



San Diego Electric  
 Railway Ass'n  
 PO Box 89068  
 San Diego, CA  
 92138  
 (619) 699-8990

April 2004

NATIONAL CITY DEPOT IS  
 OFF I-5 AND MILE OF CARS  
 WAY—TAKE BAY MARINA  
 DRIVE WEST TO MARINA  
 WAY, THEN RIGHT. OPEN  
 SAT. & SUN, 12-4 PM.

## Vienna Trolleys Get Checked by an Expert; Tucson's Pueblo Trolleys Running

Two of San Diego's 3 Vienna streetcars can be made to run, with the 3rd useful for parts. Following a detailed inspection, Tucson trolley expert Eric Sitiko outlined the work required and probable costs for getting the cars up and running.



**Vienna Car 6890, one of three in the Downtown trolley yard, waiting to be moved and renovated.**

Sitiko, of Old Pueblo Trolley Museum in Tucson, inspected the three historic Austrian cars on Track 8 at the SD Trolley shops. He is currently the principal restoration chief and major mechanic of the up-and-running historic Tucson trolley line. SDERA President Jim

Price, who visited the Tucson group in February, noted: "Old Pueblo has been in existence since the mid 1980s. They have fully restored two cars, one originally from Japan, one from Belgium."

For more on Tucson's Trolleys, see page 2.



## SDERA Gets Congress of History Award

SDERA members got a pleasant surprise from the University Heights Historical Society, at the March 6th meeting of the Congress of History. Citing

the Electric Railway Association's efforts to highlight the role of trolleys in the growth of San Diego, the Historical Society pre-

sented their Award of Merit to SDERA representatives. Text of the nomination letter can be found on page 2.

### Inside this issue:

*SDERA nominated for Historical Society award* 2

*Carrizo Gorge Rail Route open and ready* 2

*Farebox bells ring for Tucson Vintage Trolleys* 2

*The PREZ sez : "We want YOU!!!!"* 3

*Coming events you won't want to miss* 3

*Thanks to those Depot Docents of year 2003...* 3

*Big plans mean a huge bottom line for SDERA* 4

### San Diego Electric Railway Association

- **Jim Price**, President
- **Mike Reading**, Vice Pres.
- **Tom Matson**, Secretary
- **Richard Hamilton**, Treasurer
- **Directors:** Paul Pakus  
Gary Johnson  
Gene Calman
- **Chris Higgins**, webmaster
- **George Geyer**, bookstore
- **Chuck Bencik**, newsletter editor



# Text of Historical Society's Nomination letter for Award of Merit To SDERA

"Dear Committee Members:

The University Heights Historical Society would like to nominate the San Diego Electric Railway Association for the Award of Merit. The organization has been an important influence in emphasizing the continuing impact of the trolley's influence in San Diego's development, growth, and population expansion. They have continually educated and spread information relating to San Diego's transit history. They have also been successful in establishing a museum in National City.

"The organization is an all-volunteer staff. They participated in the University Heights 1999 50th anniversary of the last trolley entering the Trolley Barn in 1949, in what is now Trolley Barn Park. They recently appeared at the Historical Resources Board advocating the historic designation of the Coronado Beltway Railway. They were also involved in the opening events for the new trolley extension to the Stadium.

"Our Historical Society feels that the San Diego Electric Railway Association has not been given adequate recognition for its contributions to what has been

one of the most important elements in San Diego history. Their continuing support in compiling and maintaining archives on the history of the San Diego Trolley system has been a force in the enrichment of local history.

"A copy of their page from the director of San Diego County Historical Resources is enclosed for your information. The contact person at their organization is [currently Jim Price].

"Thank you for your consideration of this nomination.

Sincerely, Ernestine Bonn, Board Member"



Feb. 3, 2004 University Heights Historical Society Letter to Congress of History Award Committee

## Light at the end of the tunnels: Carrizo Gorge Desert Route opens; Trains run daily to Mexico

After 20 years and endless setbacks, and with Union Pacific aid, Carrizo Gorge Railway has finished reopening the line from Tijuana to Plaster City.

VP Mike Reading, engineer for the Line, reports that 89' flat cars, and Union Pacific auto racks can now run thru.

Currently the line runs one train each way in Mexico. Future runs will number 4 or 5 runs a day.

The timber lining in Tunnel

2 in Mexico was replaced with steel, after fire damage. Digging out Tunnel 7 started 6 months ago. It had had landslide problems ever since it was built. Blocked tunnels 3, 8 and 16 were reopened,

Passenger operations are still "up in the air." Goat Canyon Trestle was fire-damaged in 1983; 2 or 3 vertical posts and cross members need replacing.

Section crews with shovels dug 1000' of track out from under 8 feet of windblown sand,

and will run hopper loads of the high-quality stuff to the coast, where sure markets for beach renewal create a big opportunity. Measurements show tracks in half the tunnels must be dug out and lowered to accommodate double stacks and auto carriers.

Crews fixed tunnel 3, near Mexico, which collapsed in 1994 due to fire.



CZRY loco [ex-C&NW 4324] inside tunnel #8 west portal

*"Our Historical Society feels that the San Diego Electric Railway Association has not been given adequate recognition... Their continuing support in compiling and maintaining archives on the history of the San Diego Trolley system has been a force in the enrichment of local history."*

## Tucson's Vintage Trolleys are winners at fare box and cash register for 4th Avenue merchants

On the historic Old Pueblo Trolley line, weekend shoppers take a nostalgic trip that rings up \$26,000 a year at the fare box. Rolling stock also includes a 1936 Belgian car from Brussels, a Japanese car, and a Toronto PCC. Their collection includes a 1912 Los Angeles Railway car, and a 1925 Lisbon tram which are both being restored.

Old Pueblo Trolley [OPT] is comprised of Museum, Street

Railway, Operations, Maintenance, Track Work, Administrative and Bus divisions. OPT collects, restores and operates 10 motor busses of various vintages and makes.

All track on University Blvd. was put in by volunteers. Costs ran \$300,000 for 3 blocks of turnaround track. Chief Mechanic Eric Sitiko attributes motivated donors and the arrival of long awaited community support. Results were long in coming, but now seem worth the efforts.



Old Pueblo Trolley's Belgian tram runs from University of Arizona (Tucson) main gate, on University and 4th Avenues, along a picturesque shopping district.



## NOTES FROM THE PREZ — Jim Price

First, let me introduce **the new editor for our newsletter: Chuck Bencik**. Chuck brings a wealth of experience to this post, having been Maritime Museum Librarian for 5 years and editor of their quarterly journal. As you can see from the appearance of this newsletter, he's off to a good start!

As reported elsewhere, we (SDERA) were presented with a very prestigious **award at the recent Congress of History meeting**. We are very grateful to the University Heights Historical Society for nominating us!

Your Board of Directors is pressing ahead in a number of areas. We are **actively pursuing the acquisition of an historic streetcar**, or at least something that will run on rails. As noted in this newsletter we recently **hosted Eric Sitiko** from Old Pueblo Trolley in Tucson to in-

spect the **Vienna streetcars** that sit in the San Diego Trolley yard and provide us with an in-depth report on their condition. We are increasing our visibility and outreach within National City and the railroad community. We will have our **VW "trolley on wheels" ready for public shows very soon**. There are **very interesting speakers lined up** for the next few months – see the list in this newsletter.

**We still need your help** in many areas, **especially with being docents at the depot**. If you can spare a few hours a month, please contact me, Jim Price, at 619-286-3255 or Tom Matson at 619-275-0216.

We have an ever-expanding base of participation in making this organization grow. For example, we all owe a big 'thank you' to **Chris Higgins** for the totally revitalized web site. **Tom**

**Matson and Richard Hamilton** have devoted huge amounts of time recently to our day-to-day operations as well as planning for the future. **Gene Calman** is spearheading the restoration of the VW trolley-on-wheels. **Art Jones** has provided assistance in the acquisition of a new television. And now **Chuck Bencik** is creating a great newsletter. Many others are contributing in other ways – but believe me, there is still much more to be done. If you've ever wanted to contribute to the future of SDERA, the time is now!

The National City Depot is at the corner of Bay Marina Drive and Marina Way, in National City.



Depot is open every Saturday and Sunday, 12–4 PM. The Depot phone is 619 474-4400

## Upcoming Events

### Membership meetings, NC Depot, 7:30 p.m. :

**April 10** – Paul Desrochers, recently retired head of the National City Community Development Commission discusses the **Depot restoration and area planned developments**. Paul got the funding for and led the restoration of the NC depot in the '90s. He was our very "benevolent landlord" during the past 5 years. Please attend, and help us express our gratitude to Paul for many years of close association.

**May 8** - videos of **historic London street-**

**cars** and current British rail transportation courtesy of Member Peter Matthews

**June 12** - MTS program on local transportation planning, **update on SD Trolley extension** thru Mission VALLEY (tentative)

**July 10: Open**

**August 14**—historic slides of **Los Angeles Railway, Pacific Electric Rwy** – Don Brown

**Board Meetings, 7 p.m.** **Richard Hamilton's office.** call 858-836-0106 for directions.

**April 13– May 11–**

**June 8 – July 13**

### OTHER RAIL EVENTS

**April 24, 25 - Orange Empire Railway Museum Rail Festival 2004, Perris.** Phone: 909-657-2605. Website: [www.oerm.org](http://www.oerm.org)

**April 24, 25 Campo–San Diego RR Museum, live demonstration of passing mail bags** to a moving train. Call 619 478-9937. Website: [www.sdrm.org](http://www.sdrm.org)

**May 1–San Diego Model Railroad Museum ANNUAL SWAP MEET, 7-11 AM.** Call 619-293-0162

**May 1-2 - Fullerton Railroad Days, Santa Fe station, Fullerton.** Call 714-278-0648. Website: [www.trainweb.com/frap](http://www.trainweb.com/frap)

*"We still need your help in many areas, especially with being docents at the depot..."*

*"If you've ever wanted to contribute to the future of SDERA, the time is now!"*

Our three-fifths scale Volkswagen trolley ready for a renovated engine and, soon, a major body makeover. Scene is Madison Senior High's auto-repair class parking lot.

### Our Thanks to The 2003 Depot Docents:

Docent Coordinator Tom Matson reports following volunteers and the number of times they worked at National City Depot in 2003: **George Geyer** (42), **Jim Papulas** (16), **Charles Smith** (12), **Tom Matson** (11), **Jim Price** (11), **Jan Papulas** (10), **Tom Carnes** (9), **Mike Quigg** (6), **Mike Paulus** (5), **Charity Paulus** (5), **Jim Anderson** (5), **Larry Occhiello** (3), **Paul Pakus** (3), **Richard Hamilton** (1), **Mike Reading** (1), **Don Johnson** (1), **Gwen Johnson** (1), **Chris Higgins** (1)



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### Address Corrections Requested

Attention Members: Please look carefully at the mailing label above. If your membership has expired, or will expire soon, please send your dues, and your tax deductible contribution, to SDERA, PO Box 89068, San Diego, CA 92138-9068. Thank you.

## Why we're "Non-Profit:" Estimated Bottom Line to get 2 SDERA Vienna Trolleys Operable: \$1 Million!

A conservative cost estimate to get 2 operating Vienna street-cars, 1 mile of track, a maintenance shop and overhead costs could be as much as \$1 Million. This assumes 80% volunteer labor and donations. Reporting on his inspection of the 3 Vienna cars, Eric Sitiko gave SDERA members the hard news, at his March 25 Depot presentation.

Sitiko urges SDERA to decide the need and purposes such a historic transit system would serve: the operating, maintenance and planning staff required; and how to fund both equipment and some paid staff.

As a principal figure of Old Pueblo Trolleys in Tucson, Sitiko said running heritage cars 24 hours a week requires \$16,000 per car per year for routine

maintenance parts. Each must be shop-made: there are no supplies available.

The Vienna cars were built in the '50s or '60s, by a Siemens-derivative firm, who still build light rail, and could help furnish drawings. The cars ran 'til the '80s. They were acquired 10 years ago. Sitiko said they're really modern, but run on an older style control system; their couplers and motor controls brand new, may fall under light rail guidelines (FRA). The yellow car is in the worst shape. One car is very modern, with much new equipment added. The single trucks have 12' wheelbase, and don't track well on curves, frogs or points. Spiral curves are needed. Gauge is close to standard, but metric. Tires are thin. Interiors have hard, pressed-

wood seats, slat wood floors. A 90v m.g. is installed for lighting. The bodies have much surface rust; interior varnish needs refinishing. They have air brakes and heaters under seats. An odd arch and leaf spring suspension uses rubber extensively, and is deteriorated. The air compressor is a modern V-head type.

Sitiko urged SDERA to get a full mechanical-electrical assessment with testing equipment, or bring the cars to NC to work on. We should do a wheel engineering study, to see how they would run on available tracks. A study is needed on the power system: whether overhead (costs less), or generators (usually cheaper for startup).

A maintenance shop has to be built. OPT's vintage cars each



**Austrian streetcars on Track 8 at the San Diego Trolley yard.**

need 230 hours' maintenance per car per year. Sitiko says California's CPUC codes for vintage cars are "incredibly strict." He suggests a non-PCC, pre-1936 car. Peter Witt cars, available from Milan, are excellent, but not US gauge. PCCs are "the worst thing for maintenance." The available Vienna cars will take a lot of doing to get on the line. It's time to get grants and do some serious fundraising.