The Trolleyville Times

April 2012

The Custom Traxx/Miniatures by Eric team has finally revealed

Train Control Systems to upgrade the M4T decoder!

***

After three years of the M4T decoder being available for the HO scale Bowser PCC cars, Train Control Systems (TCS) will soon introduce a new line of M4 decoders which have all the functions to which Bowser PCC trolley operators have become accustomed.

The new M4-KA decoder comes with the short harness nd eight-pin plug required by the Bowser PCC car. At press time, the new decoder needs only a value of 11 to be placed into CV8 or CV248 to enable the trolley brake lights and automatic stop sequence needed by models of traditional PCC cars. A value of 12 in CV8 or CV248 gives all of the same features as CV8/248 = 11 but adds the taillights featured on the San Francisco Muni rebuilt PCC cars.

While either CV8 or CV248 will perform the same function, we recommend that CV 248 can be used. No matter what number you write into CV8, it will always readout as 135, the assigned manufacturer number for Train Control Systems (TCS). Using CV 248 will show the number that you have entered and you will always know how that decoder has been configured.

Custom Traxx and the Southern California Traction Club began testing of the new M4-KA-SH in late February and testing continues.

We are hoping that all these features are incorporated into JMRI/DecoderPro to assist future users.

Meanwhile the M4T will continue to be available from Custom Traxx for the Bowser PCC car until replaced by the appropriate M4-SH.

The next PCC model from the Custom Traxx / Miniatures by Eric Team!

***

After a year of planning and development, the Custom Traxx /Miniatures by Eric team finally announced their HO scale San Francisco Municipal Railway 1101-1170 series PCC model. In the next photos are [1] car 1123 in the original 1950's paint scheme, [2] car 1176 in the later paint scheme and [3], car XXX in shown in the paint scheme some of these cars received prior to retirement. Incidentally, Car 1123 is now in San Diego becoming a stand in for the original 1937 San Diego PCC cars series 501-528.

Bowser Souvenir/Display Only HO scale PCC Car models!

Trolleyville is pleased to report to our readers that Transquip Company of Chalfont, Pennsylvania has been named the primary distributor of the Bowser HO scale Souvenir/Display only PCC Car models.

The Souvenir/Display only models consist of the same body shell with details and window glass as the more expensive/powered models. However, a less expensive plastic floor and wheels are substituted. While the wheels are HO gauge and will sit on a piece of HO scale straight track, they do not swivel. They were developed for the many streetcar, railroad and transit museums that exist throughout the country.

Transquip Company also has excellent one and two-car display cases that highlight these very fine models.

These models are/will be available from Transquip Stock. Should you be interested in adding this type of model to your collection or layout Transquip May be reached Toll Free at (888) 542-7455 or if in Pennsylvania at (215) 822-8092.

The Bakersfield Model Train Show!

***

This very enjoyable model train show has been presented each year during January / March by the Golden Empire Modeling & Historical Society (GEHAMS) for the enjoyment of the Central California railfans. The one thing that we love about these shows in the smaller venues is that there is usually another event going on at the local Fairgrounds that is nice to visit as an added attraction before or after you visit the train show.

The show is located at the Kern County Fairgrounds which is about 1.5 miles east of the Ming Avenue exit of California Highway 99. Bakersfield is about 100 miles north of Los Angeles and is a beautiful drive through the mountains. The Kern Country Fairgrounds ia a very adequately maintained fairgrounds considering the difficulty in maintaining such a facility in these tough economic times.

Of course, Trolleyville was there, as it has been for the past 15 years. There are quite a few trolley modelers in the Bakersfield area, especially now with all the Ready-To-Run HO scale trolleys now available.

These seventy cars, obtained from Saint Louis Public Service in 1959 and 1962 provided most of the PCC service from the time that they were acquired until PCC service ended in 1982 as they comprised 2/3 of the total 105 PCC cars in the fleet. Car 1785 is shown in the next photo while still operating in Saint Louis. This is one of the few cars of the 1700-1799 series that ended its service life in Saint Louis.

We recently received a photo of the right side of the preliminary shell of the car and it is shown below:

This year, we could demonstrate the new Tsunami-Sound-Equipped (TSE) Bowser PCC models. In the next photo, TSE Bowser SEPTA PCC 2185 is shown crossing in front of Bowser VO-1000 PE1321 equipped with trolley poles for grade crossing signal activation, while in the rear is one of Custom Traxx' new Boston PCC cars. Car 2185 performed flawlessly for the entire two-day show, running continuously for over eight hours each day at a scale speed of 15 to 20 mph, clearly demonstrating the ruggedness, stamina and slow sped control of the new Tsunami PCC Trolley decoder, currently exclusively available in the Bowser PCC.

But the modules that really caught our eye this year were the Mare Island Naval Base modules of the high Desert Modular Modular Model Railroad Club (HDMRRC) complete with aircraft carrier (jeep carrier) fully detailed with airplanes and other pertinent items. These modules were so detailed that we could not pass them up for your review. We thought that so much effort had been placed into these modules that we felt they had to be shown here. The camera can not show you the great detail in these scenes.

For more photos of these excellent modules, click here.

The added attraction at this show was a car show held just outside the main entrance to the train show. The next photo will give you an idea of the size of this show.

The next few photos are of some of the unique vehicles viewed at this show.

As we keep reminding our readers, always check out train shows in the smaller venues. You usually get pleasant surprises which translate to more "bang for your buck".

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

I removed some additional material from at either end of the area IHP provided for a future placement of a decoder and wires for the headlights and taillights and the results are shown in Figure 6.

For views of the front, left side and rear, click on the respective link(s). Keep in mind that this is a preliminary shell and there have been and will be many changes prior to production. The Times will keep you up-to-date as the development of this model progresses. It is expected to be available within two or three months at **$195.00**. You will not hurt the progress if you submit your email reservations in advance. In fact, it just might help!

The IHP San Francisco 1006-1015 Double-End PCC Model, A Very Pleasant Surprise!

***

by Jonathan Werner
Director of Procurement
Custom Traxx

The Brief History:

The San Francisco 1006-1015 double end all-electric "Torpedo" streetcars were a remarkable group since eight of the original ten are still intact. Moreover, these eight either are or will be running some 64 years after they were first manufactured by the Saint Louis Car Company. Cars 1007, 1010 and 1015 have been running in San Francisco since 1995 after a rebuilding by Morrison-Knudson. Cars 1006, 1008, 1009 and 1011 are currently being rebuilt by Brookville and should be operational by 2013. Car 1014 is in Australia at a museum and is operational. Cars 1012 and 1013 unfortunately were scrapped by San Francisco Municipal Railway.

IHP introduced its HO scale model of these cars in May 2011, but for unknown reasons they were suddenly withdrawn from the market the following month. The ready-to-finish kit was re-introduced in February 2012 at which time the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) notified IHP of their interest in evaluating and reporting as this kit could have a high amount of interest with modelers in California.

After receiving and inspecting the model, George Huckaby of the SCTC called me and asked me to review this kit. While I am not a member of SCTC, I have been asked by that group for consultation on many other such reviews and other club matters in the past. George told me up front that he would not tell me any of his thoughts on the kit until after I saw it. He also told me he wished to have my input since my interest in modeling is closer to my own mid-western roots, I have no personal interest in a California model, therefore I am not likely to be “flowery” in a review just to get a model I want to own produced.

Now, for purposes of full disclosure, if you’ve been a reader of the Trolleyville Times, you will know that I am on record as having been critical of almost every aspect of IHP's operation in the past. For purposes of full honesty, when George Huckaby called me, I thought I would be getting another model fraught with quality concerns.

However, once I opened the box, I immediately saw this kit represented a turning point in the quality of IHP products with which I had been familiar. IHP’s own announcement of this kit used the phrase “one of the nicest HO PCC models ever produced.” I can’t say it is the “nicest” model IHP ever produced because as a traction modeler, I’ve never taken a discerning look at IHP’s many commuter products. However, I can say it is the nicest IHP product I have seen to date.

Figure 6 - Shells showing original vs modified milled out roof.

Some other preferential modifications I made were the substitution of the trolley pole hooks on both cars with brass PCC style hooks which were provided by Eric Courtney of Miniatures by Eric, and installation of brass fender trip bars similar to those found on the Bowser R-T-R PCC. I also added the 1283 Super Resilient Wheels from Custom Traxx, then painted the contacts behind the wheels, the motor, the flywheel, and the two weights I placed under the floor between the trucks with Floquil 110017 Weathered Black. I also airbrushed the interior of both shells with Floquil 110010 Engine Black. I used Floquil Wisconsin Central Maroon 110282 for the Muni 1007 and Floquil 110010 Engine Black for the roof. Floquil 110183, Reading Green, was used for the Muni 1008.

Since I had already removed the oversize trolley rope catchers that were molded on the front of both shells, I added the brass trolley catchers in the correct place for a 1950's Torpedo, Muni 1008, and then added brass trolley catchers in the correct place for a current Torpedo, Muni 1007 and inserted and cemented the two Bowser 12508 trolley pole pivots in both shells. Then I prepared both shells for decal application by overspraying the entire shell with Testor's Glosscote.

Unit 1 is to be finished as the current version of San Francisco Municipal Railway (MUNI) 1007, which represents one of the Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Company (PSTC) 11-24 series, which were the 1949 Saint Louis Car Company suburban cars that operated until 1982. Unit 2 is to be finished as MUNI 1008 as it was during the 1950-1960 era.

First, all shells had their interiors airbrushed with Floquil 110017 Weathered Black. As far as the exteriors were concerned, after I had carefully removed both trolley rope catchers, I did follow the IHP instructions and sprayed (from the aerosol can) Dupli-Color white spray primer to the exterior. By the way, if that issue pings your radar, removing the trolley rope catcher proved to be rather simple; it only requires a steady hand, a sharp Exacto knife, and a very small square file. In Figure 7, both the 87183 shell (top) and the 87183A shells (bottom) are joined by an Illinois Terminal PCC shell (middle) that Custom Traxx converted to a MUNI “Torpedo” sometime ago.

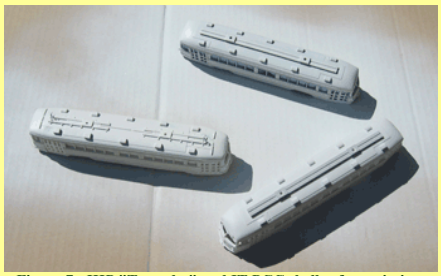

Figure 7 - IHP "Torpedo " and IT PCC shells after priming.

Then the exteriors of both shells were airbrushed with Floquil 110085 Antique White, which is the standard cream color used by Custom Traxx in painting most streetcars. I then turned my full attention to the 1007, since I had that shell the longest. Both catchers were first painted Floquil Engine Black as they are today. The exterior of the shell as sprayed with Testor's Gloss-Cote to prepare for decal application. Custom Traxx provided decals for this car, assembled from sections of many San Francisco and PSTC decal sets that they have made over the past twenty years. The nearly-finished car 1007 is shown below on a module under construction by the Southern California Traction Club. The side window glass has been installed but not the windshield glass at the time of the above photo.

The Kit: Assembly and Operation:

As somebody who has a long background in engineering, technical documentation and management, the first thing I noticed upon opening the box was the Kit Instruction Sheet and the Painting & Decaling Sheet which were supplied. I was impressed. Both documents were of professional quality and contained accurate and timely prototype and modeling information. The entire contents of the kit is shown in Figure 1 below

Figure 1 - The IHP 87183 IHP "Torpedo" Kit Contents.

Decal cream San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) 1950 wings and striping, along with black numbers and round MUNI heralds were supplied and shown in Figure 2. The kit did not provide destination signs, although information as to where to obtain them was supplied. The cream color is documented as a match to Floquil 110085 Antique White, but since as of this writing I have not finalized any exterior work on that car, therefore I cannot fairly qualify that statement.

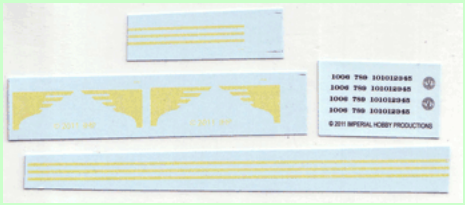

Figure 2 - IHP "Torpedo" decals.

For purposes of writing this review, I must mention there were two examples of this kit to which I had visibility. Unit 1 (#87183) was obtained by SCTC just after the East Penn Traction Club Meet in May 2011 while Unit 2 (#87183A) was just obtained by SCTC on February 29th. I decided to finish Unit 1 (#87183) as San Francisco Municipal Railway 1007, as it exists today, representing the Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Co. The second unit (#87183A) would be finished as MUNI 1008 as it appeared when delivered in 1948.

The body and drive are essentially the same in both Units 1 and 2, except that the trolley pole pivots were not installed in Unit 1, avoiding the problems we had in removing them. The instructions that accompanied the Unit 1 kit stated that the pivots could not be removed. But due to the thickness of the roof, the 12508 Bowser pivots would have to be changed in favor of the longer SCTC-1 pivots in order to attach any wires to these pivots for overhead operation. Such a strong force had to be applied to remove these pivots that we broke both pole hooks that had been installed on the car. Hence, not installing the pivots is a big plus for those of us intending to configure the car for overhead wire operation.

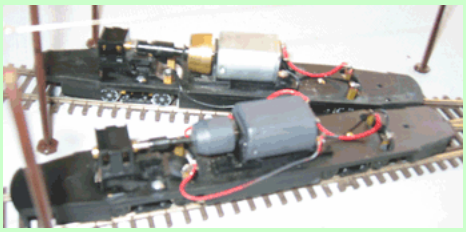

Figure 3 - IHP 87183 chassis' with Bowser Drives.

The model of Muni 1008 made from Unit 2 will be reported in a later issue of the times.

Unfortunately, I could not finish painting and lettering the Francisco Municipal Railway car 1008 in time for this review. That will be reported in a later issue.

Back when the kits were first examined, I measured them against prototype dimensions, which is where I found four issues which could range from very minor to very noticeable depending on your own personal sensitivities on what I like to call the "Rivet-Counter Scale." If you are a hard-core rivet counter, you will consider these more than minor issues. If you are not, you won't let these detract from the overall quality of the kit.

First, the front trolley rope catcher is much too large and not in the correct position (too far to the right) for a car in the two-man, as-built configuration. When the cars were one-manned, most of them had the front catcher replaced with one from the older non-PCC cars and placed in various positions both to the lower right and lower left of the original position. However, since this model is intended to represent the 1950s version of the "Torpedo", the front catcher is definitely in the wrong location. In any case. the rear catcher was in most if not all instances was left in the original position as shown on cars 1009 and 1012 in Figure 8 below:

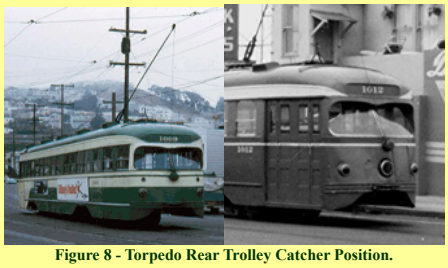

Figure 8 - Torpedo Rear Trolley Catcher Position.

But to be fair, there are factors which compound this situation. The three cars rebuilt in the early 1990s for service on the MUNI F-Market line (cars 1007, 1010, and 1015) returned to service with the catchers in another location, lower on the dasher. See Figure 9.

Figure 9 - Current "Torpedo" Trolley Rope Catcher Placement.

Cars 1007 and 1015 are shown in the above two photos as they exist today. It is unknown where the catchers will be placed on 1006, 1008, 1009, and 1011 when they return from rebuilding at Brookville.

The suggestion I would offer for this matter would be for IHP to remove the catchers from the shell casting and replace them with separate catcher castings. This would permit modeling any of the eras in which these cars operated.

The second issue lies in the front headlight(s). Previous IHP shells were drilled for an operational headlight, yet for an unknown reason this one is not. As present, the headlight(s) also appear to be too large, but on the upside, for the average modeler this is very easy to change.

The third issue also revolves around the size of lights as present, this time on the rear of the car, as the brake/tail lights appear to be too large. For me, this is not a major issue as in

Figure 3 shows both of the drives that were tested during this review. The top drive is the basic Bowser 125100 drive with the A-line 20040 Bowser Flywheel kit installed. We used this one in the Unit 2, 87183A kit. The bottom drive is the basic Bowser 125100 drive except that a Stewart flywheel and drive line, similar to that used in the Bowser R-T-R PCC cars was used. We installed this one in the Unit 1, 87183A kit because we anticipated a problem with the A-line flywheel clearing the roof of the shell. We installed the unit shown below in Figure 4 in Unit 2 when it was discovered that it would fit inside the car.

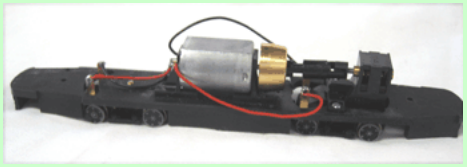

Figure 4 - IHP 87183A chassis' with Bowser Drive & A-line Flywheel.

Units 1 and 2 both arrived with a chassis that weighed 3.2 ounces, with the shell adding the final 1.2 ounces. Additional weights were placed under the floor that totaled .7 ounces; Unit 2 had another .2-ounce weight placed near the trailing truck on top of the floor. It has been both my experience and that of several members of SCTC that adding weight behind the motor does not normally produce benefits. I have found the best results are obtained by placing weight under the floor between the trucks.

The plastic floor supplied with both kits was rigid and is very well made. Despite the fact that I prefer heavier pewter and/or die cast floors, this floor is very workable so long as sufficient weight is added. If you so desire, the 125164 floor designed for the IHP Illinois Terminal PCC can be used here, however you will need to do a small amount of filing on the ends to fit this car's more correct contour. Personally, I prefer the pewter floor as it adds 2.1 ounces to the model's overall weight, which can be very advantageous for overhead wire operation and for operation on grades.

However, I made the decision not to use the 125164 floor and use the floor as supplied. I did however choose to remove the weights supplied and to fill the same area between the trucks with one total one-ounce weight and a portion of another to add a total 1.7 ounces to the floor. Upon completion of this modification, Unit 1 now weighed 5.5 oz and Unit 2 assembled weighed 5.8 oz when assembled. It is important to note that I did need to drill two holes in both weights to maintain access to the two screws that secure the motor mounts to the floor. Figure 5 shows the bottom view of both of the "Torpedo" floors. The bottom view of the 87183A kit (Unit 2) is on top in the next photo and the 87183 kit (Unit 1) is shown on the bottom.

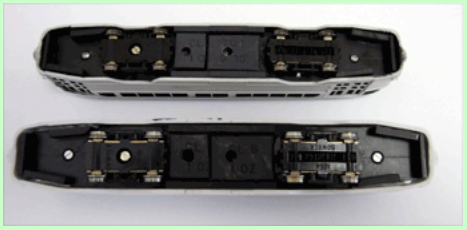

Figure 5 - "Torpedo" 87183 and 87183A chassis bottom views.

Another improvement in this product as opposed to previous IHP efforts (especially the Illinois Terminal PCC) is the thickness of the roof. With the IT Car, SCTC found it necessary to mill out a significant portion of the roof so that it would to accommodate the Bowser 79 motor and the A-line flywheel that comes with their 20040 Bowser Trolley Flywheel Kit. I had been anticipating a similar problem, so I had cobbled together a new flywheel assembly using components used in the current ready-to-run line of Bowser PCC cars. Note that this was a "homemade" remedy using parts which are not commercially available. The idea was that using the 1.27mm diameter of the Bowser flywheel rather than the 1.75mm diameter of the A-line flywheel used in their 20040 kit would avoid the need for further milling out the roof.

the future, I will most likely remove the surface detail and the existing brake/tail lights in favor of operating units once I get a properly programmed Train Control System (TCS) decoder. Note in Figure 10 the end of the IHP shell compared to a photo of the front end of an actual car.

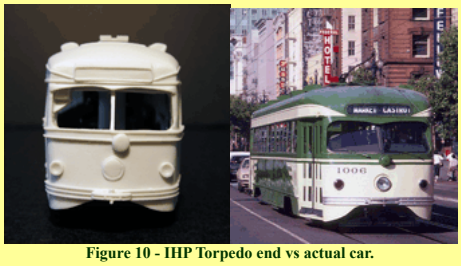

Figure 10 - IHP Torpedo end vs actual car.

Lastly, there is the bas-relief fender trip bar. I'm going to say up front that for some reason this feature red-lines my own personal "Rivet-Counter" scale, but other modelers may not care. My trouble is that it catches my eye every time I look at this kit. To me, this detail would be totally appropriate on the "souvenir" models I know IHP produces, but in my mind a model produced for the "Rivet Counters" of the traction world would have done this detail with a brass or plastic casting. Again, this would be an easy change for even an average modeler.

Conclusions:

As mentioned earlier, as of this writing the finishing of the exterior work of the second car was not complete at the time this article went to press. But this is not to say I didn't follow the IHP instructions as much as I would given my own personal preferences.

But in general, despite the four issues I mentioned, this effort by IHP represents a quantum leap in quality from some of the previous efforts of which I have been critical. As much as IHP deserved the criticism they received on previous occasions, they certainly deserve the praise I'm giving them now.

Not only did IHP impress me with the quality of this kit, they also addressed some of my other previous issues with their practices. According to George Huckaby at SCTC, this kit was shipped within 24 hours of being ordered, it arrived adequately packed for shipment, and when I had a follow-up question regarding this review, I was answered promptly and courteously the same day.

The bottom line is that this kit is a very credible addition to the traction world, and once finished, the units I worked with will be running on SCTC layouts in the near future.

Orange Empire Railway Museum gets new President/CEO!

***

The Times just learned that George Huckaby, owner of Custom Traxx, was selected President & Chief Executive Officer of the Orange Empire Railway Museum (OERM) in Perris, California, succeeding Tom Jacobson. Tom had held that position since 1984. George has been a member of OERM for over 41 years and an operator for 40 of them. Best Wishes, George, from the Trolleyville Staff!

I was pleasantly surprised to discover IHP had already eliminated this issue by removing .040" from the roof over the motor area and also reducing the thickness of the entire roof by another .030". This meant that while Unit 1 would be equipped with my “homemade” flywheel assembly, Unit 2 could be equipped with an A-Line 20040 flywheel kit.

The only additional milling I did on these units was something that was purely elective on my part.

[See **PCC**, column 2]
