

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

November-December 2025



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Thank YOU!

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

As we close a very successful season, on behalf of your museum's leaders, I would like to thank each of you for your commitment and participation in supporting our museum and its mission. As I have mentioned numerous times in the past, our museum could not function without the work you do, whether it is interacting with our guests or performing countless tasks behind the scenes. Your professionalism, courtesy, and respect for others make the museum not only a valued destination but also a fun place to volunteer.

From an operating perspective the numbers below reflect strong performance.

- We ended the year with 114 qualified operators/station agents, who contributed almost 4,000 volunteer hours.
- While the number of qualified operators is comparable to the last few years, what is special about 2025 is that 90% of the qualified operators volunteered. The normal participation is 84-86%.
- Not counting the Christmas events, we served approximately 20,200 guests in regular service (+3% year-over-year), approximately 1,100 guests in non-ticketed special events (+19%), and had several sellouts in our ticketed special events. Special event revenue was, unfortunately, down year-over-year due not having several events (Murder Mystery, Ghost Trolley Late Show and Summer Santa).
- We also ran over 80 charters, which was an incredibly strong showing +37% year-over-year.

Iwould also like to highlight a sampling of the activities and the volunteers who lead those efforts that are not always visible but are nonetheless critical to attract customers and provide an environment to operate the museum's equipment. There are too many names to fully list, but all your volunteer effort is greatly appreciated.

Marketing and Special Events

Charters: Karen Kertzman (ESL); Pat Cosgrove (CHSL)

Facebook: Brian Long (History Posts); Griffin Lawrence (Editor)

Kid's Club Manager: Leah Harp

Merchandise: Bill Arends (Manager), Rose Arends (Asst. Mgr.) Karen Kertzman (ESL)

Special Events: Katie Barron (CHSL); Karen Kertzman (ESL)

Community Relations ESL: Karen & Jim Kertzman

Mechanical

Chief Mechanical Officer: Dick Zawacki

Mechanical Projects Coordinator: Dennis Stephens

Shop Foreman: Dennis Stephens (CHSL); Howie Melco (ESL)

Car Cleaning Foreman: Louis Hoffman (CHSL); Eric Werner (ESL)

Engineering

Chief Engineer: Keith Anderson

Track Foreman: Miles Anderson

Overhead Foreman: Chris Heck

Power Supply Foreman: Ben Franske

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Grounds Foreman: Jerry Betz (CHSL); John McElmurry (ESL)

Building Foreman: Jerry Draeger (ESL)

Chief of Building Security: Karl Jones

Thank you again for all your hard work. Have a wonderful and safe off-season. I look forward to working with you again next year.





From the Front Platform—Updates on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

The runoff is done. In 2023, when PCC No. 322's brakes failed and it ran off the end of track, the abrupt drop onto the ground damaged truck components and made re-railing very difficult. We decided that the runoff area beyond CHSL's north end of track needed to be modified to minimize problems if a derailment occurs in the future. At the time we didn't know there was a voltage leak in the PCC wiring that allowed the battery to run down, which disabled the brakes. Now that we know, we can detect the problem and prevent it from happening again.

Project manager **Keith Anderson** and **Miles Anderson** worked with contractor Railroad Specialties to design a runoff that ramps down into high ballast, eliminating the bad drop-off and creating resistance to slow and stop the streetcar. The ballast is confined between a pair of guardrails. Their purpose is to keep the streetcar from shifting sideways so it can be re-railed more easily. The runoff was completed in October. A similar runoff was installed at the east end of the Excelsior Streetcar Line earlier this year. Hopefully they'll never be needed.



Long range planning session January 3. We haven't had a long range planning session in quite a few years and it's time to do it again. There are several upcoming projects that need consensus.

- **The future of Mesaba No. 10.** Over the last few years the ESL shop crew has cleaned junk out of the car, made the trucks usable and installed them under the car, which can now be towed. The body needs a great deal of work, but what is the final goal? Does it remain a static display or can it be returned to operation? I admit to a bias in favor of operation, because we have the trucks. I've seen a lot of worse bodies restored. Duluth No. 78 is a good example.
- **ESL carbarn roof and solar?** We know the Excelsior carbarn roof will need replacement in the next several years. When that happens, will it make economic sense to install solar panels? This year we budgeted \$8000 for electricity. We've done some research and the Excelsior barn has more solar potential than the Como-Harriet barn. From a PR standpoint it would be great to have solar powered streetcars.
- **A 4th streetcar to Lake Harriet.** Whenever No. 1239's new trucks are finished, we want to move Fargo & Moorhead St. Rwy. single-truck Birney No. 28 out of dead storage in Watertown, Minn. so restoration can begin. That means we have to decide on which of the single truck cars—Duluth No. 78, MVPS (Winona) No. 10, or Birney No. 28—goes to Lake Harriet. That in turn requires an analysis of the Isaacs Carbarn space to decide how best to accommodate a 4th car. Also, should an additional pit and shop area be created in the Ready Barn?

There will be an all-day, in-person planning meeting on January 3rd, involving the museum's Board members and managers. All attendees will be encouraged to weigh in on all the above issues, regardless of where they volunteer. So we're not starting from zero, I've asked the following people to prepare options in advance, to be distributed beforehand. They are:

- Mesaba No. 10 future: Dick Zawacki
- ESL roof and potential solar panels: Jerry Draeger
- Isaacs carbarn improvements: Dennis Stephens

Please start thinking about these issues and give Board members and managers your input. ☺

The run-off is finished! Located at the north end of CHSL, the run-off track will ensure that any future brake failures will not result in major damage to the streetcar's trucks. (Keith Anderson photo)



MSM Photo Ops on Pages 3,4 & 5



New meets old. Metro Transit is instituting a new Bus Rapid Transit Line from downtown Minneapolis to the south metro with some of the route operating on a portion of TCRT's COMO-HARRIET line. This photo was taken at the E-Line BRT stop with the BRT bus saying hello to No. 1300. (Metro Transit photo)



This season's pumpkin patch trolley was a success thanks to our volunteers. Here we see sometime pumpkin farmer **Bill Arends** with crewmembers **Brian Long** and **Katie Barron**.



This is a great photo of No. 1300 waiting for passengers for our Halloween *Streetcar Named Expire* special nighttime operation. This graphically shows how great the new canopy is for such nighttime events. Looks like the fellow on the bench has waited too long. (Aaron Isaacs photo)



Jerry Betz is on No. 1300's roof washing it. The roof will get painted this winter and that dirt and grime has to go. (*Karl Jones photo*)



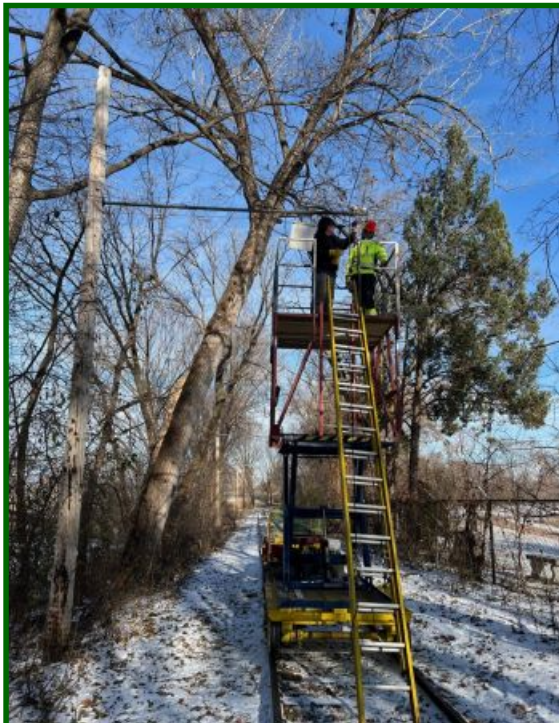
Santa Claus, a/k/a member **Mike Helde**, is at No. 1300's controller getting ready for the day of Christmas joy.



Santa is on the platform greeting the young ones on November 30th. Photo was taken by one of the video cameras mounted under the roof of the new platform canopy. (*Karl Jones*)



At the UofM's main campus loop of the Intercampus Line, a TCRT gate car is waiting for students. Ahead of the streetcar, one of TCRT's snowplows is clearing the track. (*MSM photo archive*)



(**Above**) No. 1300 is seen here in the snow on a Holly Trolley run. No. 1300 is electrically heated so Santa Claus and passengers were nice and warm. In the background is the Lakewood Cemetery and the end-of-track platform.

(**Left**) The week before the Holly Trolley event the support wire holding up a trolley wire support bracket arm on CHSL broke and the arm drooped down. The problem was quickly fixed by the overhead line crew of **Chris Heck**, **Jerry Betz** (shown on the tower car) and **Aaron Isaacs** (the photographer).



David Downs greets some of the 750 trick or treaters that rode on the ESL Ghost Trolley. (Karen Kertzman photo)



(L to R) **Mary Amsden, Elaine Love, Karen Kertzman** and **Sarah Dibble** comprised the crew for the new ESL special event "Witches Night Out." (Jim Kertzman photo)



(L to R) **David McCollum, Dick Zawacki** and **Steve Mages** hard at work in the ESL shop. (Karen Kertzman photo)



Carl Floren will shortly operate Mississippi Valley Public Service (Winona lines) No. 10 on ESL's track for further testing following the machining and adjusting of the brake heads and shoes. (Dick Zawacki photo)



All Dressed-up but no place to go! Duluth No. 265 was fully decorated for ESL's *Jingle Bells Trolley* event on November 28th & 29th. Unfortunately the event was cancelled because the streetcar's air brake system froze up. No. 265 is usually stored in the unheated portion of ESL's car barn and with the below freezing temps the metro had been having for the last week or two, moisture in the system froze and couldn't be unfrozen. (Karen Kertzman photo)

March ----- MSM Annual member's meeting—date and time to be announced
 March-May ----- CHSL & ESL new operator recruiting and training program
 May 2 ----- ESL's & CHSL's weekend operations for the 2026 operating season begin



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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief

Annual fund. We have sent out the flyer to all members soliciting donations to our Museum's 2025-2026 annual fund. Focus for this year's annual fund is repairs to the ESL car barn doors and improvements to the CHSL shop pit. Please consider a generous donation to our annual fund. Your support is really needed and most appreciated.

Obituary. We regret to report that **Scott Ingram** has passed away. Following service in the Air Force, Scott was employed for 30 years by Pitney-Bowes. He was a stalwart member of the ESL shop crew for many years and is missed. ☹

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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Streetcar **CURRENTS** November-December 2025

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 January 20, 2026.

Please send items for the Currents to:
jim.vaitkunas@trolleyride.org

Behavior on the OAK-HARRIET streetcar in 1947

Reminiscence by Bill Graham

When I was five years old, I learned it was fun to talk with other people riding on the Oak-Harriet streetcar, even if I didn't know them. The wheels squealed, the wind whistled through the windows, and sometimes one needed to speak louder so that older people could hear what I was saying. "You have to stay in your seat and speak in a low voice," my mother told me "or the conductor will put you off the car and you will have to walk home." It was plain she meant business, and I could imagine having to walk along the streetcar tracks all the way back home, maybe even in the dark. I probably would have to explain to my parents what I had done. That would be tough! And they might even take away my streetcar-riding privileges. That would be worse.

I began watching how other people behaved themselves on the streetcar. They mostly sat quietly reading their newspapers. Two or three women might be talking quietly, but most men sat by themselves sleeping. They were missing all those happy moments on the Oak-Harriet streetcar. Why would anyone doze off at a time like that? Besides, there always was at least one adult, probably someone's grandma, who would talk to me. So I lowered my voice and unloaded everything I had on my mind to the lady. Afterwards, I always felt better, and I've been talking with strangers ever since. And I learned that some people just didn't want to talk to me or to anyone else, either, and that was OK, too.

Lately, we hear about some people who don't behave themselves nicely on our Blue Line trains to the Mall of America. "So sad, too bad," as they say but it reminds me what my Mom, my Grandma, my Dad and others used to tell me about how I should behave myself on the Oak Harriet streetcar. "Don't make a fuss," they told me, "or the conductor might put you off and you'll have to walk home." Maybe we should have conductors on our Blue Line trains to remind us how we should behave.

TCRT No. 1473 just made a stop and is headed south on Xerxes Avenue, a few blocks west of our museum's Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. This is where Bill would have jumped-off the streetcar and walk towards his Linden Hills home. That hill in the distance is a 5.53 percent grade. There were seven grades on the TCRT system that were steeper. Imagine trying to get up that hill with frost or snow on the rails. Lots of sand on the rails was necessary to get up the hill.
 (MSM photo archive)

