

**Tour:** Overview of the Trolley Era

**Route:** Starts at the TDB Main Entrance, goes down aisle 1 towards the West side of the building and then back up aisle 2.

**Time Estimate:** 30 minutes

**Description:** This tour will utilize the collection items in the Trolley Display Building to give an overview of the Trolley Era. The tour is designed to talk about the development not only of trolleys and how they changed over time, but also how those innovations affected society.

Stop One: Just inside the Trolley Display Building main entrance (½ to 1 minute)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Set expectations and logistics for the tour (no food or drink, feel free to ask questions, photos allowed, )
- Before the tour starts:
  - As visitors gather for the tour, make small talk with them. Some questions that you might like to ask them include: How's your day been? Is this your first time visiting the museum? Where are you visiting from? How was your trolley ride today? Have you ever ridden a trolley before?
- Example Interpretation:
  - Hello, everyone! Welcome to our Trolley Display Building here at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be your guide today. We have just a few rules that I am going to ask you to follow. Please do not bring any food or drinks inside the trolleys so that we can protect them as historic artifacts. During this half-hour tour, we will not be boarding any of the trolleys, but you are welcome to explore them on your own while you are here today. Please only board the trolleys that have their doors open and their lights on. Please do not touch any of the controls of the trolleys. I would also suggest holding the hands of children while you are boarding or deboarding the streetcars. Okay, now, please follow me to the first stop just down here a bit. (move to horsecar)

Stop Two: Near the Horsecar (3 to 3 ½ minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Life before Trolley Era
  - Horsecar Basics
  - Frank Sprague
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Electricity
  - Cable Cars
  - Inclines
  - Story of the horse display
  - Specifics about routes/companies
- Example Interpretation:
  - In the early 1800's, travel was a nightmare for most people. You basically had walking or horses (with or without carriages). Does anyone remember that Oregon Trail game? How many times did you break an axle or wheel? The truth is that carriages often broke from the bumpy/uneven roads or got stuck in the mud. A man by the name of John Stephenson was inspired to put steel wheels on carriages and have them drive on smooth rails instead. This changed the transportation game in cities as people and goods could get around faster and easier. However, it did not

solve the issues faced by many - horses were expensive and messy. So almost as soon as the horsecar came about, people were trying to find a way to improve it.

- There were numerous attempts (including battery power, steam power, compressed air, and even a combustion engine) but nothing seemed to work quite right. Early on, Andrew Hallidie, from San Francisco, developed a system of powered pulleys laid underneath a track. This allowed cars to grip on to the cable to move along, and let go to slow down and brake. While successful, this system was costly and only a step in the path to a solution.
- At the same time the famous “war of the currents” was going on between Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla (backed by George Westinghouse), a man named Frank Sprague was utilizing the electrical technology from both great innovators to develop an electric powered streetcar that used a spring loaded pole to feed power from an overhead wire. He opened the first successful electric streetcar operation in Richmond, VA in 1888. The cars designed for these early systems were small like a large carriage, but soon enough cars like the next car here were developed to increase capacity. (move to 3487)

### Stop Three: Near 3487 - high-floor car (2 to 2 ½ minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Growth of trolleys / dependence on trolleys
  - Inconvenience of High-Floor Design
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Specifics about routes/companies
  - Large wheels/motors
  - Suburbs
  - Trolley Parks
  - Advertising
  - Model T - automobiles
- Example Interpretation:
  - This style of car is referred to as a “high-floor car”. If you take a look at the height of the step into the car, you can easily see where the name came from. These cars were taking over the streets in major cities during the early 1900s. This big step to board the trolley did cause some inconvenience to passengers. People wore more restrictive clothing back then, including women, who wore long skirts even during the day. This would have made it more difficult to board the trolleys, and it would have been even worse if you were elderly, a small child, or carrying your groceries or other packages. However, even that inconvenience didn’t slow down the effect streetcars were having. Where there were once large cities and rural farmland, a third type of community began to develop - the suburb. For the first time, people could live farther away from where they worked because streetcars offered a faster, easier way to get there.
  - While trolleys became essential for getting to work or school, the companies also knew they could increase their profits if they convinced people to use them for leisure activities too. Some companies began to feature service on weekends to places like parks or cemeteries (at the time, cemeteries were leisure destinations similar to how parks are today). Other companies purchased pieces of land that they could turn into their own parks - adding dance halls, pavilions, and even amusement rides. In fact, there are still four amusement parks in Pennsylvania that

were started by Trolley companies. Of course those parks have grown and changed quite a bit over the years; just like the trolley continued to do.

Stop Four: Near 3756 - this is directly across from 3487, so you just need to move yourself to the other side of the group and have them turn around (2 to 2 ½ minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Focus on ease, comfort, and efficiency
  - Adding Interurbans
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Specifics about routes/companies
  - Small wheels/motors
  - Trolley trailers
  - PN Jones
  - Advertising
  - Rolling melting pot / immigration
  - Mister Rogers
- Example Interpretation:
  - This car is an example of what came after the high-floor models. As you can see, the step to climb in was significantly lower. I bet you can guess what it was called? (\*\*Wait for someone to say low-floor... if they don't you can say it\*\*) This meant people could get on and off quicker and easier. For riders it meant ease, for trolley companies it meant more efficiency. The focus in the transit industry became efficient boarding and disembarking, efficient fare collection, and attracting customers with a comfortable ride and expanded options for service.
  - During the early 1900s, travel had become quite accessible for people going from city to city on locomotives and traveling around in a city using trolleys. However, a gap remained for those who lived in surrounding towns to get into the cities nearby. Trolley companies found a way to fill that gap by adding interurban routes. For example, our Museum lies along the original interurban line that ran between Washington, PA and Pittsburgh. This allowed people to spread out even more.
  - In fact, with so many people riding trolleys, companies of all kinds began to buy up ad space in and on the cars. Inside cars like this one (3756), you can see period-appropriate advertisements with their catchy phrases and bright colors.
  - Trolleys permeated society - becoming a place to learn about products and services but also a place to meet new people and find new places. Trolleys brought neighborhoods and even whole cities closer together.
  - No one in the Pittsburgh region has exemplified that togetherness better than Mister Fred Rogers who filmed an episode of his show here in 1983. For a lot of people, whenever they think of a trolley - Mr Rogers is what comes to mind, whether it be his wooden toy trolley from the show or the famous picture of him holding it while sitting on the steps of this car. After we finish up with the tour, I would be happy to help you recreate the image.

Stop Five: Near 94 (Shaker Heights) (2 to 2 ½ minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Transition to PCCs
  - WW2 effects
  - Decline in Trolleys
- Secondary Objective(s):

- Specifics about routes/companies
- Presidents' Conference Committee details
- Single-end v.s. Double-end
- Peter Witt door arrangement
- Women in Transit
- Minorities in Transit
- Example Interpretation:
  - The last major change to trolleys came in the 1930s. As automobiles and buses began moving through the streets more and more, it meant less and less people were riding trolleys. So, trolley companies tried to come up with something more modern. Major trolley companies banded together to form the Presidents' Conference Committee and out of it came the PCC. These cars were faster, quieter, and more comfortable. As World War Two began, things like gasoline, rubber, and metal were rationed as manufacturing military supplies became a priority. Between the new PCCs and the war, people went back to the trolleys as a major source of transportation.
  - The war also meant many men going off to fight and leaving their jobs in factories and on the trolley systems. This opened opportunities for female operators, known as motorettes, and for people of color to move from behind the scenes positions (like track crew or maintenance) to the operating force.
  - Despite the brief resurgence, after the war, trolley companies saw a sharp decline in ridership. Transit companies shifted into public ownership and started to focus on buses instead of streetcars.

Stop Six: Toledo (4 to 4 ½ minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Private / Parlor Cars
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Popular Culture
  - What happened to the cars after they stopped being trolleys
  - Riding trolleys was an occasion - people dressed up and went into town together as families
  - Trolley adventures (children riding all day, people "stealing" the cars, etc.)
  - Dangers (accidents, derailments, etc.)
- Example Interpretation:
  - This car is an example of a private car, or a parlor car, think of today's corporate jets. These cars were owned by the private trolley companies or their top executives and were used for meetings and to ride the line for inspections. The cars were never available to the general public and often had more comfortable amenities. For example, this car has a small kitchen and a bathroom. After the car was taken out of service, it had a second life as a cabin.
  - In reality, that is what happened to a lot of trolleys that are still around today. As the trolley era came to an end, the majority of cars were scrapped, burned, and recycled. Not all, but many of the ones that were saved, were turned into something else. For example, 739, which is across the aisle there, was someone's home. But why would people want to save them?
  - Despite no longer being a popular source of transit, trolleys captured the hearts and minds of people all over the world. Movies like *Meet Me in St. Louis* and plays like *A Streetcar Named Desire* came out in the 1940s after streetcars had already

started to disappear from cityscapes. Even Mr. Rogers, who we talked about before, started his show in 1968, when only a handful of US cities still had trolley lines.

Stop Seven: Near 07 (Freight) (1 ½ to 2 minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Moved more than people
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Specifics about routes/companies
  - Example of freight service (specifics about goods - i.e. produce, refrigerated cars, ordering from stores)
- Example Interpretation:
  - This car is another example of a special car. Recently restored, this is an example of a freight trolley. As companies grew and found ways to improve their passenger cars, they also realized they could increase their profits by providing other services. By adding freight cars or combine cars (combination of freight and passenger), companies not only increase their bottom line but they improved the lives of their patrons. People living in cities suddenly had better access to fresh produce, allowing farmers to expand their customer base.
  - Additionally, department stores could offer remote-ordering. Sounds awfully modern, doesn't it? Someone could call into the store and ask them to send their purchases to the nearest trolley stop without having to go into town. In fact, if you called early enough in the day, you might even get your items the same afternoon - that's better than Amazon!

Stop Eight: Near 606 (1 to 1 ½ minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Modern transit systems
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Almond Joy nickname
  - Light Rail v.s Heavy Rail
  - Modern transit (rapid / high-level)
  - Specifics about routes/companies
- Example Interpretation:
  - Now this car is one that we often hear people say they recognize because it is the one that most closely resembles a modern public transit car. While the trolley era died out and rails were ripped out or covered up almost everywhere by the 1960s and 70s, the population continued to grow and cities became increasingly congested with traffic. For many city planners and government officials, the solution to this problem was public transit systems. Cities around the country have installed modern rail systems, for example "The T" in Pittsburgh, and SEPTA in Philadelphia. Many cities have moved their transit systems underground into subways. But the historic trolleys are also making their way back as not only public transit options, but as tourist attractions. Cities like New Orleans and San Francisco often attract tourists hoping to ride the streetcar named desire or a famous San Francisco cable car.

Stop Nine: Near Work Cars (1 to 1 ½ minutes)

- Primary Objective(s):

- Work cars
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Point out specific function of some of the work cars
- Example Interpretation:
  - Up this aisle you will see a sampling of our maintenance cars. Trolley companies not only had to build and maintain their trolleys, they also had to build and maintain their tracks. Maintenance equipment kept the line running reliably and economically.
  - For example, the closest car here, 3618, is a dump car. It carried ballast, the gravel bed that stabilizes the tracks, and could dump it out as it moved along the tracks. This one is unique in that most dump cars were built to dump out of the side but this one has the ability to dump underneath itself.
  - Now, if you will please follow me right over here, we can wrap up.

Stop Ten: Wherever you would like to conclude

- Primary Objective(s):
  - Conclusion
  - What can you do now?
- Secondary Objective(s):
  - Future of transit (do you drive a car?)
  - How to help the Museum (volunteer, donate, etc)
- Example Interpretation:
  - When you look at the Trolley Era overall, it is quite impressive that the streetcar was able to adapt and survive through not one, but two world wars, and the Great Depression. It also took a new technology, electricity, and turned it into something that made people's lives easier and more exciting. For some people, riding on a trolley may have been their first or only interactions with electricity - lights, heat, the power to the electric motors - it would have been really thrilling for people.
  - In fact, trolleys can be said to be the forerunner of the green-energy movement in transit. Today, companies race to build electric powered vehicles and cities install electric mass transit systems - some along the same lines where they tore out trolley tracks. Bus companies are even striving to create successful electric buses to replace the gasoline powered ones that pushed trolleys aside.
  - Despite the relative brevity of the trolley era, the innovations that came from the early days of the transit industry have informed not only modern transit systems, but many areas of society. For almost a century, trolleys adapted and served as a great unifier. They helped to make the world more accessible and introduced people to new people, places, and ideas.
  - That concludes the guided tour. You are welcome to explore the Trolley Display Building more on your own, you may go into the cars that are open and accessible - please do not try to go in any of the other cars. Also, while inside the cars, for your safety and for the safety of our artifacts, please do not touch any of the controls, including the bells, horns, and anything in the operator areas.
  - Please also make sure that you leave time to ride the trolley(s), explore the exhibits in our Welcome and Education Center, visit Wexford Station, and all of the other great options we have for you here.
  - On behalf of the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum, we thank you so much for coming to visit us. If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them and I will be sticking around in the building here.