

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

August 2024



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Smooth Sailing!

As we glide through the mid-point of the regular operating season (excluding the fall/winter special events), the museum has performed almost flawlessly. I say “almost” as I don’t want to jinx anything. Seriously, we have experienced excellent year-to-date performance:

- 9,800 paid fares
- Strong merchandise sales
- Sold-out special events
- 111 qualified operators who have contributed approximately 1,500 hours at Como-Harriet and 440 hours at Excelsior—excluding around 350 hours spent training new volunteers
- 18 new operating volunteers
- Relatively few shifts were cancelled because of weather (rain and heat related)



Operational performance has been exemplary. We have not had any shifts cancelled for lack of crews and almost 90% (97 out of 111) of our qualified operators have volunteered. As a side note, the 90% participation rate is higher than 2023, which was 85%. At Como-Harriet we have had 74 of the 87 active operating personnel volunteer. A group of 17 volunteers including **Bill Pekarna, Bruce Allyn, Nick Orbe, Katie Barron, Elizabeth Gray, Ted Rich, Rod Eaton, Mike Buck, Pat Cosgrove, Louis Hoffman, Andy Jacob, Tom May, Aaron Isaacs, Griffin Lawrence, Anthony Lebda, John Stein, and John Dillery** have contributed more than 50% of the total hours. At Excelsior we have had 23 of the 27 operating volunteers operate. Similar to historical patterns, a small group of volunteers supplies most of the hours. This group includes **Tim Gephart, Karen Kertzman, Rich Holz, Mike Buck, John Knox, Ann Behning, and Dave Downs**. Note that we have a couple of operators volunteering at both locations.

I would also like to note, that we have had a very successful and smooth transition of the Special Events & Projects Manager from **Rod Eaton** to **Pat Cosgrove**. Special events are a significant factor in our annual revenues at both locations, contributing almost 20%. While I have mentioned this in prior communications, it has been in the last month or so that we have seen how successful that transition has been as the special events are held. Thank you both, Rod and Pat.

Finally, I would like to thank several of our operating volunteers for their organization and participation in outreach activities providing American Sign Language interpreters and neurodiverse friendly events and in the celebration of the Motorettes first hire held on July 6th. Some of those involved included **Leah Harp, Steve Simon, Linda Ridelhuber, Katie Barron, Marion Garcia, Hattie Harstad, and Anja Curiskis**.

Inside This Issue

<i>From the Front Platform</i>	2
<i>MSM's Special Events Photos</i>	3
<i>Coming Events</i>	4
<i>"ZED—we have a bat!"</i> <i>(with apologies to Men in Black)</i>	4

As always thank you for your continuing interest and participation in the Minnesota Streetcar Museum. Be safe. 🍀





From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

A major online history addition. I'm pleased to announce that all of **Russell Olson's** research papers are available on the MSM website. Let me put that in context for you. **Russ Olson** is one of our museum's founders and our first historian. His research into Minnesota streetcars goes back to about 1950. He worked for awhile at the TCRT 11th and Hennepin Avenue Main office building in Minneapolis. With TCRT motorman **Ed Nelson**, he dug through the files in the office and the shops and preserved a great deal of material that would otherwise have been trashed.



In 1953 Russ and Ed produced Interurbans #14, the first history of TCRT, also available on our website. Russ expanded his research to include all the Minnesota streetcars, interurbans and industrial lines. The result in 1976 was the 560-page book *Electric Railways of Minnesota*. Because historic research is never done, in 1990 Russ produced a hand-typed 154-page addendum to *Electric Railways of Minnesota*. Both are online. It didn't end there. Historic newspapers and trade magazines like the *Street Railway Journal* became keyword searchable online and a trove of great new information became available. Russ immediately explored it.

In 2015 we expanded the George Isaacs Car barn, and built the speeder shed, the machine shop and our first ever library, which we dedicated in Russ' honor. For his part, Russ compiled his research into 48 three-ring binders and donated them to the library. They are a precious resource and the only copy, so naturally we wanted to digitize them and put them online where they would be available to our members and the general public. In 2023 **Floyd Child** took on that challenge and recently completed it. Now **Ben Franske** has formatted them and linked them to our website. Go to the History button under Research Papers or <https://archive.org/details/msmolsonpapers> to access them. And thank you, Russ, for your great work. All the books and magazines I've produced have used your research.

History signs being replaced. Back in 2006, the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council gave us a \$750 grant to install a dozen interpretive signs along our Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. The idea was to mount an historic photo of the line so the viewer sees it and the present day scene from the same angle, with appropriate captioning. Now 18 years old, the signs have reached the end of their useful lives. Some have been vandalized beyond repair. New ones have been purchased and will soon replace the old ones.

A second sign project, also funded by the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council, placed the same type of signs along the 44th Street trolley path and right of way from east of Xerxes Avenue to Chowen Avenue. Thanks to the efforts of the late MSM member **Jim White**, there's an MSM-sponsored interpretive sign above TCRT's Selby Tunnel in St. Paul. Finally, **Anja Curiskis** is working through a long Park Board approval process to place three signs along the trolley path on the east side of Bde Maka Ska between 34th and 36th Streets. 🍀



History at your feet!

Next time you visit CHSL, take a short stroll to the north end of the Linden Hills station's platform. There you'll find the three manhole covers seen on the right. The two on the top are from the St. Paul City Ry Co and TCRT Co. The bottom one is from the St Anthony Falls Water Company. These were salvaged years ago and we now have a great place to display these unusual artifacts. It's a little known fact that TCRT had an extensive system of underground tunnels in both Minneapolis and St. Paul which were used for both A/C high voltage transmission lines and 600-volt DC traction power cables. (Photo by Aaron Isaacs)

Busy On The Lines



TCRT hired its first woman streetcar operators during World War II. MSM honored those early pioneers by scheduling an all-woman "Motorette" crew for both shifts on Saturday, July 6th. From left to right we have **Elizabeth Gray, Marion Garcia, Nattie Harstad, Linda Ridlehuber, Elizabeth Hauck, Leah Harp, Jennifer Gascoigne** and **Kattie Barron**. (Photo by Tony Lebda)



A sold-out **Summer Santa** returned to CHSL on July 30th for the second year. Santa (**Mike Helde**) was a very jolly host, entertaining with songs, stories, and HO-HO-HOs. (Photo by Rod Eaton)



Duluth started converting their streetcar lines to electric trolley buses (ETB) in 1931. Duluth-Superior Transit Company ETBs are seen here at the Superior Street garage in Duluth. Photo was taken on 8-7-54 and show ETBs No. 13 built by Twin Coach Co and Nos. 5 & 2 built by the J.G. Brill Co. (Photo by Ray DeGroot)



The ESL Shop Crew is shown stretching the canvas over the repaired roof on DSR No.265. From back left to right: **Tom Heimer, Scott Wardrope, Jerry Draeger, Mike Kimitch, Chuck Bingham** (on ladder), **Carl Floren, Howie Melco, and Steve Mages**. (Photo by Dave Buckman)



Foreman **Tim Gephart** (left) organized a charter for the Excelsior Heritage Preservation Commission. **Michael Buck** (in uniform) is talking with the commissioners following his historic streetcar presentation. (Photo by Jim Kertzman)



Passengers on ESL's July Story Time Trolley are shown here being entertained by Miss Debra. (Photo by Chic Anding)

What's Happening?

August 9, 10 & 11-----Streetcar Murder Mystery at CHSL—9 PM performance each night
 August 11-----ALL ABOARD! A special time for neurodiverse folks, families, and friends.
 August 15-----Streetcar Camp I for kids—9 AM to 1 PM
 August 15-----Story Time Trolley at ESL—5 PM and 6 PM
 August 17-----Owl Service at CHSL 9:00 PM to 12-midnight
 August 20-----Streetcar Camp II for kids—9 AM to 1 PM
 August 22-----PJ Party Trolley at CHSL—6 PM and 7 PM
 September 2-----Labor Day operations at both ESL and CHSL

Bat in the Streetcar!

Well, this was a first for MSM! We had a bat take a ride on one of our streetcars! Here are the details from **Katie Barron**, who was the shift Foreman during this unusual occurrence.

“The Owl Car shift (9 PM to midnite) on July 20th had an unexpected visitor join us while running to the Isaacs carbarn. As No. 1300 crossed 42nd Street, I heard an audible smack and thud, followed by hushed voices of “it’s on the floor.” I attempted to get a glimpse of what was happening in the mirror as we came to a stop, only to see something flying towards me in the glass of the windshield. I opened both doors but the bat flew up to the destination sign...and subsequently disappeared.

The passengers saw it fly up to the destination sign, I saw it fly up to the destination sign, but when fellow crewmember **Louis Hoffman** tried to coax the bat down with the broom there was nothing to be found. The bat was simply not there. This perplexed me the rest of the shift but no bat made an appearance in the car again.

Unfortunately the “smack” I had heard was the bat flying into the car and hitting a young woman, who was presumably on a date with her boyfriend. The thud was when the bat likely fell to the floor, stunned. Luckily the woman was not hurt, just stunned like the rest of us (bat included). This is clearly one spooky ride this passenger will never forget, and it’s not even Halloween yet.” ☺



Here’s Owl Car crewmember **Louis Hoffman** trying to “shoo” the bat out of No. 1300. The bat must have escaped because it was not seen again.

(Article and both photos by Katie Barron)

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 e-mail address are:

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Please send items to the editor at the following e-mail address:

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