

The expanded 2009 East Penn Traction Club Meet will be held this month

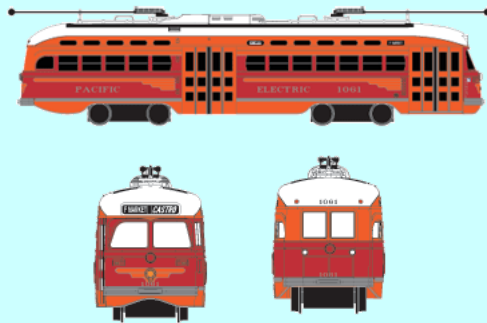
## Bowser F-Line PCC Car Moves into Production!

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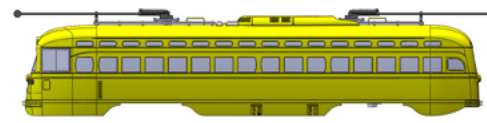
After what has seemed to be an eternity, final drawings and specifications were approved in late March for production of this model trolley. As most of you know by now, the PCC car was not produced using a computer. The many curved surfaces of both the front and rear roof, the rear end and the front dasher have to be converted into a 3D computer program. This program will be used to create the molds used to produce the injection-molded car.

This car is scheduled to have flush windows, operating headlights, taillights and an illuminated front destination sign. The car will use the proven Bowser 1999 power and trailing trucks but there will be a new drive train complete with flywheel. The car will have dummy trolley poles.

If all goes as planned, there may be some pre-production models at the East Penn Meet later this month. Meanwhile below is the door side artwork for the 12561 Pacific Electric PCC, Muni 1061, formerly PTC 2116.



Next is the "blind" side or door less side drawing on which the mold was based:



From all we have seen so far, this should be a fine model of a contemporary streetcar. The first test models arrived at Bowser on April 28th and the next two photos taken on the next day.



Testing by Custom Traxx and the Southern California Traction Club is already underway. The Times just received some [photos of the preliminary body and the drive train along with the testing of the unit](#). Another Bowser streetcar may be in the planning stage. So stay tuned for more information. But meanwhile, look for the pre-production model at the Custom Traxx/MTS Imports, Inc. booth at the East Penn Traction Club Meet later this month at Villanova University.

## What the Traction Hobby REALLY Needs to Survive!

(Trolleyville Editorial)

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The current state and the future of the traction hobby always seems to be a topic of discussion and it was recently on one of the various internet traction groups. Trolleyville Times reporters and associates are members of various traction related chat rooms / groups and each one is a traction modeler. During these discussions, some of the comments are very helpful and well thought out, while others made no sense considering current political and economic realities.

One does not have to be a rocket scientist to see that members of the traction portion of the model railroading hobby are aging and since traction modelers exist in far fewer numbers than mainline model railroaders, the situation is getting critical. Trolleyville has had its share of discussion on this matter and after much consideration, we thought it prudent to relay it with our readers in this forum. Basically our thoughts are in four areas.

### 1. WE NEED TO DISPLAY OPERATING TRACTION MODELS IN DIFFERENT ARENAS!

It is obvious to almost everyone that we need to get some younger participants, if traction modeling is to endure. The methods of doing this seem to be elusive, so we looked at history. Joshua Cowan Lionel started the entire model train hobby with a display placed in the window of a store. In other words, he displayed an item to the general public. It was in congruence with the technology of the time so it was welcomed and the hobby grew. Eventually scale modeling split from the toy train enthusiasts and the hobby grew even more. AC powered model trains gave way to DC powered trains, which is currently being augmented by Digital Command Control. Currently, there are popular heritage trolley lines in Boston, Dallas, Memphis, Kenosha, Los Angeles, Little Rock, Tampa, San Jose, New Orleans and other locations, all using the same trolleys or replicas of the same trolleys that we hastily eliminated from our cities fifty years ago. The increase in the numbers of people who annually change their commute mode to public transit along with the 22,000 people who daily ride San Francisco's F-line proves that the general public is accepting electric railway transit in greater numbers. They far outnumber the existing dwindling number of model railroaders. This leads us to the inescapable conclusion that we need to be searching for new members from the general public and not from the current aging model railroading crowd. Displays at the World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, local historical events and general public gatherings should be given some priority in model traction clubs planning for appearances. The Southern California Traction Club recently appeared at the San Bernardino County Museum in Redlands and has also appeared at the Los Angeles County Museum. The East Penn Traction Club also makes the same type of appearances. Both clubs see the reaction of the public and feel they are definitely on the right track. Most younger potential modelers will have no trouble with Digital Command Control, which a lot of the older model railroaders resist. In fact, the use and implementation of DCC is speaking their language so adaptation to DCC operation should be encouraged. As with the case of personal computers, the advantages of DCC are hard to demonstrate to those who have not used it. The Southern California Traction Club in conjunction with Custom Traxx have proven that DCC operation from live overhead wire is practical subject to a few concerns.

### 2. WE HAVE THE BEST CHANCE OF FINDING NEW MODELERS FROM PEOPLE WHO USE LIGHT RAIL TODAY!

When talking to any traction modeler today, you do not get too far into a conversation without someone talking about the cars that they saw and/or those that they rode. They are remembering an age where trains and trolley cars were a necessity. This was before widespread use of automobiles, cell phones and the internet. So we need to get to that

# Southern California Traction Club Prepares for the East Penn Meet!

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We talked last month to members of the Southern California Traction Club and they told us that they are planning to bring one of their modules to the East Penn Meet. It is being driven across country by one of their members. The module is operated by DCC and will highlight Philadelphia traction. The SCTC uses DCC on its city trolley line and has converted over 35 cars for use on this line, most of them Bowser powered. Most SCTC traction vehicles are equipped with Train Control Systems M1 decoders although others including the recently released Z-scale Z-2 are also used. Shown in the next photo are several Bowser powered cars being tested and evaluated prior to being shipped to Pennsylvania for the meet. Some of these cars have various portions of the revised Bowser traction drive that will be used on the new San Francisco F-line PCC car.



Several traction fans have called us about installing Bowser mechanisms in older brass and wooden trolley models. If you are one of these, Bowser's CEO Lee English provided us with a [drawing with dimensions](#) for their use.

Meanwhile, one of the four modules, known to the club as module 970, that is used in the DCC powered city streetcar line is to be driven back to the East Penn Meet by one of the club members along with several Philadelphia prototype models. This twelve-year-old module has received much attention in the last few weeks with the addition of several lights and structure interiors in preparation for the meet. Shown in the next photos are scenes from the club city streetcar line along with some photos taken on module 970 which will be present at the East Penn Meet. In the next scene, PTC Safety car 2128, a Bowser product, crossing in front of Peter Witt 8334 signed for former PTC Route 41 (63rd St) which was abandoned in August 1957. The 8334 is a brass model imported by MTS Imports.



Next, Brill 1923 double-end car 5333, modernized in 1940, is shown signed for Route 52, Midvale Avenue, bound for Ridge & Midvale. This route was also abandoned in the mid-1950's. Prototype car 5333 would be transferred to West Philadelphia in the late summer of 1956 for service on Route 46. It would be the last car on the last double end streetcar route in Philadelphia on August 1957.

segment of the population that sees the current vehicles and to a certain extent, rides them today. They are likely the segment of the population that is likely to produce new hobby enthusiasts. This also means that we need to be producing models of today's current vehicles. This is precisely the driving force behind Bowser's new San Francisco PCC. These cars have been on the street since 1995 and are likely to be on the street for many years. The fact that they get 22,000 riders every day from almost every country in the world made that a great choice. Of course it did help that Bowser already produced a PCC car that was overdue for upgrade to Ready-To-Run capability. But of the multitude of Light Rail Systems opened in the United States in the last 25 years, only one model of a Light Rail Vehicle was ever made, and, it was at best a mediocre performing model. So, we concluded that we need more models of currently operating electric railway vehicles. Current manufacturers are NOT going to build these for a shrinking number of avid trolley modelers. They will only do it if there is sufficient market and that means we have to get to the general public more than we have done in the past. Going after new blood means that we will be approaching people with different cultures and who use different languages and customs so we are going to have to be sensitive to all these items.

### 3. WE NEED AVAILABLE READY-TO-RUN TRACTION MODELS THAT EMPLOY ALL THE ADVANTAGES OF DCC & SOUND!

At one time, a train running around in a circle was something. Then we added a headlight. After that was the chuffing sound of the steam engine. Today, it seems like the sky's the limit. For a birthday celebration in March, one of our reporters took an HO scale Blue Line Pennsylvania Railroad J1a 2-10-4 steam locomotive, equipped with a TCS decoder and coupled to 20 hopper cars and an N6b caboose, to the Golden Empire Historical & Modeling Society (Bakersfield, CA) Open House. This very forward thinking model railroad club has two huge DCC operated layouts at 19th & Eye Streets in downtown Bakersfield. One layout is N scale and is on the entire second floor of the building and the HO scale layout takes the majority of the third floor. 70% of the members are HO scale fans, with 22% members being N scalers. The remaining 8% model in both scales. The engine was operated with a Digitrax DT400R Radio Controlled Throttle and took one full hour to make one complete run. The member enjoyed the layout, the members and DCC operation so much that he joined the club, even though that layout is over 100 miles from his home. Being able to control your train along with the lights and sounds adds a new dimension to operating trains. Similar capabilities will have to come to electric railway models including the ability to open and close doors similar to Lionel's new R-27 subway cars. Such models are not only possible but they would attract new hobbyists, especially those younger modelers used to computer technology. We have to demonstrate that there is a market for these items. But before we can get there, some of us have considerable attitude adjustment work to do and this may be difficult, if not impossible, for some.

### 4. WE NEED TO EMBRACE PROFESSIONALISM, TOLERANCE AND BECOME GOOD SALESMEN!

The last area is a major concern with most of us here at Trolleyville and due to current events, may turn out to be the most important of all, as this is something that we all can do. Some modelers and suppliers have the capability to make or break the future of this hobby. They have potential products to sell to major model manufacturers and the general public. There have been so many light rail and heritage trolley systems opened since 1980 while the number of major railroads has shrunk to four, BNSF, CSX, NS and UP. There are five light rail systems in California alone (*San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento, San Diego and Los Angeles*). Cities that abandoned their trolley systems relatively early, such as Salt Lake City, Buffalo and Phoenix now have new light rail systems. The international popularity and patronage of the San Francisco trolleys continues to increase. The original plan was to have a seven car base service on the F line. Today there are sometimes over twenty cars on the line and they are packed. Last month we found this toy, obviously based on the Corgi PCC 1:50 scale models, complete with Chinese destination signs, on sale at the Great Train Expo in Costa Mesa. We got a kick out of the mag-type wheels on the car.



Finally, in a scene from the 970 module, Bowser powered Kawasaki cars and PCC-II cars are shown.



The entire city streetcar line is shown set-up in John McWhirter's living room for testing and improvements.



## More Great Trolley News from San Francisco!

*[The City that Loves its Streetcars!]*

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The San Francisco Chronicle reported in mid-April that Francisco [MUNI streetcar #1](#) will be sent to Brookville Equipment Corp. in Pennsylvania for rehabilitation. The article went on to state that the contract is valued at \$1.9 million. No. 1, San Francisco's first municipally-owned streetcar, debuted 97 years ago and the objective is to have it operational in time for MUNI's 2012 centennial celebration. Brookville Equipment was the builder of an 18-car PCC-II fleet for Philadelphia's 8.2-mile all surface Route 15 rail revival on the Girard Avenue corridor. The MUNI contract for a total rehabilitation gives a good idea of today's prices. In 2002, SEPTA awarded a contract to Brookville for reconstruction of all-electric PCCs into state-of-the-art PCC-II cars, retaining the car body but providing new electrical equipment and trucks plus air conditioning. The cost seven years ago was \$1.3 million per car. The work on MUNI No. 1 will be extensive and results from a rainstorm that put an end to its heritage service: "A fierce rainstorm put an end to Streetcar No. 1's comeback in 2006. Stored at Muni's open-air streetcar yard at Geneva and San Jose Avenues, water seeped in and shorted much of the wiring" said Karl Johnson, a transit mechanic supervisor for Muni who oversees the facility. He related that the deterioration accelerated after that. The wicker seat coverings are unraveling; dry rot and rust are eating away at the frame and paint inside and



To avoid a repeat of the VCR (invented in the U.S. and marketed almost exclusively by another country), some of us need to act as if we really care if the hobby exists after us. These hobbyists must begin to be much more civil to each other, to employees of friendly properties operating historic vehicles and to hobby manufacturers. There are very few of us and we ought to present a united pro-traction hobby position at least in the public environment. For instance, if a modeler does not prefer to model a certain type of car, railway or era, that modeler must remember that there are other modelers that might prefer exactly those items and they should not be belittled or insulted on a yahoo group for their preference. The lack of civility on especially one traction-oriented yahoo group has been appalling and in some cases even initiated by the moderator. There have been some really nasty comments hurled at certain modelers by others. A recent discussion of the remake of the movie, *The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3*, resulted in very opinionated insults being hurled between members on another traction-oriented yahoo group. When members of the model industry read items like this, it does little to persuade these manufacturers that there is a viable market out there for electric traction models, especially when they see some of the personalities they may have to deal with. The current almost world-wide economic conditions is not helping this situation. During economic recessions, people learn to do without items long considered necessities. Other items become less important and sometimes found to be non-essential after all. Moreover, people tend to be less tolerant of bad business practices, shady businessmen and bad behavior during these times as their discretionary funds are reduced. It comes as no surprise that recessions tend to eliminate a lot of bad businesses. The survivors are often those who serve their customers well and make good impressions. On an episode of *Matlock* some years ago, Benjamin Matlock, played by Andy Griffith, was pointing out to a really nasty merchant that if there are two stores, one operated by a jerk and the other run by a nice guy, people tend to shop at the nice guys's store. This is even more true during times like these.

A few months ago, a prospective 30-ish modeler had been trying to get a traction vehicle advertised as supposedly available on the web site of a traction supplier, who advertises on the internet as one of the leaders in the model traction/transit market. But we will refer to that supplier as Supplier X. But the desired item seemed to be continuously unavailable to the modeler. Finally, in frustration, the modeler wrote another supplier narrating the entire situation. That supplier ensured that the letter was sent to Supplier X, hoping that the misunderstanding might be corrected easily and a new traction customer might be gained. To our utter amazement, Supplier X's response could not have been more insensitive, inconsistent with good business practices while being just incredibly stupid. Instead of telling the prospective customer when the item would indeed be available, the letter along with Supplier X's meandering covering-the-butt type response expressing how offended he was by the complaint, was posted on two yahoo sites, neither of which site had any relevance to the situation. But in all the verbiage provided, the response did not even offer to satisfy the potential customer's complaint. On top of this, the international furor that resulted from the posting of both the letter and the response was one of the factors in the eventual demise last month of one of the two yahoo groups. The hobby probably lost that prospect along with anyone with which that person comes into contact and that will most likely hurt the hobby in the long run. We should not allow, encourage or tolerate incidents like this, if we *really* care about the future of the traction hobby. When we get new prospects, we all need to bend over backwards to get them rolling in the hobby.

In the prototype world, if you compare the number of miles of operational street railway track in 1980 in most cities and the number of miles of street railway track in operation today in those same cities, only one property emerges as a street railway haven, San Francisco. San Francisco has done things with streetcars that we would have never thought possible just a few years ago. Yet on the opening day of the F-Line in September 1995, one of our reporters was on a PCC car listening to two very obnoxious rail fans berating a San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) official about why

out is chipping and fading. The electric motors and cast-iron brakes are all but shot and the canvas shades that keep glare off the windshields, and even the rope used for the conductor's bell are brittle. The car will undergo a complete overhaul, from a fresh paint job in the original gray and red color scheme to mechanical and electric work so it can carry passengers again.

## HO scale Girder Rail!

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Right after the 2008 Christmas season, we started to hear rumblings about the status of HO scale girder rail. The rumors kept coming. So we contacted Custom Traxx about the status of the ORR TRACK line. They told us that there is no current problem with the #2400 series turnouts and #2500 series crossings and there are no foreseeable problems. They are cast in Central California by a very professional and personable firm and there seems to be no problem with supply. There is also no shortage of parts for the #2350 Rail Curving Tools. But the #2300 series nickel silver girder rail obtained when they acquired the ORR TRACK line was down to less than 300 pieces and that they were not in the position to acquire more. The rail may still be available directly from Europe in meter lengths. But Custom Traxx and the European concern are trying to negotiate some sort of agreement to allow the rail to remain available in the United States from Custom Traxx. Custom Traxx did state that 100 pcs of the rail in yard lengths have been set aside for shipment to the East Penn Meet for sale. They stated that they will also have ORR switches and turnouts, trolley poles by Miniatures by Eric, decals and unique trolley parts. That meet is scheduled for the end of this month at Villanova University!

something or other was not done to their liking. Here was a property that had restored streetcar service on its main street with seventeen almost fifty year old refurbished PCC cars and did we hear praise or thanks to Muni for bringing these treasures back to us? Maybe there were some, but we heard complaints such as the "...colors were not right.."; "...Pacific Electric never had single ended cars.."; "...How come there is no San Diego PCC?..". Our reporters have personally heard comments made to Muni employees involved with the heritage service and they were borderline insulting. We can, and must improve in this area!

When manufacturers seek out one of us for details on a model of an electric railway vehicle that they want to make, we must answer their questions based on the fact that these manufacturers want to make money with the car. They are interested in details but they are NOT interested in you showing them all the trivial things you know about a streetcar. These facts often confuse them and make it difficult to separate important facts. Certain traction modelers/suppliers have seriously irked model railroad suppliers with abrasive and rude behavior. We heard lots of horror stories and experienced more unpleasantness during the development process of the Bowser and Con-Cor HO scale PCC cars and we know some of the worst offenders. We enjoy excellent relations with all the major model train manufacturers and almost all of the minor players. One of our reporters has been very closely involved with the planning and development of the new Bowser PCC car and it is more effort than most of you could imagine. You must consider that the car is probably NOT being made entirely for modelers and it may be only 90 to 95% correct for your prototype, not the 100% that you desire. Compromises must sometimes be made for the molding process, cost considerations, durability and marketing. Unless a profit can be forecast, there can be no future models of streetcars or light rail vehicles made. We must all be supportive of attempts by competent and ethical manufacturers to bring model traction vehicles to market. The Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) membership purchased over 15 of the Bachmann Peter Witts in all five of the road names. But one-third of those were the Baltimore version. In their latest catalog, Bachmann shows both Toronto (#84607) and Cleveland (#84608) versions coming. Bachmann is also going to offer their Peter Witt in O scale so they seem to be heading in our direction. While the SCTC will be purchasing the HO scale versions, we urge our O scale readers to consider purchasing them also.

It really appears that the future or the lack of a future of our enjoyable hobby may depend a lot on us. We can only hope it is not too late for us to move things forward!  
*[Comments to this editorial are invited!]*