



MSM Operations Newsletter

Issue No. 26-3
August - 2026



2026 – WHAT A SUMMER!

The data I am using for this newsletter is through the end of July, but some of the trends observable in the data seem to be persisting in August. In reviewing the season, two items stick out.

1. Ridership has had sizable year-over-year performance shifts in May/June compared to July. Specifically, May and June ridership based on the Point of Sale (POS) system was up year-over-year 14% overall and 44% at ESL. In July, however, system ridership was down 22%. The high heat and to some degree the poor air quality resulted in 11 weekday and 5 weekend shifts cancelled at CHSL and 5 shifts cancelled at ESL.
2. Participation by our qualified volunteers is at the lower end of what we have historically seen. Approximately 84% of our qualified operating members have volunteered time and many are volunteering less time. While this has improved slightly over the last month, we continue to have numerous shifts in the “Red Zone” when Jim Vaitkunas does his weekly report outs.

I know not everyone plans their time weeks in advance, but leaving the decision to select a shift to the last minute creates a lot of stress and uncertainty around the likelihood of operating. We need you to volunteer – each of you. All aspects of the museum (i.e., maintenance, car cleaning, overhead wire, back office) require volunteers. Currently, we have one of the largest groups of qualified operating volunteers ever – at 118. This should be great news as it can spread the volunteering requirements over a larger pool of individuals. However, this year we also have the largest number of volunteers who have not operated one shift. I recognize that there are legitimate reasons to limit volunteering and that we are all busy, but the Training Department led by Bill Pekarna and the efforts of over a dozen volunteers spent almost 700 hours training new recruits, recertifying existing operators, and enhancing PCC skills for others with the explicit expectation of our operators volunteering twice a month. If you have not done so, please volunteer.

I am including in this edition of the Operations Newsletter more information on the financial performance of the operations to provide context illustrating the importance of having sufficient staffing for every event. Without volunteers the museum cannot operate. The museum does have a small online presence (see the following tables), but 97% of the operating revenue comes from moving streetcars or having the station/ car barn open for in-person sales.

PERFORMANCE (POS DATA)

Revenue performance through July 31 as captured by the POS system is shown in the following tables. Total revenue of \$57,006 is, as expected, driven by ticket sales (Fares and Passes), which account for 63% of total sales, and Merchandise sales (21% of total).

Special Events are concentrated later in the season and as such are not a material contributor for the first part of the season.

	SALES - 2026 (Through July 31)						Online Sales	Union Depot	MSM Total	% of Revenue
	MSM		CHSL		ESL					
	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$				
Fares	10,978	\$ 32,934	9,170	\$ 27,510	1,808	\$ 5,424	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 32,934	56%
Passes	118	3,794	106	3,604	12	190	360	-	4,154	7%
Charters	46	5,080	31	3,930	15	1,150	190	-	5,270	9%
Special Events non-ticketed	7	35	0	-	7	35	-	-	35	0%
Special Events ticketed	0	2,945	0	2,040	0	905	-	-	2,945	5%
Merchandise	0	11,267	0	8,996	0	2,067	1,040	204	12,511	21%
Donations	68	952	21	268	49	684	-	-	952	2%
Total		\$ 57,006		\$ 46,347		\$ 10,455	\$ 1,590	\$ 204	\$ 58,800	

Year-over-Year Performance

Year-over-year total revenue through June was above last year (+9%), year-over-year performance through July is down 3%, resulting from the large number of heat-related cancellations. The direct impact of the cancellations is seen in Fares and Merchandise but is likely influencing other categories such as charters (which had an outstanding year in 2025).

	SALES - Year-over-Year (Through July 31)								Online Sales	Union Depot	MSM Total	YOY
	MSM		CHSL		ESL							
	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$						
Fares	33	\$ 99	-135	\$ (405)	168	\$ 504	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 99	0%		
Passes	-33	(1,238)	-27	(878)	-2	(120)	120	-	(1,118)	-21%		
Charters	0	(560)	-9	(685)	9	510	(195)	-	(755)	-13%		
Special Events non-ticketed	7	35	0	-	7	35	-		35	na		
Special Events ticketed	0	220	0	310	0	(90)	-		220	8%		
Merchandise		(824)		(538)		495	55	204	(565)	-4%		
Donations		(7)		(71)		64	-	-	(7)	-1%		
Total		\$ (2,276)		\$ (2,268)		\$ 1,398	\$ (20)	\$ 204	\$ (2,092)	-3%		

RIDERSHIP

As noted in the opening summary, the operating season through July has been a journey of two very different halves. May-June paid ridership was exceptional, posting year-over-year increases of 14% overall (9% at CHSL and 44% at ESL) based on paid fares. Total ridership (based on trip sheet data) through June resulted in a 13% increase at CHSL and a 36% increase at ESL. Truly remarkable early performance.

YTD through June Year-over-Year (POS Data)

	SALES - Year-over-Year (Through June 30)					
	MSM		CHSL		ESL	
	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$
Fares	936	\$ 2,808	540	\$ 1,620	396	\$ 1,188
Year-over-year	14%		9%		44%	

July was a totally different story. Weather had a severe impact on performance with 11 weekday and 5 weekend shifts cancelled and two shut down early at CHSL and 5 shifts at ESL cancelled. Unlike most years, all the weather impacts were heat or air quality related – no cancellations due to rain. The net impact resulted in July ridership (based on POS data) to be down 22% year-over-year in total and down 20% and 31% for CHSL and ESL, respectively.

July Year-Over-Year (POS Data)

	SALES - Year-over-Year (July)					
	MSM		CHSL		ESL	
	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$
Fares	-903	\$ (2,709)	-675	\$ (2,025)	-228	\$ (684)
Year-over-year	-22%		-20%		-31%	

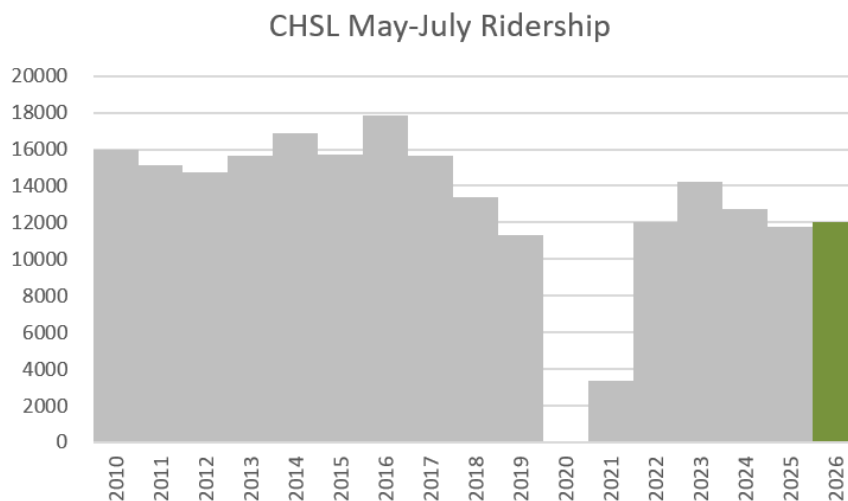
As a result of a very disappointing July, year-to-date (YTD) activity through July is essentially flat with last year for the museum in total and at CHSL, with a modest increase at ESL.

TRIP SHEET DATA

Trip sheet data enables the comparison of 2026 performance over time.

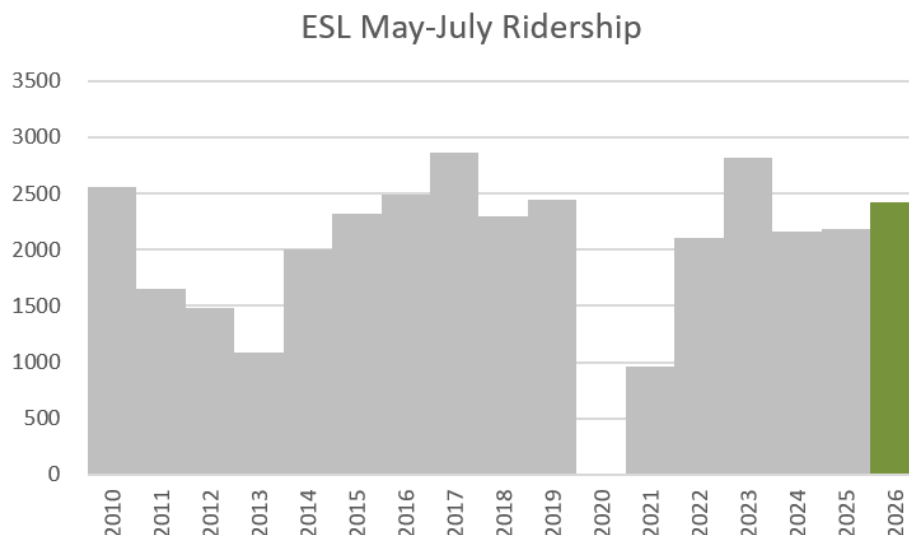
CHSL

Trip Sheet data shows a 2% increase over the same period in 2025. (Note this compares to a 1% decrease in paid fares)



ESL

Trip Sheet data shows a 11% increase over the same period in 2025. (Note this compares to a 10% increase in paid fares)



There are 118 qualified operating personnel. This excludes several volunteers that have signed up as docent-only positions. As can be seen, this is larger than recent history.

Location	Total Volunteers	Operating Volunteers		
	2026	2026	2025	Avg. 2022-25
Como-Harriet	102	97	92	90
Excelsior	37	32	31	30
Total	123	118	116	114

SPECIAL EVENTS – KAREN KERTZMAN

During the summer the museum sponsors a few events at both CHSL and ESL. The performance for the book reading activities continues to excel, while some of the newer events are building a customer base. The results are shown in the following table. As can be seen, most of the events occur later in the year focusing on Halloween and Christmas.

ESL

- ESL special events to date have been successful. Despite the StoryTime rainout in June, a majority of the riders attended the rescheduled June date or opted for tickets for the July or August StoryTime event. July StoryTime was a sellout, and August StoryTime Trolley looks to be on the same path.
- The next big ESL event, before we head into the holiday season of Halloween and Christmas, is Apple Days, September 19 and 20. To accommodate the crowds of people expected in Excelsior, we will offer a shuttle service between Water Street and the carbarn on DSR No. 265, allowing people to tour the carbarn for as long as they want. Docents will greet the passengers and welcome them aboard DSR No. 78 and MVPS No. 10 to share streetcar history. Mesaba No. 10 will be on display in the doorway to the shop, where restoration has begun.

YTD July 2026

Item Name	CHSL		ESL	
	Tickets	Revenue	Tickets	Revenue
PJ Party Trolley		\$ 1,200		
Story Time Trolley: Excelsior			\$ 905	
Spirits on a Streetcar		300		
Evening with Santa				
Streetcar Camp		540		
Graveyard Ghost Stories				
Como-Harriet Trick 'r Trolley				
Trolleyween: Excelsior				
Streetcar Named Expire				
All Aboard Halloween				
Total	0	\$ 2,040	0	\$ 905
Grand Total MSM		2,945		

OPERATIONAL REMINDERS

Operations Bulletin Board

The Operations Department's bulletin board is in the CHSL ready barn and on the north wall of the cold barn at ESL. It displays all the basic information that operating personnel need to know, including reference documents such as the rule book (located in the plastic pocket below the BB at CHSL), Foreman's checklist, current operations and safety bulletins, general procedures memorandum, crew roster, etc. Please check this at every shift to make sure you don't miss an important notice or operating update.

Accident/Incident Report

Accident/Incident report blank forms are located on each streetcar and in the plastic pocket below the operations bulletin board in the ready barn at CHSL. If there is any accident/incident involving our passengers or damage to our streetcars, equipment or buildings, a report should be completed immediately on-site. If a passenger or volunteer is injured, obtain the names and contact information from all witnesses. Doing this is very important for possible insurance claim purposes. Do not wait a few days before completing and filing the report.

Defect Report Forms

If a defect or problem on the streetcar is noticed, either during the pre-shift maintenance check by the Foreman, or during operations, please report the defect or problem using the defect report form. Blanks of the form are in the CHSL shop in a holder next to the Foreman's cabinet. File completed forms in the same holder. At ESL, blank forms are on the operations bulletin board. For major problems with the streetcar, e.g., the car had to be taken out of service, call the shop personnel to inform them of the significant problem right away.

FOREMAN DECISION TO CANCEL A SHIFT

Cancellations will happen due to a variety of factors. If a foreman decides to cancel a shift they should do the following:

CHSL

- Contact your crew
- Contact Sarah Dibble (primary) or Jim Vaitkunas (back-up) to post the cancellation on the museum's website
- Place a sign in the window of the depot – if you cannot do it, contact Bruce Allyn, Bill Arends, Aaron Issacs, or Bruce Gustafson.

ESL

- Contact your crew
- Contact Karen Kertzman. (Karen will contact Sarah or Jim to update the website)
- Put a sign in the ticket booth window

SAFETY REMINDERS – JOHN DILLERY/KAREN KERTZMAN

ESL. The biggest safety reminder, that we can't say enough: Proceed with extreme caution while crossing Morse Avenue, in either direction. It can become a very busy intersection with vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and e-bikes. Always err on the side of caution.

CHSL. Be alert. Whether it is crossing 42nd Street or operating within the depot area – be watchful for people and vehicles. Before your first operating shift, please read and be comfortable with the operating rules and procedures.

SAFETY PROCEDURE REMINDERS:

- **Phone Policy.** If you have a cell phone, please have the phone in silence mode. We would like you to have your phone with you to allow you to call 911 in the event of an emergency. Foremen can also use their phone for weather and other job-related activities.
- **Safely Crossing 42nd Street.** We expect the crossing guard (who is wearing a safety vest at all times) to be active in securing the crossing – stopping as appropriate pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles prior to the

arrival of the streetcar. The crossing guard is the only member of a four-person crew who should be signaling to pedestrians, etc. The operator has the final responsibility/ decision to move through the intersection.

- **With a 3-person crew**, the operator has the responsibility to signal traffic in the intersection as well as the final decision to move through the intersection.

OPERATIONS BULLETINS IN EFFECT

At this time, there are no site-specific bulletins in effect.

Both Locations

26CE-1 - Cancellation of Operations Due to Excessive Heat

It is MSM policy that operations will be cancelled when the heat index reaches a dangerous level. A shift should be cancelled if the heat index is 95 or greater, which is reflected by the green line in the heat/ humidity chart below.

As with other weather-related cancellations the Foreman will decide to cancel a shift. They should check local weather conditions using websites such as NOAA or Weather Underground to get the latest heat index info.

When the Foreman cancels a shift due to heat, the procedures are the same as a rain cancellation. Foremen are responsible to:

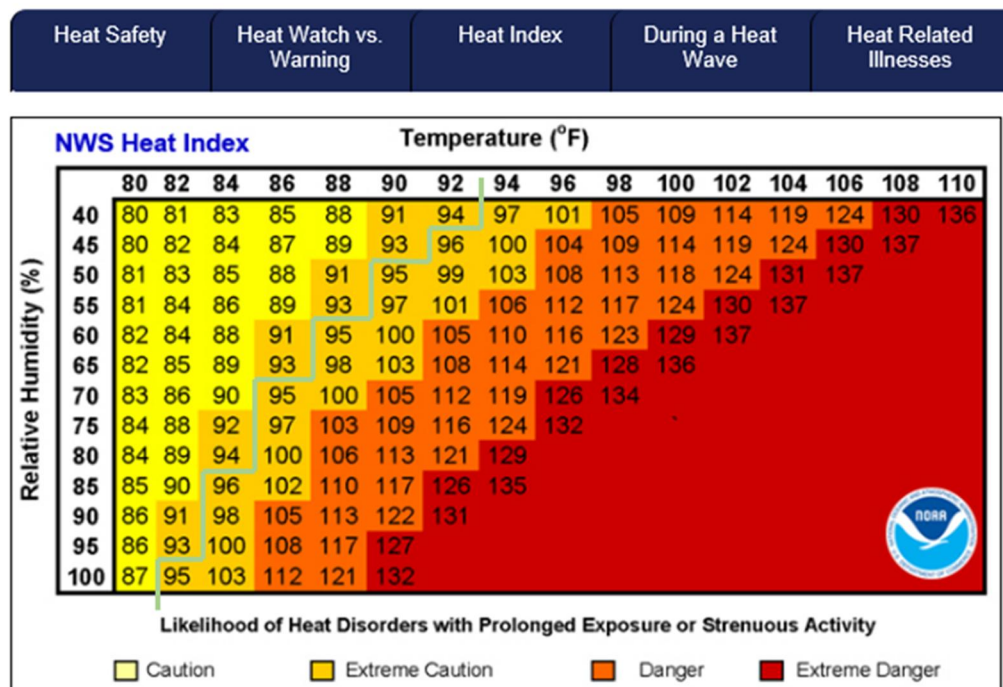
CHSL:

- 1) call your crew
- 2) contact Sarah Dibble or Jim Vaitkunas (back-up) to post the cancellation to our website
- 3) if possible, place a sign in the depot door indicating the reason operations are cancelled

ESL:

- 1) Call your crew
- 2) Call Karen or Jim Kertzman

When temperature and humidity rise, it is critical that volunteers drink plenty of water, slow down, and watch yourself and others for any signs of heat exhaustion.



26CE-2 - Cancellation of Operations Due to Poor Air Quality

Given the ongoing risk of unhealthy air quality due to forest fires, the museum is establishing an MSM operations policy to cancel activities when the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaches an unhealthy level. A shift will be cancelled if the AQI is 151 or greater – placing it in the “Unhealthy” or “Very Unhealthy” categories as shown on page 2.

As with other weather-related cancellations the Foreman will decide to cancel a shift. They should check local weather conditions using websites such as NOAA or Weather Underground to get the latest Air Quality Index information.

When the Foreman cancels a shift, the procedures are the same as other cancellations. Foremen are responsible to:

CHSL:

- call your crew
- contact Sarah Dibble (612-616-5491, sarahdibble@live.com) to post the cancellation on the museum’s website. (Jim Vaitkunas is the back-up).
- if possible, place a sign in the depot door indicating the reason operations are cancelled

ESL:

- Call your crew
- Call Karen or Jim Kertzman

The AQI is divided into six categories. Each category corresponds to a different level of health concern. Each category also has a specific color. The color makes it easy for people to quickly determine whether air quality is reaching unhealthy levels in their communities.

AQI Basics for Ozone and Particle Pollution			
Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Green	Good	0 to 50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	151 to 200	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.