



# Streetcar CURRENTS



June 2006

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## Volunteers are the Backbone of our Museum!

- *Help both our railways keep rolling by filling operating vacancies when you see them*
- *Volunteer to help with streetcar cleaning*
- *Do you have a strong back? Our track and overhead wire crews can use YOU*
- *Welcome our new Operator Trainees and make them feel at home on your next shift*

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**Masthead Photo:** It's springtime! Time when the streetcars come out of their winter slumber to begin their annual romps up and down the track. This photo shows DSR No. 78 (the car is 113-years old this year!) operating in early May on a training run.

*Jim Vaitkunas photo*

## EXCELSIOR UPDATE

Reaching out and into the community and marketing the Excelsior Streetcar Line is the theme and goal of the ESL leaders in 2006.

Superintendent **Bob Johnson** has been instrumental in arranging for the two-page *Star Tribune* color article in the West Suburban Thursday edition about the Excelsior Streetcar Line. **Bill Graham** added many historical facts and humor to this article. Bob's recruitment efforts have resulted in getting 18 calls from potential volunteers. Bob and Bill have conducted training sessions for these Operator trainees and we hope to get them in revenue service soon.

Rails Around Minnetonka was **Bill Graham's** PowerPoint presentation to the Excelsior Historical Society's annual meeting in April. Eighty-five people listened to Bill's in-depth history of the railroads and streetcars from the Mississippi River to Tonka Bay. **Jim Vaitkunas** and **Aaron Isaacs** helped research the many historical pictures which were shown. Bill has been invited to speak at the Excelsior Rotary Club using the same presentation.

**Bob Johnson** and **Bruce Kobs** for the second year in a row exhibited at the Mt. Calvary Nursery School Fun Night a running streetcar layout made by Bill Olson. About 600 people of all ages attend this function which features much conversation about ESL's operating schedule and charter trip information. Many brochures were handed out to the attendees at this meeting. In addition, a trip on the Excelsior car was auctioned at the school's silent auction.

**Bill Olson's** portable streetcar layout, called the Glen Lake Line, is O-Scale (1:48) and was a hit at the Fun Night. This nifty layout uses nickel silver rails soldered into sixteen brass strips that form the circle track with phosphor bronze overhead trolley wire. Animated ducklings and birds-of-prey are run by a DC battery. Two fiery red lights warm the pot belly stove in the store and cook the bird for a hobo down the line. Two different trolleys operate on the track, Tom Lowry's private car and car No. 875. This operating layout is a real treat for the young and old viewers. Bill Olson is a true artist, model builder, and authentic streetcar historian.

**Bob Johnson** is a member of the Excelsior Merchants Association and **Bruce Kobs** is a member of the South Lake-Excelsior Chamber of Commerce. At monthly meetings Bob and Bruce make it a point to promote the streetcar to these organizations. The latest exciting news is that the Chamber will be installing two permanent illuminated signs along highway 7 which will advertise merchants in Excelsior and rides on the streetcar during the summer months. We have also posted on the carbarn a sign with the URL of our website [www.trolleyride.com](http://www.trolleyride.com) so people driving along highway #7 can see it.

**Jim Willmore** and the mechanical department hope to have TCRT No. 1239's trucks back in place and the car returned to revenue service by mid summer. Restoration on the wood in Winona 10 continues each week thanks to **George Ittner** and **Bill Graham**.

**Bob Johnson and Bruce Kobs — The ESL Leadership Team**

## From the Front Platform

*Jim Vaitkunas*—CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Last month in this Column, I reported to you my assessment of where the Museum is right now. In summary, the year 2005 was a very busy and very trying year. Your Museum literally had several balls in the air at any one time: the separation from MTM; the organization of a brand new Museum; managing the track rebuilding project; being shut down for almost three months; organizing the ghost trolley and the first holly trolley—just to name a few of the “highlights.” While managing all these complicated projects, your Museum’s leadership had to establish its internal management structure and get this fledgling Museum organization functioning. All this was done while we all operated two demonstration railways! I would ask that the next time you see them you should thank those key leaders like **Louis Hoffman, Scott Heiderich, Keith Anderson, Bill Graham, Mike Miller, John DeWitt, Aaron Isaacs, Bob Johnson, Bruce Kobs, Dave French, Greg Taylor, Rod Eaton, Russ Olson**, and a lot of others who worked long and hard in what had to be the busiest year in our 35-year history. Thanks guys!

What challenges do we now face and what can we look for in the future? Now that the organizational work and the track project is behind us there’s a lot of work that needs to be done in the coming months and years. My assessment is that our Museum has a very bright future and now we can shift our focus to our mission which is to interpret and educate our passengers on the electric railway history of Minnesota. Here, in a short summary, are the challenges we will face in the coming months and years and what we might look forward to in the future. But first, let me put some fresh batteries in my digital crystal ball.

### **RIDERSHIP**

Ridership at CHSL peaked in the early 1990s at 50,000 passengers per year but starting in the mid-1990s has gradually declined to around 35,000 to 40,000 per year and has remained steady at that level. We don’t quite know the reason for the decline but we surmise that it was caused by a combination of factors, among them being the passing of those who rode and remember the streetcars when they ran in the Twin Cities, the popularity of other forms of, perhaps, more exciting entertainment and the unseasonably cool and wet springs and early summers followed by hot and humid summers we’ve “enjoyed” for the last 6-plus years. As most of us know, the majority of our passengers ride our cars when they visit the Chain-of-Lakes area. Only a rela-

tively small percentage come to Lake Harriet specifically to ride our streetcars. So, when the weather is unpleasant people don’t come out and we carry less passengers. The solution is to promote our two railways as much as we can through publicity, news releases and probably the most important way, by our members and volunteers talking about our Museum railways and encouraging relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc., to come on out and ride our cars.

### **OPERATING PERSONNEL**

Last year we had a severe shortage of operating personnel. This shortage carried over into this year. But this year we have a great bunch of new Operator trainees at both CHSL and ESL so as long as we welcome our new Operators and make them feel at home, our Operator shortage should not be a problem this year and hopefully into the future.

### **CARBARN SPRINKLER SYSTEMS**

The installation of carbarn sprinkler systems in both our carbarns has been, and will continue to be, a priority. We have a little over \$40,000 right now in the sprinkler fund, which sounds like a lot until we found out that in addition to the sprinkler systems themselves, we need to spend a significant amount of money to bring the 4-inch water pipe from the city’s water main into both barns and install new intrusion and fire detection alarm systems that are compatible with the sprinkler systems—there’s no point to having a sprinkler system if the signal doesn’t go to the local fire department that there’s a fire in one of our buildings. Bottom line, we’ll need at least another \$40,000 to have systems installed in both buildings.

### **DEVELOPMENT AND FUND RAISING**

This area goes hand-in-hand with the previous item, and in fact, has an impact on virtually everything our Museum is involved in. We need a team of dedicated volunteers who can determine where to obtain grants and then write the grant applications. It’s not that hard but sometimes it takes a lot of detective work and time to find out where to apply for the grants, write the grants and then do the necessary follow-up. We can get only a small amount of the funding we need for projects like the sprinkler systems and streetcar restoration from our members so when we have BIG projects we need to go outside the Museum.

### **PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY**

We can do more in this area. The direct result of efforts at publicity and promotion will, hopefully, be an

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(*From the Front Platform* Continued from page 2)

increase in visibility of our Museum and an increase in ridership from current levels.

#### SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND CHARTERS

In 1998 we ran our first ghost trolley and last year we ran our first Holly Trolley. The whole purpose of these special events is to increase ridership and revenue. The unpleasant (to some) reality for both our demonstration railways is that it costs big money to operate them and it costs money to maintain the physical plant and streetcars. Last year we spent a considerable amount of money on unplanned repairs to our streetcars, i.e., the new wheels for No.1239 and the new siding wood for No. 1300. And there were other unplanned expenses. The “bottom line” is if we are to continue to maintain our current good financial status we need to keep our rider numbers steady, promote our special events, and promote and build our charter business.

#### PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION

And, let's not forget that our *raison d'être* as a museum is to preserve, restore and operate historic streetcars and interurban cars so that future generations of Minnesotans can learn about and experience how grandpa and grandma got around way back when. Right now, major work on Winona No. 10 has come to a halt because our shop forces shifted their focus to build the new Linden Hills platform and to do repairs to No. 1300 and No. 1239. A lot of Winona No. 10's interior wood has been stripped and finished but this work is relatively easy compared to the big work like fabricating the replica truck and work on the electric and mechanical systems. We estimate that it'll cost around \$20,000 to build the truck and that's money that we don't now have.

#### THE FUTURE

So, what can we expect to see in the coming years? As the old saying goes, if you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there. Well, we know what road we need to take. Your Board does have

plans for the future. These plans fall into two categories: short term and long term.

Short term, the Museum, when funds permit, will install the sprinkler systems in our carbarns. This remains top priority. After that is done, we would like to extend our mainline north approximately 250 feet and then rebuild the 42nd Street crossing (it's 30+ years old). As you recall these two projects were part of the TEA-21 track rebuilding plan but had to be dropped because the initial bids were way over the approved amount of the TEA-21 grant.

Long term, the Museum plans to work closely with the Park Board to rebuild the Chalet Station at 42nd Street. The Chalet station will significantly increase the space available to us for merchandising and for educational and historic exhibits and interpretive displays, something we do only in a marginal way now. We'll also gain better storage and administrative area in the second floor and basement of this building. Another long-range goal we have is to build a display barn in the area near the archery range at Lake Calhoun. Having a two or four-car display barn will give us much needed car storage space and will allow us to better meet our Museum's education and interpretive mission. We also plan on building a picnic grove in this general area called “Lowry meadow”, that will have a shelter, picnic tables, swings, etc., that can be a destination for riders and for charters.

So, will any of this come about? Oops! The batteries in my crystal ball just died on me! The plans sound fantastic and too good to be true. But with a little vision, some good grant writing, cooperation with the city and Park Board, the possibilities are there. My assessment is that there will be challenges ahead. And certainly there will be setbacks and disappointments. But from my perspective as your Board Chair the future is bright for your Museum. All we ask is that you join us to help make our dreams reality.

## MSM News Update

Louis Hoffman — SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT

**New members.** We welcome new members **Teresa Babler, Marshall Ginthner and Kim, Jim, and Bryce Lesinski.** The total number of memberships is now 204. Have you recruited a new member yet? If all of our charter members did, we'd have more than 300 members! And if all of our members did, we'd have more than 400 members!

To keep the Museum's finances fluid, save the Museum the cost of paper and postage, and save on scarce volunteer labor, please renew your membership

promptly when you receive your notice and let us know, in the space provided, about any changes in contact information and membership level. And, if you're able, please sign up to receive *Streetcar Currents* via e-mail—it's a huge money-saver for your Museum!

**Winona No. 10 and other donations.** Many thanks to **John Prestholdt** for his recent generous donations to the Winona No. 10 Fund in memory of **George Isaacs, Kathy Prestholdt, and Don**

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Pribble and to Phil Epstein for his donation to the General Fund.

**R**eimbursement procedures. While the Museum's mailbox at the University post office is checked most every day, the best way to get prompt reimbursement for expenses is to get or give your properly completed *Request for Payment*, with all receipts attached, directly to General Superintendent Rod Eaton for approval either by mail or in person. Reimbursements received by mail at the post office box are given to Rod weekly on Tuesday and that may delay your reimbursement.

**S**cout Saturdays and Tuesdays. This is an important reminder to operating crews at both Como-Harriet and Excelsior about the Museum's cooperative arrangement with the Northern Star Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Please remember that every Saturday is "Scout Saturday" at Excelsior and every Tuesday is "Scout Tuesday" at Como-Harriet.

What does this mean? It means that any Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Explorer, or Venturer in uniform, in a unit t-shirt (identifying the pack, troop, post, or crew by number, such as "Pack 120"), or with other official

BSA identification such as a card may ride for free *with another paying passenger*. For example, a group of seven Scouts with three adults would see three Scouts riding for free (one per paying adult passenger) with the other four and the adults paying the appropriate fare. In a group of ten Scouts with twelve adults, all Scouts would ride for free (twelve paying adult passengers) and only the adults would pay the appropriate fare. Very early reports from Excelsior indicate that we've seen quite a bit of Scout traffic—a noticeable chunk of the first Saturday's ridership. If you have any questions about this promotion, or would like to organize a similar promotion for another group, please contact Louis Hoffman at 612.729.0442 or send me an e-mail to: hamhoff@msn.com

**S**teamboat Minnehaha season to open July 4. We've received information that the Museum of Lake Minnetonka's steamboat *Minnehaha* will begin its 2006 season on Independence Day, July 4th. Passengers wanting more information about the Minnehaha should contact MLM at 952.474.2115 or go to their website [www.steamboatminnehaha.org](http://www.steamboatminnehaha.org). We hope to have brochures available at both Como-Harriet and Excelsior.

## What's New?

Rod Eaton—GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

**W**ith our new season just begun, you don't have to look far to find new things.

You can't miss the new platform at our Linden Hills Station. Ken Albrecht engineered the platform, and it was built over the past month by our Tuesday Boys, with help from a number of others. Thanks to all of you who participated for a job very well done.

The platform was designed to be built entirely from four-foot long boards, which Ken purchased at a near giveaway price. The entire thing rests on ties that we already had, so the cost of the project was minimal. Keeping the cost low was important, since we're considering this a "temporary" solution. In a year or two, we'll have to decide what needs to be done long term. The new platform makes passenger boarding easier and safer. But as we all learned (or relearned from last fall), the new uphill station siding requires a different technique on the controller to negotiate smoothly.

**A**lso new this season is the way we're handling operator recertification. Foremen have been checked out by our Training Department, Greg Taylor and Dave French. Foremen, in turn, are certifying Operators during their regular operating shifts. This saves everyone a lot of time, and it frees up Greg and Dave

to work with our very large Class of '06 Trainees. At both Como-Harriet and Excelsior, we have a good group of excited and energetic new Operators. Make them feel welcome as you meet them.

**C**harles Barthold has resumed the duties of Merchandise Manager, and has already brought several new gift items into the station. More are on the way. Because space in the station is at a premium, you'll see some changes made soon in the way merchandise is displayed. All of the new items are listed on the price guide that sits next to the register. It's helpful if you take a minute to look things over when it's your turn to work in the station so you won't be surprised when someone asks the price on the "cute little trolley bell."

**W**e're thinking very seriously about adding, on a trial basis, a new Wednesday afternoon schedule beginning in June. There are a lot of people around the Lake in the afternoon, so we thought it was worth a try. It could turn into a profitable afternoon. And No. 1300 will soon be back in service followed a bit later by the repaired No. 1239.

**W**hat's new? You don't have to look far to see the changes made since last season.

## The Dirty Dozen?

Maryellen Digre-Mueller—STREETCAR CLEANING MANAGER

A working streetcar museum needs reliable track, overhead and streetcars, plus trimmed brush. The cleaning crew (a/k/a The Dirty Dozen) takes all of our museum's dedication, love and pride, and gives visitors our best impression. We make the streetcars and station look magnificent and inviting. The cleaning crew for May 6th were:

**Harold Dalland**—cleaning crew member since forever; outside window expert, cleaning inspector, and hospitality

**Tim Layeux**—crew member for at least 15 years (check the records) expert on outside windows and floors in trolleys and depot. We can't function without him.

**Laura Wikstrom** and **Sebastian Cox**—Laura is expert on interior fine details and hospitality; her son, Sebastian Cox, saves our knees and backs by sweeping the floor corners, and cleaning below the windows. He and **Karen Digre** wipe the streetcars' exterior running lights and headlights.

**Eric Schwarzkopf** and his son, **Carl**—stopped by and wanted to vacuum No. 265's floor and wipe up sticky messes. We took their offer.

**Karen Digre**—expert on interior windows, exterior running lights and headlights, plus any job that taller people would forget. Saves our knees and backs.

**Mark Digre**—outside window expert, expert on removing the depot's windows, cash register programmer.

**Maryellen Digre-Mueller**—usual suspect and car cleaning Foreperson. *(She makes the cleaning crew run like clockwork. Thanks so much, Maryellen. Ed.)*

Longtime members who couldn't make it May 6:

**Walt Strobel**—expert on everything.

**Clyde Hawkins**—does any chore cheerfully.

**Clark Hoffman**—does any chore cheerfully, after

driving three hours to MSM.

Special thanks to former members: **Louis Hoffman**, **Hilmar Wagner** and the late, and very much missed, **Lyndon Benson**. Thanks to all former cleaning crew members who moved on to other work crews.

**M**aryellen brings bribes for all cleaning crew members. The selections are: orange juice, freshly popped popcorn, and her homemade muffins or sweet-breads baked that morning (usually rhubarb, pumpkin, carrot, or cranberry-orange varieties). People are welcome to drop by anytime we work, between 8:30-11:30 AM. There is always work for arrivals between 9-10:00 AM. If you have to leave before 11:30, we rearrange our work load.

**W**e realize that people have bad knees and backs, and arthritis/bursitis. They work best when their bodies don't hurt. When pain limits their motions, our crew works only in their comfortable range of motion. Then we get creative with breaking up jobs. Other people do the parts above and below their range. We also save time having the tallest people with long arms clean the top parts of the cars; no stepstools to move around. When shorter people (our junior members) clean the areas below the windows they save wear on our creaky knees and backs. Bring us your latest ache, and we'll invent a custom trolley cleaning method for you!

**N**ew members and Volunteers. Working on the car cleaning crew is an easy way to contribute to your Museum in ways other than financial. Our Museum is known for our good maintenance and the clean streetcars and this is due, in large measure, to the great work by our car cleaners. You get to meet and work with a fascinating bunch of people and you also get to see some of the behind the scenes "goings-on" when you come to the Isaacs Car barn on a Saturday morning. We hope to see you there for our next car cleaning session scheduled for Saturday, June 10th.

## Museum Store Update

Charles Barthold—MERCHANDISE MANAGER

Several new items will be arriving (or have arrived) over the next several weeks. Keep an eye out for them. (Trolley spoons and bells--and the return of several old items--pencil sharpeners and charms. For those visiting other trolley museum operations, if you see and interesting item, ask about its source and let us know. Good trolley items are in short supply. Also, if anyone has an idea for a "cute" kid's shirt, don't hold back. Call me at 612-529-3428 or send me an e-mail to: barthold@aol.com



### Classic Railroad Hats

Many of our new, and not so new, Operators have been asking about where they can buy the standard Motorman & Conductor's hat (like the one shown on the left but without the yellow braid) We have found a source for the hats and the flyer you can use to order the hats will be sent to you by e-mail. Both a winter and summer version will be offered and the discounted price for either version is \$50 per hat.

## 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 telephone number is:

P.O. Box 14467, University Station  
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467  
 952-922-1096

**Streetcar **CURRENTS****  
 June 2006

**Streetcar **CURRENTS**** is a periodic newsletter for the members and friends of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

Deadline for submitting items for the next issue of the **Streetcar **CURRENTS**** is June 20, 2006.

Please send items to editor Jim Vaitkunas at the following address:

155 Chaparral Dr.,  
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774

You can send input or inquiries by e-mail to: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)

**WHAT'S HAPPENING?**

MAY 29	CHSL MEMORIAL DAY EARLY BIRD SERVICE BEGINS AT 9:00 AM
JUNE 10	STREETCAR CLEANING AT CHSL - 8:30 TO 11:30 AM, ISAACS CARBARN
JUNE 18	SPECIAL VISIT TO CHSL & ESL BY BLICKPUNKT STRASSENBAHN TOUR GROUP FROM GERMANY
JULY 4	EARLY BIRD SERVICE AT CHSL BEGINS AT 9:30 AM

**Operations Notes**

*Jim Vaitkunas*—OPS CHIEF

The June Operations Schedule for both CHSL and ESL are included with this issue of the **Streetcar **CURRENTS****. If you see a vacancy that needs filling, and please note that there are several shifts at CHSL that are in the **red zone** (June 3rd-2nd shift, June 17th-2nd shift, June 24th-2nd shift), please contact Jim Vaitkunas ASAP by either a phone call (952-688-7255) or e-mail: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)

If you would still like to volunteer to operate on a shift even though there is a full crew shown on the schedule of operations, please call the Foreman and talk with him/her about it. We can especially use you on those busy weekend shifts. We feel sure that no Foreman would deny you the chance to help out on a shift, especially a weekend shift. So call and sign-up!

**Remember** that **you must inform your Foreman** of all substitutions or if you are forced to cancel your shift and **please** inform **both Foremen** if you swap shifts

**New Operating Rules and Regulations.** The new operating rules and regulations were e-mailed to everyone with that capability about 3 weeks ago. You can also download a copy by going to the member's only section of our museum's website. If you don't have internet access you can pick up an old-fashioned printed copy at the George Isaacs Carbarn when you report for your next shift. Copies are located in the bottom of the cashier's cabinet. This is **MUST READING** for all operating personnel so make sure you get a copy.

**General Procedures Memorandum.** We again ask that operating personnel read the 2006 edition of the general procedures memorandum. As with the new rule book, copies are available for download from our website or you can get a hard copy at the Excelsior and the George Isaacs Carbarns.

**New CHSL Sequence of Operations.** Our new track layout, new platform at the Linden Hills station, the new cottage city stop, etc., requires that we revise our basic sequence of streetcar operations. For those who receive their copy of the **Streetcar **CURRENTS**** by USPS mail, your copy is enclosed. For the rest of you, you will receive the new sequence of operations by e-mail.

**This and That from All Over**

**Sales Tax on Museum Purchases.** Remember that for almost all purchases that you make on behalf of the museum do not pay the state sales tax. Please get a copy of the sales tax exemption letter and certificate from MSM Treasurer, Scott Heiderich or you can download and print out a copy of them from our Member's only section of the Museum's website. You will not be reimbursed for sales tax paid when you request reimbursement.

**Tokens.** Aaron Isaacs reports that we have received 13,000 original Minneapolis Street Railway and St. Paul City Railway tokens from Metro Transit. These were actually used on Metro Transit buses until just a couple of years ago. We are now using them as the fare token at both CHSL and ESL. Many thanks to Metro transit for this unique donation.

**Duplicate Issues of the Minnegazette.** Several MSM members who are also Minnesota Transportation Museum members have asked why they receive two copies of the *Minnegazette*, the joint MTM & MSM publication edited by Aaron Isaacs. The answer is you receive two copies because that is one of the benefits of your membership in our two organizations. If you do not wish to receive a second copy, please let Member Services Chief, John DeWitt know that and he'll remove you from MSM's *Minnegazette* mailing list. Contact John at 612-338-1871 or [jdewitt@mn.rr.com](mailto:jdewitt@mn.rr.com)