The Trolleyville Times

January 2016

eans NORTA red [Riverfront], green [Saint Charles]; New Orleans NOPSI (pre 1964) and Philadelphia Trans Co g

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CURRENT EVENTS.....

Progress Continues on the Phase 2 Expo Line!

(First Accident with Motor Vehicle!)

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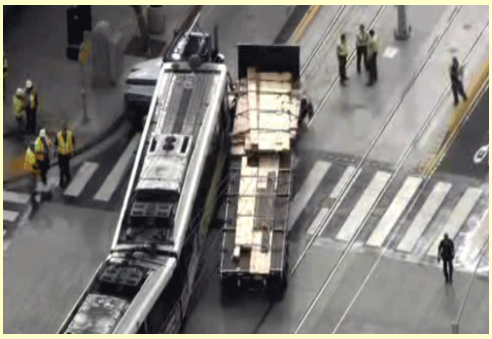
About noon on Thursday, December 10, 2015, a truck driver who must be somewhat blind, was traveling westbound on Colorado Street when he decided to make an illegal left turn at Seventh street, crossing both tracks and knocking the front truck of Siemens car 238 from the rails. It appears that the train was proceeding westbound on the track normally used by eastbound cars. The "somewhat blind" appellation to this truck driver is due to the plethora of NO LEFT TURN signs on Colorado Street from 17th to the station at 4th Street. There were no passengers on board as the train was a test train. The truck driver had minor injuries.



Left turns have been CLEARLY prohibited from westbound Colorado onto 7th Street for at least one year, but drivers still make the illegal maneuver. According to the California Highway Patrol, there have been 261 incidents on Colorado Boulevard between 5th and 17th with one fatality and 258 injuries since 2007 and the trains have not started running yet. During the same time 45 incidents caused by improper turns have injured 38 people. To put all of this in perspective, the community rejected placing the Expo rails on a 50 ft tall elevated structure when it was originally proposed by the LACMTA. They did not want to lose a large number of mature coral trees.

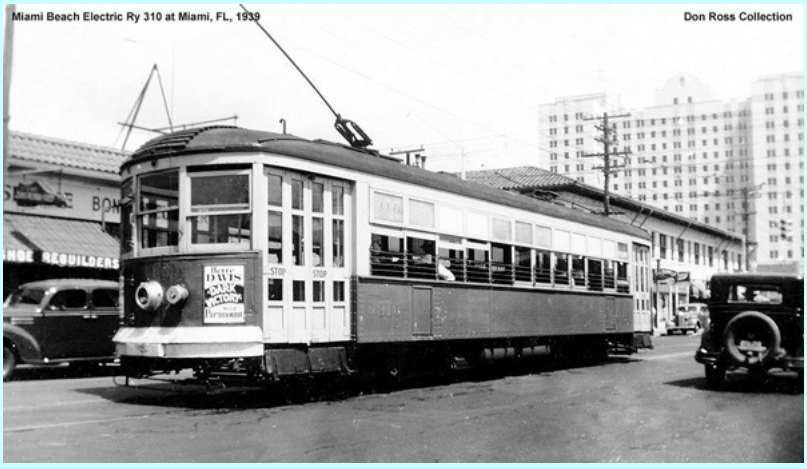
The car was rerailed and towed eastward about 4:00 PM by Nippon-Sharyo 111. Trolleyville webmaster witnessed the tow job but did not have his camera handy when the train passed Barrington Avenue. After the car made it back to the Blue Line Shops and was examined, it looked like this, not bad for hitting such a large truck.

The Phase 2 portion of the line is still expected to open in the spring of 2016.

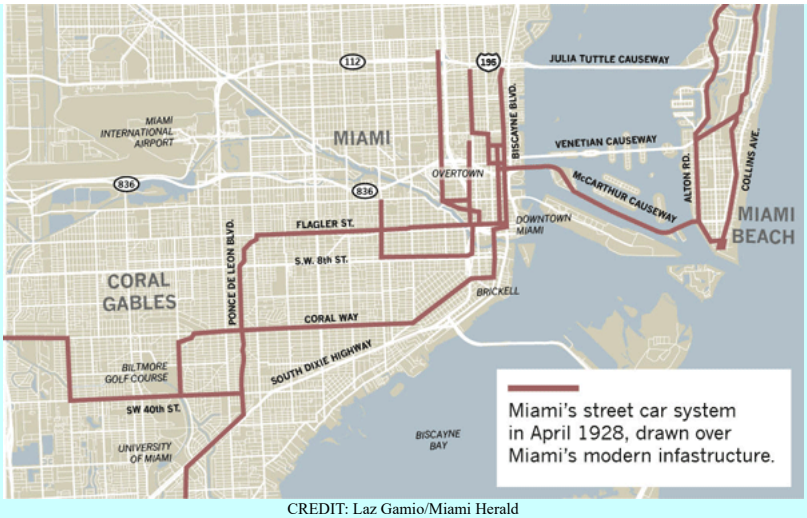
Miami Beach and Tacoma Streetcar Projects Advance! Trouble at Little Rock!

by Edward Havens

In South Florida, the Miami Herald reported that the coastal resort city of Miami Beach, sandwiched on barrier islands between Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, has decided to seek bids from firms qualified to design a streetcar system. One leg would serve South Beach in the tourism-oriented community while another would run across MacArthur Causeway to Miami. The first generation street railway over the Causeway was abandoned in 1939. Miami Beach Electric Railway initially equipped its car line with single-ended Cincinnati Car Company four-wheel Birney Safety Cars but later acquired double truck cars as shown in the next photo for the run into Miami.



The next illustration shows the Miami streetcar system as it existed in 1928:



CREDIT: Laz Gamio/Miami Herald

Initial proposed streetcar routes

Miami Beach wants to create a wireless streetcar system that would eventually link to a rail connection across the MacArthur Causeway to Miami commonly known as BayLink. Though still in the preliminary planning stages, including an environmental impact study, the city wants to push forward with a streetcar as soon as it can. These are initial routes considered as part of the larger BayLink project, but Beach officials will consider other alternatives.

Another bright spot is Tacoma, Washington. The "progressive railroading.com" site reported in December that the 2.4 mile extension of the existing 1.6 mile Tacoma Link modern streetcar line has received $75 million in federal funds under the budget bill approved by Congress. The money will come from the Federal Transit Administration

Small Starts program and combined with other federal and state grants raises the total for the extension to $158 million.

Sound Transit, which plans a November 2016 Tax-For-Transit referendum in the Puget Sound Region has plans for two extensions of Tacoma Link totaling 7.1 miles and costing $1.5 billion. According to the News Tribune, new streetcar tracks would run to Tacoma Community College and also to Tacoma Mall, making it possible for a light rail link from the mall to Federal Way and Seattle. Current Seattle LRT expansion plans only takes the rail system south to Federal Way.

Elsewhere in the U.S., the news isn't so good. The "usa.streetsblog.org" site revealed in October that Arkansas transportation officials want to widen Interstate 30 from six to ten lanes through the heart of Little Rock, the state capital, at a cost of $600 million. The I-30 bridge over the Arkansas River needs to be replaced. That would mean tearing out a portion of the River Rail heritage streetcar line, eliminating the branch to Bill Clinton Presidential Library and ending the possibility of an extension to the airport.

The study is continuing. The first public comment period ended Dec. 7, 2015 and a second will be held next spring to discuss an environmental report. The final photo shows another of the cars at the Clinton library terminal.

Not Your Grandpa's DCC Anymore!

by John McWhirter

In the October issue of the Trolleyville Times, I introduced you to three of the more sophisticated digital control systems designed for model railroading. Included were the Roco/Fleischmann Z21, the ESU ECoS II, and the Marklin Central Station 2. In the December issue, I covered in more depth, the Z21. In this issue, I will explore the many features of the ECoS II.

The ESU Command Station II comes with a dedicated 75VA power supply. The rated output is good for 5A at 15VDC. This is capable of providing 4A of track power. The ECoS II measures nearly 14 inches across and contains a 7 inch full color HD touch screen and 2 throttle controls on the front panel. There are also push buttons for function controls as well as a horn or whistle multi function joy-stick. The rear apron contains ports for power in, programming track, main track, ethernet, 4 EcoSlink connectors and s88 connectors. EcoSlink allows for direct connection of external EcoSlink devices such as handheld controllers, boosters, and feedback decoders. The s88 port is to allow connection of up to 32 Marklin s88-compatible feedback decoders. The command station has provisions for a back-up rechargeable battery. All settings are safely stored in the units flash memory.

Right out of the box, the ECoS II is very straightforward to set up. Install the supplied rechargeable batteries. Connect the supplied power pack. Connect the main track output to your layout. If you are connecting to a 3-rail or overhead power system, you need to observe correct polarity in order to insure proper operation of some older locomotives and accessories. Following is a photo of the main screen after boot-up.

As you can see, the last 2 locos that were accessed on the speedometer display are now visible. In this system, all locomotive and layout settings and configurations are stored in the command station flash memory. The touch screen responds to your finger or the use of a supplied stylus. Simply swipe your finger to advance the throttle speed indicator or turn the speed control knob. As the knobs are motor controlled, they will respond to input from the touch screen. The accuracy of the touch screen can be optimized by using a built-in calibration process.

Before you can run a locomotive it must be entered into the internal loco list. All existing locos can be accessed by the loco button on the front of the console. To add a new loco, from the loco menu display, select New loco and then Manual entry. Choose the correct protocol. The choices are: DCC 128 speed steps. Motorola Fx14, DCC 14 speed steps, DCC 28 speed steps, LGB, or Selectrix. Should you have a loco with a Marklin mfx decoder or ESU Lokpilot M4 decoder, the command station will automatically detect it and report the appropriate information. In this case you can over-ride the supplied info to change the name if desired. For manual entry, you need to enter the digital address, loco name, and assign an icon. The system has many loco photo icons in it's data base or you can choose to upload a user supplied photo from your computer while connected to the internet. This procedure allow access to images uploaded by other users also and you can supply your images to them as well. The extremely comprehensive manual discusses this in detail. Decoder functions can be mapped and assigned icons by entering the properties display.

One highly desirable feature of the ECoS II is the ability to function in multi-protocol operation. The command station can transmit all of the above formats in sequence. Thus each loco can be controlled with its own data format. Mixed operation of different decoders on the same track is generally possible.

Locomotive consists are as easy to set up as a single loco. Any locos in the memory of the ECoS II can be configured into a consist. It is possible to operate and display consists with locomotives whose decoders cannot otherwise support consist addresses. Furthermore, it is also possible to form consists consisting of locos with different decoder types and protocols. Consists are always run with 128 speed steps.

Shuttle operation of trolleys, trams, or trains can be achieved by using one s88 input for each stopping point. The ECoS II slows down the loco automatically when it reaches the end of the line, changes the direction and lets the loco depart after a pre-determined layover time.

Control of magnetic devices such as accessories, turnouts, signals, uncouplers, or other relay or servo operated devices is a main feature of the ECoS II. All of the these devices can be controlled as long as they are equipped with proper digital decoders. This even applies to Marklin turntables. Routes can be established by integrating the control of turnouts and bringing them into pre-determined status instead of switching them individually. The ECoS II can handle up to 1024 routes with 256 individual devices each.

The ECoS II offers an integral track diagram feature. You can draw just about any track configuration with available symbols. Even the largest layouts can be displayed and operated from multiple integrated panel displays.

Programming can be done on the Main as well as a dedicated Programming track. The ECoS II supports DCC programming as well as Motorola and M4.

Although this command station is self contained as it is, when connected via the LAN connector to a WiFi router, and accessed via available mobile apps, remote operation is possible. As I'm a Mac/Apple user, the free app is called TouchCab Free.

For a few bucks more, you can get OneDotFive. The later has more to offer and I would recommend it. You will need, of course, a dedicated WiFi router. As mentioned in last months article on the Roco Z21, just about any inexpensive router will do the trick. I, in fact use the TP-LINK TL-WR841N which came with my Z21, with my ECoS II as well as my Marklin CS2. These can be found on eBay for about $20 or so. I've even thought of picking up one for each system to simplifying transitioning from one to the other for mobile device operation. There are phone apps as well as tablet apps available. Here is the iPad throttle display for one of my locos:

It is possible to run up to 16,384 locos simultaneously. Although that number is theoretical, only 128 boosters can be connected. The individual loco response time increases as the number of locos is increased. In practice, this is unnoticeable but would become unacceptable if you had such a layout.

I've tried to cover the highlights of this system. One thing that has impressed me about it is the extremely comprehensive documentation that comes with this system. 50 pages of well written and illustrated instructions on every aspect of the ECoS II are a great resource for the casual user as well as the expert. The ESU ECoS II system offers the model railroader a high level of sophistication along with a low level of complication in achieving advanced digital controls of their layout. Here is a link to a youtube video covering the basics of this system: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApxjEciFr40

In the final installment of this series on upscale and highly sophisticated digital systems, I will explore the Marklin CS 2 and offer my overall impressions of these systems and how they match up with the DCC systems with which you may be the most familiar.

SLICE OF HISTORY .....

John Wanamaker Kiddie Ride!

John Wanamaker (1838-1922) was the founder of the first department store in the United States. He was born in Philadelphia, Pa so his flagstaff store was located at 13th and Market in that same city. At the peak of his success, he operated 16 stores, two of which were in New York City. In 1878, his store was the first to be illuminated with electricity. His store was the first to use the telephone in 1879 and in 1880, the first to use pneumatic tubes to transport cash and documents. However, as the advent of shopping malls brought the era of the large department store came to an end. The chain was bought by Woodward & Lothrop and by 1994 had filed for bankruptcy.

His flagship store was first built on the site of an abandoned Pennsylvania Railroad Station. He renovated it into a "Grand Depot similar to London's Royal Exchange or Paris' Les Halles, two central markets which were the forerunners of what would become the department store. This store opened just in time for the 1876 American Centennial Exposition. In 1910, a new structure was built on the same site. The new store was built in Florentine style with granite walls, twelve floors, galleries and two lower levels, a pipe organ from the Saint Louis World's Fair and a large bronze eagle, which would become a meeting place for Philadelphians for decades. The flagship store was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1978 and became Lord & Taylors and is currently Macy's Center City.

The store had many features including a Crystal Tea Room on the ninth floor which lasted until 1995 and a Balcony Cafe, "Terrace On The Court", a restaurant on the third floor where customers could dine while listening to the organ. It closed in 2008. But the grand organ remains in place, and is the largest operational pipe organ in the world.

But the eighth floor of the store featured a monorail for kids, called the Rocket Express, that traveled around and above the entire toy department, along with the camera, piano and organ departments. I rode that monorail many times in the early 1950s. As you can see from the photo, this ride was for children.

I can still vaguely remember some young riders who were too scared to get on the monorail and some that got scared when the train left the boarding location.

The ride was removed in 1984 and was saved from the salvage heap by a foresighted worker who called the curator of the Please Touch Museum located in the Centennial District of Philadelphia (Fairmount Park), where the ride now resides.