

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

September 2026



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

One thing leads to another

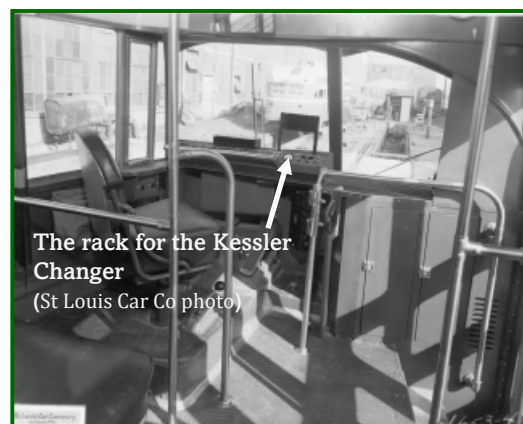
By now you've received the latest issue of *Twin City Lines*, which is mostly devoted to the history of fare collection. Let me tell you how that came to be.

Cleaning unneeded items out of the Isaacs Car barn has been long overdue. It was identified as a priority at last winter's long range planning session. Stage One of the cleanout was finding items with sale value. We joined the big Linden Hills neighborhood sale on May 16 and sold over \$200 worth of surplus tools and other items we don't need. The cleanout became more urgent once we greenlighted the shop pit extension, which will happen in October and will require storing all three streetcars in the Ready Barn for a couple of weeks. We went through the Ready Barn and found all sorts of unnecessary stuff along the west wall, where no one ever goes because it's hard to squeeze by the parked streetcar.

John Prestholdt is well known as the only person who really knows where everything is in the car barn. He began going into padlocked cabinets that hadn't been opened in decades. In them he recovered previously unknown historic artifacts and brought them to me for cataloguing and display. Among them was the Kessler coin changer, that automatically sorted coins and tokens when the top crank was turned, I previously wasn't sure actually existed. I handed the dusty item to new shop volunteer Scott Brar and asked him to clean it up. Being a mechanical guy he immediately took it apart, cleaned it inside and out and ran some coins through it to prove that it worked.

I dove into the museum's photo collection and found three photos of Kessler changers mounted on streetcar dashboard racks in the motorman's position. One of them was inside a PCC car, hanging on a metal rack on the dash. But our PCC No. 322 didn't have a rack. I went back into the photos and discovered that every PCC had a rack to hold a coin changer. Furthermore, I found a builder's photo taken at the St. Louis Car Company that proved the racks were installed at the factory. I showed this to Mark Digre, who is Mr. PCC in the shop. He fabricated and installed a convincing replica rack, so No. 322 is now a little more historically accurate.

Learning about the Kessler changer caused me to look closer at the regular changers in our collection. I also went through Russ Olson's research papers to get more familiar with the subject of fare collection, answering questions like "When did conductors first use changers?" And that's how I was inspired to devote most of the magazine to fare collection. Hope you enjoy reading it.



The rack for the Kessler Changer
(St Louis Car Co photo)

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BILL THE MOTORMAN



Bill

How TCRT Handled MINNESOTA STATE FAIR Crowds in 1907

By Bill The Motorman

Well, a quick look at the calendar tells me right quick that it is Minnesota State Fair time. What a great State Fair we have, probably one of the best in the Midwest if not the entire country! And as you all know the State Fair was located on the Como-Harriet "interurban" line.

The TCRT was thoroughly prepared to move the throngs of people who took the streetcars to the fair each year. So, let's take a closer look at the TCRT's State Fair operations for the year 1907 (as described in the *Street Railway Journal-Ed.*) and you can get an idea of what the company did to "move the masses," so to speak.

During the six days of the fair in 1907 (September 2-7) the company carried approximately 250,000 people to and from the grounds; the heaviest single day was Sept. 2, Labor Day, when attendance mounted to 80,000. The company's fair terminal consisted of two great loops, enclosing five storage tracks between each loop.

This duplicate arrangement is adopted to separate the Minneapolis and St. Paul traffic; the St. Paul cars enter and leave on the east or St. Paul loop, while the Minneapolis cars use the west or Minneapolis loop. Large signs direct the passengers to the proper points and absolutely no confusion occurs. The main loops are so connected to the two main tracks that cars can be run in and out of the terminal on almost any conceivable manner, making a very flexible arrangement.

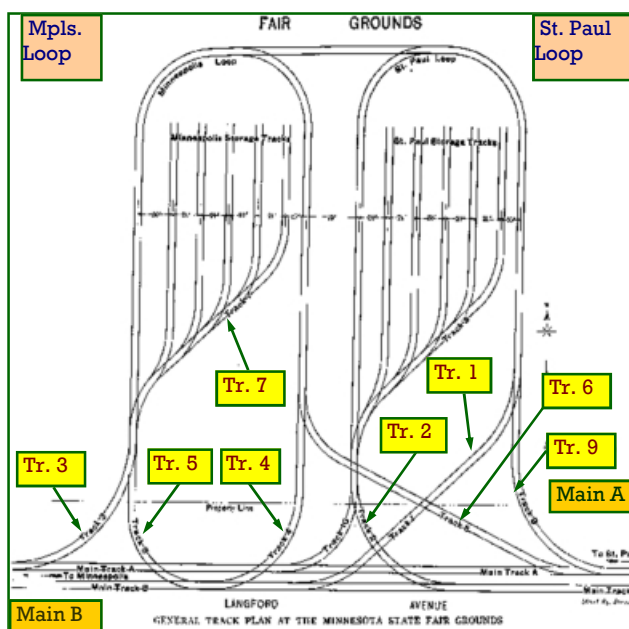
The method of handling and dispatching cars in and out of the terminal is as follows: Through service, running on a five minute schedule, is maintained between Minneapolis and St. Paul (this is the *COMO-HARRIET line-Ed.*). These cars come from Minneapolis on main track B and enter the St. Paul loop by means of track 1. They proceed around this loop, stopping at the upper end to receive and discharge passengers, and then go out to main track B again via track 2. Through cars from St. Paul enter the Minneapolis loop from main track A via track 6, proceed around the loop, stopping at the loading platform at the upper end as described above and then leave the terminal over track 3 which switches the car again on to main track A.

Local cars are run from both cities on a 1 1/4 minute schedule. The Minneapolis cars enter from main track B via track 4 and proceed to the unloading platform, from which they return to Minneapolis over track 3 or enter the storage yard via ladder track 7. St. Paul cars are run around the St Paul loop in a similar manner. This method gives a continuous uninterrupted stream of both through and local cars, all moving in the same direction on each loop; the traffic from each city is completely separated, an important feature in operating a terminal of this nature. While under normal conditions the cars are dispatched as described above, the main line connections are purposely arranged to permit any variations from the usual procedure that an emergency may dictate. Two or three repairmen and a dispatcher is all the operating force necessary at the terminal. A repair car is also maintained in readiness for any emergency.

Twin City standard cars are designed to load and unload from the rear platform only. At the fair terminal, however, special steps were provided so that passengers were unloaded from both platforms at once. Ninety-five percent of the travel was either in one direction or the other. By using both platforms for unloading and loading, a car could be emptied and filled in practically one minute.

The fair exodus reaches a maximum at 5 and 10 PM. To provide for these rush periods from thirty-five to fifty cars are stored on the Minneapolis tracks and from twenty-five to thirty on the St. Paul tracks. Cars are dispatched from these storage tracks in order of their occurrence, so that during the rush periods one-quarter minute service is maintained to Minneapolis and St. Paul. This amounts to 240 cars per hour to each city. Each car carries about 100 passengers, which means that the maximum number of passengers moved per hour to each city is 24,000.

This record was actually attained several times during the week, and the traffic was handled without undue crowding or congestion. Every passenger did not get a seat, but this could not be expected. The company made an honest effort to provide and keep moving a sufficient number of cars to carry the crowds. By means of this terminal this was accomplished throughout the week without a single hitch. ☺





Mary Porter has been the gardener and lead coordinator for the Linden Hills Station's garden since 2017 and she is now passing the trowel to **Kris Drew** and **Steph Peterson**, both are Hennepin County Master Gardeners. Many thanks to Mary and **Ben Porter** for their great work keeping our garden beautiful. (Photo by Mary Porter)



In late July we hosted the Minneapolis Aquatennial candidates and visiting dignitaries for an afternoon of streetcar rides at CHSL. The Aquatennial is an annual festival. Here's the photo of the group. (Photo by Aquatennial photographer)



Here's Foreman **Marion Garcia** chatting with some of our Aquatennial guests. (Photo by Aquatennial photographer)



Determining which of the remaining parts belong to Mesaba 10, and which ones are part of other streetcars. From left: **Sara Pace**, **Howie Melco**, **Tom Heimer** and **Dave Buckman**. (Karen Kertzman photo)



Unfortunately, we don't have any detailed plans for Mesaba 10 from the Niles Car Company. So, we have to do research using period journals such as the Street Railway Journal. Here's **Dave Buckman** and **Sara Pace** doing some research using reprints of an old publication. (Karen Kertzman photo)



Here's another group photo. This time it's at our Excelsior railway and this is the annual charter for the local **Kids Core** organization. (Jim Kertzman photo)

September 7- - - - - Labor Day operations at ESL and CHSL

September 13- - - - - ALL ABOARD! CHSL. A calmer ride for neurodiverse families and friends—10 AM to 12-Noon.

September 19 & 20- - - - - Excelsior Apple Days festival at ESL

MSM Passengers' Facebook Comments

MSM's Facebook manager **Sarah Dibble** forwarded comments from some recent passengers.

5 Star Review by Kristine. I recently rode on the streetcar with one of my best friends. This was one of the things I wanted to do this year to celebrate a milestone birthday and it was truly fun and interesting! The volunteers are great and it's good to know that new volunteers are welcome to sign up for training in the spring. My great grandfather was a streetcar motorman and my great-great grandfather (different side of the family) was a freight train engineer whose gravesite can be seen at Lakewood Cemetery from this streetcar line, so I appreciated this opportunity to step back into some history.

5 Star Review by Christie. Simple, enjoyable, time limited (for short attention spans) and slow-paced activity with the kids! One of ours was very disappointed not to have a second ride so would perhaps consider a day pass next time. But \$3/ticket and the timeline were great for us for our first visit!

5 Star Review by Doug. Fantastic streetcar ride on trackage that once belonged to the Minneapolis streetcar system. Short ride, but scenic and when I rode, they used a trolley that was used on the line back in the day. 🍪

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
Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509
info@trolleyride.org

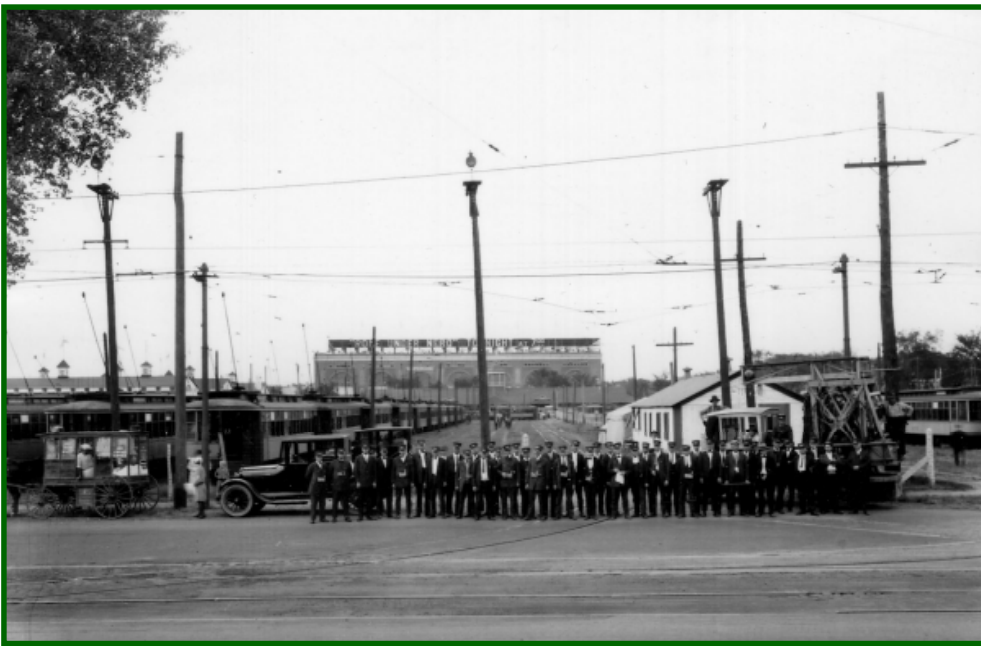
Streetcar **CURRENTS** September 2026

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 September 20, 2026.

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



Photos of TCRT operations prior to 1920 are rare. Back in the day it was common for a photographer to take a photo of TCRT employees during a special event like the state fair. Here's the group shot taken around 1920 of mostly uniformed personnel standing on the north side of Como Avenue. The photo was taken probably sometime in mid-afternoon judging by the full storage tracks.

Note that the track layout is different from the 1907 diagram shown on page two. After TCRT built the terminal in 1904, they realized that the track as built was not efficient for car movement at the crush times in the evening and night so they rebuilt it entirely in 1909. In 1934, TCRT rebuilt the state fair terminal yet again, reducing it greatly in size. By then many more people had autos than in the period prior to 1920, so streetcar riders to the state fair was much reduced.

DETAILS-DETAILS. Look at the photo closely and you'll see on the left a horse-drawn wagon selling ice cream cones for 5-cents, the overhead repair tower truck on the right side with two workers hanging on and the spot light on top of the pole in the center that helped with nighttime operations by illuminating the area where the switches are in Como Avenue. Also, look how close TCRT's state fair terminal is to the grandstand. There are ten streetcars on the left storage track which means that track is at least 450-plus feet long! The banner sign on top of the grandstand reads: "ROME UNDER NERO" Tonight at 7⁰⁰ PM. One wonders what that was all about.