The Trolleyville Times

February 2011

The next Bowser PCC Cars (SEPTA, Johnstown, Pittsburgh, Los Ange

East Penn Traction Club Plans May 2011 Meet!

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The East Penn Traction Club is planning its greatest meet ever on May 13-14, 2011! There will be over 20,00 square feet of trolley fun including manufacturer and dealer tables related to traction from models and modeling supplies to books, photographs and memorabilia. There are awards given to outstanding modules and displays along with operating trolley models in 3/4", 1/2", large (G), O, HO and N scales.

Door prizes are awarded during the meet. There are also clinics, a "Works in Progress" program and a self-guided tour on Sunday May 15th.

For the model contest this year, the theme is "Nearside Cars". The Nearside Car ran in Philadelphia (1500 cars), Chicago (125 cars) with smaller numbers in Buffalo, NY and Lincoln, NE. Philadelphia's cars lasted until 1954.

This years' meet will be located at the Greater Philadelphia EXPO Center at Oaks, Route 422, Egypt Road. Use Oaks Exit, near I-76 (PA Turnpike/Schuylkill Expressway) or SEPTA Bus Route 99.

Hours of the meet are Friday, May 13th from 11:00 AM to 11:00 PM & Saturday, May 14th from 9:00 AM to 11:00 PM.

Admission is $18.00 prior to May 1, 2011 and $20.00 after that date. Spouses and children and admitted free with a registered adult.

Dealers may reserve tables for $20.00 each. More info is available at www.eastpenn/org/meetad.html or contact Charles Long-Registrar, 227 locust Road, Fort Washington, PA 19034 (215) 247-1951. This meet is a must for any serious traction modeler!

A Battery Powered Track Tester!

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by John McWhirter

During the 16 year life of the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC), their members have often found themselves constructing modules whose trackwork consists primarily of ORR Track and specialwork. They found themselves with no easy way to test this trackwork since none of the rails were insulated and there was no overhead wire in place. At first cars were operated over this test track with alligator clips connected to the trolley pole, but this had limitations, caused derailments and occasionally damaged trolley poles.

An obvious solution was a battery powered test car but how would the club go about obtaining one. There were none immediately available commercially so the club had no choice but to attempt to build one.

The battery powered car that I eventually built was designed merely to test newly laid trackage before the installation of overhead wire. Modifications to the track are difficult once the overhead is in place. I believe that it's use to power a track cleaning car would work very well.

Basically, I started with a Bowser drive mounted on a metal floor obtained from Custom Traxx. I installed no pickup wiring between the trucks and the motor as shown in Figure 1 below:

The Bachmann HO Scale Birney!

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In the last issue, we reported on our experience with the Bachmann HO scale Birney. We had just gone to press with the January issue when we received our test M1T decoder for this car. We installed the decoder and tested the car in the two-rail mode. When we began testing in the overhead wire mode, we discovered that one of the wipers that conduct power from the wheels to the motor was not working at all. So we had to examine these wipers much more closely.

Of course the malfunctioning wiper was one of the two that we needed in the overhead wire mode. These wipers turn out to be the weak point of the car. With only four wheels to pick up power and only two in the overhead wire mode, our testing shows these wipers to be the "Achilles Heel" of the unit.

Users are advised to check these wipers by checking current pick-up by each wheel to minimize these problems**.** We removed both wheelsets and repositioned the wipers. Replacing the wheelsets is very tricky as one must line up the bearing to fit into the slots in the cast frame. The bearings are basically miniature versions of the bearings, Bowser part #1257, currently used in the Bowser traction mechanism and must be reinserted while keeping the wipers out of the way.

Since Custom Traxx and the Southern California Traction Club operate streetcars and interurbans exclusively from overhead wire, we soldered a small wire from one wiper mount on one side of the car to the wiper mount on the other side of the car. That ended the possibility of two-rail operation for that car but we do not do that anyway. The car was successfully operated at the Anaheim Great Train Expo last month.

NMRA Reports Conformance Warrant for Bowser F-line PCC!

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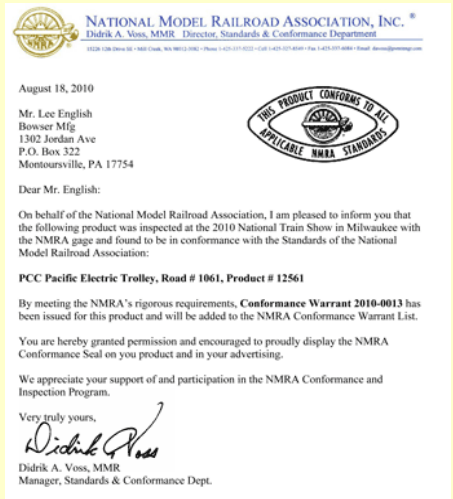
The NMRA Magazine, January 2011, reported the NMRA Conformance Warrant 2010-0013 issued in August 2010 for the HO scale Bowser PCC.



NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION, INC. ®
Didrik A. Voss, MMR Director, Standards & Conformance Department

August 18, 2010

Mr. Lee English
Bowser Mfg
1302 Jordan Ave
P.O. Box 322
Montoursville, PA 17754

THIS PRODUCT CONFORMS TO ALL APPLICABLE NMRA STANDARDS

Dear Mr. English:

On behalf of the National Model Railroad Association, I am pleased to inform you that the following product was inspected at the 2010 National Train Show in Milwaukee with the NMRA gage and found to be in conformance with the Standards of the National Model Railroad Association:

PCC Pacific Electric Trolley, Road # 1061, Product # 12561

By meeting the NMRA's rigorous requirements, **Conformance Warrant 2010-0013** has been issued for this product and will be added to the NMRA Conformance Warrant List.

You are hereby granted permission and encouraged to proudly display the NMRA Conformance Seal on you product and in your advertising.

We appreciate your support of and participation in the NMRA Conformance and Inspection Program.

Very truly yours,

Didrik Voss

Didrik A. Voss, MMR
Manager, Standards & Conformance Dept.

The reception of this warrant and the subsequent review led to a discussion among the Times staff of the relevance of the NMRA and a much overdue review of the NMRA Standards and Recommended Practices, all of which are on-line at nmra.org.

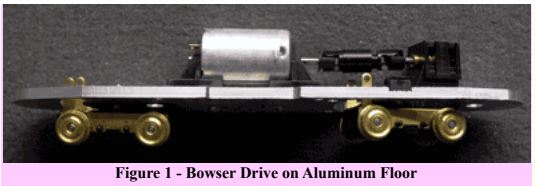


Figure 1 - Bowser Drive on Aluminum Floor

I then obtained (4) AA 1.2v NiCad cells with solder tabs.

Figure 2 - NiCad Cells

I then soldered the cells in series and used shrink wrap to secure them.

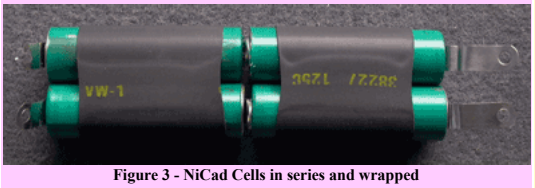


Figure 3 - NiCad Cells in series and wrapped

I cut a piece of phenolic circuit board material and mounted a 5 position rotary switch

at one end.

Figure 4 - Phenolic Board with Rotary Switch

I wired the system according to the schematic shown in Figure 5. Note that the selector switch varies the amount of voltage sent to the motor and allows various speeds for testing of trackwork:

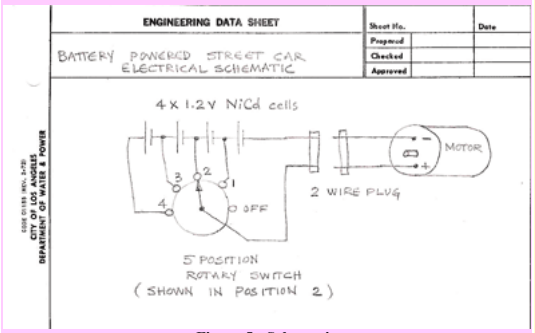


Figure 5 - Schematic

I then attached the batteries to the board and the board to the top of the drive.

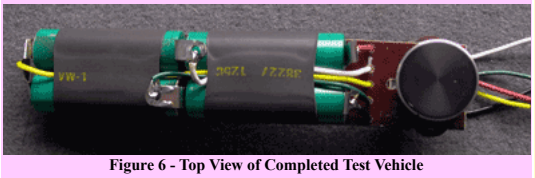


Figure 6 - Top View of Completed Test Vehicle

The NMRA was created in 1935 by model railroaders, manufacturer's, and publishers, in response to the need to bring order out of chaos. The NMRA Standards were developed as a way to help insure that equipment could be interchanged between one model railroad and another and that cars and locomotives of one manufacturer could run on the track of another manufacturer together with cars and equipment of still other manufacturers and modelers.

For almost 75 years, many of these basic Standards have remained virtually unchanged from the time of their original publication. They have been supplemented and refined, but they have stood the test of time and have proven to have been of great benefit to the hobby of model railroading and have contributed greatly in allowing the hobby to develop to the point where it is today.

There appears to be a misconception among many model railroaders and traction modelers that most of the Standards and Recommended Practices are out of date and need revision. A visit to the NMRA web site, showed this hardly to be the case. Not only are there Standards (S) and Recommended Practices (RP) for layouts but there are Module Standards (MS) and Module Recommended Practices (MRP). We reviewed all the standards and recommended practices applicable to traction and traction modules and concur that the existence of these guidelines must be recognized and reviewed by all who want to produce models. A lot of hard work has been done by someone to produce these guidelines. What a modeler does on his/her model railroad or traction empire is up to the individual. But if that individual wants things to work well, he or she should consider these standards and recommended practices. These are the words of those who have already "done it".

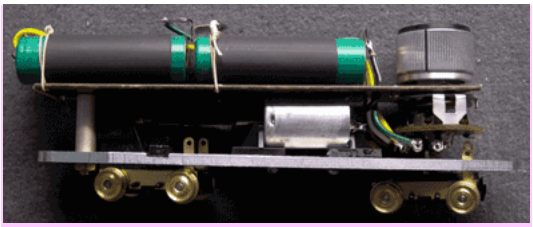


Figure 6 - Left Side View of Completed Test Vehicle

The two-wire plug shown in the schematic was used as a polarity switch by simply reversing the pins. This can be an important feature especially when checking complicated hand laid special work in street trackage.

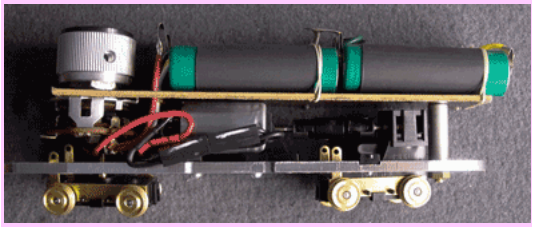
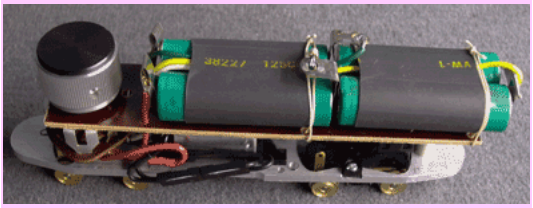


Figure 7 - Right Side View of Completed Test Vehicle

The batteries provide more than the necessary weight for traction. The 4 levels of voltage are sufficient to test track at different prototypical speeds. I left the tabs exposed to easily connect clip leads for recharging. If you build something similar, you may need higher voltages to pull a track cleaning car.



Although this test car worked very well, I have been working on an improved version of this car using (2) 3.6v Lithium cells and toggle switches. If it ever finished, it should fit into a PCC body.

Two Operating Traction Displays in Southern California!

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Operating traction was displayed twice in Southern California during January 2010. On January 15-16, the modules of the Southern California Traction Club were displayed at the San Bernardino County Museum in Redlands, CA as part of their "Train Days" weekend.

This was the third such visit to the Museum for the club. This Museum is located at 2024 Orange Tree Lane, just off the California Street exit of the Interstate 10 freeway and has former Southern Pacific 2-8-0 Steam Locomotive #2825 along with caboose #1333. They are in the process of restoring both items.

Another New Traction Modeler!

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One feature of this display was the operation of Bowser Baldwin VO-1000 diesels equipped with trolley poles. The diesels were equipped with Tsunami sound which was impressive even when operated in the DC mode. See Exhibit 1 below:

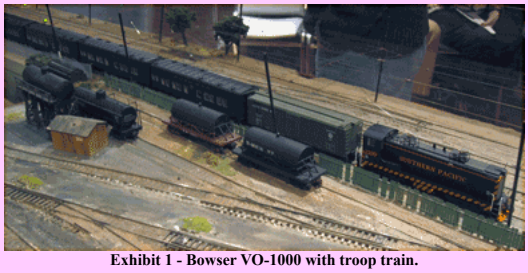

Exhibit 1 - Bowser VO-1000 with troop train.

But, running a Tsunami-sound equipped loco on a DC layout has one big disadvantage. Any other loco that you run on the layout will be running unprototypically fast as the line voltage on the track to start the Tsunami sound is about 8 volts and to move the Tsunami-sound equipped engines is 10 to 11 volts. The SCTC found it best to let their VO-1000s sit on a siding and let the public listen to the diesel start-up and idle.

There is renewed hope for a Tsunami-sound-equipped trolley soon. Soundtraxx sent a test Tsunami-sound-equipped Bowser PCC to Custom Traxx in mid-January for test and evaluation last month and is currently being tested. We hopefully will be able to report on this in the March 1 Trolleyville Times. Another feature was the display of lots of Bowser power on the SCTC yard modules currently under remodeling.

Exhibit 2 - Bowser Pre-Production PCC cars.

Shown in Exhibit 2 are Bowser pre-production PCC models of Toronto PCC 4336, Pittsburgh PCC 1600 and Johnstown 417. At right are Los Angeles MTA 3165, SEPTA 1970s 2168 and SEPTA 1980s 2095. In the background is a Pacific Electric VO-1000 equipped with working trolley poles and behind that is Con-Cor Electroliner 803-804. In the next photo, George Jones Ken Kidder Tidewater Southern Box Motor 08 is passing David Lyman's Suydam San Diego and Southeastern Niles Car #102. Car #102 is equipped with a Train Control Systems (TCS) M4 decoder.

Exhibit 3 - Box Motor passing Interurban.

Over 1600 people visited the show on Saturday, which was 33% more attendance than both days of the 2010 show. Sunday morning when the doors opened, the crowds poured in again. It did not hurt that the show was mentioned in the local Redlands Newspaper on Saturday. As a result, another 1281 visitors came to the show, bringing the total to just over 2900 for the entire weekend. This was the second largest "Train Days" attendance in the museum history.

It all started a few years ago with the purchase of a Bowser 125210 PCC car along with the desire to paint and letter it to represent the Los Angeles trolleys that he rode when he was younger. So with that desire, Rudi Volti slowly became a trolley modeler. In 2008, he procured a set of CN-3100 decals from Custom Traxx and then acquired the correct colors for the Los Angeles Railway "fruit salad"paint scheme and proceeded to finish his car.

Rudi is now Professor Emeritus, Pitzer College, a small Liberal Arts College in Claremont, California. He currently lives in that same community in a quiet residential street on the end of a cul-de-sac. Rudi has lived all over the world, including places like Hong Kong, the Netherlands, England, Spain and in other states including Maryland and Texas.

Rudi wanted to see his car run, so he searched for information. He developed his own track plan, ensured that it fit into a 6' by 3.5' space in his den and in early 2010 began to lay his track, assemble building kits and install some scenery.

When the track was tested in the two rail mode, it was found to be operational so the next thing was to erect his overhead wire. Reading literature available to him, he started to accumulate the necessary items such as line poles, overhead frogs and wire. Unfortunately, he used one of those old "loop and beads" methods of hanging overhead trolley wire. This method did not use the overhead hanger fittings by Suydam and Rivers now commonly used by most traction modelers. Compounding this was the use of the wrong type of wire used for the contact wire. By May, when he had not achieved the level of operation that he wished, he contacted Custom Traxx and the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC). John McWhirter and George Huckaby eventually made two visits to his layout. On the first visit, they discovered most of the problems that were causing the difficulties. They made some recommendations and demonstrated some techniques that they used on the SCTC modules. Rudi was a great learner and many of these had been implemented by the second visit. He had acquired the necessary overhead wire hangers and he and an associate had installed them throughout the layout. On our recent visit, Rudi wanted some assistance with some problem areas that remained and John and George did just that. In the next two photos, Rudi (left) is pointing out a troublesome location and George Huckaby (right) is repairing that area.

By this time, the goal was to get the initial level of operation. This meant two-rail operation with the poles merely staying on the wire. The summer went by and so did fall and then the

Sunday started with the running of two Bowser Tsunami-sound-equipped, trolley pole equipped VO-1000s pulling freight trains. George Jones' SP 1320 was pulling the troop train shown earlier and George Huckaby's PE1321 was pulling a reefer train. Bowser pre-production PCC model of LAMTA 3165 is shown in the next photo passing the reefer train just taken out of service.

Exhibit 4 - PCC 3165 passing second Bowser VO-1000 PERy 1321.

Then one of Con-Cor's Electroliners, CNS&M 803-804 replaced SP1320 and LAMTA 3165 replaced PE1321. LAMTA 3165 is a pre-production PCC in Custom Traxx custody for testing. the car is equipped with the first batch of operational trolley poles built in China using the proven design by Eric Courtney (Miniatures by Eric). After trolley shoe break-in, the pole performed flawlessly on the layout from most of the day Sunday. The next group of Bowser PCCs will be equipped with this operational trolley pole. CNS&M 803-804 was obtained in June 2009 but this was the first time the unit had been operated at a show. The club also has CNS&M Electroliner 801-802, but that one is equipped with a TCS decoder. Although this train is very difficult to put together electrically, especially under overhead wire, it can be done and was done successfully at this show and the train ran flawlessly for over eight hours at the show.

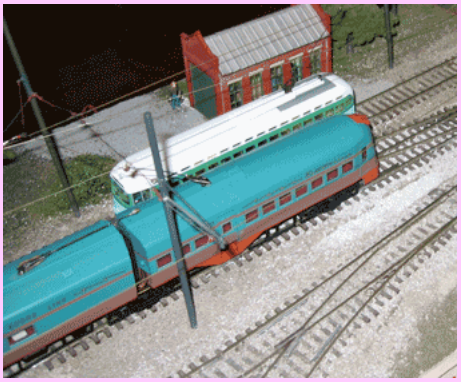

Exhibit 5 - LAMTA PCC 3165 meeting CNS&M 803.

On Saturday, January 15th, the club acquired one of the just released Bachmann Birneys, decorated as Sacramento Northern 62. It was brought to the show on the next day. Right out of the box the unit was placed on a two-rail portion of the layout.

The car stalled in numerous places but when it ran it ran well. The car was then tried on the overhead wire portion of the layout. It would also run but the Bachmann trolley poles have such weak springs as to render them virtually useless. The car was then put aside for pole upgrade and check of the four wipers that pick up current from the wheels. The club will not even attempt to run the Bachmann Birneys on the DCC City Streetcar line until all four wheels can be grounded and the trolley poles replaced with something more credible.

The Southern California Traction Club firmly believes that railroad/traction modelers must support the historical and museum organizations dedicated to the preservation of railway/traction history and/or vehicles. These organizations record and maintain critical data that is needed for model making. While we realize that every modeler has his/her own special interest area, not only must we support the other modelers but we should not "bad-mouth" them just because they like something or do something different. The number of active participants in railroad related activities seems to be shrinking. For all of these and a few other reasons, the club appears at Orange Empire Railway Museum and other such organizations.

holiday season. Early last month, we got another invitation to visit the layout. We finally got there on January 11th and after a few adjustments the car ran well on two-rail and the poles followed the overhead wire perfectly. In the next Photo, Rudi's Bowser PCC was shown in the next photo operating on his layout without any stalls, dewirememts or derailments.

The next step is to power the overhead wire and convert the cars to run on the overhead wire. In our final photo, Rudi is shown with his layout as his PCC passes.

HO scale San Francisco Class B Streetcar Kit Coming!

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Greg King (Transit Classics) will soon have a San Francisco Municipal Railway Class B streetcar kit available. Traction fans will now be able to model San Francisco Muni 130 and 162 both now featured on their F-line. Those of you, who were fortunate to get one of his San Francisco Class K/L kits when they were available a few years back, know how nice his kits are. Combine them with a Hollywood Foundry power unit and you have a really nice trolley model. Keep an eye on the Times for more information!

Soundtraxx (Tsunami) Sound Coming for the Bowser PCC!

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Based on sounds recorded in San Francisco in 2007. Soundtraxx unveiled their first Tsunami equipped PCC. The new circuit board was placed in a model of San Francisco Municipal Railway 1063, which wears the colors of the Baltimore Transit Company. Designed for the post-war all-electric PCC, sounds include the bell (gong), doors opening & closing, passenger stop signal, motor-generator start, run and shutdown and super resilient wheel groan. You will have to hear it to believe it. Some who actually did.....didn't! The unit was tested prior to the opening to the public of the Great Train Expo in Anaheim on January 23rd in the company of several model railroad vendors. Much work remains to be done before the final product is released but it will be worth the wait!

The Soundtraxx people also developed the passenger stop/start feature similar to that found on the M4T decoder from Train Control Systems. When integrated with the passenger car stop signal, doors opening and closing and the two bells to start, the effect is just plain awesome!

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*[**Shows**, from Column 1]*

Then, the club acquired a model of a single Class A-49 car. So the two married cars were rewired to allow that third car, now painted as PTC 617, to be added to the train and control the headlight and taillights individually. Fortunately, this car and another A-49, 646, can now be completed due to IHP

One week later it was the Great Train Expo in Anaheim, CA at the Anaheim Convention Center. This would be the club's 92nd public appearance since the club was founded in 1995. As is normally the case, the club with it's two trailers arrived at the show location about noon on the Friday preceding the show, having checked everything the day before at the clubhouse. This show turned out to be a "barn-burner" with over 4,000 visitors on the first day (Saturday).

One of the major achievements of the Southern California Traction Club at this show was the return of Philadelphia Almond Joy A-50/A-51 married pair subway cars 876-849. These cars had been obtained in 2007. The club found major defects in the design of the powering of the original two-car train. These issues were not corrected until almost two years later and the cars were placed in regular operation on the club subway line. Both cars had been wired for DCC and headlights and taillights had been installed in both cars.

*[See **Shows**, Column 2]*

graciously supplying eight of the required truck details. Thank you, Mr. Bartel! A prototype-size six-car train is hoped to be in operation in the future.

HO scale Bowser Tsunami-equipped (Soundtraxx) Baldwin VO-1000 diesels were displayed on both the Southern California Traction Club modules and at the Custom Traxx booth. Visitors were treated to the excellent quality sound reproduction of a Baldwin diesel start-up and running in both DC and DCC operating modes.

Sunday morning prior to the show, the first Tsunami (Sound traxx) equipped Bowser PCC was tested on the 16' by 40' modular layout of the Pacific Coast Modular Club (PCMC) of Rialto, CA. The PCMC was founded in 2000 in Lakewood, CA and has eleven members. Club President, William Braden and David Pantoja, invited the SCTC to test drive the car on their layout. The car was operated on their layout for about fifteen minutes during which all of the functions were demonstrated. The quality of the sound is exceptional, and the bell (gong) is unbelievable.

Participating in the test were (l to r) David Leubben, William Braden, Club President, and David Pantoja. Everyone present was amazed at the sound, especially the bell. They also could not believe that such a intense quality sound was coming from "...that little car..." This will be a winner and every traction layout will want one or more.

Occasionally, Woodland Scenics provides a structure or one of their Accent Series for the Southern California Traction Club to evaluate. This time the structure was the BR5037 Meg-A-Watts Transformer facility. This facility is really perfect for those far corners of a small layout that are hard to realistically develop as you can see in the next photograph.

A Really Nice-looking Air-Electric PCC Model!

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Recently, Aristocraft announced on its web site that it's long awaited model of the 1936 Saint Louis Car Company-built Air-Electric PCC car was being shipped to dealers. In the next photo is their model of Pittsburgh Railways Co 1039.

These large-scale models have been announced in the following ten road names and paint schemes:

Undecorated - ART23300
Brooklyn (original) - ART23302
Boston - ART23303*
Philadelphia (PRT/PTC) - ART23304
San Francisco Muni** - ART23305
Los Angeles Railway - ART23306
Toronto Transit Commission - ART23307
Philadelphia (SEPTA 1970s) - ART23308
Baltimore Transit - ART23309
Pittsburgh Railways - ART23342

The body shell is an excellent general representation of the prototype car. All of the schemes shown are reasonable representations of prototype 1938 or later air-electric PCC cars except for the San Francisco Muni model. **San Francisco never owned air-electric PCC cars. The number pictured on the car was actually worn by a 1948 All-Electric PCC. *Boston only had only one such car, 3001. The number shown in the announcement is totally incorrect. A thorough review of this car is available on the TrainElectronics web site.

The Bachmann N Scale Peter Witt!

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Bachmann Industries seems to be making sure that it does not miss out on the resurgence of traction modeling in any scale. First, the Baltimore Peter Witt was introduced in HO scale, then O scale and now N scale, as promised last summer.

This car may do for N scale traction what the Bowser cars did for HO scale traction almost 50 years ago. For a review of this car, click here!