

PCC Cars to Return To Philadelphia - Finally!

Route 15, Girard Avenue, to get PCC cars - Again!

On Friday, August 1, 2003, Kawasaki LRV 9077 became the first trolley car to traverse the entire Route 15 Line in nearly 12 years as a pilot car. It had plenty company, including a parade of supervisors, a line truck, SEPTA pick-up trucks, a tow truck and, of course a SEPTA Transit police officer. The car operated under wire for the entire trip except under the Richmond Street railroad underpass where the low overhead wire has been tied off for years.



The years of inactivity had caused a lot of corrosion on the overhead wire in certain places. Note the "blue flame" special in the next photo and the inset.

A Look at Route 15 in past years.



[Mid-1940s] Venerable Nearside car 6122 leading a parade of trippers near Cramps Shipyard westbound during World War II. Although the car still wears its PRT numbers, it is running under the relatively new PTC ownership. Car 6122 was one of the earlier models, delivered in April 1912 without center doors. It received the center doors in June 1920 and faithfully provided service until January 1955 when scrapped.

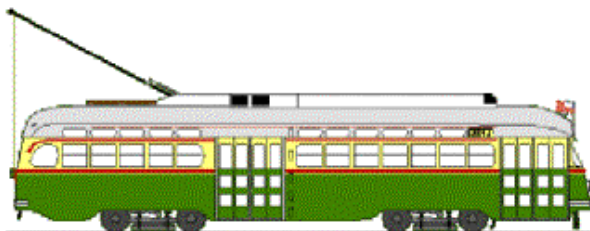


[Early 1950s] Until September 1955, when the PCC cars took over, these over 40-year old Nearside cars were the mainstay of the route. Car 6278 was another one of the earlier models, arriving in May 1912. Its center door was added in October 1919. This car was scrapped in May 1955.



In September 1955, PCC cars permanently replaced the venerable Nearside Cars on crosstown route 15 in Philadelphia. This route, which was based at the Callowhill Depot in West Philadelphia, started just west of the Depot at 63rd and Girard and went eastbound to the Philadelphia Zoo, crossed the Schuylkill River and continued past Girard College and Saint Joseph's Prep to Broad Street. The route then continued eastbound to Richmond Street and finally terminating at Richmond and Allegheny. For many years, the terminal was shared with Route 60 PCC cars, base at Luzerne Depot. Route 15 kept its PCC cars for 37 years until buses took over the line. Soon 18 remanufactured PCC cars will serve the line. These cars will be air-conditioned and handicapped accessible. They will have all new trucks, propulsion equipment and new seats. In fact, the only thing that will be left is the car body itself. The following cars have been selected for rebuilding into what is expected to be the new 2320 class cars:
 2158, 2182, 2196, 2197, 2726, 2730, 2738, 2741, 2746, 2747, 2750, 2753, 2758, 2770, 2777, 2783, 2790, 2798.

Trolleyville has been unsuccessful in getting any direct information about the rebuilding project from the contractor actually rebuilding the cars. But we located a sketch of how the cars are to look when completed.



[1960s] Route 15 car 2667, the ZOO Trolley, eastbound on 26th Street enroute to the Richmond-Norris short turn loop. Car 2667 arrived in 1942 and lasted until 1981 when all "air-electric" PCC cars were removed from service.



[1970s] Car 2110 eastbound in the last green and cream scheme. This car arrived in 1948 and was eventually a GOH car until sold to San Francisco, where it is still going strong as car 1052, Los Angeles Railway.



[Late 1970s]Route 15 car 2101, another car of the 1948 and final PCC order, sharing Richmond loop with Route 60 (ex, Toronto & Birmingham) car 2304. Car 2101 is still sporting a trolley wheel, but is in the orange and blue scheme while 2304 is still basically in Toronto paint and equipped with a trolley shoe. 2304 was later scrapped but 2101 is also still going strong as San Francisco MUNI 1062 (Louisville Rys).

Note the extended pole shroud for the air-conditioning. It is expected that the cars will be painted in the original 1947 green and cream paint scheme with the Chinese red accents, maroon belt rail and silver roof. For more information, check www.phillytrolley.org/

It does not seem that long, but the PCC cars will have been gone now for 11 years this month. Interestingly enough, many of the same cars that were deemed by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) to be too worn out to rehabilitate are now running the F-line in San Francisco and they look better than they ever did in the last years of PTC or anytime during the care of SEPTA. Route 15 literally gave birth to the San Francisco F-line with at least cars 2096, 2099, 2102, 2110, 2113, 2116, 2119 and 2715 spending most of their post-1955 lives on that line. SEPTA's incredible stupidity helped create a great San Francisco tourist attraction. (And these cars are only hours from our offices in West Los Angeles .) After eight years of running with crush load crowds, these cars continue to sparkle.



[1980s] During this time, the GOH cars ruled the line. Above car 2134 passes car 2106 as it heads toward 63rd & Girard. Car 2134 was the last trolley car to visit Willow Grove on Route 6 and the car has just recently become an ice cream parlor in Mt. Airy along Route 23. For a while, during certain events, modernized 8000 Peter Witt cars saw some service on the line. Kawasaki LRVs ran on Route 15 on certain weekends prior to the cessation of trolley service in 1992. So the line saw all the major single end trolley cars operated in Philadelphia. It will be nice to see traditional cars on Route 15 once again, even if they will look a little different. You can't stop progress!!

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