



# TWO BELLS

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

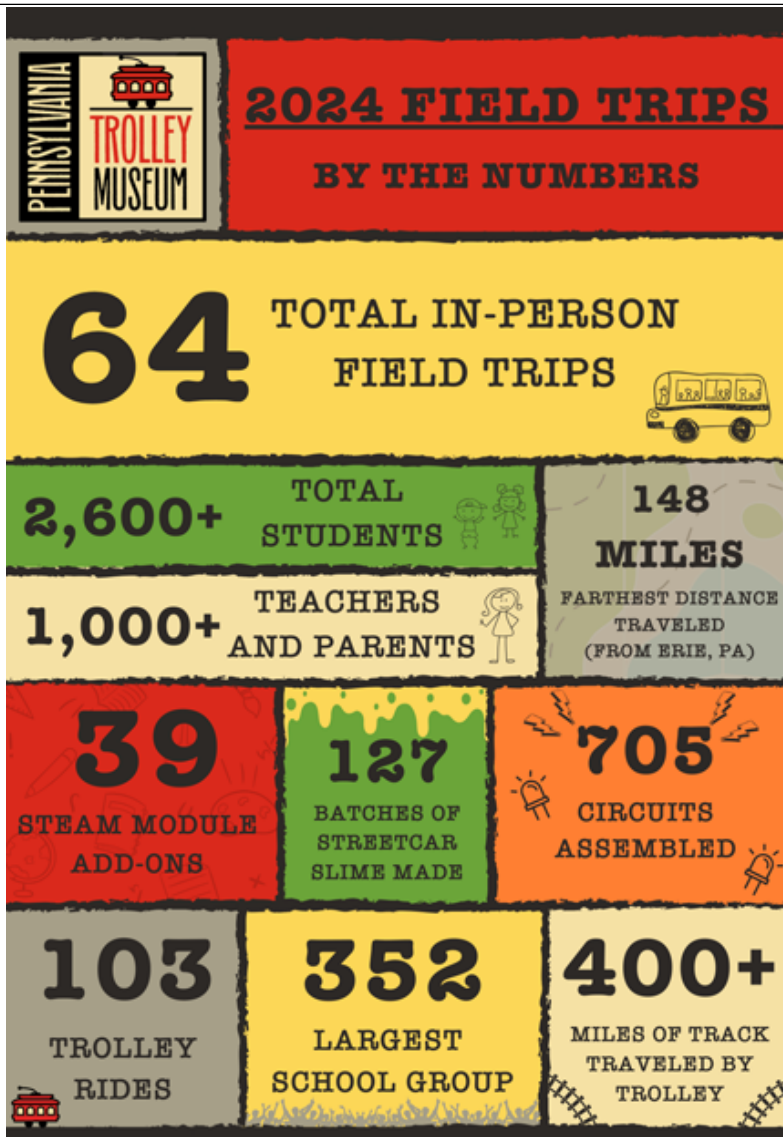
February 2025

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

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## A New Year!

By Scott R. Becker, Executive Director & CEO

Thanks to all of you that worked so hard to allow us to have a successful 2024, our 70<sup>th</sup> in Washington County! We welcomed over 48,000 visitors, a 26% increase over the 38,000 visitors we had in 2023!

As we begin a new season there is a lot to look forward to! February is Free Kids Month thanks to a generous sponsorship from Alex Paris Contracting. In addition to our major events, we have Sensory Friendly hours on select days such as this Sunday Feb 9 10AM-1:00 PM and new events such as Teddy Bear Trolley Feb 14-15 and Trolley Tots Feb 20. Returning events are Vintage Communications Weekend March 15-16 and our very popular Bunny Trolley April 11-13 and 18-19. We have had a number of school groups as well so there are many opportunities to volunteer during this time of year!

This week we took delivery of 5 new interactive exhibits from the Carnegie Science Center: Track Switching, Bearing Comparison, Self-Centering Wheel, Track Switching and Trolley Signals. Two more exhibits will be delivered later this month bringing us to 15 interactive exhibits in the Welcome & Education Center!

Despite the cold weather, our restoration and maintenance shop have been busy working through the winter. Please see the attached photos.

If you know of anyone that may be interested in volunteering, we have a Volunteer Open House on Saturday March 8<sup>th</sup>. Also, that day is a Memorial Luncheon to remember long time volunteer Dave Hamley from Noon-2:00 PM. Just a reminder that operator requalification is March 25, 26, 29, and 30 and all operators must sign up for a day on the ops schedule. New Ops Training is April 5-6 if you know of anyone who might be interested. To find out more about the open house, register for the Dave Hamley Memorial Luncheon, requalification or new operator training, please contact Morgan Meer at [mmeer@patrolley.org](mailto:mmeer@patrolley.org)

After almost 32 years as Executive Director, I will be retiring on May 31, 2025, and will be succeeded by Jeanine DeBor, the current Deputy Executive Director, on June 1st. Jeanine has done a great job overseeing fund raising and marketing and her background makes her a great fit to guide the Museum into the future! I plan to volunteer in various ways and will continue to chair the Collections Management Committee and will be chairing a new Advisory Committee made up of people from the community to help PTM continue to grow. I want to sincerely thank everyone here who has helped me during my tenure as Executive Director!

Thanks for all you do for the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum!



Gary leads a signaling class during Junior Conductor Days Jan 12, 2025. Scott Becker photo



The toy train layout was up through January. Scott Becker photo



PTM had display tables at Carnegie Science Center's Locomotion Weekend Jan 18-19, 2025. Scott Becker photo



Jocelyn & Tim at Carnegie Science Center's Locomotion Weekend Jan 18-19, 2025. Scott Becker photo

# Shop Volunteer Wednesdays February 5, 2025



Bill Fronczek works on a corner seat frame for MWP 274.  
Scott Becker photo



Tim and Roy work overhaul a PCC pole base.  
Scott Becker photo



Lee repairs bell ringer for PAT Transit 1713 aka The Terrible Trolley.  
Scott Becker photo

## Lucky the Motorman

Episode Six - Frozen Solid  
Brett Freithaler

When Bob Lucky walked into the carhouse that morning, he was greeted by Coffee and Doughnuts who were huddled quietly at a table sharing a pot of coffee. This was par for the course for Duncan Doughnuts, but Lucky had never seen Coffee sit still before.

“Hey guys, did you start the cars yet?” Lucky asked.

“I already tried. It’s cold out there. Knock yourself out,” replied Coffee. It was quite cold that morning, less than 10 degrees.

“Are you feeling okay, Coffee?”

“I slept in the caboose last night.” There were so many things Lucky wanted to say, but as each approached his tongue, the censors deleted them for the safety of the operation. Instead he stared blankly at Coffee for about five seconds before he turned away.

When Lucky switched on the lights in the carhouse, the first thing he saw was his breath. Earlier, on his way into the building, he noticed that track 13 was blocked by a sheet of ice that covered the track completely, thus blocking in every car on that track. 14 was on the front of track 12. Nobody had put heaters out so each car was frozen solid. Lucky had had trouble starting 14 in the past when it was this cold and was not eager to try it this morning. He walked over to track 11 and found 4145 at the door with 66 behind it.

“We have our winners!” thought Lucky as he put up the poles. Both of these cars have relatively simple air systems which reduces the likelihood of a valve freezing, crippling the car. He winced as he turned on each air compressor praying that the caramel-like oil inside would not be so viscous as to stall the motor and blow the fuse. Both cars, to Lucky’s delight, started chugging away, slowly at first, but gradually faster as the oil started to warm up. His fingers now numb, he decided to go back inside to warm up.

“I got 4145 and 66 to start, so how does 66 on the interurban and 4145 on the city sound?” Lucky asked Coffee and Doughnuts as he reentered the old Event’s Room.

“Cold,” replied Coffee. “Have you gotten a brake release?”

“I haven’t tried to move them. They’re still pumping up. I’ll go move them outside and turn the heaters on in a minute. I’m going to need one of you to help me back out 4145.”

“So cold,” replied Coffee.

“You young bucks are so soft,” said Doughnuts, forgetting that Coffee had essentially just spent the night in a steel tent. “I’ll help you.” He then proceeded to get up and walk slowly out of the room.

Lucky regained feeling in his fingers then went back out into the cold barn. When he got out to 4145, Doughnuts was not yet there. He opened the barn doors, boarded the car then waited. After a minute, Doughnuts appeared wearing the feathers of a thousand chickens, boarded the rear platform and rang the bell three times. Lucky rang his bell, released the brake, pulled first point, and heard a thud.

“Hmm,” said Lucky. He pulled first point again.

“(\*Thud)... click Pop!” said 4145 as Lucky shut off the power a second time. Lucky was no mechanic, but he was about 99% certain that his brakes were not releasing. He could hear the air releasing, but could not hear the shoes coming off the wheels.

“Hey Duncan, I think our brakes froze to the wheels!” laughed Lucky. “Rocking it should work, right?”

“No clue, try it.” replied Doughnuts.

Lucky had a couple feet of room in front of him. He threw the reverser and pulled a point forward, threw it again backwards, forwards, and this time on backwards, the car’s brakes started to relent and 4145 gave a moan as she started backing out of the barn. At the first switch, Doughnuts gave a stop signal, and got out and threw the 11/13 switch by hand. They went out to County Home then parked at Richfol. Lucky got out to tell Coffee that he got a brake release, but as he put his hand on the doorknob, he heard a bell, a groan, and 66 appeared at the door.

“He just waited inside where it was warm until he heard us get our car moving and pull out. I’m going to have to remember that one,” thought Lucky to himself as he walked back to 4145 to do his on-road.

#### Takeaways:

- Extreme cold can cripple an air system. The warmer and dryer the air system is, the better off a car will be. Simpler cars have fewer parts that can fail the car.
- The brakes can physically freeze in place depending on how cold it was when last parked. This is what happened to Lucky.
- Simple electric space heaters can thaw a car or keep it from freezing. The car doesn’t have to be 70 degrees to function, just not frozen.
- If track 13 is covered in a blanket of ice, it needs to be chipped out before a car can go around the curve without derailing. It is usually easier to use a car off 11 or 12.
- Don’t trust the switches, particularly the tongue and mate switches, until you have thrown them by hand. If you trail a frozen switch, you risk derailment.