

Bowser New Orleans streetcar is in the test & evaluation phase! Also more Bowser HO scale all-electric

Another LRV Paint Scheme for Los Angeles!

In 1990, Los Angeles saw the first electrically powered rail transit vehicles enter service on the Long Beach Line. These 54 cars, built by Nippon-Sharyo, were the first such vehicles in the City of Angels since the 165 PCC cars of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority were sent packing. Those cars entered service in a paint scheme far different from anything on the streets at that time.



All sorts of reasons were given for this new scheme, shown above, but none of them made sense. By the time the Siemens cars were arriving for the Green and Gold lines, in 1995, the decision had been made to make all vehicles the same and to use the same two large yellow (gold) stripes on the sides and ends of the cars that was prevalent on the buses at that time. This made complete sense. The 15 Nippon Sharyo cars procured in 1995 and the Siemens cars came in that scheme and the original 54 cars were also so repainted as shown below:



The fifty Breda cars came with stainless steel sides to most likely eliminate repainting costs....right? See them below:



The Ready-To-Run Market vs. the Hobbyist!

(The view from Custom Traxx)

Some of us thought that the day would have come when kits would disappear. Our hobby, especially HO traction, was mostly kits. It seems like yesterday when the main staples of HO traction were the Pennsylvania Scale models 1948 era PCC, 1906 era Brill Suburban and 1931 IRR interurban. Of course, there was the Mantua Single truck streetcar with one axle powered. For the serious modeler there were brass models, but you still had to paint and letter them.

The Bachmann PCC and Brill streetcars offered Ready-To-Run streetcars but they had their limitations.

When Bowser decided to enter the RTR field with the all-electric PCC in 2007, we thought that this would have an effect on the hobby but what followed was even more surprising. Bachmann entered the market with the Baltimore Peter Witt. Con-Cor offered the Electroliner and the air-electric PCC and Bachmann followed their Peter Witt with a four-wheel Birney Safety Car. This has had an even more effect on the traction hobby. Now we have factory-installed sound already in the Bowser PCC and in six-months there will be a factory sound equipped New Orleans streetcar.

The day of reckoning appears to be close if not her already, while the sales of the RTR trolleys had been at the levels expected, sales of parts, decals and ORR track have not been at the levels previously experienced.

Custom Traxx told the Times late last month that decal purchases have reached the level that not only are new decal sets not likely to be made but reorders of decal sets already produced may not occur.

Richard Orr - A Traction Modelers Legend!

Richard ORR, who gave HO scale traction modelers the simulated girder rail and street turnouts and crossings that they have used for many years, died on July 19, 2013. The following article appeared in the local newspaper in Omaha, Nebraska:

Time couldn't derail Dick Orr's passion for streetcars!

By Michael Kelly, World-Herald columnist



So now there is now the next paint scheme, revealed last month on 1990 vintage Nippon Sharyo car 148, which at first glance reminded us of a typical pet cockatiel, with the gray body and bright yellow head.



Another view of car 148 is provided for readers and to illustrate why the Times calls this the "Cockatiel Scheme". For more images of car 148, [click here](#).



According to the release by the LACMTA, "...Incorporating enhanced safety was a critical objective of the design. Improvements include bright, large scale, reflective white and yellow decalating that make trains more highly visible – particularly at night – and therefore create safer conditions for customers approaching trains and at intersections. "The increased reflectiveness of the train surfaces is impressive," said Lee Hetherington, a 16-year veteran Metro Rail Body/Paint Leader in Fleet Services. "These trains are sure to stimulate new ridership. Other transit agencies across the nation will be envious of our bold, fresh looking trains." With its new styling, Metro trains will present a cohesive and more visible rolling billboard for the agency county-wide, encouraging discretionary riders and creating a safer and more attractive ride for our customers..." We wondered if anyone could tell us how the yellow end is safer than the white end used on the Siemens and Nippon Sharyo cars now? So last month we talked to Bruce Shelburne, Executive Director, Rail Operations, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) about this. We were told that many of the European Light Rail Systems were adopting yellow on the front and sides of their vehicles as evidence was showing that the yellow is more visible at night than the white. Another beneficial aspect of the "cockatiel" paint scheme is that it would work on the Breda cars. If they repaint the 50 Breda cars on the Gold Line into this scheme, they might get a believer or two. Let's see if all of the current fleet of 172 LRVs finally get the same paint scheme before the next batch of cars from Kinkisharyo arrive and they do this all over again!

First Factory Prototype New Orleans Streetcar Arrives at Bowser!

Like the trolleys he loved, streetcar enthusiast Dick Orr has reached the end of the line. He filmed Omaha's last streetcar run in 1955 and long hoped for a renewal of a streetcar or light rail system in Omaha.

While mayor, Hal Daub once promised him the first ride on new streetcars. But Dick told me 14 years ago: "I don't think I'll ever see them." He did not. Richard Orr died July 19 at 88. "He was just a wonderful guy," said Daub. "I got to know him when I served on a transportation subcommittee in Congress (in the 1980s), and he gave me his insights." People die, but hopes for a streetcar line seemingly never do. Daub, a proponent, said the idea "has been pretty much studied to death."

A streetcar line is one option in a \$1.3 million, 18-month transportation study underway for the Metro transit system. It is funded with a \$700,000 federal grant and local contributions from various institutions, including the City of Omaha.

Meanwhile, the nonprofit Emerging Terrain this month proposed a light rail system on the old Belt Line railroad path — built in the 1880s and abandoned in the 1980s — that extends from north Omaha through South Omaha and into Bellevue. As mayor from 1994 to 2001, Daub pushed for a streetcar loop that would connect Creighton University, the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the midtown area with downtown, plus a stretch on South 10th Street to the zoo. With rising costs, he acknowledged last week that getting a streetcar system on track becomes difficult. Because of potential costs, Mayor Jean Stothert has not supported the idea.

Kansas City, Mo., is building a \$102 million downtown streetcar line funded largely with a 1-cent sales tax for 25 years in a "downtown streetcar district." The line, scheduled to open in 2015, is designed by Omaha-based HDR Inc. Oklahoma City had planned to have a streetcar line by 2017, but the effort stalled this month when local commissioners raised questions. If Dick Orr was something of a romantic on the subject of streetcars, he had a personal reason. As a young man, he took a certain streetcar because he had his eye on a certain rider named Martha Ann Neuhaus. Streetcars didn't last, but the couple's marriage endured — more than six decades.

"Dick was versatile, interested in everything," Martha Ann said. "He always wanted to conserve our world and all of its resources. We recycled everything we could, and we're continuing that — donating his body to medical science." His body wore out with age, including two strokes and a heart attack, but he had taken very good care of himself. He ran 22 marathons between the ages of 50 and 60, including Boston's.

He worked four decades in the printing business. In his basement, he made parts for model streetcars and trains that sold internationally. They were known as "ORR PARTS." For years, the family took vacations in a 1965 Studebaker modified for sleeping. He owned it from age 41 to age 82. Dick wrote two books about streetcars. And in 1999, he gathered the 8mm home movies he had shot long ago, producing a one-hour, 47-minute video, "Streetcars of Omaha and Council Bluffs, 1947-55." The video was more than just film of streetcars, though. It provided a treasure-trove of postwar Omaha pictures. It included glimpses of such bygone landmarks as the Metz Brewery, the Admiral, Beacon, Chief and Military Theaters, the Nebraska Clothing Store and the old Woodmen of the World building. Also, as narrator, Dick said, "the infant Nebraska Furniture Mart." He was pleased in 2002 when a wall sculpture was unveiled at Happy Hollow Boulevard and Underwood Avenue, a tribute to the Dundee neighborhood's streetcar past. Local residents helped raise \$130,000 for the sculpture. Dick appreciated stability — 41 years with a car, 53 years in one house, 62 years with his wife, 71 years at St. Paul United Methodist Church, 5410 Corby St.

A memorial service will be held there at 3:30 p.m. on August 18. Another will be held at 10 a.m. on August 19 at Skyline Manor, where he and Martha Ann have lived in recent years. He is also survived by daughters June Roberts of San Francisco and Wendy Smith of Minneapolis. A 1942 graduate of Benson High, Dick enjoyed the mature trees and homes of the Benson neighborhood. He helped restore the old Omaha streetcar on display in the Durham Museum — and when he visited, he would always turn the streetcar's destination sign to "Benson." He often lamented that people were "married to their cars" and noted that mass transit is more energy-efficient. Hal Daub says it's just a matter of time. "Someday all urban areas like ours will have commuter light rail," he said. "I think the idea has new legs and new life. If it happens, we can give a little of the legacy and credit for keeping the idea alive to Dick Orr."

Note: I first met Richard Orr and his wife, Martha Ann at an East Penn Traction Club meet in the late 1990s. He told me that he was thinking about giving his business to someone else as he was approaching "his eightieth year" and needed to ensure that the business to go on. He invited my wife and I to spend a few days at his house in 2000 and showed me the entire ORR Special Work (turnouts and crossings) casting operation from beginning to end. But I was still very surprised when in June 2003, he wrote as a very long letter an in that letter and told me that he had "selected" us to continue his business. So another member of the Southern California Traction Club and I drove up to Omaha from Los Angeles in two days, picked up the items and returned in another two days. We searched for and finally found a casting house in Fresno and were in the business of making ORR Track by the end of 2003. I will miss him. He was a very good friend!

George Huckaby, Custom Traxx

August 26th was a significant day at the Bowser Manufacturing facility in Montoursville, PA when they received the first test New Orleans trolley from the factory. This car was complete with the sound board, except that no sounds were contained. This car was on its way to the Southern California Traction club test track for evaluation and testing as this issue went to press. The reasons for the lack of sound is quite simple. Earlier this month, Bowser, after a long and somewhat painful evaluation of technology, pricing and maintainability made the business decision to switch from Soundtraxx to ESU LLC LokSound for all their models. Since the sounds to be used on the New Orleans car were recorded and therefore owned outright by Soundtraxx, another source of the actual sounds had to be found and recorded. This was done and all sounds were recorded on August 28th at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum. When Bowser introduced sound to its PCC models a few years ago, they recognized Soundtraxx/Tsunami as one of the leaders in the industry. Most modelers at that time knew and recognized the Tsunami name and quality. But Bowser could not ignore the dramatic increase in technology and capability now employed in the ESU LLC LokSound models and desired to use the 21-pin "plug and play" method that is currently used by LokSound. This technology would allow sound to be added to non-sound models with the mere addition of the sound module and a speaker. Bowser had already started to switch to LokSound for their diesel engines leaving only the trolley models with Soundtraxx. During the change to LokSound, several issues were both reported by users and discovered during testing. Bowser is working all of those issues at the current time and expects to have them all completely solved as soon as possible. Most of them will be invisible to the average user. Bowser just sent a LokSound equipped Baldwin diesel to the Southern California Traction Club test facility for evaluation. Since the engine just arrived, tests were not complete but it was reported to us that the sounds were impressive.

There are two different shells being manufactured for these series of cars. The major difference is windows or no windows in the lower half of the doors as you can see in the next two photographs. The New Orleans cars have existed in both configurations over the years. Note 913 many years ago without the windows in the lower half of the doors and 952 today in San Francisco.



Both New Orleans 900 shells are shown below with Bowser DS-4-4-1000 Diesel Switcher, PRR 9275, The 9275 was just beginning to undergo evaluation at the Southern California Traction Club test track at press time as it is among the first of the Bowser locomotives equipped with sound from ESU-LLC LokSound. One thing we did find out is that you can readdress the unit without a power booster.

