

Email reservations are now being taken for the new

Bowser/Custom Traxx revisit China!

For the third time in four years, the Bowser/Custom Traxx team visited GuangDong province in Southern China. The main reason was to collaborate with their current suppliers in ShiJie on their PCC cars and their new trolley to be introduced next year. Also during this trip a potential supplier was targeted for evaluation. These are always whirlwind trips with time only for business and little time for anything else. Two Bowser representatives, Lee K. English, Bowser CEO and Scott B. Davis, Bowser Locomotive Project Manager, left their Montoursville, PA headquarters early in the morning on Thursday, March 29th, arriving in Los Angeles, CA mid-afternoon, where they met up with George Huckaby of Custom Traxx. George serves as Product Consultant for all Bowser HO scale trolleys. All three then left LAX via United Airlines early Friday morning, arriving in Hong Kong late Saturday evening. Sunday is normally spent socializing with their main vendor, and developing an agenda for the next two days. Fortunately, such efficiency between the supplier and the team exists that the expected two-day visit turned out to require only one day and there was time to visit other potential suppliers. Naturally, by Thursday morning, it would be time to board the airplane for home and due to the peculiarities caused by the International Date Line, arrive back in the United States a few hours before they left Hong Kong.

As part of doing business in China, Custom Traxx' George Huckaby began studying both the Cantonese and Mandarin languages after his second visit to China. Cantonese is almost spoken exclusively in Hong Kong and was spoken in Southern China, but Mandarin is taking over slowly. The characters have the same meaning in both languages. But there are both traditional (*more involved and complicated*) characters and the simplified ones introduced during the cultural revolution. He Huan (*pronounced 'huh wan'*), the wife of a UCLA Medical Laboratory Professional, became his Mandarin instructor. George has been taking one-hour lessons, twice almost every week since 2010.



Figure 1 - Huan explaining the four tones in Mandarin!

Huan is shown above discussing the Chinese language during an informal meeting just before all three left the U.S. for China. [Note that the Chinese state their last (family) name first and the first (given) name last.] When George began his Chinese lessons, Huan had a Chinese student, Gao Yu Qi (*pronounced 'gow eu chee'*) living with her husband Yong and young daughter Mei Mei and they all became close friends. Yu Qi had to return to China in June 2011 but

Scenes from China!

During the recent Bowser/Custom Traxx China visit, they took a lot of photographs of the areas for your enjoyment. The next two scenes were recorded in Kowloon on Sunday, April 1st.



Photo A - Typical Kowloon structure!

We noticed that a lot of the buildings have the plumbing on the outside as shown in Photo A above. While some of them are retrofits, some of the newer buildings have this same feature. This saves construction money, and they are easy to access when there is a problem and there is no freezing weather to contend with. Most of the piping for both sewer and fresh water is PVC.



Photo B - Holiday Inn Golden Mile!

Photo B shows the hotel that the team used in Kowloon on Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Monday evening was spent in Dongguan at the Cinese Hotel [Note: We did not forget the 'H'. This is the correct spelling.] Tuesday evening was spent at the Crowne Plaza ZhongShan XiaoLan.

Mainland Chinese hotels are distinguished by a Grand Entrance and Lobby with lots of help to assist you. Note Photo C.

insisted that we tell her when we planned to visit China again, as she intended to visit us, wherever we were to be. We did and she met us at the Chinese Hotel in Dongguan for two days of the trip. Yu Qi is shown at our main supplier's conference room with Scott Davis and Lee English during a brief lull in our meeting. As expected, Yu Qi would demonstrate to George Huckaby just how much Mandarin that he knew and also how much he did not know.



Figure 2 - Yu Qi, Scott and Lee in the supplier conference room!

As expected the meetings with Bowser's primary supplier, AFFA Technology Limited, ShiJie, Dongguan, Guang Dong Province started right after a plant tour. In Figure 3, Lee English is discussing his concerns with K. K. Ku, owner of AFFA Technology Ltd. Also in the photo are Chen Shu Lin, and Chen Xiao, Project Engineers. We are always impressed with the youth and quality of all the engineers, managers and workers. Bowser presented a Request for Proposal (RFP) to AFFA for their next streetcar project and within one week, the response and quote was received.

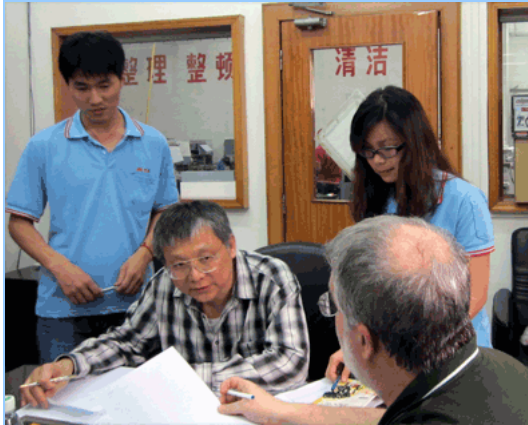


Figure 3 - Shu Lin, K.K., Lee and Xiao, discussing production issues!

Not all business is done at the supplier facility. Sometimes it is far more efficient to talk in a more relaxed atmosphere. In the next photo, Lee is discussing motor applications in the restaurant of the Crowne Plaza Hotel with Sun Yau, a representative from ZhongShan XiaoLan Yong De Metal Production Factory, one of the potential suppliers contacted during the trip.



Figure E - Sun Yau and Lee English discussing motor selection!

One thing would be different in this China visit. In our first visit in 2008, we returned to Hong Kong via private car. We



Photo C - Lobby of the Chinese Hotel in Dongguan!

Early Monday morning, the team boarded an [MTR train](#) from East Tsim Sha Tsui Station in Kowloon to Wo Lu (Light Blue Line). Wo Lu is the last stop before entering mainland China and the city of ShenZhen. The high platform MTR trains are electrically-powered via overhead catenary & pantographs. Each car has five doors per side and very few seats. Photo D shows the typical "bowling-alley" seating in the cars.



Photo D - Interior of MTR car!

When the team reaches Lo Wu, there is the immigration exit booth from Hong Kong followed by visiting a second immigration booth before you are allowed to enter mainland China. This is followed by another walk to the Hi-Speed train to ShiLong/ShiJie, which takes about 40 minutes. No photos of the High-Speed train were made on this visit because we did not have access to our cameras during that ride. But the ShiLong train station is shown in the next photo below.



Photo E - Exterior of ShiLong High Speed Train Station!

We had heard about pollution in China but had really never experienced it until we got to ZhongShan XiaoLan. The next photo was taken from the tenth floor of the Crowne Plaza Hotel at about 8:30AM on April 4th. That was the best visibility that we experienced during our 24 hours there.



Photo F - View from the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 5:30 PM, April 4th!

The amount and persistence of the pollution makes all the buildings look dingy, even the new ones.

San Francisco Dedicates Car #1!

ended our second trip by returning exactly the same way we entered, via the high-speed rail and the MTR. This time we would be returning from Zhong Shan via a ferry. But first there would be an hour van ride from the Crowne Plaza Hotel where we parted ways with Yu Qi, who for all intensive purposes had served as our guide. This van ride turned out to be somewhat similar to Mr. Toad's Wild Ride at Disneyland, but we saw parts of China not normally seen by tourists. After 90 minutes on the ferry, and the normal "show-us-your-papers" immigration rigmarole, we were back at the Holiday Inn Golden Mile in Tsim Sha Tsui (one of the major sections of Kowloon).

With our business almost completed, we were afforded the opportunity to visit the Peak Galleria on the top of Hong Kong Island. One can either drive up a very narrow two-lane road or take an articulated tram to reach this great view of the Hong Kong / Kowloon area.



Figure F - Articulated Tram approaching the Peak!

The views from the Peak can simply be breath-taking. Unfortunately, the fog rolled in as we reached the Peak and the best view that we could record on a late Wednesday evening is shown next.



Figure G - The View from the Peak!

Getting to know the country, the language and the people of China has speeded the development of Bowser products and has lessened the errors possible in such an endeavor. It also has been a very enjoyable experience for all concerned.

More about the IHP San Francisco 1016-1015 series Double End PCC Model!

by George L. Huckaby, Jr.

In our last issue, Jonathan Werner reported on the IHP "Torpedo". He had acquired two cars, the first one was to be painted as San Francisco current car 1007 in the Philadelphia Suburban Transit Co (PSTCo) livery, while the second one was sent to me to be finished as Muni 1008 in the original "wings" scheme. Because of the fact that there will soon be

Another red-letter day in San Francisco occurred on April 5th, when almost 100-year-old San Francisco Municipal Railway #1 was displayed for the public and dignitaries. Car 1 inaugurated San Francisco Municipal Railway streetcar service in December 1912 and unlike many other cities, including some who should have known better (i. e. SEPTA) saved, preserved and actually renovated their treasures and will be celebrated 100 years of transit excellence this coming December.

Car 1 was strategically positioned in front of the San Francisco Railway Museum on the inbound track for official photographs. Sharp eyed viewers can discern Senator (formerly Mayor) Feinstein and current Mayor Lee on the front platform of the car in the next photo.



Normal F-line service going to Fisherman's Wharf were rerouted via Mission Street while the cars to Castro passed by the festivities. Car 1071, dressed in Minneapolis/Saint Paul colors passes Car #1 in the next photo.



Keep tuned for many great streetcar events and photographs during the rest of this year as San Francisco and the San Francisco Municipal Railway celebrate their streetcar heritage.

[Torpedo, from Column 1]

not provided to accept a light bulb or an LED as were all previous IHP PCC shells. We never did figure that one out so I drilled out the holes in the Muni 1008 shell first with a 48 drill and with a 43 drill to accept a Miniaturics 12 volt 30mA 1.7mm bulb. We wrapped the bulb in shrink tubing to keep the light from shining through the shell. We also found that, as is the case with most PCC floors, including the Bowser 1283 die cast floor and some Custom Traxx pewter floors, that material at the very end of the floor must be removed to clear the headlight. See Exhibit D below:

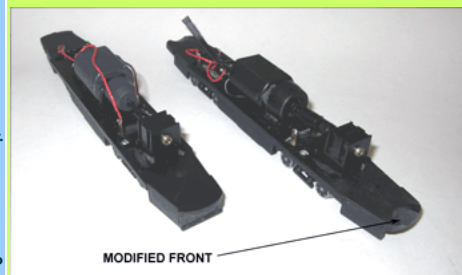


Exhibit D - Original and Modified Floor Front.

Please remember to do this or you just might break the bulb that you just spent time carefully positioning in the end of the shell. We learned this the hard way when installing a

seven of these cars operating in San Francisco, the Times has a keen interest in these models. We have consistently attempted to give our readers the complete story about any product we review and there were some surprises with painting and lettering the second car in the Muni scheme.

As soon as I received the Torpedo model from Jonathan, I prepared the model for painting, removed both cast-on trolley catchers and airbrushed the interior with Floquil Weathered Black. Then I airbrushed the entire exterior with Floquil Antique White [110085], masked off the appropriate areas and then sprayed the remaining portions of the car with Floquil Reading Green [110183]. It was not until then that I examined the decals and read the finishing instructions. Immediately, it appeared that the decal color would not match the Floquil Antique White already applied to the car.

The original Muni 1948 paint scheme on a "Torpedo" is not an easy one to reproduce accurately, especially in an HO scale model. It requires cream striping along the sides and ends and depending on how you paint the model, dark green striping on the ends to the edges of the "Wings". Microscale 87-124-9, 1 inch & 2 inch green striping can be used here. We have used both methods in the past when finishing various San Francisco Muni PCC cars.

IHP provided cream striping, and Wings with numbers and Muni heralds in black, all of which make the job of finishing this car easier, but it is still for the experienced painter and decal applicator. The cream wings and stripes appear to have been desktop-computer generated rather than silk screened so there is a 'texture' to the Wings and stripes when applied on the car which may be evident in close-up photography. When applying these decals, be very careful as there are little or no extras of anything. IHP provides two heralds and two are needed for the car. One of them disintegrated on us so we were lucky that we had an extra set. Giving an extra herald and some extra numbers costs very little and would avoid similar problems for other users.

Knowing that decals and paint sometimes are opaque and as such are affected by the color of the paint beneath them, I decided to go ahead and apply both the 'wing' and stripe decals and see how they looked. See Exhibit A.



Exhibit A - Decals before and after application.

The decals on the car (Exhibit A, above left) looked just like the decals on the blue paper (See Exhibit A, above right) before placing them in the water and applying them to the car.

But IHP seems to have really done their homework here by allowing for the effects of the green color under the cream decal. We were pleasantly surprised when the decal wings were a much closer, although not exact, match to Floquil Antique White when applied to the car. The match will be close enough for many modelers, unacceptable to some. Shown in Exhibit B is our car 1008 in the process of being finished. The IHP-provided clear windows had yet to be installed. Another set of the IHP decals are shown below the car, again illustrating the apparent difference in color, before and after application.



Exhibit B - Torpedo 1008 nearing completion.

headlight in the HO scale MTS resin-shelled Boston "Picture-window" PCC model a few years back.

After the MIT decoder was installed and programmed, testing started on the Southern California Traction Club City Streetcar line, which is totally operated by DCC. We also replaced the wheelsets provided in the kit with the Bowser Super Resilient Wheelsets now provided with the Bowser R-T-R PCC cars.

We then started to install the clear windows provided by IHP. These are the nicest windows seen from IHP to date. The side windows are the easiest to put in. A little adhesive holds them firm. The doors are a little harder and this was probably due to excessive paint on the inside surfaces that the windows must fit into. But after little light sanding they did fit nicely. Remember the operator's window only installs from the outside. A little adhesive holds it firm. We have not yet been able to get the windshield glass to fit properly into either of our two models. If anyone has a tip for us, please let us know.

One of the questions usually asked about any traction model is the minimum radius that the unit will successfully negotiate. In this model the minimum radius will be limited by the skirts since the wheels do not clear the skirts on turns. Of course, thinner scale wheels that at one time were available from NorthWest Short Line could be used but the usual method for increasing the turning radius of a Bowser traction drive is not recommended here. The IHP plastic floor appears to have two very vulnerable places at the rear of the opening for the power truck where the material is only .123" by .137". We handled our floors very carefully due to this perceived weak point. So removing material from this area does not seem wise. Time will tell if this is a problem with the floors. We have always had this apprehension with plastic floors using the Bowser traction mechanism and this led to the development of the line of pewter floors now marketed by Custom Traxx. One of those floors, #125164, can be used for this car.

Testing of both the 1007 and the 1008 began on April 19th on the City Streetcar Line. It is currently located in John McWhirter's living room. The results of these tests showed that the cars would easily take a 9" radius with no modifications. Shown in Exhibits E and F are 1007 and 1008 rounding our Patton Circle, which is 9" radius.



Exhibit E - Muni 1007 at Patton Circle.



Exhibit F - Muni 1008 and 1052 at Patton Circle.

We could not get the cars to operate on the 6" or 5 3/4" radius curves of the SCTC City Streetcar Line. We did note from the noises heard that the wheels were probably rubbing against the inside of the skirts. To get the cars to negotiate tighter curves, we would first remove some material from the inside of the shells where the wheels would make contact with the skirts. If this was successful, the cars should be able to successfully negotiate a 6" radius with little effort. But again, we do not recommend removing any material from the plastic floor in the area of the opening for the power truck. The next photo, Exhibit G, shows both Torpedo 1007 and 1008 with Bowser F-line PCC cars 1050 and 1052 on module 062 of the Southern California Traction Club during testing.

We did find that the size of the striping supplied matched the striping used on the as-delivered paint scheme as shown on the photo of car 1013, shown as Exhibit C.



Exhibit C - Car 1013 at Saint Louis Car Company (1948).

Regardless, applying the cream stripe on the ends and sides is a very difficult application as a portion of the stripes must be placed over the lower portion of the belt rail that is very exaggerated on the model. This is a job for an modeler experienced in decal application. If I ever have the opportunity to finish another IHP Torpedo in the 1948 Muni scheme, I would mask and paint the entire stripe, especially if the original cast-on trolley catchers have been removed.

These molded-on catchers do not seem to be in the correct location for most versions of the "Torpedo" recorded in our photographs.

We are working with Train Control Systems (TCS) to develop a double ended version of the M4T decoder so DCC can be added to these double end PCC cars along with both operating headlights, brake lights and tail lights. Meanwhile, we began the process of adding a TCS M1 decoder to control the reversing headlights. When Jonathan and I first saw the Torpedo shells, we wondered why holes for headlights were

[See [Torpedo](#), Column 2]

PCCII's start running again in Philadelphia!

We heard that the PCCII cars began running again on April 29th on Route 15 - Girard Avenue for the first time since October 2011, while SEPTA conducted long overdue track replacements. More on this next month but, meanwhile, make plans to share a great charter trip with the [Friends of Philadelphia Trolleys on Father's Day](#). Below is car 2327 leaving the new Frankford Avenue trackage and about to turn right onto Richmond Street and head to 63rd & Girard.



Exhibit G - Muni cars 1007, 1008, 1050 and 1052 during testing.

We did take our Muni 1008 to the SCTC test track and verified that after we removed sufficient material from the inside of the skirts, it would take the 6" radius curves as demonstrated in Exhibit H.



Exhibit H - Muni car 1008 traversing the 6" curve.

With that our evaluation is now concluded. This is a fine model but it will need some work to operate on most city traction layouts!

Los Angeles Opens its Fourth Light Rail Line!

The Expo line, which eventually may run from Los Angeles to Santa Monica along the old Pacific Electric Santa Monica Air Line opened on April 28th as far as La Cienega Boulevard. It joins the Blue, Gold and Green lines, opened earlier. More on this also next month.

