

# TIMEPOINTS

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# Timepoints

April 1992

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## **Preserving a Mobile Segment of the Built Environment**

By Dwight B. Minnich

(Continued from March '92 issue.)

Several exhibits had come from Canada and overseas, but, domestically at least, the operating companies were largely history by the end of the decade, and most that remained were running only the bus like streamlined cars that a 1936 conference of street railway presidents had developed in an attempt to stem the decline of the industry. Belatedly, the Presidents Conference Cars (PCC) did save a few operations, even though almost all passed to control of public agencies. The PCC has an interesting historical niche as a particularly enduring technology and one of history's few programs effectively accomplished by a committee. This is a rather

stark contrast to the recent government sponsored effort to develop a standard bus that put vast sections of many a transit agency's fleet on the scrap line after only a few months of service. Several PCC's are in the Seashore National Collection, even though they are of a post classic era.

Today, in all North America, only New Orleans operates traditional trolleys in regular service. Even there, preservationists must wage an ongoing battle to keep engineers and politicians from trashing the cars in the name of safety, modernity, or whatever; the fleet is already substantially modified and battered, though Seashore has recently completed a full original restoration of the only car in the 900 (last) series that is operated outside New Orleans. San Francisco has its cable cars, damaged somewhat in a recent upgrade, but everybody's favorite city also has a fleet of historic electric cars from its own relictia and those of other cities. Though the program is partly privately sponsored, the operation is sporadic, since historic trolley operation is an easy target for trimming in times of sorely stressed municipal budgets. A few cities with new 'light rail systems have undertaken traditional looking operations, but nearly all have had to use vastly modified old body shells or replicas, most of the latter copied from originals at Seashore. Only the Seashore National Museum even aspired to the thought that it would be worthwhile, not only to experience what a streetcar was like, but what one was like in Memphis or Boston or Omaha or Seattle, very different things indeed. With nearly all the operating sources gone, the Museum turned to restoring many of its cars that had been received in very tattered condition, even though they were generally completely equipped and nominally operable. Although far more remain to be done than have been completed, the quality of these restorations is legendary, with as much of the original saved as possible. There were vast gaps in the collection, but museum activists knew that old streetcars once filled the ecological niche now held by house trailers. Even in the heyday, streetcar companies were willing to sell the bodies of retired or damaged cars to anybody with a few bucks that needed a tool shed, chicken house, or summer cottage, or who wanted to open up a diner. Although some systems held

(Continued on page nine)



### Merger

The RTD/LACTC merger is definite although there is still no timetable to accomplish the joining. The new agency will officially be called the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Agency or LACMTA!

### Red Line

LACTC has gotten approval to "mine" four Red Line stations along Hollywood Boulevard. It has been alleged that the 60 foot wide 80 feet deep block long station holes have put many viable businesses, out-of-business; including the only McDonalds ever to go out of business in its first year of operation.

This plan will require a single staging area at Barnsdahl Park at the corner of Vermont Avenue and Hollywood Boulevards. 400 daily dump truck trips will haul at least 550,000 cubic yards of earth out of the hole where a car wash now stands. Because of nearby schools and rush hour traffic, most of the trucks will operate between 6PM and 6AM.

The station at the corner of Sunset and Vermont will likely be a joint development with Kaiser Permanente and Children's Hospital which already occupy the other three corners. A new hospital building would occupy the North-East corner, its basement would feature the station as well as shops, restaurants and tunnels to the other three hospital corners.

Another planned public/private development is being planned for the current end-of-the-line at MacArthur Park Station. This mixed-use project is to feature shops, restaurants a supermarket and five screen movie theatre on the first two floors with 300

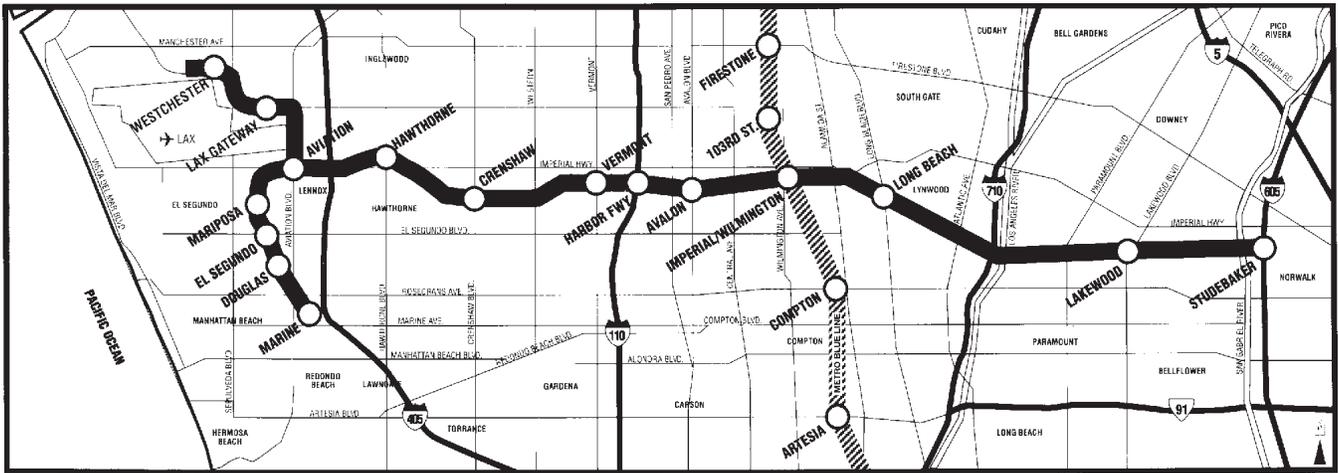
low cost subsidized apartments above. There could also be government offices in the project, but not for the RTD which plans to move to a new high-rise headquarters to be built behind Union Station.

### Orange Line

The recent passage in Congress of the Surface Transportation Act is pushing along work on the Metro Orange Line. In addition to the Wilshire diversion route, the big news are plans for up to seven new stations in East Los Angeles along Atlantic Boulevard. The Los Angeles City council on an amendment by councilman Holden lifted the city's designation of the Wilshire/Fairfax area as a "methane hazard area". This designation was being used by congressman Waxman as the excuse for routing the Orange line off of Wilshire Boulevard down to Vineyard, (Pico & San Vicente), and then up San Vicente to rejoin Wilshire in time to "hit" Beverly Hills. This route is finally being fought by the city's influential movers and shakers who realize only now that the dense mid-Wilshire corridor would be skipped as well as the enormous County Museum complex. According to geologists, the Vineyard area is just as susceptible to methane pockets as Wilshire. According to mining engineers on the project, tunneling a subway is one of man's best methods for venting potentially dangerous gas pockets! *One only hopes it is not too late to put a Red Line station in at the Hollywood Bowl, none is planned although the line runs directly beneath...*

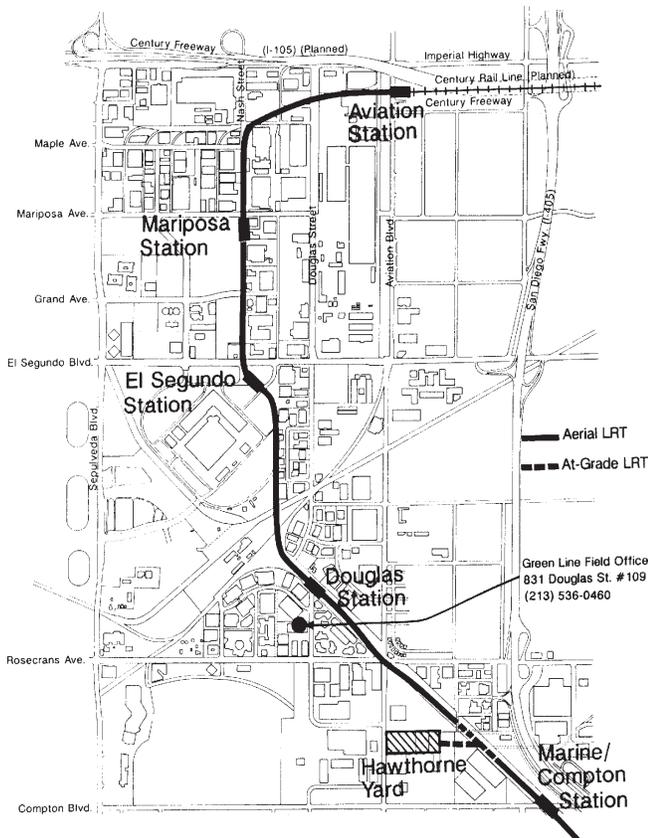
### Green Line

Since the cancelling of the Green Line car contract with Sumitomo made national headlines, very little has been said publically about new direc-



tions for this project. Sumitomo has filed all of the necessary paperwork to sue the LACTC if their payoff offer is not to the Japanese Company's liking. TIMEPOINTS' sources report that the first rails have been laid in the Green Line right-of-way; we hope to report in more detail soon.

Above is the current a-building Green Line. Below the recently circulated "possible Green Line Route Extensions"



**Blue Line maintenance schedule:**

Daily inspection of all cars after service each day. Daily inspection takes 20 to 30 minutes. It includes cleaning the cars and physical inspection of components such as doors and lights.

Mechanical parts are inspected as they come in. The lead time is six months to a year for many of the parts. The railcar bodies come from Japan, the trucks from Brazil and other parts from around the world.

30 days- Safety check, change air filters, lubricate door tracks, check door timing and brakes.

90 days- Check components, auto-drop on pantograph, air conditioning, traction motors, motor alternators and low-voltage power supply.

Six months- Check power, tolerances and for unusual wear.

One year- Charge batteries and check cell voltage. Inspect drum switch and electric coupler. Sensitive edge test and adjust limit switch and pressure regulator on door controls. For the friction brakes, test safety valve, adjust air pressure switch, test drain and cut-out cock function, measure brake disc wear, lube brake caliper, test track brake coil resistance and electronic control system calibration, starter resistor check and brush replacement. Also, for propulsion, gearbox oil change, replace motor air filter, clean chopper-blower filter, clean high speed circuit breaker, inspect and clean lightning arrestor and inspect brake resistor. For the truck and suspension, check air spring, lube ball bearing and check spherical pivot lining.



Five years- Replace components regardless.

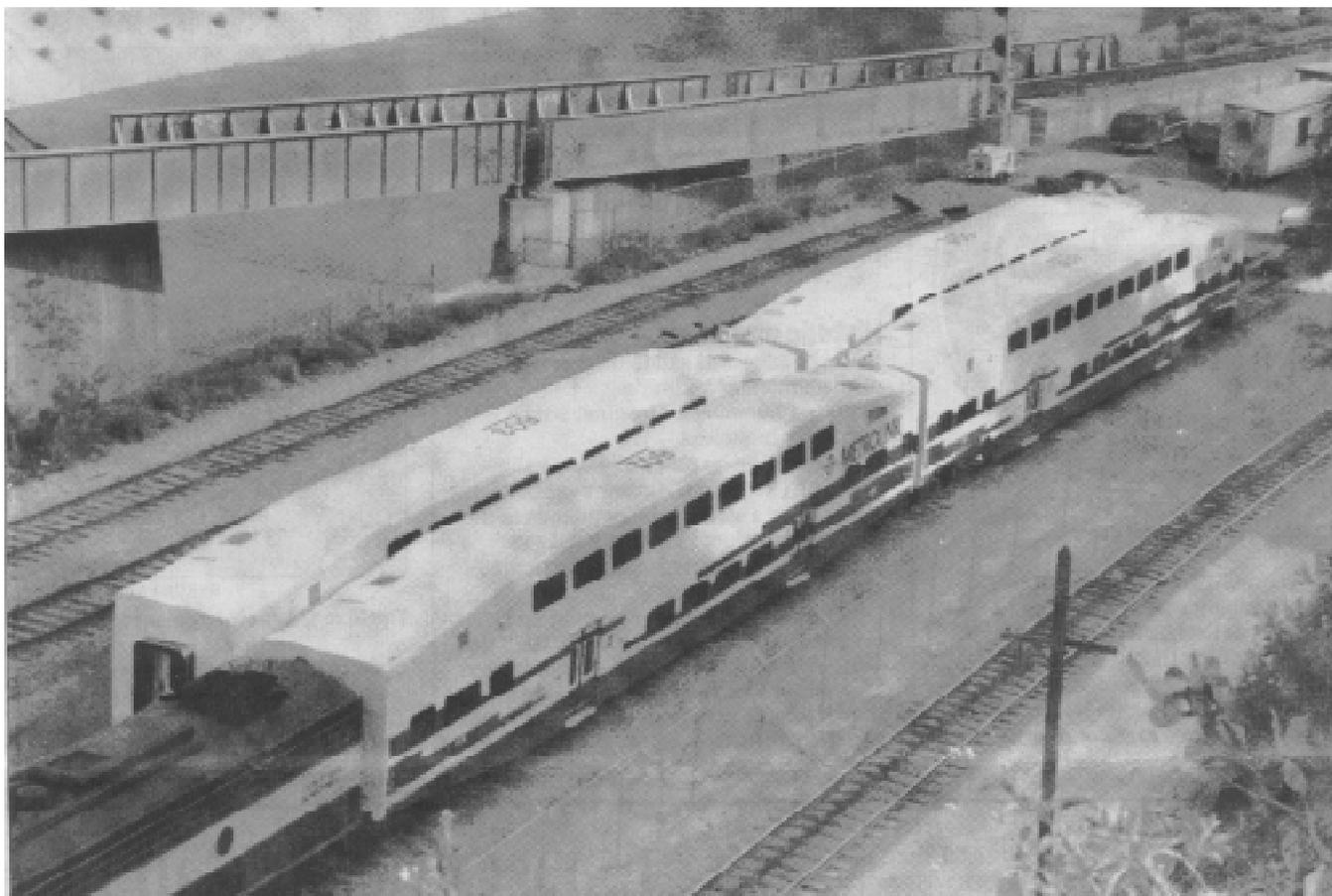
### **MetroLink**

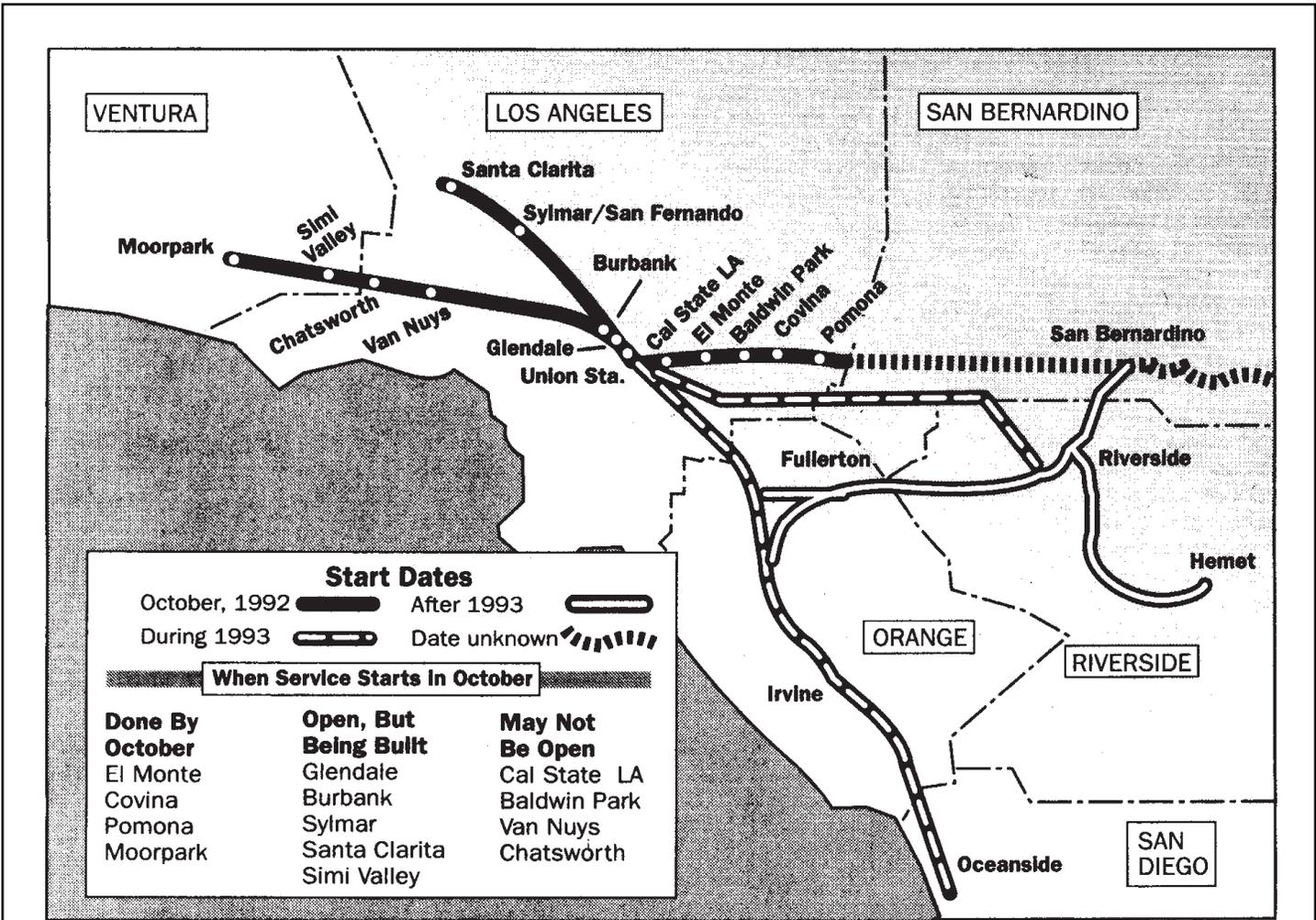
MetroLink is expected to debut on time this October despite delays in getting some of the stations open and/or ready in time. The project is under budget and service on all three initial lines should meet with no crippling delays; there is even a rumor that the Red Line opening will be pushed up more than six months to coincide with opening day for MetroLink!

Service on the San Bernardino Line will extend only as far as Pomona until conflicts with the Santa Fe are worked out. Amtrak will operate the service under contract with a variable rate going to them based upon operating costs and efficiency of service provided. Initially there will be five trains on the line from Pomona (later San Berdoo), four trains from Moorpark and three trains from Santa Clarita. All of the lines will run inbound to Union Station each morning, (where all of the units will

sleep-off the day, awaiting the return runs at evening rush-hour). Rail fans would either have to spend the night at the ends of the line, drive out to a line's end very early in the day and spend the entire mid-day in downtown Los Angeles or perhaps ERHA will be able to run charters. One possible marathon would be a chartered weekend run over all three of the shortened MetroLink lines beginning and ending at Union Station, then the length of the Red Line transferring on the way inbound at 7th & Flower for a quick run to Long Beach on the Blue Line and then back to Union Station via the Red Line. On opening day the following stations will be in service: El Monte, Covina, Pomona, and Moorpark. Glendale, Burbank, Sylmar, Santa Clarita and Simi Valley will be open but not complete. The remaining four

Sitting at Elysian Park where North Broadway crosses the Los Angeles river and one can almost still read the Southern Pacific's "Eight trains Daily" billboard painted on the wall, stand the first four MetroLink cars. Here Nos. 601, 602, 603 & 604 stand with a used 'F' unit in front of the Santa Fe's river bridge that we still hope will soon be the route the Blue Line takes to Pasadena.





stations Cal State Los Angeles, Baldwin Park, Van Nuys and Chatsworth will open later.

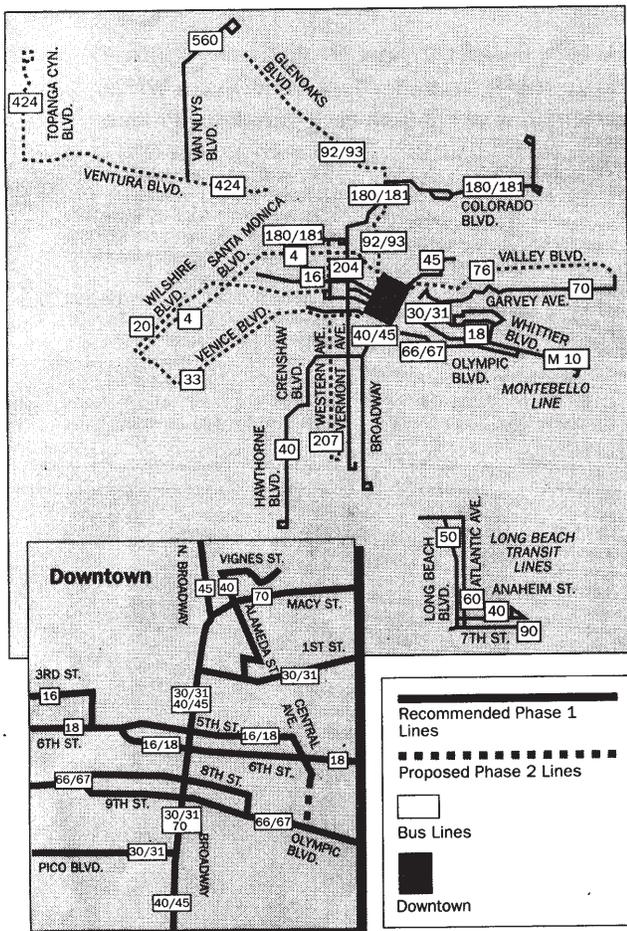
**MetroLink Survey Finds Mixed Results.** About 44% of commuters who drive alone and live near the routes of a commuter rail line would be likely to use the line according to an LACTC commissioned survey. Only one-third of those who said they would ride said they would be willing to alter their schedules to accommodate the train trip. 44% agreed with the statement, "I would rather have privacy and be by myself during my commute than to ride with others." Of those who said they would be very likely to use the commuter lines, only half would be willing to use it five days a week.

Orange County officials have voted to move ahead with a plan to spend \$4.4 Billion by the year 2010 to put in place 87 miles of elevated electric rail system that would connect up with several of the

MetroLink stations. At this time there is no specific information as to type of equipment or exact routing or construction timetables. Some of the points noted are; a route to link Irvine with Santa Ana, Anaheim, several Northern County cities and Norwalk's Green Line station. Other routes would include San Juan Capistrano to Brea and cities in-between and South Orange county with Long Beach via the San Diego Freeway.

**Trolleybuses**

Los Angeles is definitely going to see the return of trolleybus service... this MTA will start with ten lines unlike the old MTA's measly two lines. Naturally the project team plans to virtually reinvent the trolleybus having already let the specs out to interested bus, 'ehm' Electric Mass Transit Roadway Vehicles builders. There will be a mix of single and articulated electric buses featuring that great



innovation... the see-throughable rear window!

The first lines converted are some of the very heaviest traffic'ed in the region. All of the lines will get trolley overhead and poles independent of existing poles and/or buildings. All lines except Montebello's will receive dual stands of mature trees along the entire routes to "hide the wires". While we doubt that trees will hide the wires, their presence will make the trolleybus lines prettier to ride than non-electrified non-treed routes. The line candidates are Van Nuys and Colorado Boulevards in the Northern part of the County, Garvey Avenue, 1st Street and Whittier and Olympic Boulevards on the Eastside, Pico Boulevard and 3rd, 6th and 8th Streets in midtown; Broadway and Vermont Avenue in South-Central and Crenshaw and Hawthorne Boulevards in Southwestern LA County. The Long Beach Line nominated for conversion would run along Long Beach Boulevard, Atlantic Avenue and 7th Street. A second set of high use lines in West Los

Angeles the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys was put off for future discussion.

"Penis envy and light rail to be explored" read the ad in a Berkeley newspaper for an upcoming lecture on the University's campus. Writer Jonathan Richmond believes that the backers of light rail in Los Angeles were controlled by subconscious sexual feelings, among other influences.

Richmond, a visiting scientist from MIT, is the author of "Transport of Delight: The Mythical Conception of Rail Transit in Los Angeles."

In the unpublished manuscript, he points out that the cover of the February, 1991 issue of "Metro Moves", an LACTC newsletter reads, "Tunnel Just Waiting for a Train." and he says, "the tunnel is shaped just like a heart."

He asserts that the line is costly and out of sync with the wishes and needs of Los Angeles and that numerous symbols, metaphors and images have been used to push the concept of rail transit. "When the people of Los Angeles turned to autos they



already had a rail transit system," he points out. *Of course sometimes a train is just a train.*

Los Angeles Times photo accompanied article about overspending at the LACTC. Agency spent over \$6,000 in 18 month period on donuts. Now we know there are rail fans at the agency!

*On the Cover. No the San Francisco Muni isn't really going back to the Green and Creme color scheme, nor are they planning to rebuild or remanufacture their beat up collection of Boeing cars. April Fools!*

# 40¢

# EXCURSION FARE TO THE BEACHES

## WEDNESDAY

# AUGUST 20

### CHILDREN *OVER 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> UNDER* 20¢ *12 YEARS OF AGE*

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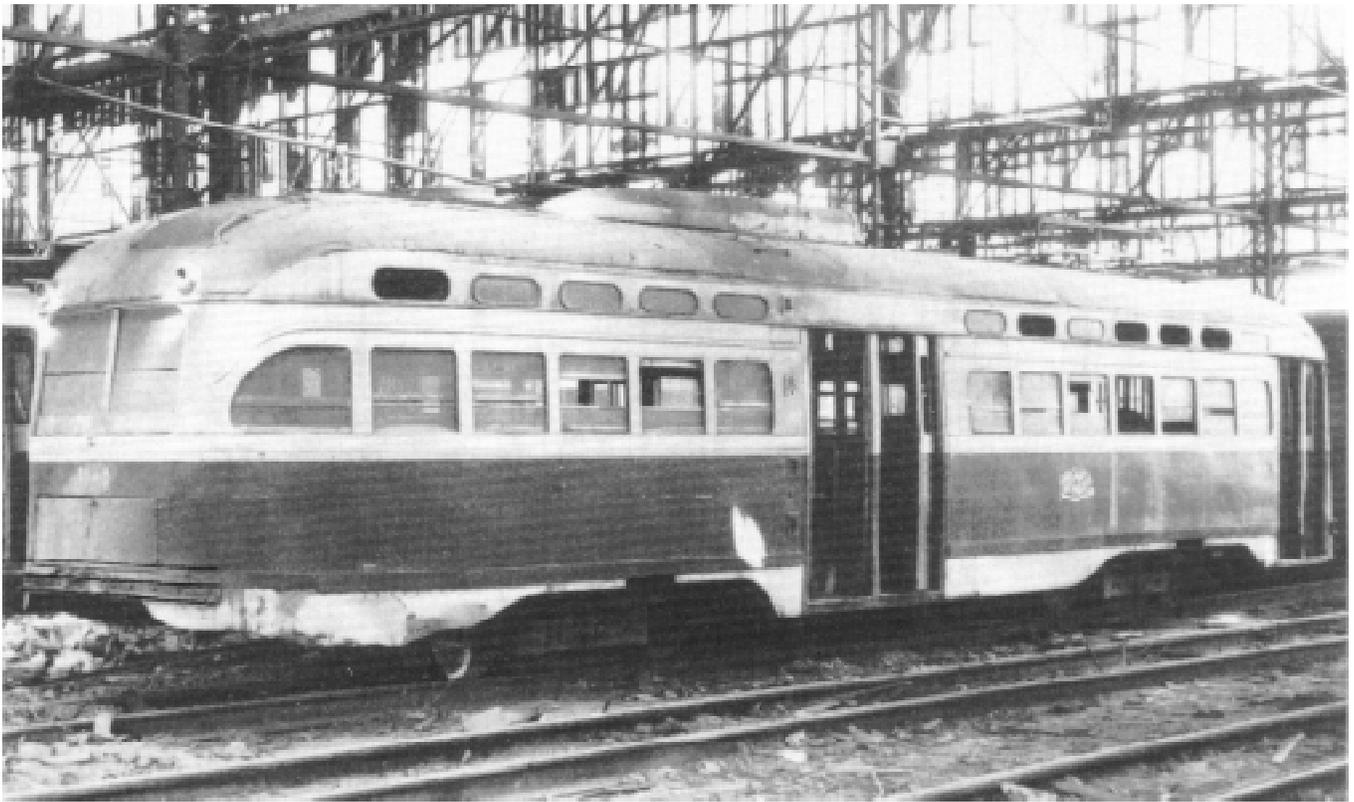
*TO*  
LONG BEACH, SAN PEDRO  
SEAL BEACH,  
REDONDO BEACH

*FROM*  
Main Street Station  
(6th & Main Sts.)  
Watts  
Compton  
Gardena.

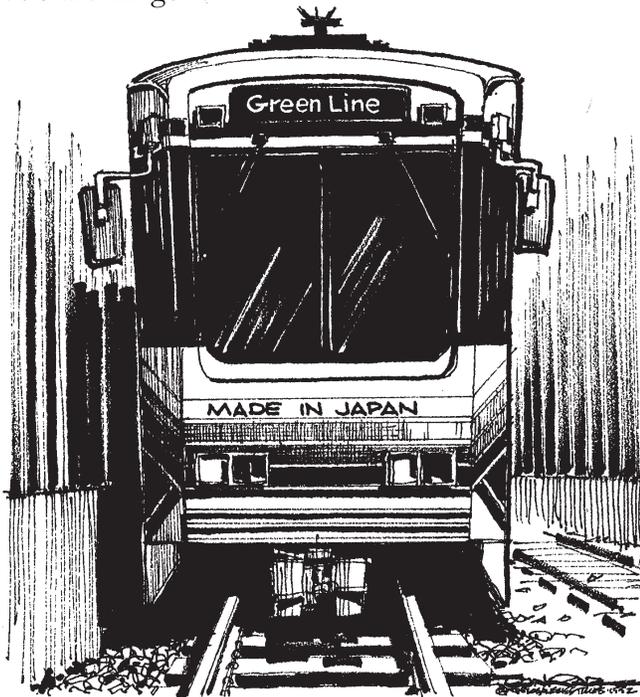
Special Ticket Agent  
(7 A.M. TO 4:30 P.M.)  
VERNON & LONG BEACH  
Avenues

TICKETS SOLD ONLY BY AGENTS  
NOT SOLD BY CONDUCTORS ON CARS

# PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY



Car 1105 one of two surviving ex-Los Angeles PCC cars allegedly retained for a future tourist service in Cairo. 1105 and 1023 are in dead storage in the remains of the Abbasia car barn outside of Cairo. The PCC's soldier on; the Tattras delivered new in the 70's are all gone!



A Streetcar Named Retire

## Preserving

(Continued from page two)

burning orgies after the final runs, others sold bodies liberally, after removing and selling mechanical and electrical components with high scrap value. Also usually lost were seats, which tended to be in the way of adaptive uses. Acknowledging one of the more winsome possibilities for the second life of a streetcar, museum activists refer to old carbodies generically as 'chicken coops'. A few cars had been obtained from secondary sources that would not have been available otherwise.

One of the proudest restorations in the Seashore National Collection is the executive Parlor Car from Manchester, New Hampshire, rescued from service as a children's backyard playhouse. A rural doctor's office in Ohio would be the only car known to survive from Wheeling, West Virginia, and was once believed the only remaining examples of the Cincinnati Car Company's famed 'Curveside' design, popular throughout the Southeast, but not accessible to the collection when complete cars would have been available. Other curvesides have since been found, but there was no inkling of how many carbodies there were scattered around the

country until the museum received one that represented the original design of Peter Witt, the 1920s Cleveland Transit Commissar who is credited with the invention of the paper clip as well as the center entrance streetcar. There is some dispute about this, since Denver had center entrance cars early on and Birmingham claimed the idea as a means to facilitate segregation, but Rochester 1213 was definitely the first from Mr. Witt, for whom all sorts of center entrance cars were named, from Los Angeles to Milan. But when a Seashore moving crew went to pick up the car body in 1984, the local trolley enthusiasts told them of having identified some 75 carbodies in a three county area.

Two more of them have since come to Seashore, but, extrapolating to the more than 3,000 counties in the nation, that's 75,000 chicken coops. Of course there are not that many, but it seems rational to postulate five or ten thousand. Most of these, of course, will not be saved; many are wrecks, duplicates, or of limited historical importance. The late Count Theodore Santarelli de Brasch, one of the original students who ponied up ten dollars in 1939 and went on to become the Museum's long time president, wondered if there should not perhaps be a 'last roundup' whose purpose would be to round out the collection with some of the better carbodies. Unfortunately Santarelli died suddenly not long thereafter, but the author and others have carried on the concept and over 30 such cars have been brought in. They represent such places as the original Richmond, Mobile, Ottawa, Sioux City, Fort Wayne, and Ohio's great Lake Shore Electric interurban, whose name inspired that of the Seashore Museum. Although carbodies that were in plain sight had mostly disappeared, others have been coming out of the woods more swiftly than the resources to deal with them, even merely for removal to the museum and temporary stabilization. As one historical society president lamented some years ago, "the streetcars are more unwieldy than pewterware," You don't just put them on the back seat of the family car. Secondary use carbodies, furthermore, are often situated inconveniently for removal. Traffic and terrain conditions make access and transport logistically challenging. There is a saying that

car moves are like space shots- every one has a different set of problems. Though Seashore once had its own semitractor- trailer rig, tightening regulation and escalating costs for things like insurance made this too costly, so most equipment must be rented, expensively and of limited availability. Competent volunteers must be recruited or willing minions hired and paid. Any move now costs several thousand dollars and not a few people days of grunt and sweat. As in any preservation situation, there have been wins and losses.

A couple of years ago came a rumor that two cars from Maine's great Androscoggin and Kennebec Railway were in a north woods gravel pit. This was the first report ever of any A&K cars, so the museum hastened to follow up. But when the pitmaster was advised of the mission, he responded sadly: "I wish you'd come a few months ago, before I bulldozed them."

Even more recently, an Arkansas cotton gin operator responded to an inquiry that he'd heard there might be an interest in two Memphis cars on his lot, but, having waited a year and heard nothing, he had gone ahead and burned them. Never mind that those interested had investigated as soon as the rumor was heard, so keep looking.

More typically, there will come a phone call, sometimes out of the blue, or sometimes from some prior contact who wasn't quite ready to find another place for the tools or the chickens or whatever. The property has been sold, or the city has demanded removal of an eyesore, or the contractor wants to begin work on the new condos Monday, or there is some even more imaginative problem, but it is almost always a right now urgency. Sometimes an expedition can be mustered, or sometimes the deadline can be extended, and sometimes there is nothing for it but to let go. There was one of these crash situations in Texas one time, where the car was especially important. The alternative was a loser, so it was necessary to pay a local mover almost as much to take the car to a storage lot 35 miles further away as it would have cost to bring the car home to Maine.

And then there are the folks who are sure they have a fabulously valuable antique. Usually these are the rattiest, rusted, rotted, and cut up specimens, and it is often difficult to explain that there

probably is not enough money to move the car and do the restoration, let alone pay substantial ransom. Suffice that substantial selectiveness about acquisitions is necessary. Resources to build track and barn space have not kept up, so most of the new accessions have to stay wrapped in tarpaulins until that bright tomorrow when the funds for restoration and covered storage become available. But we have preserved the option, for surely the car would not still be in the farmyard if all the funding were to be waited for.

There are a number of excellent railway and transport museums around the country, and Seashore has cooperated with many of them in their own car saving projects. But, every so often, the issue arises, individually and separately, as to how nice it would be if some carbody could be restored and enshrined or even operated on its original home turf. The operation idea comes up against reality very hard and fast, since the facilities needed for one car are almost as extensive as for twenty, and just finding a place to do it is a real problem.

Fort Collins, Colorado, is a shining exception to the usual fate of such efforts; they have one of their original cars restored and operating over part of its original route. But they started with a complete car, not just a body, and had exceptional support from the community and the city administration. Even so, there were angry political and legal attacks led by a resident along the route who simply hated the whole project. Interestingly, all five of the little 1919 Birney Safety Cars that were in Fort Collins when the city ended its streetcar service still survive complete. However, the sponsors of the project have been unable to recover any besides the first one that was found deteriorating in their own city park. A private owner of one sold it for a decoration in a Southern shopping center, and the others are in museums unwilling to release them. Seashore even offered to supply a more suitable exhibit to one of them if they would release the Birney to Fort Collins, but there was a flat policy that nothing once there ever leaves.

Elsewhere, though, if an operation seems to be unworkable, the next options are to give the carbody to the local general museum or put it in the park. Of course the museum has no place for it, so it sits in the parking lot, deteriorating until the director can persuade the board of trustees to allow a

discreet call to the junk man. Occasionally, the call will be to a railway museum, but usually, the car is lost. The park concept was developed for steam Locomotives, but even these suffer neglect, for seldom can the ongoing enthusiasm for a single static piece be maintained. Steam locomotives have very little glass to be broken, and what there is not vital to the overall protection and integrity of the engine. Similarly, there is little wood or other combustible material in a steam locomotive. It has to rust away rather slowly, and it does not contain large internal spaces suitable for human activity.

Streetcars, on the other hand, even if protected by prison type fences that pretty well negate any exhibit value, develop much broken glass almost immediately. It usually does not take too long for there to be a fire started from careless smoking by partying juveniles or the cooking and heating campfires of the homeless. Even so, there is often no alternative but to demur to even the most hare-brained locally based schemes when mere explanations fail to convey the realities. And await the phone call, which hopefully will come before a loss is unavoidable.

An interesting demonstration of this phenomenon involved the 'Merci Train', a set of 40' type four wheel boxcars France sent, one to every state, as a token of thanks for liberation from the Nazis after World War II. They would be placed on display in prominent locations as an eternal demonstration of French Gratitude. A few years ago, a student undertook to trace the fate of these cars for a doctoral thesis. Even though the cars were windowless, and contained very little easily removable scrap metal, he could find fewer than ten of them, and most of those were in tough shape.

The Last Roundup continues, though funds are getting very short. The chicken coops are not only decaying beyond restorability, but more and more are being demolished as urban encroachment and neighborhood upscaling bring pressure for demolition of substandard buildings and removal of 'eyesores'.

Future generations can continue restoration work, but only if the basic elements are saved now. The final decisions must come within the next few years. Hopefully the resources can be found for a few hundred of the best prospects.

# TIME TABLES

**April** 3, Friday. MEETING, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, 8:00 PM, 2024 Durant Avenue, Berkeley

10, Friday. MEETING, Pacific Railroad Society regular monthly meeting, 7:30 PM at Joslyn Recreation Center, Alhambra

11,12, Saturday, Sunday. MEETING, San Diego Electric Railway Association regular monthly meeting and swap meet, 2:00PM-5:00PM at the firehouse., Don Brown's S.D.E.Ry slides & movies, Paul Ward's "Art Alter" slides, S.D.E.Ry artifacts

**17, Friday. MEETING, ELECTRIC RAILWAY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION regular monthly meeting. in the Church, Heritage Square. 7:30PM Business Meeting, 8:00PM Program: Ken Douglas, Canada, Cuba & Mexico in the 50's & 60's.**

25-26, Saturday & Sunday. RAIL FESTIVAL, OERM  
Spring rail festival 9:00AM to 5:00PM

25-26, Saturday & Sunday. RAIL FESTIVAL., San Francisco's 100th Anniversary of electric streetcar service. A dozen hist. cars 10:00AM to 6:00PM, a nickle-a-ride on Market St., parades and displays on Sunday

**May** 3, Friday. MEETING, Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, 8:00 PM, 2024 Durant Avenue, Berkeley

10, Friday. MEETING, Pacific Railroad Society

regular monthly meeting, 7:30 PM at Joslyn Recreation Center, Alhambra

11, Saturday. MEETING, San Diego Electric Railway Association regular monthly meeting, 7:30 PM at SDG&E Co. 1st & Ash Sts., member's nite, bring 20-30 slides

**17, Friday. MEETING, ELECTRIC RAILWAY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION regular monthly meeting. in the Church, Heritage Square. 7:30 PM Business Meeting, 8:00 PM Program: Dick Reynold's 16mm movies. First Reel; Los Angeles traction, 1940 to the end (LArY, LATL, PE, etc.)**

**Second Reel, first part, "Traction Tidbits" around the U.S. in the 1940's and 1950's.**

**Second Reel, second part, "An Interurban without wire: Nevada Copper Belt Motor Car 21, 1960-1978 (including operations on the**

## Meetings By Mail!

While our monthly meetings are better attended than ever, we realize that many members live out of the area and are missing out on some wonderful programs.

As an experiment, ERHA is videotaping our meeting's entertainment portion. Not a slick professional style video, occasional heads in the way, the audience commentary, white screens from missing slides, etc., the picture quality is excellent and any narration is picked up with a wireless microphone. A Hi8 Camcorder is placed on a tripod just above the slide projector so there is no keystoneing.

Please make out checks to ERHA of SC. Shipment time will depend upon the number of orders we receive. (Tapes will be duped to order.) Your donation of \$15.00/VHS tape includes postage, please add \$5.00 U.S. for international orders.

#101 Ted Damon's PE, Glendale/Burbank, Bellflower, Long Beach & San Pedro. Lots of work trains, Juice Jacks, regular service and fan trips. (115m)app.

#700 Ken Douglas's Canada, Cuba & Mexico in the 50's & 60's.

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