



# TWO BELLS

The occasional newsletter of the  
Operations Department of the  
Pennsylvania Trolley Museum

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<https://patrolley.org/ptm-operations/>

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Fair Week



2023 Fair  
L Gula photo

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History that connects us.

# Executive Director's Update

By Scott R. Becker, Executive Director/CEO

August means Trolley to the Fair, one of the busiest times of the year with over 8,500 people riding to the Fair in 2023! This year this popular event runs August 10-17 and with our new Welcome & Education Center on-line, quite a few improvements have occurred. Thanks to sponsorship by Coen, we are pleased to announce that we are offering regular admission to the Museum for only \$5 for Fair Week, a saving of \$15! Admission includes the full Museum experience featuring exhibits, a film on Pittsburgh trolleys and guided tours of our streetcar collection in the Trolley Display Building. The Museum will be open 10:00AM-4:00PM each day and extended hours on Monday August 12 from 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM.



August 13, 2023 Scott Becker photo

Trolley to the Fair hours will be 10:00 AM – 11:00 PM and visitors will have the option to park at three lots: The Eaton Lot at 2800 N. Main Street, The East Campus at 1 Electric Way and our West Campus lot at 1 Museum Road. To take full advantage of our lot at 1 Electric Way, a new trolley stop is being added at the WEST



Kevin and volunteers install wire for lights at Ellis Stop 7-15-24. Scott Becker photo

end of the Eaton parking lot adjacent to Redman Wye. This new stop is being called Ellis Stop in honor of Arthur S. Ellis, Sr., our oldest member and longest serving volunteer! This new stop will replace the McClane Stop and will speed trolley service since cars will not need to travel from Redman to McClane Loop, saving time. A special ceremony honoring Art and the new Ellis Stop will be held this Friday afternoon August 9 followed by a picnic at the West Campus. Cars will be leaving the West Campus at 4:30 to go to the Ceremony.

With our operation going from two lots to three lots, volunteers are needed to sell tickets at these locations and Fairgrounds Stop.

If you are available, please contact Morgan Meer at [mmeer@patrolley.org](mailto:mmeer@patrolley.org)

Thank you for making the 2024 season such a great success!



Laura Wells operates auger while Kevin Zebley assists with fence post installation at Ellis Stop  
7-16-24 Scott Becker photo



Fence post installation at Ellis Stop  
7-16-24 Scott Becker photo



Ellis Stop  
8-1-24 Scott Becker photos

## Reminders for TDB Volunteers

Morgan Meer

Hi, volunteers! Thank you to everyone who's been volunteering in the Trolley Display Building lately! This summer has been super busy, and I'm grateful for your help in making sure our visitors have a good time. We're always looking for more TDB volunteers, so if you are interested in giving tours or greeting, please let me know!

Here's a reminder of how you should greet visitors to the TDB:

**Welcome them!** Say hello, introduce yourself, and say "Welcome to our Trolley Display Building!" Ask if they've visited before. If they have, tell them "welcome back." If they haven't, make sure they know you're glad they're here.

**Offer them a tour.** Museum guides should offer visitors a tour or mention the start time of the next scheduled tour. We'll soon be resuming scheduled tours that are announced over the speaker system. For now, the museum staff member on duty will let you know when you arrive if we'll be doing scheduled tours that day. Even on days with scheduled tours, you are welcome to offer spontaneous tours to visitors in between the scheduled ones.

Also let visitors know that they can explore the building on their own and find you if they have any questions.

**Inform them of the rules.** Ask that the visitors please:

Only board the trolleys that have their lights on and their doors open.

Use caution boarding and deboarding trolleys.

Do not touch the controls in the trolleys.

Keep food and drink off the trolley.

Make sure their children stay within their sight.

**Tell them to enjoy their visit!**

Please make sure to go through this list when greeting! Please also remember to take a walk around the TDB every so often to see if things are alright and if anyone has any questions. On these laps, you can also check that the open trolleys still have their controls roped off. Extra ropes can be found in a cardboard box near the side door that leads out to Falconi Plaza (the fountain). Additionally, please refrain from using your phone while you are around visitors.

For more tips for guiding and greeting, check out our Visitor Services Training Manual at [patrolley.org/training-resources](https://patrolley.org/training-resources) (password: Westpenn832). This page also has lots of great resources for learning more about trolley history.

Thanks and see you all soon!

**Lucky the Motorman**  
Episode Three- M551 Gives the Finger  
Brett Freithaler

Fedora stared into his sandwich trying to shut out outside world. Into his ear, Coffee was rattling on about a new engine at his fire department in a whirlwind of caffeinated descriptors. Fedora wasn't really listening. He made the mistake of asking about the engine expecting an answer such as "a red truck with a ladder." That was a cup of mac n' cheese and seven inches of sandwich ago. Just then the radio keyed up, "M551 to dispatch."

"Dispatch here," replied Fedora.

"This is M551. I'm at Enterprise wye eastbound and my pole came off the wire. The rope is too high. I can't get it down."

A tear came to Fedora's eye as he took one last savory bite of pastrami and provolone cheese, realizing that he now had an opportunity to escape. "I'll be down," he said.

As Fedora stepped out of his office to start the trudge down toward the TDB to look for a hot stick, Coffee started to follow him. "Hey, Enterprise is the other way." He was not about to allow Coffee to tag along for this one.

"Hey Coffee, would you be so kind as to fetch G. Rees for me?" George Rees was one of the guys in car maintenance. He should be able to help if even to rid Fedora of Coffee for a few minutes so he could have a clear mind.

It took several minutes for Fedora to find the hot stick in the TDB as it got moved the last time the TDB was decorated. He found it under the first car on thirty-two along with a pen, a guitar pick and his last pair of sunglasses. "I've been looking everywhere for these," he thought.

As he walked down past the pump station and toward the wye, he was starting to see the carnage. M551 had its pole up in the air like a common hand gesture. Its motorman, Bob Lucky, who had been asked to move the car from the shop to the TDB yard in preparation for a parade later that day, was sitting on the shaded side of the cab waiting patiently.

"Woah, that's a long stick," remarked Lucky as Fedora drew near

"It gets longer, check it out," replied Fedora as he reached for the first telescoping joint.

“That’s got to be the longest stick in this whole museum.”

“Quite possibly.”

Just then a truck came down the busway and G. Rees stepped out and turned to Fedora. “Wow,” he said seeing the hot stick, his eyes widening. “I’m glad the pole doesn’t look bent.”

“Yeah.” “I thought somebody was going to have to go on the roof.”

“Hopefully not with this,” Fedora said nodding to the hot stick.

“Do you think you can handle that thing yourself?” Lucky chuckled. “Shut up, Bob,” cracked Fedora. With that comment, he extended the second telescoping joint and got the hook around pole. As soon as he started to pull it down, the hook started sliding rapidly toward harp. After a slur of four letter words, the hook caught the harp. He maneuvered the pole down between the span wires and got it hooked.

“Hey Fedora, where’s the rope?” Lucky laughed. The rope, when the pole whipped it into the sky, had wrapped itself around the pole like the red stripe on a candy cane. Annoyed, Fedora foisted the hot stick into Lucky’s hands, who almost immediately dropped it not realizing how top heavy it was when fully extended.

“Here, wiseguy. You get the rope.” It was now Fedora’s turn to laugh as Lucky tried to untie the rope with the hot stick unsuccessfully.

“You guys are killing me,” said G. Rees as he climbed onto the end of the bed, reached up, grabbed the rope, tossed it over the pole a few times then walked it back toward the middle of the car completely untangled. After that was a pregnant pause during which Fedora and Lucky stared at G. Rees awkwardly.

“That works too,” said Lucky eventually.

“Oh shoot, here comes the interurban. We better scatter. Thanks for the help, G. Rees. Hey Bob, I’ll be your rope catcher up to the yard where I need to put the stick back. When you’re ready let’s roll.”

Hot sticks are located near the door by the track 11 and 32 in Founders Carhouse and the TDB. They are yellow with a red hook on the end. They have two telescoping joints that twist to tighten or release. These sticks insulate so they can be used when the overhead is live to recover a pole that for any reason cannot be lowered with the usual rope.

#### Tips:

Plan ahead. Make sure there is not span wire between you and the pole or you’ll get caught on it halfway down.

Hook the pole near the harp. This offers the best leverage and the hook will want to slide to the harp as the pole approaches horizontal.

## Elevated Railways - A Brief Look Back

Dennis F. Cramer

We are fortunate at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum to have an outstanding collection representing an era longer than you may have surmised. I must emphasize that our history is not about equipment, it is about people and how the interaction of people and technology changed the world. There are two major items in the Trolley Display Building that help us take our history back before the electric trolley age to the very beginnings of urban transit.

As a relatively new nation in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800's), the population was based mainly along the east coast. As the cities of New York, Philadelphia and Boston vied for commerce those same cities started attracting more people. John Moore incorporated America's first street railway, the New York & Harlem which began transporting passengers in 1832 with horse drawn cars on iron rails. By the end of the 1850's there were street railway systems (horse or mule powered) in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Chicago and New Orleans.



TIN PAN ALLEY

Metropolitan Elevated Railroad Company  
Sixth Avenue Line at 28th Street Station, Manhattan  
New York Public Library b13668355-482727

These systems were a tremendous improvement. It got folks out of the mud. However, there was a problem. The unforeseen impact of the Second Industrial Revolution on our cities and towns created unbridled growth with all of the ensuing chaos, crowds, language barriers and delays. The street railways were not the answer in the very largest cities, the answer lay either above or below street level. By 1863, London had opened the world's first subway. Things took a little longer over here, notwithstanding the number of various systems inventors tried, usually unsuccessfully to market to city com-

missions. After much trial and error, ideas were improved upon and by 1873, the New York Elevated Railway Company began operating with small steam locomotives pulling a short train of cars above the streets. By the late 1870's the Metropolitan Elevated Railroad Company had joined the race and soon elevated railroads were making their way north along 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

Now just image for a second living in New York a mere 150 years ago and having steam locomotives trundling past your open-windowed, un-airconditioned apartment on the third floor of a tenement house. Better yet, have the store front underneath where the ashes from the firebox rain down on your customers as the overhead passes.

The elevated structures of both companies were marvels of nineteenth-century engineering and architecture. This was not a dull colored world. One would see claret red, bright green, gold trim, pea green and more on elevated stations and cars. Platforms in stations were elevated to expediate passenger movements. As New York grew, so did the elevateds, reaching into Brooklyn and north into the Bronx at Pelham Street.



SEPTA Market-Frankford Line The "L"  
52nd & Market Street, Philadelphia  
2016 D Cramer photo



Chicago Transit Authority  
"L" Green Line  
2010 D Cramer photo



SEPTA Market-Frankford Line The "L"  
North Front Street & Girard Avenue, Philadelphia  
2016 D Cramer photo

Before long, Kansas City, Sioux City and Chicago all had steam powered overheads. Times were changing. After some not so successful attempts to electrify the overheads, Frank Sprague experimented in 1886 on the Manhattan Railway and subsequently developed the wheel barrow concept of attaching a motor to the axle while working on the elevated. This would lead to his street railway successes in his near future. The first full-scale electric elevated was the line to the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago.

Meanwhile back east; New York ran the last steam powered elevated in 1903, while electric elevateds opened in Boston (1901) and Philadelphia (1907). The Market-Frankford line in Philadelphia was the last new electric elevated railway system built in America. Improvements in subway technology signaled the end of an era. The New York City Subway opened the same year.

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The end was not as bad as one might think. In New York, the elevateds continued on until a massive cutback in 1942 with the last train running in 1955. In 2024, elevated railways still play a vital role in both Philadelphia, Chicago and to a certain extent, New York City. It is difficult to explain the experience of riding in an el train and the view of cities from an entirely different perspective. Or better yet, walking under an elevated especially in Chicago. You owe it to yourself to experience these 19<sup>th</sup> century wonders still doing their job in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Whether leading a tour past the horse car or the Market-Frankford Line car (no, it is not that old, but the system is), make sure to paint a vivid picture of people whose lives were changing faster than they ever had in the past. We are privileged to have artifacts, but they don't tell the entire story. That is up to us.

Metropolitan Railways - Rapid Transit in America, William D. Middleton  
Indiana University Press 2003

The "L" - The Development of Chicago's Rapid Transit System, 1888-1932,  
Bruce G. Moffat Central Electric Railfan's Association Bulletin 131, 1995

The Road from Upper Darby, The Story of the Market Street Subway-Elevated  
Harold E. Cox 1967

Trolley: The Cars That Built Our Cities, Transit Gloria Mundi 1991 (video)

SEPTA Market-Frankford Line

12.9 miles in length double track,  
about half above ground and half below.

Known as the "L" in Philadelphia

This line is the busiest in the Commonwealth. It carries more passengers in a 250 day work year than the entire Pittsburgh Regional Transit system of buses, light-rail and incline does in an entire calendar year.

D Cramer-Editor & Publisher since 2008