

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

July 2026



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

Volunteering

As an all-volunteer organization, our museum would not be possible without you. From a direct streetcar operation perspective, our annual operations schedule includes about 540 shifts (not including charters). With an average crew size around 3.5, this results in approximately 1,900 volunteer opportunities. To fill these open positions with the current roster of 123 volunteers we need you to volunteer an average of twice a month.

The 123 volunteers is the largest group we have had in many years and is about 8 higher than our average. The strong interest in volunteering is a tribute to our many returning members and the result of strong performance from our 2026 training class. The training team led by Superintendent of Training **Bill Pekarna**, ESL Training Leader **Karen Kertzman**, and PCC Training Leader **Katie Barron**, spent close to 800 hours this year training 22 new volunteers and training, and giving refresher training, to dozens more on the PCC.



Operations and training, while critical activities, are not the only areas where we need your help in making our museum function. I want to call your attention to a couple of areas that are behind the scenes but are essential to delivering a quality product and need your volunteer support. These activities can always use an extra set of hands for a few hours a month.

Car Cleaning. **Louis Hoffman** and **Eric Werner** lead the activity at CHSL and ESL, respectively. They need your help. Car cleaning is once a month and is scheduled at CHSL for July 18, August 15, September 12, and October 10. Car cleaning at ESL is led **Eric Waters** and is done periodically as needed. No prior training is required. Bring the family or a friend and help keep our streetcars clean.

Grounds Maintenance. This activity includes the trimming of weeds and branches along the right-of-way, which is done on an ad-hoc basis. The leaders at CHSL and ESL are **Tony Lebda** and **John McElmurry**, respectively. Please watch for calls for volunteer support.

Overhead Wire Maintenance. Overhead Foreman **Chris Heck** leads the work. As you can imagine without power the streetcars can't operate. This critical function and our ability to respond was put to the test two weeks ago when a tree limb fell on the overhead wire and bent a bracket at Como-Harriet. A crew comprised of **Scott Benson**, **Jerry Betz**, **Pat Cosgrove**, **Chris Heck**, and **Tony Lebda** quickly assembled after the tree limb was removed by the Park Board to restore operations up to the point of the bent arm bracket by removing other branches along the right-of-way and addressing the overhead. **Dennis Stephens** is leading the group to manufacture replacement brackets, which once installed by the overhead crew will restore service to the north end. (*Service has since been restored. Ed.*)

Please consider helping with these critical functions.

Regardless of how much time you are able to contribute to the museum, I want to thank you for all you do and the time and effort you are able to provide. I hope you continue to enjoy your experience with the Museum. Be safe. 🍀

Inside This Issue

From the Front Platform	2
Photo Ops	3
Coming Events	4
MSM News & Views	4
Obituaries	4

Editor's Note. I received a lot of photos of activities that occurred during the month of June at both CHSL and ESL. I couldn't fit most of them in this issue of the *Streetcar Currents*, so I plan to send out a special photo supplement within the next week or so. Be on the lookout for it.



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

Longtime volunteer **John Prestholdt** has kept a spreadsheet of ridership by month from the trip sheets going back to the beginning of museum streetcar service in 1971. He reports that in May 2026 the Como-Harriet Line carried 5208 passengers, charters included. That's the highest May total since 2014. Add in the Excelsior total of 691 to make 5899 and that's the highest May total since 2010.

Preparations for the lengthening of the Isaacs Car barn pit continue. During construction, which will happen after Labor Day, all three streetcars will be stored in the ready barn. To get ready, the unfinished truck frames for No. 1239 have been moved into the shop and the work table has been pushed to the rear. All sorts of miscellaneous items stored along the west wall of the ready barn are either finding new homes or, if no longer needed, are being discarded. In the process we've uncovered a number of historic artifacts that will be catalogued. Others which are surplus to our historic collection will be put up for sale. We found several of the wood bulkhead car number boards, a few never-before-seen wood signs from inside a standard streetcar (*see photos on page 3*).

One of the other projects identified at last winter's long range planning meeting was to fix the drainage problem that has caused storm water runoff to back up into the Isaacs Car barn, including the shop pit. Water pours down the big retaining wall into a pair of sumps which were clogged, along with their outflow pipes. We asked the City of Minneapolis for help and on June 24 their sewer crew unclogged everything. The includes a pipe between the two sumps that we didn't know existed. That should fix the problem.

Over the last couple of years the Minnesota Transportation Museum has been doing housecleaning in the Jackson Street Roundhouse archive room, has found streetcar-related material and delivered it to us. For that we thank them. The latest batch includes 33 large streetcar component drawings from Twin City Rapid Transit to add to the 198 we already had. As he has in the past, **Floyd Child** is scanning them.

A recent strong windstorm toppled trees onto the overhead wire at both CHSL and ESL. In both cases our government landlords responded quickly and removed the fallen trees, but we suffered some damage. At Excelsior the tree damaged an overhead wire support pole, but not enough to prevent operation.

At Como-Harriet the tree badly bent the nearest overhead wire support arm. For a week we had to stop short by the Park Board maintenance building. A crew consisting of Overhead Foreman **Chris Heck**, and **Jerry Betz**, **Scott Benson** and **Scott Brar** replace the support bracket arm and returned the line to full service.

Normal operation at Excelsior is a trip about every 30 minutes, with a stop at the car barn for a quick tour. For Excelsior's Art on the Lakes event, ESL tried something different. The streetcar shuttled continuously between the Water Street end of ESL and the car barn every 15 minutes or so. Passengers could either stay on the streetcar or stop at the car barn and linger for as long as they wanted. The car barn was staffed with one or two docents plus a gift shop cashier. The docents gave a quick tour the car barn, offered some history of the two streetcars not in service, in this case Duluth Street Railway No. 78 and Mississippi Valley Public Service (Winona, Minn. lines) No. 10, and to answer questions. Although it takes more volunteers to have a car barn open house, passengers waiting at Water Street have a much shorter wait between trips and those interested can get a more in-depth car barn tour. Excelsior Superintendent **Karen Kertzman** says this was a test to see how it worked and it will be done again from time to time. 🌱



PLEASE DO NOT SPIT ON FLOOR.

TO OPEN DOORS RING BELL AND
STEP ON TREADLE PLATE

EXIT

TCRT Ca. 1920s

The things that you find when you go up into your attic or your basement if you have them, and root-around looking at all the dusty things you find there. Here are some of the artifacts that were re-discovered when the guys at the Isaacs carbarn did an assessment on what was stored on all the shelves in the carbarn. The "please do not spit" sign probably lasted on the cars until that habit fell out of favor. The "step on treadle" sign came from a Duluth streetcar like No. 265. The "exit" sign is from the 1920s when TCRT added front exit doors to the gate cars. (Aaron Isaacs photos)



Oops! A bad windstorm in mid-June resulted in a large tree falling on our CHSL overhead and bent this bracket support arm. Passenger service beyond this point was halted for over a week. A new bracket has since been installed. There will be more photos on this event in a forth-coming photo supplement. (Pat Cosgrove photo)



Our MSM Motorettes met in late May for a social and picnic. Looks like they had a great time. Front row L to R: **Nettie Harstad, Linda Ridlehuber, Anja Curiskis, Margie Thompson, Debra Dylan, Katie Barron**
Middle: **Leah Harp, Sandi Torini, Marion Garcia, Karen Noll**
Back: **Corrine Hotchkiss, Ellie Maag** (Tony Lebda photo)



Here's a good photo of the crew working to unclog the two storm catch basins that were clogged with gunk. (Karl Jones photo)



A local railfan with the Facebook handle **ALC0636** did some photoshop work on a Metro Transit light rail train. If only, eh?.

What's Happening?

- July 4- -----Independence Day operations at both ESL and CHSL
 July 12- -----All Aboard special ops—10 AM to 12-noon. A calmer, quieter ride for neurodiverse folks, families and friends
 July 12- -----TCRT Motorette days at CHSL commemorating the first hiring of women Operators by TCRT
 July 18 & 19- -----Excelsior's Crazy Days festival—ESL operates from 10 AM to 4 PM both days
 July 21- -----PJ Party trolley at CHSL—6 PM and 7 PM
 July 21- -----Story-Time Trolley "Fun in the Sun" at ESL—5 PM and 6 PM
 July 24- -----Spirits on a Streetcar at CHSL—"The Car barn" 9:30 PM. See description below.
 August 11 & 17- -----Winona No. 10 will operate for museum members & friends. Details and times to follow.

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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief

Streetcar **Cleaning.** Our museum prides itself on the cleanliness of our historic streetcars. This is because we give them a deep cleaning once a month. While our volunteers help with this important task, that doesn't mean that our members and your family and friends can't come down to CHSL's Isaacs car barn to help keep our streetcars clean. Please consider coming down and lending a hand. The next cleaning dates are July 18, August 15, September 12 and October 10. If you are able to help, let Foreman **Louis Hoffman** know by sending him an e-mail: hoffman.louis@comcast.net 📧

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:

P.O. Box 16509
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**Streetcar CURRENTS
July-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: July 20, 2026

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



We opened-up the Excelsior car barn for visitors during June's "Art on the Lakes" festival in Excelsior. The event was well-received by our visitors. Here we see Duluth No. 78 and MVPS (Winona) No. 10 inside the car barn. There is a docent in each car.

(Karen Kertzman photo)

Here we see **Aaron Isaacs** inside No. 78 talking to some of our visitors, except for the young lad eyeing the photographer. Other docents who volunteered were **Bill Graham, Mike Buck, Dick Zawacki & Jim Vaitkunas.**

(Karen Kertzman photo)

**SPIRITS ON A STREETCAR**

TCRT Streetcar No. 1300 was in service for 46 years. Think of the stories it might have to tell. Take a ride with seasoned paranormal investigators on the historic Minneapolis trolley and see if there are any spirits who join us! We'll be using real investigation equipment to identify any possible paranormal activity on this historic streetcar or in the car barn where it sleeps.

Experienced investigator, **Heidi Steffens**, will show you a few how-to's in paranormal investigating. We'll travel past the lakes and along Lakewood Cemetery while the night surrounds us in hopes of speaking to someone from beyond. This is an exclusive 90-minute special event with limited seating.

