



The HO scale models of the San Diego Siemens Ultrashort Light Rail Vehicles are now

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CURRENT EVENTS.....

Urban Commuter, Light Rail / Modern Streetcar News!

by Edward Havens

ATLANTA, GA - Atlanta City Council has approved the transfer of the city's 2.7-mile modern streetcar line to Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported September 19. The transfer next year will involve all equipment and maintenance and will be funded by the half-cent sales tax the city's voters approved last year for transit expansion. The car line opened in December 2014 with high expectations for ridership but patronage dropped after the city began charging a \$1 fare to ride. At right is Atlanta Streetcar 1001 on opening day in December 2014.



BETHESDA, MD - Federal Judge Richard Leon ruled September 8th at Washington, D.C., against an effort by opponents of the Maryland Transit Administration Purple Line light rail route to halt pre-construction activity including tree clearance along the 16.2-mile corridor, WTOP news radio reported. The tree removal work is along Georgetown recreational trail.

Advocates of the LRT line between Bethesda, College Park (home of the University of Maryland) and New Carrollton say lawsuits and complaints by opponents have driven up costs for the public-private partnership [P3] project. Tree removal was set to begin September 18 and the contractor warned that any delays would mean more than \$6 million in contract penalties and labor costs. The state said the 21- stop LRT route connecting with D.C. Metrorail rapid transit into the nation's capital at several points is expected to begin operation in 2022



A federal judge in Washington, D.C. ruled September 22nd that Maryland Transit Administration can proceed with cutting down trees that block the route of the 16-mile Purple Line corridor light rail -- dealing a blow to opponents of the LRT project. District Judge Richard Leon ruled the tree cutting can go ahead even though litigation from the opponents 2014 lawsuit has not been resolved. Some of the trees are 80 years old and critics say felling them will cause "irreparable" environmental damage. The tree cutting will be along a wooded recreational trail from Bethesda to Silver Spring, The Washington Post reported.

CINCINNATI, OH - The Cincinnati modern streetcar line planned to add one extra C.A.F.-built car to weekend service on the third weekend of September for the downtown Oktoberfest festival, television station WCPO reported September 15th. Last year, the streetcar transported 29,000 riders during the festival. There were to be four streetcars in operation, up from three on a usual weekend.



DALLAS, TX - The "D magazine" site reported September 13th that Dallas City Council has approved routes for both a downtown light rail subway and a modern streetcar line through the heart of the city. The council okayed the Victory-Commerce-Swiss alignment for the D2 subway. The streetcar line would use Elm and Commerce. Engineering studies and financing still must be arranged for each project. If the projects move forward, the streetcar would be completed by 2023; the LRT subway by 2024.

DETROIT, MI - The Detroit Woodward Avenue modern streetcar line only is seeing four out of 10 riders paying fares since the no-fare introductory period ended September 5, "crain's detroit business" online reports. Ridership also has dropped -- falling from 5,000 per day to only 3,000. Private donors were subsidizing rides while QLine (M-1 Rail) worked out kinks in the fare collection system. QLine spokesman Dan Lijana said the car line is adding riders in the early evening and for special events. He is confident the service will meet its goal by September 2018 of transporting a daily average of 5,000 passengers. M-1 Rail has stationed ambassadors at car line curbside platform.



QLine 292 Southbound in Detroit!

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL - The city of Fort Lauderdale on Florida's Atlantic Ocean coast agreed September 14th to buy five Siemens S70 model streetcars for the 2.8-mile downtown car line it's planning to build. The S70s will cost \$5 million apiece or \$31.4 million for the entire procurement contract. Fort Lauderdale got a discount deal by piggybacking onto a Charlotte, North Carolina, contract for S70 LRVs, the "sun-sentinel dot com" site reported September 15th. The 83-foot-long S70 streetcars will have traffic signal priority with the ability to change red lights to green. The cars will run with pantographs and Overhead Contact System trolley wire over most of the route but will use battery power to run over the Southeast Third Avenue Bridge over New River on a wire-free basis. The city is requiring "stop" buttons on each streetcar so they don't have to halt at every curbside station, in effect making it a flag stop service. The "Wave," as the streetcar line is branded, will cost \$195.3 million and is expected to debut service in 2021.



Atlanta S70 Streetcar #1002 in Atlanta, similar to the cars to be acquired for Fort Lauderdale!

The Siemens S70 streetcar version was chosen for many reasons among those were its large windows that allow riders to view the city plus the fact that it has ample room for wheelchairs and bicycles. Another reason for the choice is that the Siemens S70 can accommodate future extensions. Future extensions under consideration are to Port Everglades, Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, the Tri-Rail Station on Broward Boulevard and the educational campus on Davie Boulevard.

One of the changes that the county has added is the addition of "Stop Buttons" an idea commonly used in early efficient trolley systems. These buttons will be used when the lines are expanded so that trains do not have to stop at every stop if no one is either departing or embarking especially during off-peak hours.

Construction of the systems vehicle maintenance and storage facility is scheduled to begin in July 2018 near Southwest 17th Street.

HONOLULU, HI - The now-under-construction elevated light metro at Honolulu on Oahu Island has gotten a boost because of a financial bailout package signed by the governor of Hawaii for the over-budget project, the "construction dive" site reported September 8.

The latest estimate for construction is \$9.5 billion and the new law will provide \$2.4 billion toward the \$3 billion funding gap. The "D magazine" site reported September 13th that Dallas City Council has approved routes for both a downtown light rail subway and a modern streetcar line through the heart of the city. The council okayed the Victory-Commerce-Swiss alignment for the D2 subway. The streetcar line would use Elm and Commerce. Engineering studies and financing still must be arranged for each project. If the projects move forward, the streetcar would be completed by 2023; the LRT subway by 2024 asure passed by the state Legislature September 1 will extend Hawaii's general excise tax which includes the state hotel tax revenue. The law also allows two non-voting members to be appointed by the state to the rapid transit board. The Federal Transit Administration has advanced \$800 million for the project and is being asked by Honolulu for another \$700 million in tax funding.

PHILADELPHIA, PA - It was reported on September 20th that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) had issued a preliminary report on the August 22nd collision between two Norristown to Upper Darby, PA Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) single car trains. The incident occurred when a SEPTA electrically powered single car struck an unoccupied SEPTA single car train that was stopped at a passenger platform at the 69th Street Transportation Center.



69th street Station, the Scene of the August 22nd Mishap!

Forty-two passengers were injured and taken to local hospitals, though none had life-threatening injuries, according to the report. The Norristown Line is a two-track, 13-mile, 600-volt direct-current electrically powered rail line. The line is used for regular train service seven-days-a-week between Norristown and Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. The incident occurred during light rain in the area. At a stop several away from the 69th Street Transportation Center, the operator of the electric train was unable to stop and slid past the passenger platform. He reported the missed station and notified SEPTA's operations control center of slippery rail. The controller directed the train to return to the missed station, then proceed to 69th Street.

"About 0.4 miles from the 69th Street Transportation Center, the train operator began receiving a series of reduce speed cab codes from the ATC system," the report stated. "The signal was stop at 6S, the last track-side signal before the 69th Street Transportation Center. The last track switch was lined for the track 1 passenger platform, where [the] unoccupied train was stopped." The operator tried to stop his train, but it went through the signal and continued into the station, and collided with the unoccupied train. NTSB officials are continuing to investigate the accident's probable cause. Parties to the investigation are the Federal Transit Administration, SEPTA, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Transport Workers Union.

SAINT PAUL, MN - St. Paul, Minnesota, -based Metro Transit set a one-day rider ship record on August 31 on the Minneapolis to St. Paul Green Line light rail route as a result of the State Fair and a variety of high-profile sports events, The Pioneer Press reported September 9. The Green Line transported 68,071 passengers on the final day of August, exceeding the old one-day record of 66,018 on October 2, 2016. The 12-day State Fair also saw record Metro Transit rider ship with express buses operating from 13 park and ride locations.



Siemens S70 three-pack heading to Minneapolis - Note sleet pantograph!

Met Council, the St. Paul-based regional planning organization for the Twin Cities area, has rejected all four construction bids for the Southwest Corridor light rail line as too costly, Minnesota Public Radio reported September 11th. The 14.5-mile line proposed to link downtown Minneapolis and suburban Eden Prairie would cost an estimated \$1.8 billion. The proposed route has been bedeviled by lawsuits and criticism, notably over the side-by-side light rail and railway freight tracks along the Kenilworth recreational trail just west of Minneapolis. Contractors said they are disappointed with the decision, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported September 14th. The bids opened ranged from \$797 million to \$1.08 billion. If ratified by the full Met Council September 20th, the new bids would delay the project by four months into early 2018. There still is no assurance of federal funds for the Southwest LRT.



One of the 59 Siemens Vehicles!



One of the 27 Bombardier Vehicles!

SAN FRANCISCO, CA - San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency [SFMTA] held a transit heritage weekend event September 9 and 10. It celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the MUNI J-Church light rail and the city's bus service, the "SF Weekly" site reports. Rides were free on heritage vehicles if passengers boarded at the railway museum. Historic cars, including MUNI's 1912 prototype streetcar #1, were operating on the heritage weekend. A talk on transit history in San Francisco was scheduled in the afternoon both days September 9 and 10.

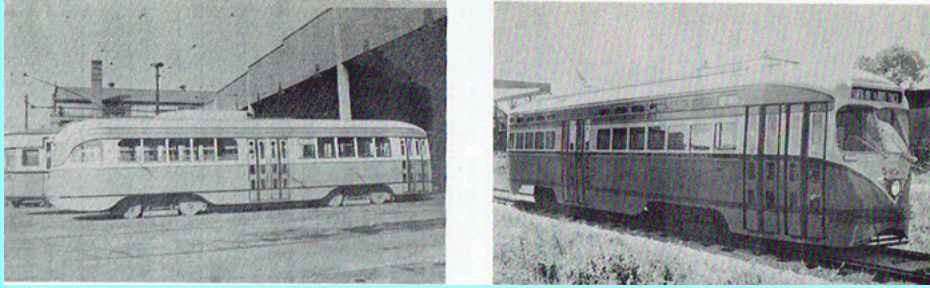
TAIWAN, CHINA - The port city of Kaohsiung in the southwestern part of the island nation of Taiwan will end free rides in November and start charging fares, the "focus taiwan" site reported September 10th. Fare collection on the C.A.F.-built Urbos trams which are wire free will start in conjunction with the opening of a new extension of what is intended to be a 13.7 mile circular line. The waterfront extension will see fares, not yet set, to be discounted by 50 percent for the first two months as an introductory benefit to encourage rider ship. The line, opened in October 2015, now has 14 stations.



Artists concept!

Louisville PCC Cars! *(They Came and Went and Almost Nobody Knew)*

When San Francisco painted ex-Philadelphia PCC car 2101 in 1994 as their 1062, they chose the livery of the Louisville Railways (LR). Almost immediately, most fans loved the paint scheme but there were few photos of these cars on the streets in Louisville. That is because they never made it out of the car barn.



These two images are from the Dr Harold E. Cox Book, " PCC Cars of North America"
The left photo shows car Pittsburgh 1253 when in Louisville for testing in October 1940.
The right photo shows one of the 15 cars to actually make it to Louisville.
However, they never were placed in service and were shipped to Cleveland.
Car 505, above right, was later Cleveland 4294 and then Toronto 4679.

In October 1940, LR had operated Pittsburgh 1253 for awhile and it convinced them to get these cars for the 4th Street line that served the famous Churchhill Downs Race Track and convert the other streetcar lines to trackless trolleys. So in January 1945, LR placed an order with Saint Louis Car Company for 25 of the latest PCC cars, all-electric with full roof monitor with three ceiling fans. But during the period of construction of the cars LR had decided to eliminate the streetcars entirely, so when the first fifteen cars were delivered to Louisville, these cars were hidden behind the barn and kept out of the public view. It is doubtful if any of them saw revenue track even for testing. All 25 cars were exchanged with Cleveland for cash and buses, and the last ten cars were shipped directly to Cleveland. All streetcar service ended in Louisville in 1947. These cars became the Cleveland 4250-4274 series for about five years. These same cars went to Toronto in 1952 where they became the 4675-4699 series where they spent most of their service lives.

More about the Louisville PCC story in future issues.

Los Angeles New Second Generation Urban Rail Transit Professionals!

At 4:48 PM on Sunday, March 31, 1963, PCC car 3002, dressed as the "Crying Trolley" rolled into its assigned place in the long line of PCC cars in Vernon Yard. The power was then turned off and the last Los Angeles streetcar had run. From that day until July 14, 1990, there would be NO rail mass transit in the city of Los Angeles for over 27 years until the Blue Line started operating between Los Angeles and Long Beach. Warren Sr. had been a motor-coach operator (*bus driver to most people...*) when the opportunity came to become one of the new breed of Los Angeles first urban rail operators.

On July 14, 1990, Warren Stockton Sr. was assigned to operate the first revenue Blue Line train out of the Long Beach yards, now known as Division 11, using cars 102 and 103. Cars 100 and 101 were the "ribbon cutting" train filled with dignitaries (shown below) that broke through the sign stretched across the tracks on Washington Boulevard that same day.



Cars 100-101 breaking the ribbon on July 14, 1990!



Warren Stockton Sr. (left) on the Blue Line first day, July 14, 1990 shown on the cover of the RTD Employee Magazine. Extreme right is the operator who would later run the first train through the ribbon shown in the first photo. Trolleyville has been unable to identify him or the gentleman behind Warren as we went to press. Behind them is Rita Malone, still at Blue Line but now a manager.



Warren Sr as an operator with P865 car 132!

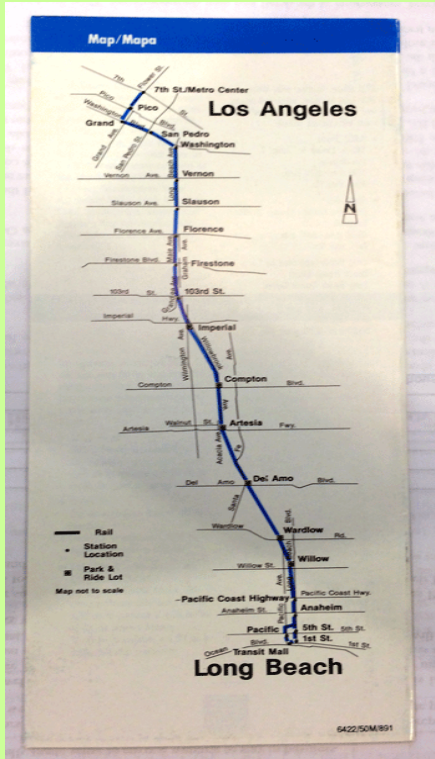


Above: Warren Sr. as a Supervisor. Warren would be both an Operator and a Supervisor on the Blue Line (Light Rail) and an Operator and Supervisor on the Red Line (Subway) before transferring to the control facility now known as the Rail Operations Center (ROC).

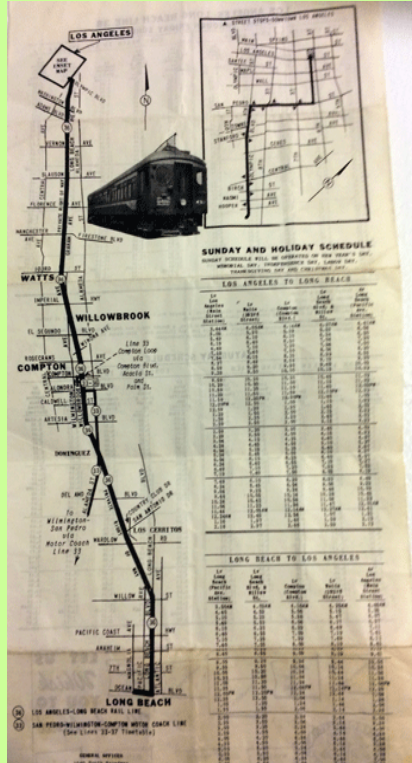
By the time Warren Sr. went to the Blue Line, he had three sons. The middle son, Warren Jr., loved trains and would accompany his Dad to work whenever he could. Despite policies that made it very hard to have young children around the yard, Warren Jr. often accompanied his father to work on the buses and the rail cars. In fact, his father would often try and sneak out to work without Warren Jr., but Warren figured out how to be ready to go and used many tricks to make sure that he got to go with his dad. This trickery included the typical tantrum that all young kids learn how to do.

Warren Sr. would operate the 54 Nippon P865 cars on the Blue Line until 1992 when he transferred to become a trainer for the Red Line, Los Angeles first subway since 1955. At this time, all rail operations were still under the management of the Southern California Rapid Transit District (RTD) which was for all intensive purposes an entrenched bus company. The forerunners of the RTD, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (LAMTA) had gone to great pains to denigrate rail transit, after their Board of Directors in made an arbitrary decision to abandon five still profit-making streetcar lines in 1963. This negative attitude toward rail transit formed the basis of the anti-rail RTD attitude. The anti-rail attitude was so bad that some employees were afraid to let anyone know that they were rail fans, model train enthusiasts or supporter of the local museum. So Warren Sr, badge #1283, was a "pioneer" in Los Angeles transit and was the beginner of the Stockton rail transit family. Fortunately, the rail lines, treated like "red-headed stepchildren" under RTD would come into their own when the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (LACMTA, MTA or Metro as commonly called) came into existence in 1993.

The Blue Line (Los Angeles to Long Beach) essentially followed the original Pacific Electric Long Beach Line that had been abandoned in 1961. Several attempts were made to save the original Pacific Electric line including taking narrow gauge PCC car 3148, borrowing standard gauge trucks from San Francisco's PCC car 1024 and operating the car on the Long Beach line with an extra long trolley pole. Many reasons, including the fact that the test was done with a single-ended car, contributed to the downfall of this idea but the basic reason is rooted in the same bone-headed idea (*get rid of the clunky obsolete trolleys*) that led to the abandonment of the five Los Angeles city trolley lines.



RTD Blue Line Route - 1990



Pacific Electric Long Beach line - 1961

In 1992, just prior to the creation of Metro, Warren Sr. had transferred to the Red Line (Los Angeles First Subway) in 1992 to become a trainer for the new operators for that line, which opened in 1993. He became one of those operators until 1995. Warren became a Supervisor in 1995 and held that position until 1998. In 1998, he transferred to the Central Control Facility (CCF), now called the Rail Operations Center (ROC) which operates similar to an airport control tower. All rails lines are currently controlled from this facility, located at the intersection of the Blue and Green Lines.

Rail Transit families were common in the streetcar days (1915 to 1965) when being a streetcar motorman (no longer called motormen for another asinine politically-correct reason) was a desired profession. The streetcar was "the thing" up to World War II. Almost everyone over 50 years old has probably has heard the "Trolley Song" by now where it was almost considered "romantic" to take your date out on the "trolley". This song was song by Judy Garland in the 1944 movie "Meet Me In Saint Louis". Dave Brubeck played the same song in jazz in 1946.

Los Angeles now is starting to have generations of rail transit families again now that rail service has been around for 27 years. Warren Jr. used to often go to work with his father when he was out of school during the summer and like many young people before him, develop a love of the trains. Warren Sr. used to try and sneak out of the house without Warren Jr. due to the hassle of 'watching' him at work. But Warren Jr. would have none of that and found ways to catch up to his Dad and would throw a tantrum if Dad would not take him along. He also learned the way the railroads conduct their affairs and brought that knowledge with him when he joined LA Metro several years ago.

Warren Stockton Jr. is currently an operator on the same Los Angeles Blue Line which runs 22 miles from Los Angeles to Long Beach. This line was the first rail connection for many communities since the Red Car quit in 1961. Some of these communities are South Los Angeles, Watts, Willowbrook, Compton, Rancho Dominguez and Long Beach itself. It also passes near other places like Vernon, Huntington Park, South Gate, Lynwood and Carson. The now famous "Watts Towers" can be seen from the Blue Line 103rd Street station. Except the the portion north of Washington Avenue and the trackage in downtown Long Beach, the line follows the right-of-way of the former Pacific Electric Long Beach line which began service in 1902.

Due to some still asinine rules, to be a rail operator, you still today must start as a "bus driver". And Warren did that but when he could go to rail, he did and after four months of training which was completed on September 12, 2011, he became an operator and began operating the same P865 cars once operated by his dad. So we had a second generation Los Angeles Urban Rail Transit Professional. I know there are many more out there, and we continue to met more of them all the time.

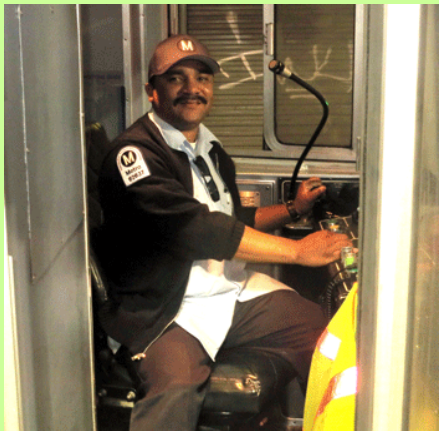
Warren reminds us of those professional trolley motormen we knew in Philadelphia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. They wore their uniforms proudly and seemed to enjoy their work. Several of them were members of transit families where their fathers and in some cases their mothers (during World War II) had been trolley operators for the privately-owned and operated Philadelphia Transportation Company (PTC). Despite the fact that orange and yellow vests must be worn by today's operators, Warren Jr. looks more professional leaving work than many current operators do when they arrive there. Like father.....like son!



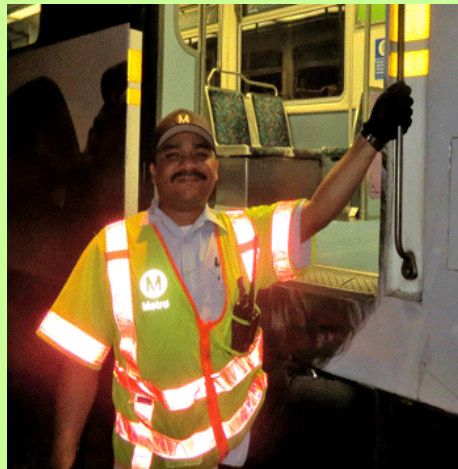
Warren Jr. and Warren Sr. Amtrak F-40 #232 and on the porch at their home in Los Angeles!

Warren Sr. passed away in March 2017 but was fondly remembered by many of the "older" members of the LA Metro! Several senior members of LA Metro attended his funeral. Meanwhile, Warren Jr. has become a key member of the Blue Line operational force, often relied upon by Division management for his knowledge and judgment!

When, beginning in June 2017, LA Metro decided to begin scrapping the worst of the 1989-1990 P865 cars, Warren Jr. was at the controls of the first such "funeral train" that dragged dead car 105 from the Division 11 yard to a tail track just north of Washington Boulevard in Los Angeles. Many Metro employees heard Warren's choked-up voice on their radios announcing the departure of car 105 on June 18. Warren was to head two more funeral trains for cars before other operators started to line up for the trips. Warren would consistently visit the tail track for the cars that he did not haul down there. As of today, cars 105, 115, 128, 129, 132, 133 and 147 have gone to the bone yard and cars 116, 122, 134 and 152 have been selected as the next victims.



Warren Stockton, Jr. at the controls of one of his three funeral trains on July 27, 2017!



Warren Stockton, Jr. visiting the tail track after P865 cars 128 and 132 had been taken there for scrapping on August 27, 2017.

More Urban Rail Happenings!

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on August 30 issued safety recommendations that call for crash-resistant inward- and outward-facing cameras to be installed in all transit agency trains.

Issued to the Federal Transit Administration and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), the recommendations call for recorders with a minimum 12-hour continuous recording capability that can verify crew actions and train operating conditions, NTSB officials said in a press release.

The board said the recorders must be easily accessible for review — with limits on public release — as part of accident investigations and as a tool to improve transit-rail safety.

"These devices, which are becoming cheaper and more reliable, are critical tools in our investigations," said NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt. "In 47 of the 64 rail transit accidents the NTSB investigated between 1976 and 2015, audio and image recorders would have greatly helped in learning what happened by documenting and preserving data describing the actions and conditions leading to an accident."



SEPTA M4 cars in accident, 2-21-17 west of 69th Street Platform!

The recommendations come as NTSB investigators are reviewing a February 21, 2017, accident in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, in which one SEPTA train collided with the rear of a second SEPTA train stopped on a loop track near the 69th Street station. The striking train was not equipped with forward-facing cameras or audio or image recorders in the cab. In the post-accident interview, the train's operator said he could not remember his actions just before the collision. The NTSB has long called for broader use of recorders as a transportation safety measure.

LOS ANGELES, CA - The unexpected closure of Los Angeles iconic Angels Flight on September 4th, four days after the funicular's grand reopening, seemed a fitting twist for a railway that has operated in fits and starts for half a century. Crowds flocked to downtown Los Angeles over Labor Day weekend, braving triple-digit heat to ride the iconic rail. But officials abruptly shut the ride down Monday morning after crews found a damaged part in the system that guides the twin cars along the steep track on Bunker Hill. The part, known as a roller, was "cracked and falling apart," said Steve DeWitt, a senior vice president at ACS Infrastructure, the majority stakeholder in the group of companies that operates Angels Flight. Before Angels Flight reopened Thursday, railway officials tested the cars more than 2,000 times without any sign of damage, DeWitt said. An initial inspection suggests the damage occurred Sunday night. "We have great confidence in the system," DeWitt said. "Mechanical things just have problems from time to time." The line was scheduled to reopen Wednesday afternoon (Sept 6) or Thursday (Sept 7).

State regulators with the Public Utilities Commission will inspect the work before service resumes, spokeswoman Constance Gordon said. Angels Flight, like other historic funiculars, is propelled by a single cable that pulls one car up the steep incline as the other car descends. Rollers are cylindrical parts that rest on the tracks and turn as the cable runs over them, smoothing the car's journey upward. The rollers are made of Teflon and were not replaced during the six-month restoration process that concluded last week, DeWitt said. The broken roller may have developed a "microscopic crack" during four years of dormancy, he said. The funicular's twin cars, Sinai and Olivet, were weighed down with more passengers than usual this weekend, DeWitt said. One of the cars likely struck the cracked roller, which had swelled in the weekend's heat, he said. Previous parts in the same location also have cracked, he said, suggesting a pattern. ACS plans to install a smaller roller, which should prevent a car from striking the part, even in extreme temperatures, he said.

For a system known as the world's shortest railway and ran for many years without serious incident, Angels Flight has a long list of relatively recent woes. The funicular opened in 1901 to carry wealthy Bunker Hill residents to downtown jobs. The iconic orange cars transported more than 100 million people by the 1950s but closed in 1969, when the homes on Bunker Hill were razed for skyscrapers. The two cars, Sinai and Olivet sat neglected in a warehouse for decades, until redevelopment authorities included funding for the funicular in the California Plaza project.

The line reopened in 1996, half a block south of its original location in a slightly shorter run. Since its reopening, 21 years ago, Angels Flight has been shut down more than half the time. In 2001, Sinai broke loose near the top of the incline and plummeted down the track, striking Olivet. The impact killed one person and injured seven others. The railway was closed for nine years following the crash. Operations were halted again briefly in 2011, and Angels Flight was shut down completely after Sinai derailed again in 2013. Federal investigators later discovered that operators had been using a tree branch to override the funicular's safety system, which had been causing unexpected stops. In March, the nonprofit that owns Angels Flight signed a deal with a group of firms, including ACS, to maintain, operate and advertise the railway, in exchange for a share of the profits. Officials have said the cost of the work and the contract's total value are confidential. The repairs included raising the height of the train's doors to prevent passengers from being flung out during a sudden stop and installing a walkway connected to the track that riders could use if they had to evacuate.



The Angels Flight Railway did reopen for passenger service around 11:30 am Thursday September 7, 2017. The Railway is open daily, seven days a week, 365 days a year, including holidays, from 6:45 in the morning until 10:00 at night. The one-way fare is \$1.00. Holders of valid Los Angeles Metro passes may ride for fifty cents. Five-ride and 40-ride discount commuter books, good for one person only and for thirty days, are available for purchase.

NEW JERSEY/NEW YORK - Progressive Railroading reported on September 29th that Members of Congress representing New York and New Jersey have introduced a bill that would require the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to mandate sleep apnea tests for commercial truckers and rail operators.

The legislation would reverse a recent decision by President Donald Trump's administration to reverse the department's proposed rule to require truck drivers and train operators to be tested for sleep apnea and, if diagnosed with the condition, receive treatment for it.

Introducing the bill in the Senate were Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.). Introducing the bill in the House were U.S. Reps. Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-N.J.) and Albio Sires (D-N.J.).



Senator Cory Booker, Democrat, New Jersey

The bill was introduced on the heels of the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) findings released last week that confirmed the engineer involved in the deadly 2016 crash of a New Jersey Transit train in Hoboken, New Jersey, was diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea after the incident but not tested during an examination two months prior. The NTSB report also confirmed that the operator of an MTA Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) train that crashed Jan. 4 at the Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn, New York, was diagnosed with sleep apnea after the incident occurred.

Although the agency has not yet ruled on the cause of the accidents — including whether the operators' sleep apnea conditions were factors — the lawmakers said they believed their legislation was necessary to help prevent fatigue-related accidents in the future. "The recent findings released by NTSB on the Hoboken and LIRR crashes underscore just how shortsighted and reckless the Trump administration's recent decision was to reverse the rule requiring sleep apnea testing and treatment," said Booker, the top-ranking Democrat on the Senate subcommittee overseeing U.S. rail infrastructure. "It's imperative that we take immediate steps to strengthen rail safety standards, and sleep apnea testing is a commonsense safety measure that could prevent crashes and save lives."

In March 2016, President Barack Obama's administration proposed a rule that would have expanded sleep apnea testing and treatment required for train operators and commercial truck drivers. Last month, the Trump administration announced the rule was withdrawn. In August, Sens. Booker, Schumer, Menendez and Gillibrand wrote to U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao to ask for the data that the USDOT relied on to make its decision to withdraw the rule, along with its plan to identify and treat rail operators and truckers diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea.

PHOENIX, AZ - Progressive Railroading reported on September 29th that the Phoenix City Council in late September approved a plan that will add a new Valley Metro light-rail station on Central Avenue in the city's downtown. The plan also calls for shifting some future light-rail platforms east between Central and First avenues. The move is aimed at creating an "easy configuration for riders to transfer from one train to another," according to a press release issued by the City of Phoenix. The changes will be implemented as part of Valley Metro's 5-mile South Central light-rail extension.



Valley Metro two-pak in downtown Phoenix!

The route, which will be funded through the Phoenix Transportation 2050 initiative, will connect downtown Phoenix to Baseline Road. "As light rail expands massively, these new platforms make our system more efficient, and maximize connectivity for passengers trying to get downtown, uptown, to the airport and eventually to south Phoenix," said Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton. For months, city staff have met with downtown stakeholders and Valley Metro to ensure the plan would address needs of drivers, pedestrians, business owners and light-rail riders.

SANTA CLARA VALLEY, CA - Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) later this week will close its Warm Springs/South Fremont Station to prepare for the opening of the Silicon Valley extension. In cooperation with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, BART will install new software at the station and test it. BART also will run test trains on the track, which is why the agency will close the station for a short time.



BART Warm Springs Station - March 2017!

The station will be closed weekends on September 23-24 and September 30 through October 1. During the closures, BART will provide bus service from the closed station to the Fremont Station. After installation and testing work is completed, BART will be ready for the new service, agency officials said in a press release. The first 10-mile phase of the Silicon Valley extension is slated to open in 2018, according to the project's website. The first phase will run from the Warm Springs station in Fremont, California, to the Berryessa District in San Jose, California. BART's Warm Springs Station opened in late March.

SEATTLE, WA - Sound Transit's board yesterday agreed to move forward with the proposed West Seattle and Ballard Link light-rail extensions, and established a \$285.9 million preliminary engineering budget for the projects, according to a September 29th report from Progressive Railroading. The extensions will bring light rail to some of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the region, Sound Transit officials said in a press release. The extensions will be funded through tax revenue generated through the Sound Transit 3 ballot initiative that local voters approved in November 2016. Sound Transit plans to bring light rail to West Seattle by 2030 and to Seattle's Ballard neighborhood by 2035. The first extension will run 4.7 miles from West Seattle to downtown Seattle; the second one will run 7.1 miles from Ballard to downtown Seattle.



This fall, the agency will initiate technical work. In early 2018, Sound Transit will kick off the community engagement process to reach consensus on a preferred alternative by early 2019. Meanwhile, the board also executed a \$24.4 million consultant contract with HNTB Corp. to begin project development services. The firm will be responsible for providing planning, engineering, operational, environmental and community outreach technical services to support the first phase of project development for the extensions. Other firms on the HNTB team include Jacobs Engineering, CH2M, EnviroIssues, Fehr & Peers, Hewitt Architects and LMN Architects.

MODELING INFORMATION.....

Arnie's Model Trains Hosts LRV Model Demonstration!

With the first of what we hope will be many more modern LRV models starting to become available as kits on Shapeways, Arnie's Model Trains hosted Custom Traxx to demonstrate some of the finished models at their store on Saturday, September 23rd all day.

Gregg Arnold, store owner and Kevin Honda, store manager have been very supportive of this effort as the very first 3D printed model of the San Diego S70 US (UltraShort) was on display at their store for an extended period in 2016 and was again on display at the store for a week prior to this Saturday operational display. It remains there as this issue goes to press!



Gram Nylen, the youngest member of the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) with his father Greg, the owner of the Barley Forge Brewing Company in Costa Mesa, CA. Behind them is the LRV Display featuring Siemens S70s as operated in San Diego and Atlanta.



The SCTC LRV Display while under testing prior to the display at Arnie's



Shown at left is the first N scale model S70, a product of Shapeways, painted by Volkmar Meier and lettered with Custom Traxx decals. This is the only N scale S70 model currently in the United States at the present time. The others are in Germany. The car is powered with two Tomytec drives and had a DCC decoder installed by Kevin Honda, Arnie's Store Manager shown in the background. The model is undergoing reliability testing using the same process done with the HO scale models.

EDITORIAL.....

Spending More Money for What?

After the SEPTA February 21 incident mentioned in the above article, they had another mishap in August on the Norristown High Speed Line where an incoming car struck one already in the station. In each of these cases, the trains were not on the main line. They were in areas like approaching a dead end station or in yard limits **totally under operator control**. So once you find out that there is no mechanical problem with the vehicle themselves, it is **obviously** operator error. While it is true that the cameras themselves have become cheaper, the labor costs to install and monitor them is **NOT** following that trend.

Many of us ride the Expo and Gold lines in Los Angeles often and allowing for the fact that Expo line operators must be familiar with four different types of cars, NipponSharyo P865 (1989-1990); Nippon Sharyo P2020 (1995); Siemens (1996) and KinkiSharyo (2014), some of their train handling skills are atrocious and a lot of the mechanical problems that these cars are exhibiting are caused by this poor train handling. Do not get me wrong, the overwhelming majority of operators are conscientious and qualified but we spend so much effort trying to upgrade or get rid of the poor ones who are protected by their so-called "union".

But since the purpose of unions is to protect their worst performers since they also pay dues, transit operators will now have to equip all of their vehicles (most have two operator cabs per vehicle so that they can watch the operators scratch themselves and blow their noses. After all that money is spent, it will not prevent any accidents, it will just give more evidence for high-priced and mostly useless lawyers to argue about. The Los Angeles Angels Flight fiasco is a great example of that!

For the first time in my railroad loving life, I have NO desire to be an operator under such total scrutiny.

Maybe we are making these jobs too easy and boring, making operators practically fall asleep at "the stick".

Maybe we should get rid of the isolated almost-hermetically-sealed operators cabs on LRVs and Subway Trains. It is too quiet and boring in there, especially at night. Remember, no one ever fell asleep operating a steam engine.....They were busy and there was noise and no air conditioning and/or smart phones!

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