

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

March-April 2026



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Welcome Back!

Welcome back! I imagine most of you like me have been anxiously awaiting the opening of the museum and the start of the new operating season. To me start of the streetcar season means Spring is here and the beautiful Minnesota summer is not far away. While most of the Museum volunteers have been pursuing other interests over the winter, critical maintenance and planning has been happening and the training and recertification work is about to start.

Mechanical. **Dick Zawacki** and his team of miracle workers has been busy fixing and providing annual maintenance to the car fleet. The Mechanical Dept. crew includes: (CHSL) **Miles Anderson, Jerry Betz, Pete Connors, Mark Digre, Ben Franske, Bea Funk, Russ Isbrandt, Karl Jones, Rob Mangels, Ian McCombs, Michael Miller, John Prestholdt, Daniel Phillips, Tom Schramm, Dennis Stephens, Ryan Tedjasukmana** and **Jim Willmore**; (ESL) **Dave Buckman, Jerry Draeger, Carl Floren, Tom Heimer, Mike Kimitch, Steve Mages, Dave McCollum, John McElmurry, Howie Melco, Scott Wardrope** and **Eric Werner**.

Training. **Bill Pekarna** is leading a talented team to train new volunteers and help enhance the skills of our existing operating members. Bill's team includes: (CHSL) **Scott Benson, Jerry Betz, Linda Ridlehuber, Anja Curiskis, Katie Barron** (PCC lead), **Andy Jacob** and **Marion Garcia**; at ESL **Karen** and **Jim Kertzman** are leading training with the help of **Gregg Thomas** and **Tim Gephart**.

Planning. The Operating Committee (**Keith Anderson, Katie Barron, Pat Cosgrove, John Dillery, Aaron Isaacs, Karen Kertzman, Bill Pekarna, Jim Vaitkunas, Dick Zawacki**, and me) met earlier this year to discuss and plan for the upcoming 2026 operating season. We made significant changes to the CHSL schedule, adding Thursday afternoon service, making Saturday PCC-only, and reduced weekend shift length from 4 to 3 hours. ESL will again be supporting Excelsior's Farmers' Market. Specific areas of focus, including safety, will be covered in the required recertification meetings in April.

Recertification. For returning operating crew, recertification will be the same as in the past few years. More details will be provided in an abbreviated operations newsletter. In summary: (1) All volunteers will be deactivated in Humanity/Shift Planning, so we can keep track of who has completed the necessary recertification requirements; (2) All operating volunteers must attend an in-person recertification meeting (CHSL or ESL). Station agents do not need to attend the meetings but are required to complete POS training led by Pat Cosgrove (CHSL) or Karen Kertzman (ESL); (3) All operators/foremen must complete the recertification quiz. This will be distributed and discussed at the recertification meetings.

All second-year operators and veteran operators who volunteered less than 10 hours in 2025 are required to complete a check ride. As was done last year, for CHSL you will be able to sign up for a check ride through Humanity/Shift Planning signing up as a "helper"; for ESL, please contact **Karen Kertzman** to schedule your check ride.

In closing, on behalf of the Museum's leadership team, I would like to thank you for your continued support of your Museum and your interest in making 2026 a great year.

Thank you for all you do! 🍀

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From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

Year 2025 in Review. The MSM Annual Meeting was held March 26. As always, I gave a State of the Museum report, which is summarized here. It's hard to believe how much we accomplished until you look back 12 months.

2025 Accomplishments

Como-Harriet Streetcar Line

- Depot platform concrete repaired
- Depot canopy constructed
- 1239 wheels, axles and gears received
- North end of line runoff completed
- Radios replaced
- 1300's air compressor replaced, some siding replaced, roof painted
- TCRT "No Trespassing" sign restored
- Car barn computer replaced
- New depot and north platform signs
- Depot benches repaired and painted



Excelsior Streetcar Line

- Solar-powered electricity to Water Street ticket booth
- Car barn lighting replaced with LEDs
- Ties replaced and end of line runoff constructed
- Car barn bathroom rebuilt
- Car barn pit covers and stairs built

History Resources

- 171 new photos and artifacts catalogued into the database. Total now is 14,895
- Website history pages updated
- Streetcar history Zoom group started
- CHSL history signs along the CHSL line replaced
- Dick Stoner streetcar models purchased
- Express boat Minnehaha model installed at ESL
- Stillwater Street Ry. history researched
- Motorette booklet published

Personnel Changes. There is always turnover. My thanks to those who filled these jobs and have retired, and to those who have stepped up to replace them.

- Special Events Coordinator: Pat Cosgrove to Katie Barron
- Facebook editor: Griffin Lawrence to Sarah Dibble
- CHSL Grounds Foreman: Jerry Betz to Tony Lebda
- Insurance Manager: Jim Vaitkunas to Tim Gephart
- Scott Benson to Streetcar Foreman
- Jerry Draeger to Assistant Chief Engineer
- Eric Werner to ESL Car Cleaning Foreman

(Continued on bottom of next page)



End of an Era. The battery-powered speeder, built by **George Isaacs** and company in the 1970s, heads to ESL to continue its service. **Tom Schramm** is at the trailer. **Karl Jones** is throwing the speeder shed switch. *(Dennis Stephens photo)*



Looking Good. All of TCRT's standard streetcars had roofs of stretched canvas painted in the familiar red color. Needless to say, these had to be replaced periodically, with cleaning and painting in between major overhauls at Snelling Shops. **Karl Jones** led a CHSL team to paint the roof so it'll last for a few more years. *(Jerry Betz photo)*



The ESL carbarn has a new set of doors! The old ones were difficult to operate and were in danger of falling off the roller track. These new ones are easier to operate, more secure and let some light into the unheated part of the carbarn. *(Karen Kertzman photo)*



New Pit Covers. ESL's shop area has a pit and new covers have been fabricated as an important safety measure. The pit covers are reinforced so a person can walk on them. The yellow thing is the top of the steps down into the pit. *(Photo by Karen Kertzman)*

(From The Front Platform Continued from page 2)

The Year Ahead. Planning and implementation has already started on the capital projects identified in January's long range planning meeting. First to be accomplished is the replacement of the Excelsior carbarn doors, perhaps by the time you read this. Thanks to **Jerry Draeger** for leading that project. Planning is underway to replace the ESL carbarn roof, and extend the shop pit at CHSL, as well as a series of smaller projects.

The Motorette booklet. We have a new item to sell. A new booklet in the Twin City Lines magazine format tells the story of the World War II motorettes and the other women streetcar pioneers. It's for sale for \$5 at the Linden Hills depot, the Excelsior carbarn and the online store. ☺

**Motorettes
Minnesota's Streetcar Women**

March-April-----CHSL & ESL new operator recruiting and training
 April 25 -----CHSL Streetcar cleaning session—9 AM to 12-noon
 May 2-----Beginning of ESL's & CHSL's weekend operations
 May 9 & 10-----Doors Open Minneapolis—CHSL carbarn tours 10 AM to 5 PM on both days
 May 25 (Memorial Day) -- Operations at CHSL & ESL. At CHSL, shuttle service to Lakewood cemetery starts at 9:30 AM



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

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

Membership Renewal. This is a busy time of year for renewing memberships. Please renew as soon as possible after receiving your notice in the mail. Save the museum the postage (and time) for sending you a second notice! Thanks! *(Barb Gacek, Member Services Manager)*

RIP. **Dave Ferch** volunteered with our museum back in the middle-1970's. He was a regular on the crew at the old Northern Pacific Como Shops helping to restore Duluth No. 265. Dave also worked on track gangs during those years when we were extending our track and overhead to the north of 42nd Street. He was always a friendly and good-humored guy who had professional as well as personal interest in promoting public awareness of Twin City transit issues, and he was a good friend to all of us. *(submitted by Bill Graham).*

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
 March-April 2026**

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, 2026.

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

Our Streetcars Don't Clean Themselves! Have you ever wondered why our streetcars are so clean? We have a cleaning crew every fourth Saturday on April 25, May 23, June 20, July 18, August 15, September 12, October 10, and a pre-Holly Trolley cleaning on November 21. **You don't have to be an active volunteer with our museum to come and help us keep our historic streetcars clean.** We work from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 Noon and there's a 10:00 AM coffee break with the Saturday morning shop crew. We wash the windows, polish the woodwork on No. 1300, wipe down the seats and other surfaces, and sweep and mop the floors. In May, we'll wash the outside of the cars. And if there are enough volunteers, we'll send a crew to clean the inside of the Linden Hills station. Please come and join us! If you wake up on one of those Saturday mornings and want to help, come on by!

Kids' Club 2026 sign up happening now! Do you know a streetcar fan aged 5-17? Sign up for the MSM Kids' Club and enjoy monthly behind the scenes hands on activities at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line! Club membership is free with paid family or student membership! E-mail leahharp@gmail.com for more information! ☺

Wait! What?

There are Twin City Lines standard streetcars in other museums? The answer is yes. Here's a photo of TCRT No. 1583 that has been restored by the East Troy Trolley Museum, located in East Troy, Wisconsin. Note the car has two trolley poles. East Troy restored the car for double-end operation because the five-mile length of their demonstration railway prohibits back-poling operation. No. 1583 has flip-over seats as a result. And lest we forget, the other TCRT standard streetcar is in the collection of the Seashore Trolley Museum, located in Kennebunkport, Maine. Car No. 1267 and was given to Seashore in 1953. It was restored to its as-built configuration and is identical to our museum's No. 1239. *(Photo by Christopher Schmidt)*

