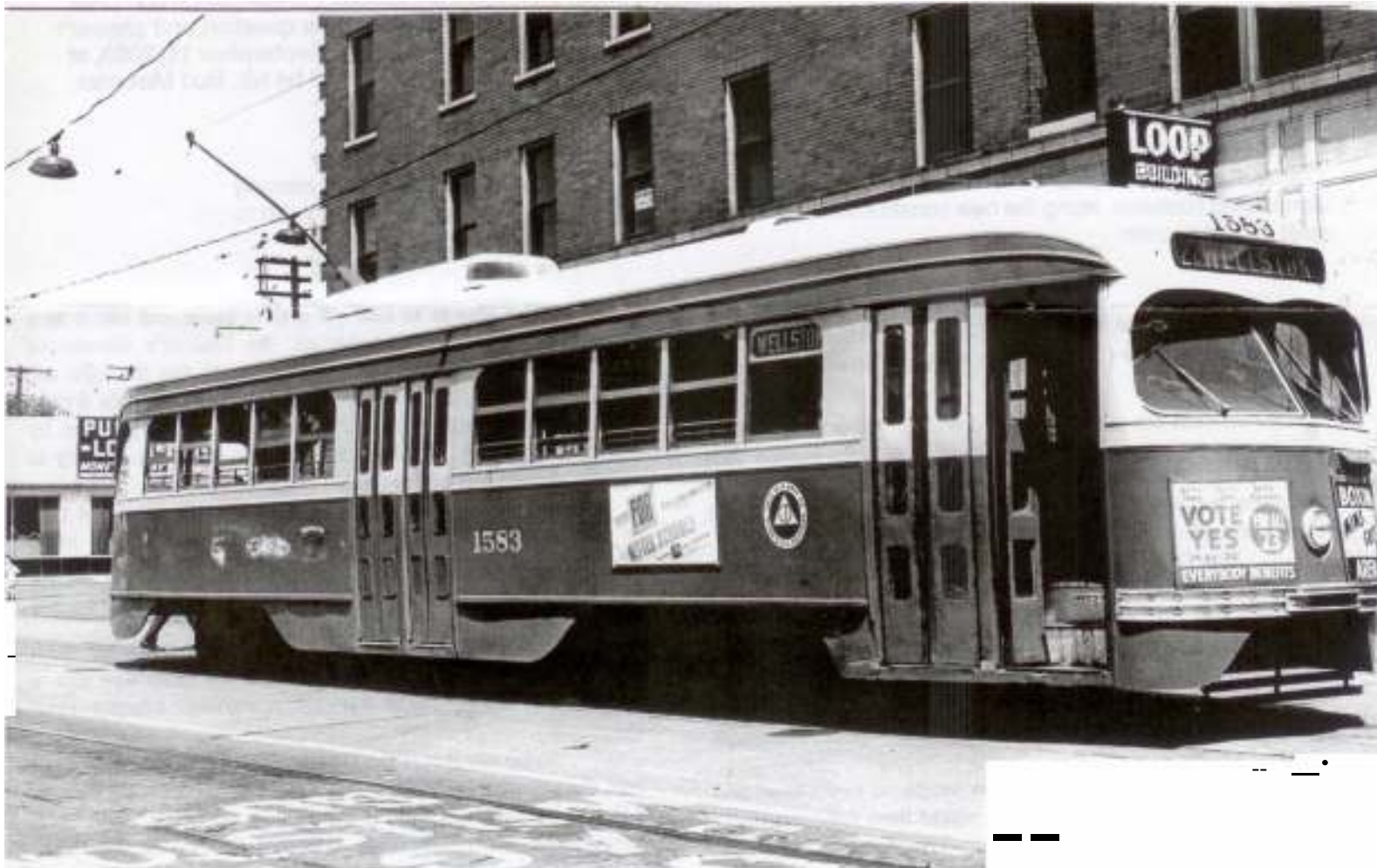


THE ST. LOUIS RAILWAY ENTHUSIASTS, INC

ST. LOUIS DIVISION OF THE RAILROAD ENTHUSIASTS, INC.

WHISTLE TALK

SEPTEMBER 2003



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To obtain or renew membership send \$20 to (SLRE) c/o Wallace F. Dittrich, Treasurer, address above. Membership year runs from September thru August. Meetings are held the 2nd Thursday, 7:30 PM at Museum of Transportation.

AUGUST MINUTES: ST. Louis Railway Enthusiasts: At 7:38 pm President Steve Binning called the August meeting of the SLRE to order. Forty-one people attended, including our guest speaker, Jim Worton. The meeting was held in the Automotive Building at the Museum of Transportation. Binning called for a motion to approve last month's minutes which was then made by Al Howe and seconded by Charlie Dasho. No corrections were forthcoming and the membership voted to approve the minutes as published in Whistle. No new Correspondence had been received. Treasurer Wally Dittrich reported income of \$21 and expenses of \$143 (printing and mailing Whistle Talk) resulting in a balance of \$1540 (all numbers rounded). Old Business: Distribution of brochures to Hobby Shops has been deferred to next month. New Business: Dave Neubauer called our attention to the need for a nominating committee to choose candidates for next year's officers. Steve Binning asked for volunteers. Andy Sisk volunteered. Binning appointed him Chair of the Nominating Committee and instructed him to choose two additional committee members and present a slate of candidates at the September meeting. Announcements: Charlie Dasho spoke about his and Donna's recent trip to Europe. Andrew young spoke about his books, including his newest, *Street Cars, Light Rail & Utility Cars of St. Louis, 1899 - 2003*. Steve Binning spoke about the new book *Collection Highlights, Museum of Transportation*. Both books are available in the museum's gift shop with discounts to TMA members and museum volunteers. Rich Eichorst spoke about the Pacific, Mo. Amtrak stop, other Amtrak news, his trip to view the Tall Ships, Caboose news, coupon books and other events. Dave Neubauer spoke about the WF&P and Trains magazine. Bill Cordes spoke about the web-cam maintained by the Illinois Railway Museum at IRM.org and reminded members that annual dues are due in September. Program: The group consented to proceeding immediately to the program with an intermission. Mr. Jim Worton, Director, Museum of Transportation then gave an excellent presentation complete with drawings and charts, of plans for the museum's expansion. The talk was followed by a question and answer period. Respectfully submitted, SLRE secretary, Bill Cordes. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, September 11, 2003, at 7:30 pm in the Automotive Building at the Museum of Transportation. Guest speaker will be Mr. Bud Meissner, former owner of the St. Louis Car Company.

There was an article in the St. Louis Post Dispatch concerning an agreement between the Minority Contractors Association and the "Concerned Citizens" with METRO regarding the percentage of minority firms doing business along the new construction of the Cross County Metrolink. They agreed to a 20 % goal of participation.

DC to Study 2.7-Mile Light Rail Line in Anacostia
Experimental Spur Could Lead to 33-Mile Citywide System

Transit officials are moving forward with an experimental light rail system in Anacostia that would introduce the region to a new type of mass transportation while improving mobility and prospects for economic development in the District's poorest neighborhoods.

The District got approval yesterday (7/3) from Metro to perform an environmental assessment of a proposed 2.7-mile light rail line that would start at the foot of the John Philip Sousa Bridge at Pennsylvania Avenue SE and run southwest, hugging the Anacostia River, to Bolling AFB. The line would use a right-of-way owned by CSX that once enabled freight trains to carry chlorine to the Blue Plains Water Treatment Plant.

Light rail, which would run mostly at street level and consist of a single or double track, would have four stops - at both ends of the line, at the Anacostia Metro station and in the middle of the line to serve Anacostia's historic downtown.

The line would be a demonstration project, just a sliver of a larger 33-mile light rail network that district officials hope to build. The network calls for light rail to move people across the District, along four corridors stretching between Georgetown and Minnesota Avenue and between Silver Spring and the waterfront in Southwest. It is the first time in a generation that DC officials have moved ahead with plans for a new transit system.

- "The idea is to bite off a little piece and use it as a laboratory," said Dan Tangherlini, the District's director of transportation. DC officials became eager to test the light rail system when they learned that CSX no longer uses its freight line. And investing in Anacostia would fulfill a promise by Mayor Anthony A. Williams to stimulate economic activity in neighborhoods east of the river, Tangherlini said.

The environmental study will determine the best type of transit for the line: electric-powered light rail, bus rapid transit or diesel multiple cars, which are self-propelled rail cars. For now, planners have assumed light rail, the modern-day equivalent of streetcars.

It would mark the first time that Metro has built anything other than a subway. "This is an adventure into a whole new world," said Richard A. White, Metro's chief executive.

Some say that if the District runs a successful light rail line, the suburbs will clamor for their own versions. "If you get a line going, this stuff will grow all over the place," said Chris Zimmerman, who represents Arlington County on the Metro board. "Once people see it, they'll want it."

Transit officials said they have no cost estimates or ridership projections. The study would provide that information. Light rail systems typically cost \$10 million to \$15 million per mile to construct.

DC Council member David A. Catania, who serves on the Metro board, said the demonstration project is certain to improve the economic health of the Anacostia area and pointed to Metro's track record of spurring development around its stations. "Public investment is usually followed by private

Continued on Page 7

COVER: Here is St. Louis Public Service #1583 in the Wellston Loop on the loading track for the 32-Wellston Line. The photo by well known IT photographer Paul Stringham is on June 24, 1955.

Page 11 has a posed photo of SLPS 1600 of the Perry turnstile. Photo is a recently purchased item from the William J. Clouser collection. With this month's program(below) it seemed appropriate for a note of the St. Louis Car Company. NOTE: Review of new streetcar book by Dave Young will be in November.

PROGRAM: This month will be the talk by Edwin "Bud" Meissner of the St. Louis Car Company, the "Quality Shops", which made many of the streetcars which ran in the U.S. In OCTOBER: the program will be a 1940's look of the many steam and early diesel trains operating in & out of St. Louis.

THIS ISSUE: I "feel" a little lazy this month so there are some reprints and some anecdotes of personal observations. There is even a "model" page from Bill Volkmer 01 Florida. A two page "DT3M" from Tom Konieczny is on pages 9 and 10.

COMMENTS: In this issue I was going to reprint a two pages from a recent RAILWAY AGE article about the planned revisions in the railroad scene in Chicago. TRAINS MAGAZINE devoted the whole July issue to Chicago, its history, what railroads ran there, and what railroads are still there and big time maps. This issue is truly a collector's edition. The September issue of TRAINS does a much better "replay" of the intended changes than the RAILWAY AGE article can hope to do, so anyone interested get some copies of TRAINS if you do not already subscribe ... Regarding the IT Birneys of Alton, Bill Janssen writes that these cars may have come from Galesburg, Illinois(another I.T. operation. He also said that E.M. Kester, the PTM of the I.T., threatened closure of the Alton City Lines due to the appearance on the streets of Alton of jitneys. Alton didn't back down and the streetcars disappeared!

ALONG THE "CAR" LINE: As you know, I probably dwell on the 65-Woodson Road the most of any of the streetcar lines of St. Louis Public Service. Upon the "dwell" I also seem to always relate my brother Dan's birthday of December 28th as this was the last run date of the Woodson in 1948. Today, August 11th, I am driving home from work and all of a sudden another "last run and birthday" hits me and I am [thinking?] where in the hell have I been for the last 40 years? My oldest daughter, Michelle, has just turned 40 and her birthday is July 26th, born in 1963. Now what carline was the "extension" of the 65Woodson east of St. Charles Rock Road, but the 32- Wellston east on Easton Avenue? 40 years ago on July 28, 1963 it succumbed to oblivion. Why haven't I thought to include it in my "date conscience[ness]"? Who knows? Probably the one thing is the fact that I didn't get to ride the last day on the Wellston as I did other lines before and since then. The U.S. Army's ANACDUTRA at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin took care of that situation. What's that, the "ANAC" what? It is Army Administration School language for [Annual Active Duty for Training]. In 1960 I enlisted in the Army Reserves as the St. Louis area had a full Reserve Division, the 102nd Ozark Division. I had 6 months Active Duty at Fort Leonard Wood where I was first trained to be a killer and then to the Administration School where I became a Payroll and Personnel Specialist. I was assigned in St. Louis to the 13th Artillery, a Battalion of 105mm and 155mm Howitzers. In the full 6 years I was in this unit I saw {and heard} the guns fired ONCE. I was behind a typewriter then as now. I later was a Supply Sergeant. I had all these Officers come down there and try to outmaneuver me; many of them are leaders of law and industry today. Another SLRE member was in our overall structure. That fine fellow is none other than retired architect Jerry Peters. Also thinking back I sometimes wonder why I was not in the Division Band or had joined one of the Army Reserve Railway Battalions? I think SLRE Dick Lukin told me he had been in Army railroading in steam at Fort Eustis, Virginia? That week before the demise of 32-Wellston, I had worked at Bettendorf-Rapp in St. Johns, bought a brand new 1963 Volkswagon "bug" on Wednesday; Michelle was born on Thursday; I picked up the car on Friday. On Saturday I drove the 550 miles to summer camp in that little stick shift "gremlin" only to trade it for a stick shift REO "deuce and a half" army truck in which I had never driven before.

In a recent letter from Sanford Goodrick of Mishawaka, Indiana, who has photos in two of the Morning Sun pictorial books, UNDER WIRES ON THE MILWAUKEE ROAD with Bill Janssen and the other recently out on New York Central steam in Indiana took a trip to Canada in September 1949. Leaving Mishawaka, near South Bend, he rode the South Shore to Chicago; the North Shore to Milwaukee; a night train on the C&NW to Minneapolis; Northern Pacific to Winnipeg; Canadian Pacific to Agassiz, British Columbia. Then a bus to Chilliwack, B.C. and the British Columbia Electric to Vancouver. He said the results from that point onward were terrific ... David J. Neubauer, Editor, 8-31-03.

NOTE: DUES FOR 2003-2004 ARE DUE BEGINNING IN SEPTEMBER. YOU MAY MAIL TO WALLACE OR PAY CASH AT MEETINGS. IF YOU "ELECT" YOU MIGHT WANT TO INCLUDE AN EXTRA BUCK OR TWO!

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TRACTION FACTION

Local News

"TECO Line Trolley Collides With Sheriff's deputy near Channelside" was the headline of a news bulletin that turned up on the Internet thanks to our member Mike Shirmer and local TV station Bay News 9.

It seems that on April 24th last, a Hillsborough County Sheriff's deputy collided with a TECO trolley. Ed Crawford of TECO was riding the trolley when the accident happened. He was on the trolley with several other TECO Line employees to determine why the trolleys have been involved in a string of accidents in the last several months.

"I watched the signal change, saw the operator had the right of way, that the no left-turn signal for autos was illuminated, and this person (the deputy) turned in front of the streetcar despite the no-turn signal," said Crawford. TECO line says this is the seventh accident since the line opened in October 2002. In each one, the driver of the car was at fault, not the trolley operator.

The sheriff's deputy involved in Thursday's crash was cited. There were no injuries reported to the deputy, the streetcar conductor (motorman) or any passengers. Damage to the trolley was minor, but the sheriff's cruiser sustained having the bumper and front grill tom off. (End of news report)

The collisions of a 35-ton streetcar with an average 2,500 lb. auto always results in considerable damage to the smaller vehicle. . Even on the day of the Tampa Bay Chapter's recent trolley excursion, we were treated to a near miss when an auto

driver made a left turn in front of our car causing a sudden stop and much horn blowing. There are two weak spots in the trolley route where auto traffic has customarily made "no stop" right turns (against the Florida Law) and it is going to take a while for drivers to become wary of those big bright yellow trolleys, which, due to the laws of physics, can't always stop as rapidly as an auto or light truck.

Meanwhile, the TECO Trolley continues to build ridership with a flexible schedule to allow for extra car availability during special events, and a huge condo project is scheduled for the Channelside area, which will provide more passengers for the cars.

St. Louis-San Diego-Ciudad Juarez-El Paso-Baltimore. Back in the late '30s, a small fleet of PCC cars was purchased from the *St. Louis Car Company* by the San Diego Transit System to replace a fleet of very old cars in the Southwest city. San Diego also operated a big fleet of trolleys similar to those now running in Tampa as the backbone of their fleet. Shortly after the end of WW II, San Diego's trolleys were replaced by buses, and several of the pcc's were sold to *El Paso City Lines* for use on the-then only international streetcar line on the planet. The cars ran in one direction on a big circular loop crossing the border to Juarez and returning via another Rio Grande bridge to Texas.

In the mid seventies, immigration laws and rail agreements were changed, and the trolleys closed down. The entire El Paso PCC trolleys were put in long-term storage and one particular carbody was pur-

chased for use as a local real estate office. It survived thirty years in relatively good shape. Recently, the car body was purchased by the *Baltimore Streetcar Museum* to round out its collection of streetcar models that ran on that city's streets. (They have a later model PCC that ran the last trip in 1963). The car body recently arrived via low boy truck at the museum and will be refitted with broad-gauge trucks and repainted in the early Baltimore green-white paint scheme. (Ed note to purists: Most of the Baltimore PCC fleet had been built by *PuUman-Standard* and were painted in the yuck-yellow and gray by the *National City Lines* when they took over the Baltimore trolley system).

The Overland Chapter - NRHS out in Moline Illinois has announced a Midwest Traction Tour to be held on August 28 - September 3, 2003. They will tour the traction routes of the *Midwest Electric Railway* in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, the *East Troy Electric Railroad* in East Troy, Wisconsin, the *Fox River TroUey Museum* in South Elgin, Illinois, and the *Illinois Railway Museum* in Union Illinois. Youreditortook part in one of these trips in 1992, and can highly recommend it. Labor Day is celebrated at the *Illinois Museum* as "Railfan's Day" at which time, ALL of the museum's operating equipment, whether it be diesel, steam, or electrically powered, is rolled out for operation.

Don Scott, Dave Bales, Kelvin Wilke and Walter Henkel went on this "marathon" as a St. Louis group.

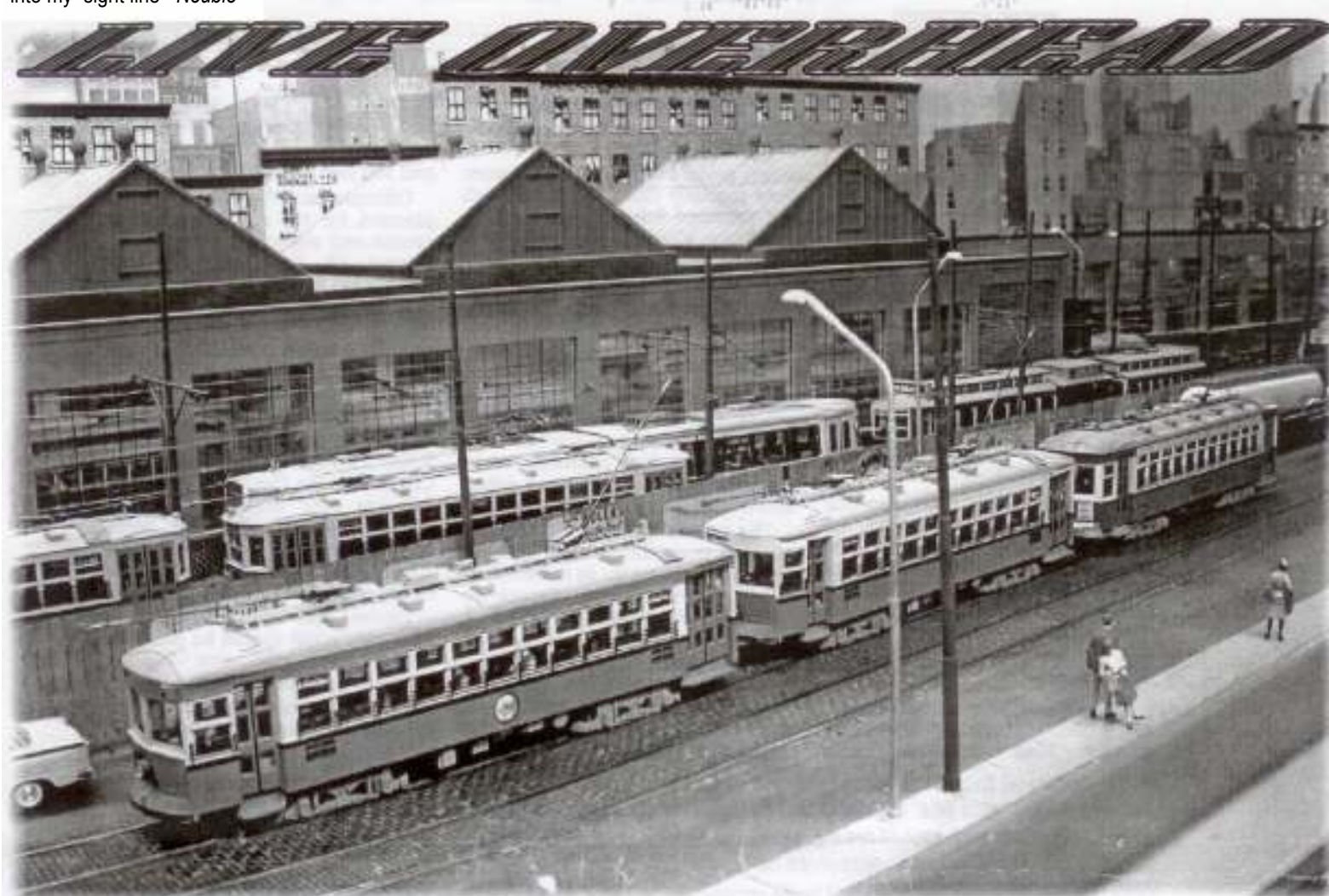


The Bad Conductor

Did you ever hear about the incompetent conductor that used to work for the CTA? He passed up stops, he derailed trains, he cursed out passengers, he left the doors open between stops and he ran trains into each other; he was absolutely the worst conductor you could possibly imagine! Once he even fell off of his train and landed directly on the 600 volt third rail. After the flash of electricity and smoke cleared, he got up and got back on his train. Why wasn't he electrocuted, you say?

I told you, he was a BAD CONDUCTOR!

This photo page from Bill Volkmer I have looked at more than 10 times and the ~ LIVE OVERHEAD just came into my sight line" Neubie



The amazing 0 scale model trolley collection of the late Ivor Walsh of Toronto came up for sale recently and Bill Volkmer purchased a two car train of Boston Center Entrance cars and an Eastern Mass. Bradley lightweight (the rear car in the photo above). His layout modeled Boston's Arborway complex. Before you ask, the "drunk lady" was posed that way by visiting firement just to see if Ivor would

notice I WHISTLE TALK SEPTEMBER 2003 PAGE 5



WES VERNON ON THE RAILS -
mGH GREEN -- August 2003

Amtrak: The Latest Chapter in a 32-Year Soap Opera Budget Battles and Smith, Dukakis Exit Amtrak President David Gunn will not blink. He warns that the House Appropriations Committee's \$900 million approval for Amtrak in FY 2004 will force him to shut down the railroad. No kidding! He's not playing a game of chicken. Furthermore, a shut down would come just as Amtrak board of directors is losing two of the most experienced and knowledgeable members.

The committee action sets up the debate for what might be called a long hot fall season. The House appropriators told the *High Green* Friday, July 25, that the Transportation Appropriations bill won't hit the House floor until Congress returns in September from its summer recess.

Those who remember when Gunn made shutdown noises last year have come to understand that when he says something, he means it.

The 32-year soap opera on Amtrak's survival has been through a roller coaster ride (again) these past few weeks. The authorizing committees of both the House and Senate have approved multiyear funding in the annual amount of \$2 billion. The idea behind that record generosity was to give the nation's

rail passenger system some sort of road map. Ideally, that would mean Amtrak can plan for the long-term, knowing what it has to work with, thus avoiding the blind trapeze band aid route.

The authorizing committees (House Transportation and Senate Commerce) have come to this conclusion and accordingly, exceeded Amtrak's formal request of \$1.812 billion.

When Amtrak Vice President Gil Mallery mentioned this development July 3 at a Baltimore joint convention of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) and the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society (R&LHS), this writer, who emceed the banquet, remarked that this was the first time in the passenger railroad's 32-year history that authorizing committees of Congress had approved anything remotely near that amount. That says something about Gunn's credibility on Capitol Hill.

However, it is in the appropriations committees that the moment of truth actually comes to fruition. The authorizers recommend. It is the appropriators who actually come up with "the scratch."

The full Appropriations Committee's \$900 million figure was upped from \$580 million approved the previous week by its Transportation Subcommittee, but still falls far short of what Amtrak says is required to avoid shutting down America's inter-city passenger trains.

After the subcommittee action, Gunn pointed out that "another year without an adequate capital budget means playing Russian roulette without revenue and service assumptions, with the operability of our Northeast corridor infrastructure and system trains, and most importantly, with the safety of our passengers. This constant state of crisis is not good for anyone."

In fact \$900 million "will quickly bring on the next crisis," according to the Amtrak boss, "This railroad simply cannot continue to operate without a maintenance budget."

In an attempt to reach a compromise, Rep. John W. Olver (D.-Mass.), the committee's ranking member, introduced a proposal to up the ante from \$900 million to \$1.4 billion. That idea was defeated on a voice vote.

Some people familiar with Amtrak's problems believe that though Olver's motion was well intended, it would still prolong the misery of Amtrak trying to run a railroad with the metaphorical scotch tape and bailing wire. Amtrak has borrowed all it can, going heavily into debt just to keep the trains running without endangering their passengers. These sources steadfastly maintain that when Gunn said \$1.8 billion was rock bottom of what he needed, he meant it. His whole attitude since assuming the top job at Amtrak last year is "No more games," they point out.

Olver, as it turned out, had to exert considerable effort just to get the figure up to \$900 million, which matches the Bush administration's budget recommendation.

Then he tried to add another half billion, but it did not

fly.

Congressman Olver said during the committee deliberations that an increase to \$1.4 billion would begin to allow Amtrak to perform some of its deferred maintenance and

deferred capital investment, which is more than can be accomplished with the administration's bottom line. The Massachusetts lawmaker believed that \$1.4 billion might have had a better chance of passage than \$1.8 billion, which would have been his own preference.

As for the \$900 million, Gunn obviously regards this as another extension of playing games.

"For too long, this company deferred maintenance on its plant and equipment. The train has been kicked down the road so far, that we have simply run out of road. The work has to begin now," he declared.

As an illustration of what he was talking about, Gunn cited a recent incident where "a span wire supporting the catenary broke and fell to the ground near the Hell Gate Bridge in New York. The wire in this area was installed before the Great Depression and this piece simply gave up the ghost." The effect of this one small incident totally disrupted service between Boston and New York for 24 hours."

In the midst of this annual Amtrak "crisis," its board chairman and vice chairman are both making their exits.

The Bush administration will not be re-appointing Amtrak Board Chairman John Robert Smith, *High Green* learned Thursday and again Friday from another source.

As we went to press, word had it they were likely to be replaced by a Democrat with international railroad experience, and a Republican loyalist. Their names may be known by the time you read this.

Smith is mayor of Meridian, Mississippi. Dukakis is a former presidential candidate and governor of Massachusetts.

Appointments to the Amtrak board are subject to Senate confirmation. Given that Amtrak in the Gunn era has reached a crossroads of sorts, it is believed senators will take a special hard look at White House appointees.

Also on July 25, the Amtrak Board elected David M.

Laney - an earlier Bush appointee to the railroad's governing body - as the new chairman of the Board.

Other board vacancies are likely in store in the months ahead, and confirmation hearings could become in-depth examinations of the prospective board member's basic philosophy as to Amtrak's place in the nation's transportation mix.

Meanwhile, protests against approval of the "shutdown" budget are pouring in to Washington.

Led by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the coalition of 30 groups oppose not only the Amtrak cut, but other rail parts of the transportation appropriations bill, as well - mainly new starts for mass transit projects.

"The record is clear," the letter argued, "New rail starts reduce congestion, improve the environment and spur development and economic growth. New rail transit projects have also helped drive the substantial growth in transit ridership over the past several years."

Traffic congestion has become such a major headache here in the Washington, DC, area that the Federal National Mortgage Association, two local banks and a regional

smorgasbord of elected officials want to give preferential treatment to home buyers who purchase their houses close to public transportation.

Participants would benefit from a nearly \$10,000 boost in the maximum allowable mortgage if their homes are a half mile from a rail transit station and a quarter mile from a bus stop. Further, they would have to agree that they will own no more than two cars.

As a sample of rail labor's take on the House committee's Amtrak slash, this comment from James "Broken Rail" Brunkenhoefer, legislative Director of the United Transportation Union (UTU): "As John Belushi once said 'It's not over until we say it's over.'"

Brunkenhoefer noted the Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to weigh in with its judgment on this. As mentioned above, the entire House of Representatives has not registered its verdict on the House panel's handiwork. It is relevant to bear in mind that 219 House members have gone on record as endorsing the Amtrak request for \$.8 billion. That is one more lawmaker than the required majority in the House.

Brunkenhoefer, a well respected lobbyist on Capitol Hill, urged UTU members to "continue making multiple telephone calls and sending multiple e-mail messages to their lawmakers." The UTU point man in Washington added that David Gunn is counting on lawmakers "to honor the funding recommendations of both the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Commerce Committee - both of which gave support to \$.8 billion in federal aid to Amtrak."

Much of the controversy here can be traced to public ignorance of the way transportation funding really works.

One 9-year-old woman at a Washington gathering emphatically told me that she would never ride Amtrak because it is "government-subsidized." I told her she should refrain from driving on highways and should avoid flying, since they too are "government-subsidized." Though much of the money from these other modes comes from "trust funds," a lot of their infrastructure funding comes from local taxpayers. But the feds encourage it by offering "matching" money from Washington.

Air and highway transport infrastructure are paid for by tax dollars. Railroading, on the other hand, has no such slush fund. While the proudly independent freight railroads pay for both operations and infrastructure, passenger railroading must rely on public subsidies for both - on the infrastructure side either to support its NEC property or to pay the freight carrier for use of their property.

Try to explain that to some adolescent dimwit at your next cocktail party. You'll have fun. *Wes Vernon*

Continued from [bottom] of Page 2

investment," he said. "Light rail could transform the downtown retail area of Anacostia."

"What's more, the new line would serve thousands of new commuters expected at several District agencies to be relocated in Anacostia, as well as 2,000 additional workers at the Defense Intelligence Agency at Bolling. Once the demonstration line is running, Tangherlini wants to extend it across the Anacostia River to the developing Navy Yard and office buildings along Maine Avenue SW.

Metro and DC officials begin holding public meetings this month to gauge public attitudes about the experimental line. Tangherlini said that if funding is secured, passengers could be riding the new line as early as 2006. The District will seek federal funds to help pay for construction.

For nearly a century, streetcars clattered along steel tracks dug into the broad boulevards of the District and its suburbs, one of the most extensive trolley systems in the country.

Congress killed the cream and green trolleys in January 1962, replacing them with diesel buses that promised a modern way to get around the city. But the rapid increase in downtown traffic, bus pollution and the difficulty of traveling across town on a subway designed for travel in and out of downtown have forced city leaders to reconsider.

The District's interest in trolleys comes during a national renaissance of light rail. In 1975, seven cities operated such systems. Today, more than 40 systems are proposed or have been approved in places as diverse as Arizona and Hawaii.

A light rail system consists of cars that can run alone or as a train at average speeds of 10 mph, compared with 8 mph for buses and 27 mph for subways. Stops are typically closer together than a subway line but further apart than on a bus line. Most often, cars draw electric power from a pole that connects with overhead wires. In Washington, a congressional ban on overhead wires in the heart of the city poses a special problem. The old streetcar companies buried the power source under the track bed.

A streetcar revival excites some Washingtonians, who wistfully recall the trolleys, post their memories on a web site and make pilgrimages to the National Capital Trolley Museum in Colesville.

One of the biggest light rail successes is in San Francisco, which opened a line in 1995 that runs vintage trolleys painted the colors of companies that ran streetcars in various cities. The historic F Line was an instant hit with tourists and trolley buffs, and commuters also embraced it. When the single trolley line replaced two bus lines, ridership nearly tripled. *Lyndsey Layton/The Washington Post, July 4, 2003*

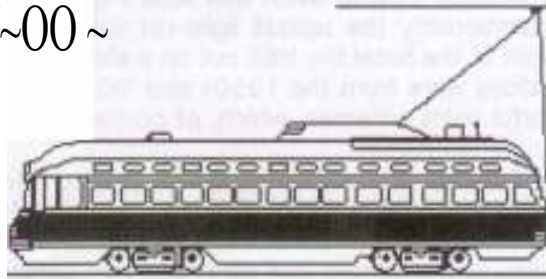


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by

Tom Konieczny



Bob Hepp and I arrived at the hotel at 9:30 PM after an evening flight from St. Louis. A young man in his early 20s, neatly dressed with a military haircut, was the lone clerk on duty. As we filled out the usual checking in paperwork other hotel guests approached and departed the front desk, the phone rang incessantly and a two-way radio crackled in a nearby room. All of these distractions were handled with such grace and competence by this young man that I couldn't help taking notice. I didn't inquire, but he was almost certainly a college student that had escaped the ravages of the American Public School System. He made me feel as if I were in another country.



A three car train on Salt Lake City's light rail line to Sandy is turning south and passing the Mormon Temple. This well run system operates on broad and very clean streets as well as prow.

That other country is Salt Lake City, home of the Mormons. The Mormons, who do not imbibe stimulants, make up the bulk of Utah's population. Fortunately, Catholics come in second, so getting a cup of coffee or a glass of beer in this city is no problem. Hepp and I were in the city for the bi-annual meeting of the Motor Bus Society (MBS). Hepp, who is most knowledgeable on bus things talked me into joining a few years ago. The Society puts out excellent publications on transit systems around the country and although the focus is the motorbus, trolleys and interurbans are often included. Besides, for both of us, the MBS gathering was a good excuse to see the city's new TRAX light-rail system.

Saturday and Sunday (Apr. 26 & 27) were devoted to touring the area on a MBS chartered coach visiting the garages of the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) and several private bus

operators. We also traveled into the mountains to visit Park City, a major ski resort and its (free) bus transit system. On Saturday, we visited the maintenance facility of UTA's light-rail lines, where we were treated to a ride from the facility to Sandy, the nearby end of one of the lines. The maintenance facility is located a half-mile or so off the mainline so riding this track between the yard and the mainline was an unexpected treat. The cars have that unfortunate wall (from which we, here in St. Louis, have been mercifully spared) separating the driver from the passengers and preventing forward viewing. However, there is a narrow window in the door that did allow me to video the ride while all the bus fans remained seated (bless their little hearts).

There are 33 Siemens-Duewag LRVs operating the two rail lines. Although it was Saturday, 30 of the 33 cars were in service, two cars were in the shop and, of course, there was the one we rode on. We were told that this is typical which means that they could use extra cars. Also on the property were two UTDC

LRVs formerly of San Jose, California. They are painted in UTA's colors: transit white (what else) with red and blue trim. They were here for testing purposes as UTA is considering purchasing a number of them. The UTDC cars became surplus when San Jose's light-rail operator replaced them with new low-floor cars which, are unquestionably the ugliest light-rail vehicles ever built (see below).

Saturday night at the hotel the MBS put on a slide show consisting mostly of west coast urban bus systems. The slides were from the 1950s and '60s when these companies were still in private ownership and all had colorful paint schemes, which, of course, only reinforced my intense dislike of today's transit white.

Monday and Tuesday Bob and I were on our own to ride and photograph the two light-rail lines. The downtown terminal is the Delta Center Station, so named for the nearby sports complex, home of the city's NBA team. (Salt Lake City is a hub of Delta Airlines.) Also here is the old Union Pacific Station, now trackless and used as a shopping and entertainment complex. Both Red (University) and Blue (Sandy) Lines share this and three more stations in the CBD before the University Line splits off to pursue its run east to the foothills while the Sandy Line continues south.

Legend tells us that Brigham Young, the city's founder, decreed that the city's principal streets should be wide enough for a horse and wagon to make a U-turn and what BY wanted BY got. The city is laced with 6 and 8 lane streets making the installation of light-rail down the center no problem. The University line operates with one and two car trains, and runs entirely down the center of these broad streets in the traditional streetcar manner. However, all street running is done with auto and rail traffic segregated. Salt Lake City sits on land as flat as the Illinois prairie; however, before reaching its terminal at the Olympic Stadium the University line ascends into the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains on a long sweeping S-curve. Only here does the line leave the center of the street turning off to the north into the Stadium Station. From here another two miles of line is under construction, which will extend it to the University's Medical Center. An inspection revealed the track work almost complete with all poles set. They were installing cross-arms on the poles during our visit. The extension meanders from side-of-road to middle-of-the-road and back to side-of-the-road with all track set in concrete. The extension is scheduled to open in September.

The busier of the two lines is the north-south oriented line to Sandy. From the junction with the Red Line it continues its street running south for another mile or so before reaching its private right-of-way. While both lines run on the same headway, the Sandy Line uses 3-car trains. It serves an area dotted with light industry and working class homes.

The right-of-way is the former UP mainline south out of the city, which became available with the merger of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific that also included the Rio Grande. The UP moved its mainline traffic to the Grande's trackage relegating the old main track to servicing on-line industries and making it available to TRAX. Freight service is carried out in the wee-hours when no light-rail trains are operating.



For me, Cleveland had the ugliest LRVs until San Jose (or a married one either). An all day pass goes for \$2.50 - cheap! Tickets are sold from machines similar to the ones used by our MetroLink.

only adds to the misery.

TJK

The city is squeaky clean (as are the people) with broad streets that are easy to navigate. The LRVs are well patronized, clean (naturally) and operated with a sense of urgency. And for us "gentiles", the city's restaurants sell hot coffee and cold beer. Life doesn't get any better. TJK

The Blue line operates on double-track except for two short single-track bridges and uses concrete ties. There are no grades and almost no curves permitting trains to travel between stations at full speed. Also, there are no fancy computer gadgets keeping trains from bumping into each other. Only automatic block signals and an intelligent work force keep things running safely.

The cash fare is \$1.25 and they use the proof-of-payment system. I took several trips on both lines and did not encounter a single fare inspector

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