

# STREETCAR

## CURRENTS

June 2026



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

### Summer Is Here

*Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.*

After Memorial Day we start the Museum’s full operating schedule and look forward to our expanded schedule with new Thursday afternoon rides, and our special events, which we continually update to create new interest and capture new riders. An example of an event we continue to fine-tune is Doors Open Minneapolis, which resulted in over 900 fares and almost \$2,000 in merchandise sales over the two-day weekend. The core of the event is the docent-led tours of the car barn showing the behind-the-scenes work of the museum. Special thanks to **Aaron Isaacs** who led the program and the docent group consisting of **Bill Arends, Pat Cosgrove, John DeWitt, Bill Graham, Tom Schramm, Dennis Stephens,** and **Jim Vaitkunas.**



The other exciting news for this time of year is the addition of new operating volunteers who have completed or are close to completing Operator training, and Operators who wish to train to operate PCC No. 322. **Bill Pekarna** is again leading MSM’s 2026 Operator training program, which began with 29 candidates (26 CHSL, 3 ESL). Of the 26 CHSL candidates, 15 are certified operators or station agents: **Jon Buck, Richard Chin, Corinne Hotchkiss, Allan Kohl, Clo LeRoy, Owen Loken, Lucas Reeder, Ashton Schultz** and **Ryan Tedjasukmana** (operators); **Sarah Dibble, Debra Dylan, Roger Hysten, Anna Kamrow, Katie Kraft, Margaret Miller** and **Graydlee Shapiro-Zimmer** (station agents). Seven trainees withdrew and three remain in training. At ESL **Karen Kertzman** was in charge of training and **William Graham** was certified and one is still training. **Marcia Jerdee** is a new ticket booth agent. Assisting with the training, which included more than 90 2-hour sessions, are **Scott Benson, Jerry Betz, Linda Ridlehuber, Anja Curiskis, Tom May, Katie Barron** (PCC lead), **Andy Jacob** and **Marion Garcia.** At ESL the training team consisted of **Karen** and **Jim Kertzman, Gregg Thomas** and **Tim Gephart.** Thank you all.

**Katie Barron** is leading our PCC training/recertification efforts. Katie and her team recertified nine Operators and qualified six new PCC Operators: **Bill Gingerich, Gordy Moore, Nick Orbe, Andrew Parr, John Schnabel** and **Margie Thompson.** **Scott Benson** and **Tom May** were certified as PCC Foremen with four more in training.

Congratulations go to two of our volunteers who have stepped-up and accepted the responsibilities of Operating Foreman. The Foreman is the leader on the ground during a shift responsible for the successful execution of the operating plan so that everyone involved—our guests, our volunteers, our neighbors, and the general public—have a safe and enjoyable experience. When you see them, please congratulate our new Operating Foremen: **Scott Benson** and **Nils Halker.**

During this part of our season we acknowledge that some of our veteran operators are no longer able, for a variety of reasons, to volunteer. Without naming those operators individually, I thank them for their years of service and dedication, and their contributions in making the museum an enjoyable place to volunteer while providing our visitors a quality product each and every day.

Finally, thanks all our new and returning volunteers for their time and effort in making our Museum a meaningful and fun experience.

**Be safe and have fun. ☺**

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## From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

**Doors Open Minneapolis.** The annual Doors Open Minneapolis event happened on May 9-10. In 2025 we were the 12th most visited Doors Open site and it appears we surpassed that this year. As usual, we ran an early 10am-1pm streetcar shift and offered tours of the George K. Isaacs Car barn. Most visitors chose to buy a streetcar ride to the barn. For awhile on Sunday afternoon car 1300 left with a full load, with another full load waiting on the depot platform.

By coincidence, May 10 was Mothers Day, so mothers rode free. Trip sheet counts show 617 passengers on Saturday and 809 on Sunday, for a total of 1426. Total revenue was up 12 percent from the same days in 2025. Merchandise sales totaled \$1284, up 20 percent from 2025. Thank you to **Bill Arends, Pat Cosgrove, John DeWitt, Bill Graham, Tom Schramm, Dennis Stephens** and **Jim Vaitkunas** who joined me as car barn docents.



**CHSL Shop pit extension.** The next big project on the Long-Range Planning list is an extension of the Isaacs Car barn shop pit. It's currently not long enough to work on the rear truck of a streetcar with the shop doors are closed. That makes winter work on a rear truck inconvenient at best. **Jerry Draeger** is leading the project, assisted by **Keith Anderson** and **Dennis Stephens**. The concept drawing by **Dennis Stephens** (see drawing on page 4—Ed.) shows the pit being extended from the green marks to the red marks. BKBM Engineering has been hired to draft the final plans. Construction is anticipated this Fall.

**CHSL crosstie inventory.** Since 2020 we've done three tie replacement projects totaling 400 ties at CHSL and 72 ties at Excelsior. Altogether they cost \$96,000. That's a lot of money and it raised the question of how often ties have to be replaced and how many? We currently have no long-range plan. Because of the financial implications, Chief Engineer **Keith Anderson** and I are in the process of creating one.

Last week we took the first step, completing a count of the good and bad ties between every pair of overhead wire poles on the Como-Harriet Line. That will highlight the bad spots. Then we looked at the Federal Railroad Administration's track speed standards. They specify how many bad ties per 39-foot rail length are acceptable for what maximum speed. We top out at about 20 mph. Bear in mind that there are about 20 ties per length of rail. Here are the FRA regulations that apply to us.

The exact number of non-defective crossties required per 39-foot segment varies by track class:

- Class 1 Passenger: max 15 mph: At least 5 non-defective ties are required.
- Class 2 Passenger: max 30 mph: At least 8 non-defective ties are required.
- Class 3 Passenger: max 40 mph: At least 8 non-defective ties are required.

A wood tie is considered defective if it meets any of the following:

- It is broken through.
- It is deteriorated or split to the extent that it will not allow spikes or other fastenings to be held securely.
- It is deteriorated or split to the extent that the tie plate can move laterally more than a half inch relative to the tie.
- It is cut by the tie plate through more than 40% of the tie's original thickness.

Given our speed, CHSL needs to have at least class 2 track. With the inventory complete, Keith will produce a report on track condition. We'll use the findings to create a long term schedule for tie replacement. I'll share that when it's done. 🔄



ESL volunteer Operator **William Graham** is giving riders on DSR No. 265 a close-up view of the new Lake Minnetonka Historical Society banner. While the banner does not include a streetcar operating in Excelsior, it does display a ticket booth at the Excelsior Amusement Park, similar to the LMHS ticket booth ESL uses to sell tokens to riders. *(Karen Kertzman photo)*



**Dick Zawacki** and **Michael Kimitch** graduated from **John Prestholdt's** 2026 "caning class" and are already working on their own. Thank you, John. *(Karen Kertzman photo)*



**John Felix Mackey**, a local Lake Minnetonka photographer, caught Ticket Booth Agent **Ann Behning** as she was selling tokens to riders. In the background, DSR No. 265 is ready to go! *(Karen Kertzman photo)*



Here's the Memorial Day 2026 operating crew, with some re-enactors thrown in to add context to the solemn purpose of the national holiday. *(Katie Kraft photo)*



Doors Open Minneapolis resulted in a great turn-out of visitors . On the left, visitors are queued for the next streetcar to take them to the Isaacs carbarn *(Katie Barron photo)*. On the right, No. 1300 is unloading visitors who were then greeted by a docent and given a brief run-down on what to expect when they enter the carbarn. If you are wondering about the closed carbarn doors, it was chilly the first day. *(Steve Mosborg photo)*

- June 13 & 14----- Excelsior's Art on The Lake event. ESL's streetcars will run 10 AM to 4 PM both days.
- June 16-----PJ Party trolley at CHSL—6 PM and 7 PM
- June 18-----Excelsior's farmer's market runs every Thursday until August 27th. Streetcars will run 2 to 5 PM
- June 21-----Father's Day—Dads ride for free with their family at ESL and CHSL
- June 23-----Story Time Trolley at ESL—5 PM and 6 PM
- July 4-----Special Independence Day Operations—two-shifts at ESL and CHSL



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

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

**A**dress & E-mail Changes. Your museum has to pay a penalty when mail is returned to us because someone has moved and didn't give us their new address. It's not a huge amount but the expense is unnecessary. When you change your mailing address and/or e-mail address, please let us know.

**R**IP. We regret to report the passing of former volunteer **John Heinl** who passed away at the age of 90. He had been an MSM member since 2000. He was a motorman at CHSL from 2000 to 2006 when he moved to Maine. John also helped with the recovery of Winona No. 10 in 1999. His time as a volunteer was a great highlight of his retirement his wife reported. ☺

**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 e-mail address are:

P.O. Box 16509  
 Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509  
[info@trolleyride.org](mailto:info@trolleyride.org)

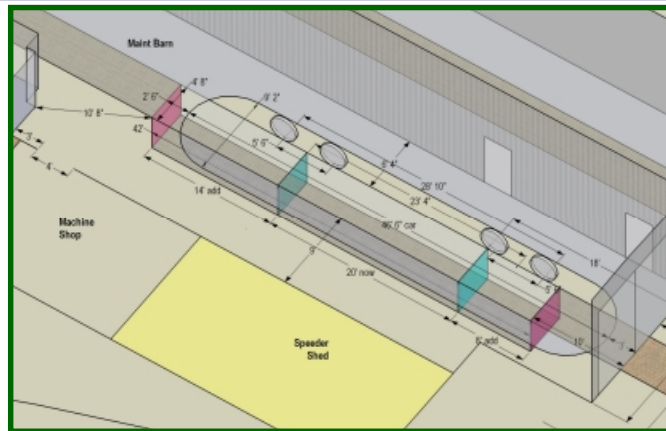
**Streetcar CURRENTS**  
 June—2026

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 June 20, 2026.

Please send items for the Currents to:  
[Jim.vaitkunas@trolleyride.org](mailto:Jim.vaitkunas@trolleyride.org)



The pit extension in the maintenance shop of the George K. Isaacs carbarn will be a pretty big project. When it's finished, it will greatly improve shop operations.



**MICHAEL E. MILLER**

**Mike Miller** passed away May 3rd after a long battle with cancer. He became a member in 1983 and trained as a motorman in 1992 and later became a Foreman. He was an active volunteer in the Lake Harriet shop from 1994 until shortly before his death. He served on the Minnesota Transportation Museum's (MTM) Board of Directors from 1993 to 2005. During that time he was the MTM Board Chair from 1996 to 2001, with stints as Secretary in 1994, 1995 and 2004. Mike played a major role in guiding our museum through the 2005 split with MTM. He was part of the team that raised the financial match for the TEA-21 federal grant that completely rebuilt the Como-Harriet track in 2005-2006. A graduate of St. Olaf College, Mike was part of the campaign to save St. Olaf's Old Main from demolition. He served in the Peace Corps and was a member of the Dale Warland Singers.



The TEA-21 Track Rebuilding fund-raising team in 2004: (L to R) **Jim Vaitkunas, Mike Miller, Louis Hoffman, John DeWitt & Dave Kettering.**