

San Francisco Activity!

During October 18-22, 2011, Soundtraxx from Durango, Colorado and Custom Traxx from Los Angeles, California teamed to record more trolley sounds for the next line of Bowser Manufacturing streetcar models. During that time, they had the pleasure of riding and recording many of the cars in service on the F line. It seems that we can always report good news in San Francisco. This time is no exception. The first is that car 1061, ex PTC 2116, is close to returning to service. The car is shown in the next photo inside the carhouse at [Cameron Beach Yard](#) while being reassembled for final testing prior to being returned to service.



Car 1061 needed a brake controller and it was thought prudent to ordering several of these items since all these 50+ year old cars may eventually need them. After a typically bureaucratic procurement process, the parts were eventually obtained from Bombardier. Car 1061, in its Pacific Electric livery, is shown in the Cameron Beach Memorial Car House next to Car #1 on October 20th. Car #1 has just been totally rebuilt at Brookville Equipment Co. and is the newest 100 year old streetcar in the world at this time.

The interior of the now rebuilt #1 is incredible. Many observers have observed the excellence of the woodwork. One visitor recently commented that patrons should be forced to remove their shoes before entering that car.



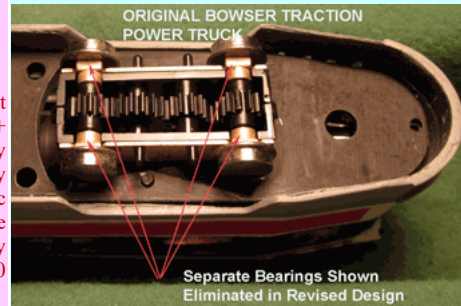
The F-line now has 24 runs assigned daily. This is incredible for a line that was intended to run with a base of 7 cars and then 9 during rush hours. As has been reported previously, the line began in 1995 with 14 ex-Philadelphia (PTC) 1947 and 1948 PCC cars. They were not enough for the

Bowser Updates their Successful HO Scale Traction Drive!

As more modelers began to use the Bowser traction drive for powering other models, such as those with brass and resin body shells, certain difficulties with replacing the wheel sets were encountered. The wheel bearing had to be inserted into the truck frames in a very specific way or binding of the trailing truck could result. Custom Traxx reported that they noticed the problem when they started to replace the earlier brass wheel/axle sets with NWSL wheel/axle sets specifically designed for the Bowser units.

Lee English went into the redesign mode and eventually redesigned the bearing and electrical pick-up. He fabricated a few made a set of test trucks with a revised electrical pick-up and bearing design that combined the electrical pick-up and the brass bearings into one unit. One chassis was operated at the Bowser test facility for over 500 hours with no serious problems of wear noted. Then, the unit was sent to Custom Traxx for further testing on the Southern California Traction Club test track. Earlier this year, Jonathan Werner, Custom Traxx Director of Procurement completed an agreement with Bowser Manufacturing designating Custom Traxx as their official test/evaluator for their HO scale traction power drives.

The original Bowser traction unit evolved from a Stewart Diesel design and incorporated the vertical 'floating' bearings in both the power and trailing trucks, officially known as part #1257. These bearings moved in the brass pickup plate, known as part #1256, tolerances were very tight on these parts as electrical contact had to be maintained while allowing some vertical movement



The wheelsets with these bearings proved to be troublesome to install at the factory so Bowser created an assembly 'jig' for the assemblers. Modelers were not so fortunate. When some of them elected to replace the original Bowser brass wheels with NorthWest Short line Nickel Silver wheels, the problem surfaced with frozen trailing trucks, and/or broken trailing axles sleeves, part #1291.

In the new design, shown in the next photo, which will become standard at first on all cars produced offshore, the parts 1256 and 1257 are combined into one part, a revised power pick up. the photo below is of the test power truck which had first been installed in a Bowser Brill for testing at Bowser and then in a Miniatures by Eric Philadelphia Suburban Transit Center Door Interurban. The drive unit with the new bearings in both the power and trailing trucks was operated for over 500 hours with no appreciable wear noted. Reduction in friction in the trailing truck was notices almost immediately.

unexpected ridership. When Philadelphia refused to sell an more of them (even though they did not want them themselves), San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) turned to Milan and obtained 11 1920s-era Peter Witt cars. It was soon apparent that these were also not enough so 11 ex-Newark, ex-Minneapolis PCC cars were obtained. These cars had not been rewired like the ex-Philadelphia cars and proved troublesome. At this time, two of them, which have never been sent back to Brookville for rewiring are in service, 1076 (D.C. Transit) and 1077 (Birmingham).

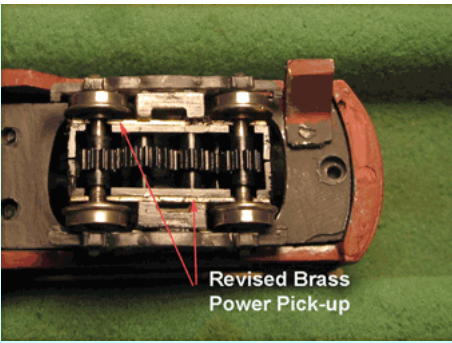
Six cars have been rewired at Brookville and are back at the Beech Facility, 1070 (Public Service of New Jersey), 1071 (Twin Cities Rapid Transit), 1072 (Mexico City), 1074 (Toronto), 1078 (San Diego Electric Railway), 1079 (Detroit Street Railway) and 1080 (Los Angeles Transit Lines). Shown below are 1079, 1078 and 1074 outside the Beech Facility on October 19, 2011. They are awaiting their turn at burn-in.



Cars 1073 (El Paso City Lines), and 1075 (Cleveland Transit System) are at Brookville being modified and rewired.

The current problem with the ex-Newark cars is the door motors. With the original manufacturer of the door motors no longer in business, the cars were equipped with a replacement brand of door motors when initially rebuilt by Brookville. These have proven to be unsatisfactory. Currently new motors, manufactured by another manufacturer, are being considered and are now being tested on car 1071 and, so far, they look promising. 1071 is currently in service and we observed it in service on Tuesday, October 18th. If the present favorable trend continues, these latest door motors will be installed in cars 1070, 1072, 1074, 1078, 1079 and 1080 prior to their burn-in. We observed this car in service on Tuesday, October 18th.

The recent change from 20 to 24 cars needed daily was specified without a corresponding increase in the supporting maintenance personnel. We have to commend these diligent folks with always so much to do with so little help. Car 1071 was stalled at 17th and Noe with "stuck fingers" in the controller late on October 18th but towed to the Beech facility, repaired and pronounced ready for service on Wednesday, October 19th. The next photo shows 1071 leaving the Beech Facility after repairs were completed.



The next group of Bowser PCC trolleys, Toronto Transportation Company (SKU 12650-12653), Cleveland Transit System (SKU 12654-12657), Detroit Street Railways (SKU 12658-12661), Minneapolis/Saint Paul (SKU 12662-12665) and SEPTA Phase 1 (SKU 12666-12669) will be delivered with the new designed combined pick-up/bearings.

A Fine Model Railroad Hobby Shop on US Highway 101!

Everyone seems to be aware that the current economic situation is as great as we would like, but nowhere is that more apparent in the model train business. We have watched so many of our favorite places close their doors or downsize in the last ten years. In the Los Angeles area, All Aboard Model Railroad Emporium in Torrance, CA along with stores in Fresno and Bakersfield closed their doors a few years back and even the mighty Allied Model Trains in Culver City gave up their signature building modeled after Los Angeles Union Station and moved to more modest quarters. So we were surprised to find a shop flourishing in an area where we would not expect it to do so.

The shop was started by Bill & Anita Walter. Bill wanted to walk into a hobby shop and even if they didn't have what he wanted he wanted them to get it on his behalf. Bill being into the N scale, which is not as well known as HO, was paying more in shipping than for the actual items. So, with Anita he opened the store with the idea that we would specialize in special orders for our customers. Anita ran the store from day to day and learned something new every day. Bill took the show on the road and attended many local model train shows. That was many years ago and what started as a hobby is now their sole income. Bill suddenly passed away in June 2008 leaving Anita to continue their fine tradition.

The store is Central Coast Trains, operated by Anita Walter, it is located in Atascadero, California right off the Curbaril Street exit on US 101, conveniently located about half the distance between Los Angeles and San Francisco.



The store is quite large, well lit and well stocked as you can see from the next views:

Orange Empire Railway Museum Gets New Director!

On September 17th, the Orange Empire Railway Museum (OERM) named George Huckaby to their nine-person Board of Directors, after being named to the Museum Executive committee in June 2011. George can now add these responsibilities to running Custom Traxx and supplying data to Bowser for their HO trolley cars. George has been a member of the museum for over forty years and has been a member of Operations for almost the same length of time. He was a monthly fixture at the museum until 1979 when he left the United States Air Force and took a position with Parsons-Gilbane on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Project and moved to New Orleans. He returned to his monthly stints when he returned to California in 1981. He has qualified for and operates PERY 331, 332, 418 and 717 along with LARY 665, 1201, and 3001; LATL 3100 and LAMTA 3165. He was a regular operator of NOPSI 913, San Francisco Muni 171 and LATL 1160 when they were in service at the museum. George is shown below during the a Thomas the Tank Engine Preparation meeting on October 15, 2011.



George holds a Bachelor of Science (B. S.) in Physics from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, PA and a Master of Science (M. S.) in Systems Management from the University of Southern California. During his fourteen years of service with the United States Air Force, he was an Alternate Missile Combat Crew Commander in the Minuteman II Missile System at Grand Forks, North Dakota, a Command Post Controller and Ballistic Missile Staff Course Instructor at Vandenberg AFB, CA and a Cost/Schedule Control Systems Criteria Specialist at Norton AFB, CA. It was during the last assignment that he became familiar with the management and cost control systems used at Aerojet-General, Bell Aerospace Systems, Boeing Aerospace, General Electric Re-Entry Systems Division, GTE Sylvania, Honeywell, Logicon, Thiokol Wasatch Division, and others. He completed his service at the rank of Major (O-4). After leaving the USAF and the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Project, he worked for the Aerospace Corporation, Northrop-Grumman and Vought Aerospace Industries. In his two latter positions, he supported the production of the Boeing 747 fuselage. He founded and currently runs a small business, Custom Traxx, whose primary focus is on modeling HO scale streetcars. Their major project, begun in 2007, was the joint venture with Bowser Manufacturing to produce a very successful line of HO scale PCC streetcars, available DCC-ready and recently available with sound. Custom Traxx provided 100% of the technical and finishing data for these cars to Bowser. George has traveled to China more than once for this latter project, incidentally traveling both times on Boeing 747s, and attends Mandarin (Chinese) classes on a twice weekly basis. George has communicated with the manufacturer in their own language, which has contributed greatly to the success of that model streetcar program. George helped develop and eventually applied decals currently on San Francisco Municipal Railway and has applied certain decal lettering to Los Angeles Railway 1201 and 9350, both preserved at the OERM. George has also participated in the effort to make the destination signs that still adorn Birney 10 (Pacific Electric 332) and will apply decals to the freshly painted LATL P-2 PCC 3100.



So when driving up (or down) the coast enjoying the scenery, make a point to stop in. Central Coast Trains is [open daily, 10 to 6](#) (10 to 5 on Saturday) except Sunday and Monday, when available only by appointment.

Rolling Hills Estates Hosts Another NMRA Sponsored Train Show!

On almost an annual basis, the Los Angeles Division of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) hosts a model train show for the general public at the [South Coast Botanic Gardens in Rolling Hills Estates](#). The Southern California Traction Club made their first public appearance in April 1997 at this show with five modules. On October 29-30, 2011, the club made their [95th appearance](#) at this show, displaying 26 modules in a 16' by 26' total arrangement. Because this show is held at a Botanic Garden, [the large scale trains get to set up among the plants](#)

The modules over the years have had more detail added and some scenes are shown below. The club assigns three-digit number to all modules, with the first two being the year the module was constructed and the last digit being the number of the module built in that year.

In the next photo, taken on module 010, the illuminated Palace Theater features the Streetcar named Desire movie. Note the two older Revell structures next to it.



On module 060, a Bowser Toronto Transportation Commission PCC stops for passengers outside of City Hall.



Module 061, which is actually under module 060, hosts the subway, with Philadelphia "Almond Joy" subway cars (1960-

2002)

featured.



If you live in Southern California, note that this club will be at the Great Train Expos in Pomona (December 2011) and Anaheim (January 2012).