The Trolleyville Times

March 2012

Custom Traxx has begun deliveries of the new HO

Helpful Hints for Bowser PCC Trolley Modelers!

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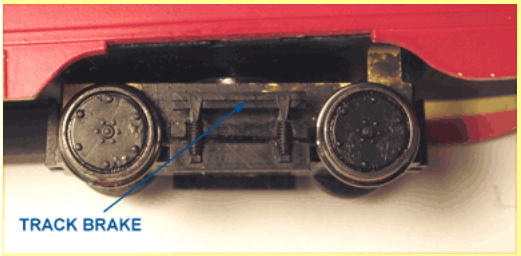
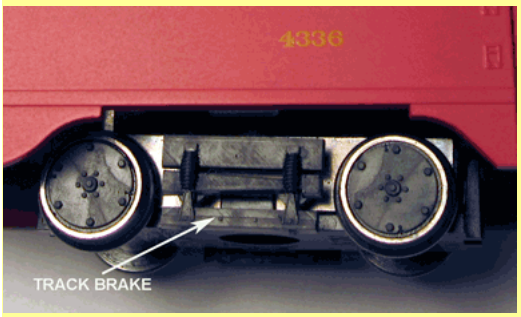
The DCC-ready Bowser PCC car was introduced to HO scale trolley modelers a little over two years ago and with sound capability two months ago. Over these last two years, the cars have demonstrated themselves to be durable, reliable performers but a few issues have surfaced. Because Bowser and Custom Traxx have encouraged customers to contact them with their findings and do not shoot messengers, those customers have reported many items to them. One customer contacted his dealer stating that he had run the item, a TTC 12603 PCC, constantly since he had bought it in early 2010 and it had operated it until the wheels were dirty. He used the method followed by the Southern California Traction Club and removed the wheel sets and the sideframes. He cleaned the wheels using a Dremel wire brush and also the bearings and the contact plate. After the trucks were reassembled, the car would run but it would hesitate and sometimes derail for no reason. After seemingly examining every aspect of the car, he was at his "wits end" so he requested that the dealer look at the car and he sent the car to them.

The dealer thoroughly examined the car, could not find the problem either and was just about to swap out the entire power chassis when they closely examined the B-2 sideframes installed on this car. They had been installed upside down as shown in the next photo and they managed to contact the rail at certain locations causing the erratic operation.



The next photo shows the correct installation of these sideframes.



These sideframes are now standard equipment on the 126XX series PCC cars and are easy to install incorrectly by those unfamiliar with PCC car hardware. Custom Traxx also noted that a check of those cars still in their inventory showed that all the sideframes examined had been installed correctly by the manufacturer. So if you have this problem with a 126XX series Bowser PCC and have removed the sideframes, this may be your problem.

Another customer had erratic operation on DCC only. The car was equipped with the TCS M4T decoder but ran well on

Pomona-Fairplex and the Great Train Expo!

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If you attend model train shows in the Los Angeles area you probably know of the past difficulties in having these shows at the Pomona-Fairplex in Pomona, CA. Going all the way back to the now defunct Great American Train Show in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were always parking, security and management issues with this location. Several model railroad clubs had refused to appear there for years due to some indignity heaped upon them by security or other Fairplex staff. Some time ago, one club was forbidden to drive up to the buildings at teardown and forced to carry their modules some great distances to their cars and trailers. That did it for them!

Enter Bill Grove, owner of the Great Train Expo (GTE). He started attacking and working out most of the issues. Finally, GTE returned to the Pomona-Fairplex with shows in July 2010, December 2010, July 2011 and December 2011. Fairplex management made a lot of changes, all of them well received. The almost medieval atmosphere in Building 9 was improved. The quality of the food in the R's & R's concession stand, was excellent and we reported that more than once. Unfortunately, the fairgrounds can not seem to correct the major problem with the facility, namely, the parking is too expensive ($9.00 for a long walk and $12.00 for a shorter long walk) and too far away. After too many complaints from both the vendors and the public alike, GTE was forced to cancel a show originally scheduled at Pomona-Fairplex for July 2012. Bill stated that he receives more complaints about the parking situation at Pomona-Fairplex from both vendors and customers **than any other venue throughout the United States** and it is a very difficult show to operate.

As a result, the Great Train Expo will return to Costa Mesa at the Orange County Fairgrounds on September 8-9, 2012, replacing the show originally scheduled at Pomona. A show at San Jose, California is now scheduled for September 15-16 for the convenience of the traveling vendors. Parking will be cheaper and closer than Pomona-Fairplex. So this is seen as a positive move for the Great Train Expo, their customers and their dealers/exhibitors.

We are not stating that there will never be another Great Train Expo at Pomona-Fairplex, but it will be awhile, until the situation improves.....

Adjusting Lights and Sound Levels on the Bowser Tsunami Sound PCC cars!

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The long awaited PCC cars with sound finally were released just before Christmas and everyone we have talked to seems to love the gong sound, the Motor Generator (MG) set background sound and all of the other effects.

The most exciting feature of these cars, besides the outstanding sound, is the Passenger Stop/Start Sequence activate by function (Button) 7. When this button is pressed, the Passenger Signal is activated and the car goes begins a very realistic deceleration and the brake lights illuminate. Finally the car comes to a stop and the sound of the doors opening is heard.

After complete stop, press button 7 again and the sound of the doors closing is heard, two gongs sound, the brakes lights got out and the car accelerates to its former speed.

During a show at the San Bernardino Country Museum in January, several members of the Southern California Traction Club could not stop "playing" with this feature. During the show, they operated production models of SEPTA 2185 and Cleveland 4265 along with test vehicles SEPTA "Gulf Oil" 2111, San Francisco Muni 1056 and Toronto 4699.

DC. After the dealer checked out all the electrical connections and found no major problems, they turned attention to the car itself. The customer did not send his trolley pole and that could have been part of his problem (See comments later in this article.). The Bowser PCC weighs in a little over 5 ounces which will work fine for two-rail operation on flat surfaces. The East Penn Traction Club tested the units some time ago and fund that for operation on grades, some weight, at least one ounce, may have to be added. Some cars appeared to work better than others and this is mainly due to the performance of the trailing truck. The bearings used in the Bowser traction drive and the RTR trolleys released prior to December 2011 use a design intended for all-axle-powered diesel locomotives. The rolling qualities of the trailing truck vary from car to car but it is not great as one would like. This was one of the reasons why the entire bearing setup was changed by Bowser beginning with the PCC cars released last December. Custom Traxx has operated some of these latest Bowser offerings under overhead wire with no weight added at all. After the trailing truck was disassembled and checked; a bad part was replaced; a Miniatures by Eric HT-P2 trolley pole placed on the car and one ounce of weight attached under the floor between the trucks, the car ran perfectly on the test track.

There are four more issues that might be useful to those operating these cars under wire in DCC environment.

First, make sure that your trolley pole has an upward pressure of at least .3 ounces. Of course, this pressure must be offset by increasing the weight of the car in most cases. Higher upward pressure is always better in the DCC environment as long as it does not cause derailments or stalling.

Second, the Southern California Traction Club reports that they have found that 7.0 ounces is the absolute minimum for reliable operation of the Bowser PCC in the DCC environment.

Third, when encountering a car with slipping wheels or erratic operation, check the trailing truck very carefully. After carefully noting how the bearings sit in the plastic truck frames, disassemble the truck and check the sleeve holding the two half-axles together. It is designated part 1291, Trailing Truck Axle Center, by Bowser. Using a magnifying glass, check this part for minor cracks. If you find any, replace that part and check all your Bowser drives. You may find that you need more than one. This is the weakest part in the Bowser traction drive. They are available from Bowser and Custom Traxx.

Fourth, the trolley poles that come with the RTR Bowser cars were painted black by the manufacturer. In the majority of cases, this poses no problem but occasionally this paint has impaired the pole vertical movement and caused reduced electrical conductivity. In those cases the judicious use of a sharp Exacto blade in certain areas loosened up the moving parts and after soaking the entire base in paint thinner and then ACT-6006, a conductive lubricant, the trolley pole was returned to acceptable operation.

As is still the case, both Custom Traxx and Bowser invite your comments and suggestions.

Trackside Trolley Action !

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This month's photographs are large scale models from Light Rail Products of Pacifica, CA!

All four cars were flawless in their operation during the entire two-day show. In fact, the club plans to find a way to allow visitors to operate one of these car and see if they can learn to stop the car right at the corner car stop. The deceleration curve forces one to estimate where the car will stop just as one must do with an actual car. How about some "Honorary Streetcar Operator" certificates for those who master the stops?

For the record, most PCC cars, as originally built, did not have rear tail lights. They had stop lights, which only illuminated when the brake pedal was depressed by the operator. Today, we call them brake lights. The words STOP were even embedded into the light lenses. Even the cars placed through the SEPTA (Philadelphia) General Overhaul (GOH) Program during the 1980s did not have this feature added. Dual filament taillights, per automotive practice, were added to the 25+ PCC cars currently operating in San Francisco on the F-line wen they were rebuilt for service there. Since most PCC cars running today (outside of museums), have some sort of rear tail lights, operating tail lights are delivered functional on the Tsunami-Sound Equipped PCC Cars, as they look really impressive on the models.

Modelers who wish to have prototypical operation of PCC cars as originally delivered and wish to turn off the tail lights, according to technical data supplied by Soundtraxx, simply place a value of 1 into both CV 33 and CV34. To enable the taillights, both CV 33 and CV 34 should be set equal to 3. The value of 3 is the default value for both CV33 and CV34. So keep that in mind if you ever do a factory reset (Setting CV8 equal to 8). Custom Traxx validated this data and turned off the taillights on their Cleveland and SEPTA cars.

Sound levels can also be adjusted, if desired, by changing the values of the appropriate Configuration Variable (CV). The master sound CV is **CV128**. Bell/Gong volume is controlled by **CV130**; Motor Generator volume is controlled by **CV131**; Stop Request Volume is controlled by **CV150**; PCC The level of the sound of the super resilient wheel groan is controlled by **CV151** and the Door Opening/closing volume is controlled by **CV152**.

Keep in mind the the values are 0 to 255 with 255 being the loudest possible. The default values for the Tsunami-Sound Equipped PCC cars are:

CV128 - 255	**CV150 - 100**
CV130 - 128	**CV151 - 128**
CV131 - 50	**CV152 - 100**

Modelers must refer to their DCC Command Station procedures for the exact methods to use to both read and change CVs. As a rule, we recommend that you always read a CV before changing it. And then read it again after changing it.

All the facts are not yet in, but these Tsunami-Sound-Equipped Bowser PCC cars seem to be great "runners" in addition to their great sound. We could not stop playing with them on the modules, stopping at every stop using Function 7, after learning how to stop the car where we wanted the car to stop.

Users of the Tsunami-Sound-Equipped Bowser PCC cars with peculiar questions are also invited to contact Custom Traxx by email (decals@customtraxx.com) or phone (310-990-5422). Custom Traxx has been working with Soundtraxx since the beginning of the PCC sound development program in 2010.

2012! Another Good Year Coming for Traction Models?

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We have already seen (and heard) the Bowser PCC streetcars in the Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis/Saint Paul, SEPTA and Toronto liveries and most of you probably know that the Con-Cor Pennsylvania Railroad MP-54 Suburban Electric Commuter Coaches, Baggage Cars and Combines will be out sometime this year and we have learned from Bowser that

As a young child, Karl Johnson of Light Rail Products had the opportunity to see the above locomotive at the Seashore Trolley Museum. It was in a state of very bad repair. Now as an adult and developing the Light Rail Products line of large scale traction parts, this car still fascinated him. His goal was to build a line of traction parts around this particular model.

Built by the Laconia Car Works in 1906, this was one of three similar engines (100-102). In the early years, locomotives 101 and 102 where both modified. 101 was rebuilt into a "box" motor and the 102 had the cab from 101 added to it resulting in a long cab version.

100 is the only one that wasn't modified to any extent. The Seashore Trolley Museum under took the restoration and in September 2009, the engine was dedicated. The chocolate brown color was discovered during the course of the restoration. The engine had been painted in varies schemes over the years.

The model itself is made of epoxy castings for the main body, white metal trucks, NWSL motors, and brass or white metal casting for the details.

The Los Angeles Railway Birney Safety car shown in the above photo is a modified Hartland Locomotive Works (HLW) Birney. It includes Light Rail Products cane seats, trolley wheel and harps, headlights, trolley catchers and fenders. This particular model is a narrow gauge car running on standard "G" scale (45mm) track. The car was painted and lettered by our friends at Custom Traxx.

The above photo a model of a 8 window Boston Elevated Railway car. The prototype #396 is at the Seashore Trolley Museum. It features Brill 27E trucks and is 2.5" gauge, which is closer to the correct 4' 8 1/2" than the 45 mm, which is actually 42 inches in 1/2 inch scale. The car was

PCC cars in the Philadelphia as-delivered green/cream/gray/maroon; Shaker Heights yellow and green; Birmingham Electric red/cream/blue/gray; Pittsburgh red/cream; and Boston orange/cream/silver/ maroon will be available this year. Los Angeles Transit Lines "Fruit Salad" and SEPTA Phase 2 may not be far behind. Work is also proceeding on that conventional car the Bowser has been developing.

The Southern California Traction Club, which made its first public appearance in April 1997 at the South Coast Botanic Garden in Rancho Palos Verdes with five modules, is expected to make it's 100th appearance this year. Right now, this appearance is most likely to be at the Costa Mesa Great Train Expo in September 2012. They are planning quite a celebration at that time.

A Very Personal Loss!

by George Huckaby

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I was very saddened by the passing of Lew English last month. He had been in failing health for some time. I first met him when Dick Bale, then of Rail Line News, made arrangements for Custom Traxx to visit Bowser in conjunction with the East Penn Traction Club Meet in May 1997. Custom Traxx had been making San Francisco Muni F-line PCC cars from the Bowser 125210 PCC which still used the older 1966 Bowser drive and had arranged for Custom Traxx to become a Bowser dealer.

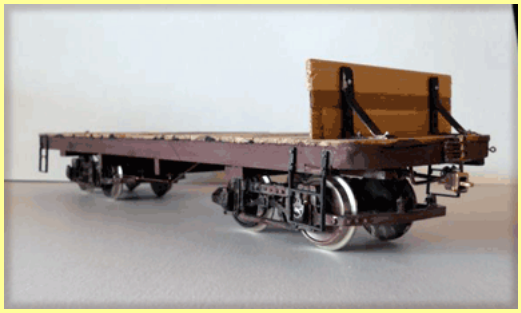
My wife and I initially intended just to tour the plant and English's Model Railroad Supply (EMRRS), which were then in separate facilities. Not only were we invited to see Lew's tremendous model train collection, which was housed over the EMRRS store but we were given a complete tour of the operation and invited by Lee English, Lew's youngest son, to visit Boyer Machine on the next day. Lee made arrangements for us to stay at the local Hampton Inn and that visit became the basis for a deep friendship with the entire family.

It became routine for me to visit Bowser in conjunction with each East Penn Traction Club Meet which is held in May of odd years. However, in 2004, I visited Bowser in May in after attending the funeral service of Edward Torpey, a close personal friend since 1962, and introduced Lee English to Earl Johnson of Transquip Company.

The relationship between Lee English, Earl Johnson and Custom Traxx would continue to develop and eventually culminate in the decision to develop the San Francisco F-line PCC cars in RTR form and to eventually provide sound. Earl would take our basic souvenir car concept, namely the idea of taking the basic detailed shell of the PCC car, adding plastic floor and wheels and selling the car as a souvenir model, and market it to the railway and streetcar museums. A method of powering these cars would be available for those purchasers who later wanted to enter the model trolley hobby. During a meeting with both Lew and Lee, Lew presented Custom Traxx with two CSS&SB cars, shown below, which occupy a very important place in the Custom Traxx collection.

The relationship between Custom Traxx and Bowser continued to develop during the development of the Bowser RTR PCC with Custom Traxx providing most of the technical data and recording the sounds that would eventually be used

built from 2 Bachmann closed cars that were carefully spliced together. It has Light Rail Products Trolley base and pole kit, Brill trucks, controllers, fenders, and NWSL motors.



The above model is a freelance "G" scale, narrow gauge work flat car. The inspiration came from a few samples of work flats, mainly the Russell Flat car that existed at one time at the Seashore Trolley Museum (now scrapped) and a couple of narrow gauge flat cars that are now at the Orange Empire Railway Museum, Perris, CA.

It is a very basic flat car, with radius type ends, Light Rail Products streetcar type couplers, Brill 27E trucks with no motors and stirrup steps. It is a nice addition to the fleet and can go around tight radius curves.

HO Boston PCC Model Status!

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Late last month, production shells of the new HO scale TS15 Boston PCC cars arrived. Deliveries of the new Custom Traxx / Miniatures by Eric / Bowser kit began on February 21st. Shown in the next photo is the basic PCC shell, another shell configured as originally delivered and a third with the full length fan monitor (shroud). Feedback from the first cars delivered has been extremely positive. See the Custom Traxx catalog for more information.

[See **Boston PCC**, column 2]

in the cars. This partnership included two trips to China in 2008 and 2010 and a joint booth at the National Train Show in Sacramento in 2011.

Lew's memory will live on at Bowser, and we will never forget the man whose vision started it all in a basement in Muncy, Pennsylvania. We really are going to miss him.

[**Boston PCC**, from column 1]

The new limited edition Boston PCC kit is available with **[TS15f]** or without **[TS15o]** the full length fan monitor. Both versions are now $195.00. Both decals and a working trolley pole are included, but no couplers. If you wish the A-line 20040 flywheel kit added, include another $10.00. Shipping is $12.50 in the continental United States.

Below is another photo of the test Boston PCC under operation on the modules of the Southern California Traction Club.