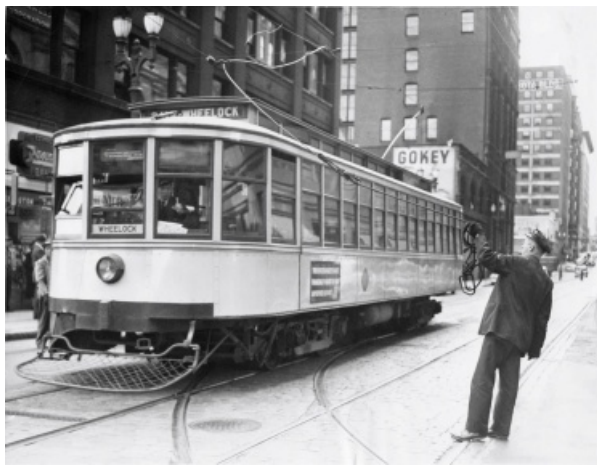
On the first trip of the day, did the Foreman look for branches on the overhead wire or obstacles on the track? Did they brief the crew on basic safety rules to reinforce them? When crossing 42nd Street, do the motorman and crossing guard both know how to coordinate so no pedestrian is hit? What do you do if the streetcar de-wires or overhead power shuts off unexpectedly?

**I**n the shop, did you remove any tripping or slipping hazards and properly store toxic materials? Do you wear eye protection when using machines or tools? Did you communicate with the other shop volunteers so everyone knows who might be working on a potentially risky project?

We're adopting specific step-by-step procedures for the riskiest tasks we do. That includes jacking up a streetcar, towing a streetcar, working on the tower car and climbing atop a streetcar.

**I**f some kind of accident does happen, what are the procedures for administering first aid, calling 911 and keeping passengers, volunteers and bystanders safe? You can't make this up on the spur of the moment. The necessary steps have to be prepared and taught in advance, and the info and tools to respond properly have to be readily available.

**B**uilding a safety culture is not an overnight process. It's one of continual reinforcement and improvement. I ask that you think about it, study the new policy and take the training to heart. 🕒



#### **SAFETY FIRST! How TCRT Did It**

The transit business may not be theater, but performance is still key, so the show must go on! Problems arise from time to time and it comes down to the training and proficiency of the employees of a transit system to keep service going as best they can. That is the case shown in this 1950 newspaper photo of a DALE-WHEELOCK streetcar at 4th Street & Robert Street in downtown Saint Paul. An overhead wire has snapped for a reason not made clear in the photo, but what is clear is an employee has been able to secure the wire to prevent it from making further contact with the rails, road, and streetcar. Clearly, the 600 volts of DC electric current in the line presented a lethal hazard, so Twin City Lines streetcar crews were provided with special equipment to safely perform the job shown here. The special equipment included a device with insulated handles to use in grabbing the live electric wire. The rope is also attached to an insulated portion of the tool, so the employee holding the rope is doing so in a safe manner. However, no one wants to remain in this position for long, so a Twin City Lines overhead line crew would be dispatched as soon as possible to make all needed repairs (Caption: Brian Long; photo: MSM photo archive).



Off-Season Work Continues



Work continues on Duluth No. 265. Volunteers in this photo are **Steve Mages, Jim Kertzman, Howie Melco, Scott Wardrope, Dave Buckman, and Jerry Draeger** (on roof) (Photo by Karen Kertzman)



Here we barely see **Jerry Draeger** working on painting the roof on No. 265. (Photo by Karen Kertzman)



**Howie Melco** is shown working on the rear controls for No. 265. (Photo by Karen Kertzman)



Here we see our intern **Meghan Dziengel** working on a project in the Russell Olson library. (Photo by Aaron Isaacs)



(Left) Here's **Jim Willmore, Mark Digre, Dennis Stephens** and **Russ Isbrandt** working on reinstalling a wheel on one of No. 322's truck. (Photo by Bill Arends)

(Right) TCRT PCC No. 322 is being put back together in the Como-Harriet car barn after replacement of damaged torque arms. **Mark Digre** tightens lug nuts on a wheel assembly sequentially to draw the wheel onto the hub and simultaneously compress the shock absorbing isolation pads. (Caption & photo by Dennis Stephens)





- May 4 ----- Beginning of CHSL & ESL weekend operations
- May 18 & 19 ----- Doors Open Minneapolis event at CHSL: 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- May 24 ----- Weeknight (except Monday & Tuesday) service begins at CHSL and runs thru Labor Day
- May 27 ----- Memorial Day operations at CHSL & ESL. Earlybird ops at CHSL begins at 9:30 AM.
- May 29 ----- Wednesday afternoon (1 PM to 4 PM) service begins at CHSL and runs thru Labor Day
- May 31 ----- Friday afternoon (1 PM to 4 PM) service begins at CHSL and runs thru Labor Day



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

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

**M**SM's Annual Meeting. The nineteenth annual meeting of the museum's members was called to order by Board Chair **Aaron Isaacs** on Thursday, March 28, 2024. The annual meeting was conducted using the Zoom application. For the vast majority of the meeting, 45 members were present. Reports using PowerPoint were rendered by the Board Chair **Aaron Isaacs**, Corporate Secretary **Jim Vaitkunas**, Treasurer **Dave Downs**, General Superintendent **Bruce Gustafson**, and Chief Mechanical Officer **Dick Zawacki**. Verbal reports were rendered by Chief Engineer **Keith Anderson** and Superintendent of Training **Bill Pekarna**. Two directors were re-elected to the MSM Board of Directors: **Ben Franske** and **Jim Vaitkunas**. After the meeting adjourned, an excellent presentation on the repairs to the trucks of TCRT PCC car No. 322 was made by our senior shop guy **Dennis Stephens**. The PowerPoint presentations used by those who rendered reports during the annual meeting will be included with the meeting minutes and will be posted on MSM's website within the next seven to ten days.

**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**  
**March-April 2024**

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 April 20, 2024.

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

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*(Focus- Gen'l Supt Column Continued from page 1)*

surroundings. Focus on prevention. Execute flawlessly.

**T**he process to start the season is the same as we have followed the last several years with the exceptions, as noted above, that the recertification quiz must be taken in person and station agent-only operators must also complete the quiz. Recertification requires completing of 3 or 4 steps:

1. Must be a museum member in good standing;
2. Must complete the recertification quiz (this includes station agent-only volunteers);
3. Must complete the POS training. This will be led by Rose Arends (CHSL) and Karen Kertzman (ESL); and,
4. All second-year Operators and those other Operators who operated <10 hours during the 2023 season must complete a check-ride.

Details on dates and times for the meetings and procedures on how to sign up for the check-rides and POS training will be given in the April Operations Newsletter.

**I**would like to thank all of you in advance for your continued interest and participation in the Museum. Your dedication and focus will lead to a strong 2024. ☺

**Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule Ends**

Starting with the May 2024 issue, the **Streetcar CURRENTS** will be published monthly until fall 2024. Publication date for the next issue will be on or about May 1<sup>st</sup>. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after that date please contact me at:

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