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HOLIDAY WEEKEND EXCURSION

Bowser RTR Trolley Debuts

George Huckaby - On Monday, August 28th, **Custom Traxx** and the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) received the first of the new Ready-To-Run HO scale trolley cars from Bowser Manufacturing Company and it is a beauty. The car is a model of the twelve 800 series Jewett Combines as used by the Lehigh Valley Transit (LVT), an interurban line that once existed in eastern Pennsylvania. Cars 800-805 arrived in August 1912 and cars 806-811 arrived in July 1913. The most noticeable difference being a change in trucks from Baldwin 78-30A to Brill 27MCB-3X. This line had trackage rights on the Philadelphia & Western, which is now the Norristown line of SEPTA. Cars 802, 808, 800, 806, and 809 were converted to freight motors C-14 through C-18 between 1935 and 1940 with all of them using the Brill 27MCB-3X trucks. These cars performed admirably until the end of the line in 1951. C-15 then became the trash car on Philadelphia's Broad Street Subway until the late 1960s until restoration of the car began in the 1970s.

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The car, which retails for **\$129.95**, is finished in the original green and ochre paint scheme used from 1912 to 1918. We hope that Bowser will eventually produce the car in the later and more familiar red schemes used until 1939 when the last of the cars were retired. This car also features Bowser's new 1999 trolley drive, which has become the standard drive for many of the cars operated by the SCTC on their modular layout. The club has been testing these drives since August 1999 and found them to be sturdy consistent performers and if there ever is a problem, parts are readily available. The original test unit is still running in an HO scale Mike Bartel/IHB model of a SEPTA Single End LRV. Other new drives have been installed in older brass models, such as Montreal & Southern Counties car #621, and continue to perform excellently. Although the RTR Jewett interurban is delivered with the Baldwin 78-30A side frames, Bowser also makes the Brill 27-MCB-3X side frame (Part #1315) available in Pewter for those who wish to model cars 806-811 or the C-14 through C-18 freight motors. These side frames were used on the Montreal car shown below:

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All four Bowser trolley cars, whether kit or ready-to-run, are intended to run on regular two-rail model railroad track and now come with dummy trolley poles. This is a reflection of the fact that the overwhelming majority of modelers prefer **not** to erect and use an operable overhead wire. Since HO scale operating trolley poles now cost from \$10.00 to \$15.00 each, elimination of operating poles from the basic car helps keep the models as affordable as possible. Operating trolley poles are available from Bowser (800-327-5126), LaBelle, O'Toole (216-383-1281) and MTS Imports (914-342-5623) for those who prefer to operate the cars prototypically from live wires.

Information on converting cars to operate on overhead wire is available on line at Trolleyville,

Trolleyville Visits MUNI

George Huckaby - The Electric Railway Historical Association of Southern California sponsored a Northern California triple-header over the 2000 long Labor Day weekend. On Saturday, September 2nd, the San Jose light rail line and heritage cars were to be featured. Sunday, September 3rd would find the group in San Francisco doing a similar thing and Monday would allow a tour of the Bay Area Electric Railway Museum in Rio Vista Junction.

Trolleyville merchant George Huckaby (Custom Traxx) and his wife, Anne decided to participate in the San Francisco portion of the weekend by making use of the United Airlines Shuttle. Fortunately, or unfortunately depending on your point of view, less than a dozen total trolley lovers turned out for this trip. This excursion featured San Francisco Municipal Railway (MUNI) car #130, operators Walt Thomsen and Jose Castillo and Supervisor Steve Clark.



By now, almost every local railfan knows that car #130 was built by the Jewett Car Co in Newark, Ohio in 1914 and was in constant service until the late 1950's when the ex-Saint Louis PCC cars arrived. Then luck intervened and car #130 ended up being the last of the operable conventional streetcars when one dedicated MUNI employee persuaded management top save the car and use it as a "wrecker". This same employee then took the seats from the car and stored them in his basement for many years just in case the car would be restored. Well it was eventually restored to the MUNI pre-WWII blue and gold and here we are.



The trip left Geneva Car House at 10:15 A.M. and returned at 4:45 P.M. without any "... unfortunate incidents..." Between those times, the car went inbound on the J line through the Bernal Cut and north on Church Street to Duboce where a left turn was made. The Fillmore crossover was used and the car went back south on Church Street to 17th where it turned right to reach 17th and Castro. After the first pit stop, the car went northeast on Market Street to 11th Street where we negotiated the wye and went back to a point just east of the Mint. We changed ends, negotiated the crossover and proceeded to the Ferry Building, noting that the former outbound track on Fremont from the East Bay terminal has been removed for some construction work. These tracks had been in service since 1939 until March 4th of this year when the line was extended to Fisherman's Wharf. When we arrived at the short turn loop at Steuart Street, we parked the car on the northbound track on the Embarcadero and a second pit stop was afforded. Then there was a surprise. The car went southbound on the northbound track to the tunnel portal where the present N-line cars exit for their run to the Cal-Train Terminal. This allowed a roof examination of the new Breda cars.



At this point, it was time to traverse the new F line extension up to Fisherman's Wharf. The number of riders waiting to board these cars was sufficiently large that it forced the supervisor to move the public to the rear of the platforms so that our chartered car could safely pass. We moved up the Embarcadero, which has been transformed into a beautiful boulevard used by many pedestrians and cyclists. When we reached Pier 39, where there exists another short turn loop, a photo stop was afforded.

We then proceeded to the main intersection in Fisherman's Wharf, Jefferson and Taylor, where the track suddenly veered to the left for half a block. The explanation for this diversion was to keep the weight of the cars from a deteriorating sea wall, which is currently under repair. After consecutive left turns at Jones street and Beach Streets, we returned to Pier 39 and back to the Ferry Building at the foot of Market Street and back out Market Street to the Mint, where the group picture shown



After changing ends, we proceeded east on 17th Street to Church and back the way we originally came through Dolores Park and the Bernal Cut. A lunch stop was provided enroute at a German Delicatessen on Church Street. When we arrived at Ocean and San Jose, the car turned right and for the rest of the trip, the L, M and K lines were covered, including the original now non- revenue track on Taraval to the Beach and the wye at 35th and Taraval. We could not visit the N-line due to a clearance problem with the ADA mandated ramp at 9th & Judah.

earlier was taken.

Leaving the Mint, we again return to 17th and Castro via Market and Noe Streets. We gave a ride to one of the Market street Railway volunteers who clean the cars and bring sodas to the F-line operators. There was an exploratory little run into the eastbound subway exit track west of the intersection of 17th and Castro.



The car formed admirable in testimony to the loving care that these cars are getting not only from MUNI's dedicated employees but also the volunteers of the Market Street Railway. But it was the three MUNI employees that stole the show. All three seem to enjoy their work, seemed to be happy at work despite the holiday weekend and were dedicated to make sure that we enjoyed the trip and the city.

Walt Thomsen, shown in the left of the photo below, is currently the senior streetcar operator at MUNI, having 37 years of experience dating back to 1963 and his handling of the car shows it. Walt was planning to retire in November but like his job and loves the heritage fleet. He refers to them as his "toys". Walt was even planning to retire in November but like the present environment so much that he elected to stay longer. That's true job satisfaction. Walt actually knew Steve

when as a young kid when he was first attracted to the MUNI system.



Steve Clark, in the center of the photo, was the Supervisor on the trip and consistently demonstrated his ability to “get things done”. He made maximum use of technology to ensure that he knew what was going on in his area of responsibility while ensuring that we enjoyed the trip. It soon became obvious that he had sufficient authority and confidence from MUNI upper management to do what he needed to do and he demonstrated repeatedly that he knew both the system and this job. Steve has been with MUNI since 1989 and has operated diesel buses, trolley coaches, streetcars and light rail vehicles. The only thing that he has not done is run cable cars so it is no wonder that he knows the system. At one point in the trip, we almost had to rescue a trolley coach that had managed to get stalled on an insulated portion of the overhead at 30th and Church. During the excursion, he showed his ability at operating the car and it was impressive, running the car as it was operated in service, making a schedule while ensuring a comfortable ride to the occupants. Steve was about one year old when Walt started at MUNI.

Jose Castillo, along with Steve represents the tomorrow generation. This is the generation that could have never known the pleasure of riding a trolley car had things been different. Jose has been with MUNI only five years, having been recruited for the heritage fleet. His ability to operate the car is equal to the veteran. He demonstrated his ability clearly with an emergency stop inbound on Taraval Street late in the excursion.

Both Jose and Steve are San Francisco natives and all three are from California, love their city and the equipment. Trolleyville hopes that MUNI management encourages employees like these three. These employees are examples of those who can reduce the anti-MUNI rhetoric that is heard all the time. It was once written:

*“...But Oh, may there never come the day,
be it ever so near or far,
that a child may go to his Dad and say,
as a youngster might in his curious way,
What was a Trolley Car? ...”*

So to you who weren't there, I bet we had as good or better time than you did wherever you were. John Heller of ERHA of SC did a great job of trip scheduling and co-ordination with the MUNI folks. So consider that the next time you get a notice from ERHA of a fan trip or excursion, it might be worth a personal rescheduling effort.

