



MSM Operations Newsletter

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RECAPPING 2024 AND PLANNING FOR A NEW (2025) SEASON

2024 was a good year. As noted in a following section, it followed patterns that we see every year – good, general participation from our operators, excellent revenue performance, and strong performance from special event and merchandise sales, which combined account for approximately 40% of our total operating revenue.

As usual, the start of the 2025 operating season will begin the first weekend in May (May 3), weather permitting. The Operations Committee (Bruce Gustafson, Keith Anderson, Bill Arends, Katie Barron, Pat Cosgrove, John Dillery, Aaron Issacs, Karen Kertzman, Bill Pekarna, and Jim Vaitkunas met on February 16 to plan for the 2025 operating season. While some issues remain open, the operating plan will look a lot like the prior year with a couple of exceptions as summarized below:

- To accommodate the large number of PCC operators and to address chronic challenges in filling the second shifts on weekends, we will test a second PCC shift on Sunday – so that both Sunday shifts will be PCC
- At CHSL, we will return to front door loading, rear door unloading
- Given low crew counts at Excelsior, we are looking for CHSL operators who are willing to spend some time at ESL.
- A sub-committee has been established to evaluate and update the Rule Book. Special consideration will be given to include a more robust policy on cell phone usage. This will be completed in March.

There are a few other small changes that will be highlighted in the next newsletter.

RECERTIFICATION

Details will be included in next month's Newsletter, but the basic requirements are listed below.

- All operators and foremen are required to attend a Foremen or Operator meeting at which time the mandatory quiz will be given.
- All second-year operators and any returning operators who did not operate for at least 10 hours in 2024 are required to complete a Check-ride. Others may sign up for check rides prior to the season start as time permits.
- POS training is required at both CHSL and ESL. Efforts will be made to combine training with other required recertifications.

START-UP ACTIVITIES

March	Line inspection and routine maintenance New operator orientation
April	Foremen/ Operator meetings Recertification quiz Check-rides POS refresher training

New operator training

May 3

Season begins

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to welcome back all returning Operating crew members. On behalf of the Museum's operations leadership, I would like to thank you again for your time and active participation in supporting our museum and with your help look forward to a great 2025 season.

2024 PERFORMANCE - GENERAL COMMENTS

- Staffing. 2024 followed two well-established patterns. 1) The Museum ended the year with 111 active operating volunteers, which is a comparable number that have operated over the last several years. The gains in new volunteers through a very effective recruitment and training process offset our annual losses. We are fortunate, however, that the majority of our volunteers serve for many, many years. 2) The second observable pattern is that a small cadre of volunteers supplies most of the hours. Year-over-year this group is also relatively stable with periodic exceptions due, generally, to aging out. We are again fortunate to have this group of dedicated volunteers.
- 2024 Performance. The results as captured by the POS system are shown in the following table. Total revenue of \$122,654 is, as expected, driven by ticket sales. As identified in previous reporting, what is notable is the significant impact resulting from special events. While we were fortunate to have good weather for our more popular events, the lack of a big car at ESL did have a negative impact on special events at that location. Merchandise also is a significant contributor to the overall revenues.

(Note the table does not include online sales or sales made at the Union Depot Train Days).

Category	MSM Items Sold	MSM Gross Sales	CHSL Items Sold	CHSL Gross Sales	ESL Items Sold	ESL Gross Sales
Charters	58	\$ 6,715	48	\$ 5,200	10	\$ 1,135
Donations		1,557	16	198	75	1,359
FARES *	19508	58,524	16630	49,890	2878	8,634
Passes	197	5,769	171	4,799	26	655
Merchandise		23,986		17,994		3,585
Special Events non-ticketed	2898	12,593	1967	10,455	931	2,138
Special Events ticketed	1343	13,510	1016	11,875	327	1,635
Total POS		\$ 122,654		\$ 100,411		\$ 19,141

*Note: Approximately \$2,000 of special events related activities are picked up in the standard fare POS account

2024 OPERATIONS

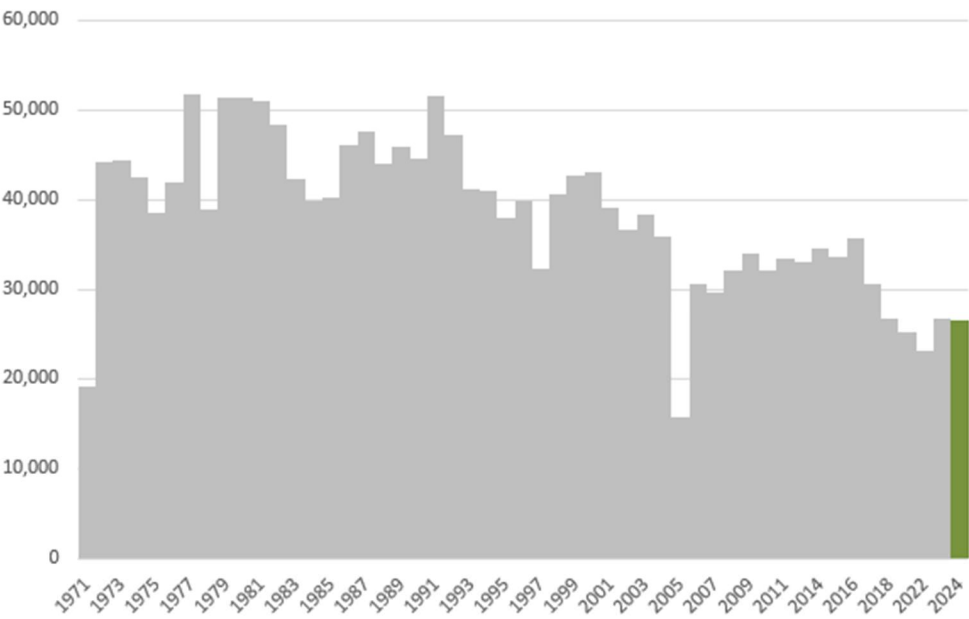
RIDERSHIP

The following two charts show trip sheet ridership, so may under-represent special events, but nonetheless show 2024 in perspective. Note that 2020 (cancelled) is not shown and that 2021 is, as a result of COVID, a partial year.

CHSL Annual Ridership

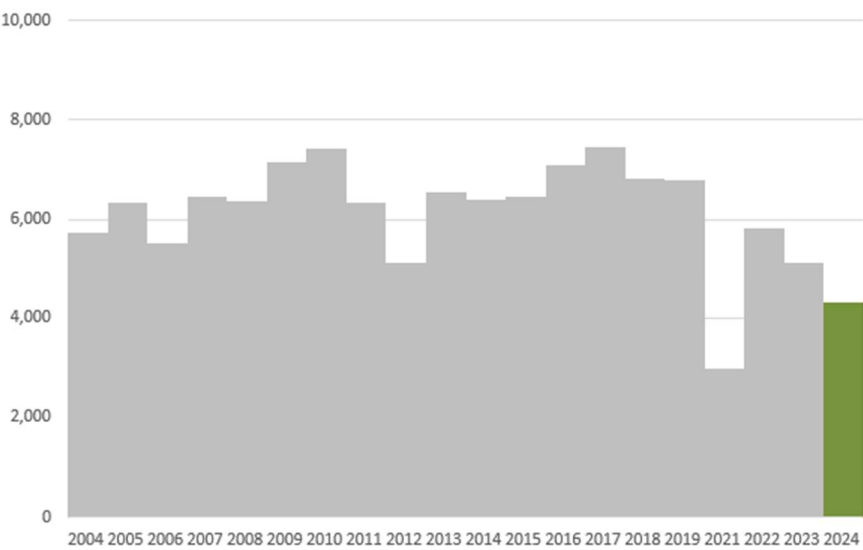
2024 had approximately 24,500 (trip sheet identified) riders, which as can be seen below, is comparable to the last several years.

(NOTE: I am using trip sheet ridership to enable a year-over-year comparison. Some events are ticketed and not included in these counts. The intent is to show “regular schedule activity”.)



ESL Ridership

2024 had approximately 4,300 (trip sheet identified) riders, which due to the car situation and the lack of Farmer’s Market volume is down slightly from prior years.



2024 SPECIAL EVENTS

The table below summarizes the annual special event activity for both CHSL and ESL. The impact of the car situation at ESL is most notable with the lack of activity for the Christmas related events. The success of the special events is shown with the significant bottom line contribution and the fact that most of the ticketed events sell out - many very quickly.

Two items of note:

1. Katie Barron has accepted the position as Special Event Manager and will be reviewing and coordinating the events for the coming season.
2. With low ridership and some neighbor complaints, the Operations Committee and Katie will be reviewing the Owl Service offering

		2024 Full Year					
		No.of Events	CHSL Riders	Revenue	No.of Events	ESL Riders	Revenue
Ticketed Events	PJ Trolley/ Story Time Trolley	6	365	\$ 1,825	6	219	\$ 1,095
	Streetcar Camp	1	18	882	-	-	-
	Summer Santa	2	107	535	-	-	-
	Streetcar Murder Mystery	4	166	3,156	-	-	-
	Spirits on the Streetcar	2	45	2,250	-	-	-
	Late Show/ Graveyard	3	133	2,347			
	Trick 'r Trolley/ Trolleyween	3	184	920	3	128	640
	Total	21	1,018	\$ 11,915	9	347	\$ 1,735
Non-Ticketed Special Events	Streetcar Named Expire		97	\$ 485		-	\$ -
	Owl Service		13	91		-	-
	Treat o' Trolley		-	-		803	1,606
	Ghost Trolley		-	-		108	432
	Pumpkins		282	1,974			
	Holly Trolley		1,394	6,970			
	Santa Story		136	680			
	Total	0	1,922	\$ 10,200	0	911	\$ 2,038
Special Events included in Fares	Pumpkin patch fares		637	\$ 1,911			
	Transylvania fares		291	873			
	All Aboard		147	441			
	Open Doors		703	2,109			
	Total	0	1,778	\$ 5,334	0	0	\$ -
GRAND TOTAL SPECIAL EVENTS			4,718	\$ 27,449		1,258	\$ 3,773

2024 ESL SUMMARY (Karen Kertzman)

Actual Ridership:

• Regular service	3,298
• Charters	455
• Special events	1,235
Total:	5,618

DSR No. 78 was the primary streetcar for the 2024 operating season. With a capacity of 28 riders, it provided challenges on peak days when passengers were waiting in line to ride. Three different times the crew was able to safely board 44 to 58 passengers (lots of little ones) for a fun ride.

DSR No. 265 returned for service in time for the busy fall special events season.

- Minnetonka second grades annual charter to ride the streetcar and visit the Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Excelsior Museum. 134 riders
- Excelsior Apple Days. 482 riders
- ESL StoryTime Trolleyween special event. 159 riders
- Trick O' Treat in Excelsior. A total of 803 riders in 5.5 hours. A record-breaking ridership event for the Excelsior Streetcar Line.

The Ghost Trolley Event was brought back after a 5-year absence. Attendance was low, 106 riders over 3 hours, but there was a lot of fun. The event will be re-evaluated for 2025.

The Water Street ticket booth was repaired and painted during 2024, offering our riders a fresh look at the original ticket booth from the old Excelsior Amusement park that closed in 1973.

2024 STAFF

QUALIFIED OPERATORS SYSTEM

The ending roster includes 111 active operators. This compares to 111 in 2023, 117 in 2022, 103 in 2021 and 117 in 2019. For the year, 89% of the certified operators volunteered contributing approximately 4,038 hours – which is comparable to the prior year. Two operators operated at both locations.

COMO-HARRIET

- At Como-Harriet we ended the year with 87 qualified operating personnel compared to 89 in 2023, 91 in 2022, 81 in 2021 and 90 in 2019. 76 operators volunteered time.
- A small group of volunteers contributed over 50% of the total operating hours. These included Bill Pekarna, Rod Eaton, Bill Arends, Bruce Allyn, Ted Rich, Katie Barron, Elizabeth Gray, Pat Cosgrove, Nick Orbe, Mike Buck, Louis Hoffman, Tom May, John Dillery, Andy Jacob, Griffin Lawrence, Anja Curiskis, and Aaron Isaacs.

EXCELSIOR

- At Excelsior we have 28 certified operating personnel compared to 28 in 2023, 34 in 2022, 27 in 2021 and 43 in 2019.
- Like CHSL a dedicated group of volunteers contributed 50% of the total operating hours at ESL. These individuals are Karen Kertzman, Jim Kertzman, Tim Gephart, Gregory Thomas, Mike Buck, John Knox, Rich Holz, and David Buckman.

STATION / MERCHANDISE (Bill Arends)

The following table summarizes POS sales excluding special events, charters, and shipping fees (for online purchases) for the full year 2024. Merchandise sales (excluding passes/ membership) represent ~20% of the POS activity. Year-over-year, merchandise sales increased almost 20%.

	2024 Full Year							2023 Full Year	
	MSM	POS		Union	Online	MSM %		MSM	MSM %
		CHSL	ESL	Depot	Sales				
Children Merchandise	\$ 6,555	\$ 5,268	\$ 1,248	\$ -	\$ 39	27%		\$ 6,380	31%
Artifacts/ Historic Souvenirs	1,964	1,509	140	40	275	8%		1,660	8%
Books	4,347	2,185	411	339	1,412	18%		2,863	14%
Ornaments	2,952	2,123	732	-	98	12%		2,516	12%
Jewelry	1,860	1,860	-	-	-	8%		1,420	7%
Candy	1,265	1,265	-	-	-	5%		1,222	6%
Clothing	1,193	902	219	54	18	5%		905	4%
Other Merchandise	4,128	3,160	836	-	133	17%		3,382	17%
Total	\$ 24,263	\$ 18,271	\$ 3,585	\$ 433	\$ 1,974			\$ 20,347	
Passes	\$ 5,769	\$ 4,799	\$ 655	\$ -	\$ 315				
Motorman Gift Certificates	\$ 380	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 380				

(1) Does not include fares, special event, charters, or shipping fees.

Online Sales

We continue to have robust online sales. Book sales (which are completely dependent on the inventory) were double the amount (\$700) received in 2023 for used books.

2024 MECHANICAL DEPT. SUMMARY— DICK ZAWACKI

CHSL CARBARN ACTIVITY AND STREETCAR STATUS

In 2024 the CHSL Maintenance Crew reported 2292 volunteer hours in support of museum-related activities. Eighteen individuals contributed to efforts related to shop activities that keep our streetcars operational. It appears people are doing a better job of reporting their volunteer hours this year. There will always be personal interpretations of what constitutes “volunteer hours”, so I encourage people to account for all the time they spend in support museum-related activities while not at the carbarn (e.g., buying materials and parts at a local store, writing a museum-related e-mail at home, etc.).

The CHSL crew’s major efforts in 2024 focused on finishing the repairs to TCRT 322 following the accident of July 2023. These repairs focused on damage found to both trucks after the accident. With a generous donation of new torque arms from Bill Wall of Shoreline Trolley Museum, the crew was able to upgrade both trucks on the car and repair some of the effects that 78 years of wear and tear (e.g., broken ground straps, worn parts, accumulated dirt, etc.) had on the car. The PCC returned to regular service in May 2024.

In addition to the “routine” work of maintaining the streetcar fleet to support daily events during the operating season, the CHSL Maintenance Crew worked on several other projects during 2024. Here are some of those projects:

- Came in early on several mornings to fix/repair/replace/adjust a failed part in time to get the streetcar running and support the start of a scheduled charter or revenue operation for that day.
- Finished tear out and demolition of the old wooden passenger platform at the 42nd Street Depot.

- Built the step boxes and railings for the revised 42nd Street Depot platform.
- Cleaned up and trimmed branches and vegetation close to our rail and overhead which interfered with cars operating safely on the line. (Thanks to the Minneapolis Park Board for their help when the crew couldn't reach some branches.)
- Cleaned and prepared the shop and related areas and served as docents for the Open Doors Minneapolis event in May.
- Installed and removed the pumpkin patch fencing for Halloween events. (Thanks again to the Minneapolis Park Board for supplying the fencing.)
- Recovered and painted several seats on TCRT 1300.
- Designed and ordered gears for 1239's trucks.
- Designed, procured, and started machining new journal bearings for 1239's trucks.
- Installed, wired, and modified security cameras in the depot and car barn.
- Repainted several signs.

ESL CARBARN ACTIVITY AND STREETCAR STATUS

In 2024 the ESL Maintenance Crew reported 3360 volunteer hours in support of museum-related activities. Thirteen individuals contributed to efforts related to shop activities that keep our streetcars operational. As at CHSL, the ESL crew is doing a better job of reporting their volunteer hours.

The ESL crew's major efforts in 2024 focused on finishing the repairs to DSR 265 following its accident in July 2023. Unlike TCRT 322, there was no damage to its trucks. Thus, repairing DSR 265 meant demolishing the rear vestibule structure down to the floorboards and completely replacing it. This included all electrical, pneumatic, and related lines. During the last few months of the project the crew scheduled two and sometimes three work sessions per week to speed up completion of the project. DSR 265 returned to service in September 2024.

In addition to the "routine" work of maintaining the streetcar fleet to support daily events during the operating season, the CHSL Maintenance Crew worked on several other projects during 2024. Here is a list of some of the major projects the crew accomplished and supported:

- Came in early on several mornings to fix/repair/replace/adjust a failed part in time to get the streetcar running and support the start of a scheduled charter or revenue operation for that day.
- Renovated (including repainting, repairing windows, upgrading the countertop, etc.) the historic Water Street ticket booth. This was done in cooperation with the Lake Minnetonka Historical Society.
- Cleaned up and trimmed branches and vegetation close to our rail and overhead which interfered with cars operating safely on the line.
- Built a new storage shed to store lawn equipment and other items that do not need to be stored in the cold shed.
- Replaced and repaired several exterior plywood panels and related trim on the warm barn with cement board panels.
- Replaced and strengthened the safety railing on the 2nd floor mezzanine in the car barn.
- Installed three new emergency exit lights inside the carbarn.
- Completely cleaned out the cold storage shed after the damaged east wall was rebuilt.
- Reorganized the equipment layout and materials in the cold storage shed.
- Completely cleaned out and reorganized equipment and materials in the shop.