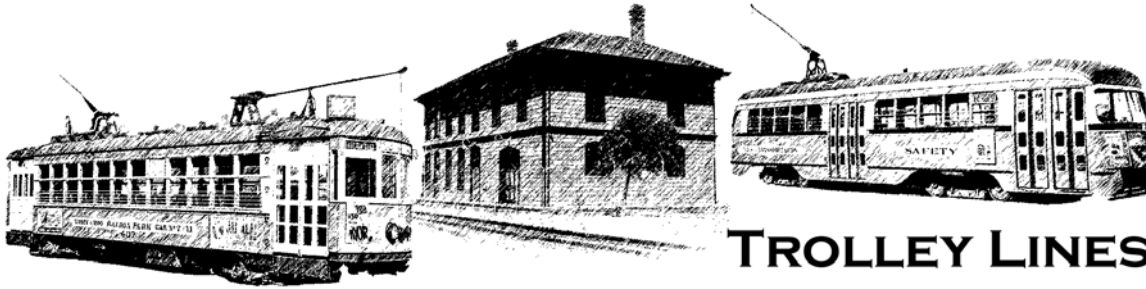


# SAN DIEGO ELECTRIC RAILWAY ASSOCIATION



## TROLLEY LINES

San Diego Electric  
Railway Association  
PO Box 89068  
San Diego, CA 92138  
(619) 474-4400

October 2008

Check us out at our  
web site:  
[www.sdera.org](http://www.sdera.org)

## Down to the Wire - Down to the Metal



It would have been a highlight of APTA. The American Public Transit Association Convention was just around the corner (Oct. 5 to 8), and to celebrate we wanted to bring the Silver Line to life. The diligent San Diego Vintage Trolley team regrets: we didn't quite make it. While they have accomplished so much since they started, there is still much to do and the work goes on!

The photo above shows car 529 being stripped of layers of paint after being moved from its workshop at San Diego Trolley's A Building. To the right, the car, now down to bare metal, waits under wraps in the paint shop to avoid exposure to the damp San Diego Bay air. Carlos Guzman, the painting contractor, stands with the car.



Front Page photos from MTS Chairman Harry Mathis.

### Inside this issue:

<i>Down to the Wire— Down to the Metal</i>	1
<i>PCC Car Project Update</i>	2
<i>Plans for Depot Property Upgrade Announced</i>	3
<i>Grade Crossing Finally Gets Repaired!</i>	3
<i>What's the Catch? Trolley Lifesavers to the PCC Rescue</i>	4,5
<i>Special Visitors Watch PCC Car Move</i>	5
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	Back

*Psst!* Wanna Know a Secret?

This newsletter is available **in color** on our website! See [www.sdera.org](http://www.sdera.org) and look on our Newsletters page.

*SDERA operates the historic National City Depot museum which is open Thursday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phone 619-474-4400.*

### San Diego Electric Railway Association

- David Slater, President
- George Geyer, Vice President / Bookstore Manager
- Chris Higgins, Secretary, Webmaster / Newsletter Editor
- Tom Matson, Treasurer
- Directors: Jim Price, Tom Carnes, Gary Sweetwood, Mitch Beauchamp, Jeff Trimble

## PCC Car Project Update

- Dave Slater, Project Manager

Now on the web at [www.sdera.org/sdvt](http://www.sdera.org/sdvt)

Great progress is being made, many thanks to volunteers: Art Aydelotte, Larry Hall, Anthony Carideo, Dennis Frazier, Chuck Bencik, Ron Sutch, Nadya Midgley, Paul Kimo McGregor, Tom Carnes, John L. Sullivan, George Geyer, Bob Recks, Gary Johnson, Sergio Lopez, Carlos Guzman, Bud Sonka, and Jan Lorenzen. Car #529 was finally moved to the body shop area of the "C" Yards on the second attempt. The first try had a derailment and we ran out of time in our short window of opportunity for crossing the Main Line. The second successful attempt was using the "Wreck Dollies" under the existing trucks and that proved to be a success. The crew of Carlos Guzman Inc., the selected contractor, proceeded to remove all exterior paint using chemicals. They also removed the rubber floor mats so the wood flooring can be inspected and repaired. Now, they are removing the inside paint. By the time you read this, she will have been moved inside the Paint Shop for complete sanding and a protective



Trolley workers worked to put car #529 back on the rails after the front truck came off the track at a switch. Photo by Chris Higgins

coating will be applied to prevent rusting, as it will be some time before the paint is applied. After the sanding and coating has been applied, she will come back home to her spot on Track #3 in the A Shop for cutting off any bad metal and welding on new. The car will then go back to the Paint Shop for application of all the SDERY colors before returning back to the A Shop for final electrical work and final test runs before being placed in service on the Downtown Loop.

Meanwhile, back at the A Shop, we switched #530 and #531 around so that more electrical and mechanical work can be

completed on both cars. This switching move was completed flawlessly on the Yard tracks in front of the A Shop. A massive cleanup was also done of the shop, which was well overdue.

One of the original overhauled trucks for #529 is back for the APTA EXPO tour display at the Traction Motor Department of the C Shop, and will be returned to Carnegie, PA for application of the new, wide tread, deep flanged wheels to operate on our Class 1 San Diego Trolley tracks before being returned for installation on #529.

I have negotiated a swap of trucks with the appropriate wheel profile with North Texas Historic Transportation, Inc in Fort Worth, thanks to referral by project member Jan Lorenzen. This swap will happen when the first set of trucks returns from Carnegie, PA. I will send them our cleaned up, extra set of trucks, and they will use them for a PCC "Spam Can" car they have on static display.

### \*THE WHEEL FUND RAISER\*

Currently, as I write this, we have \$8,000 towards getting new wheels for the PCCs. A total of \$144,000 is needed to fund this project, so that leaves \$136,000 remaining. All donations, large and small, are needed to "Restore The Magic". Please give generously and make your mark on this very important community enrichment project for generations to enjoy! Donations are tax deductible. Please send checks to The San Diego Vintage Trolley, Attn; Chairman Harry Mathis, 1255 Imperial Avenue, Suite 900, San Diego, CA 92101.

I have ordered another pantograph for #530, and that and the associated parts are forthcoming. Art Aydelotte has been working his magic once again in the fabrication of the destination sign roller spindles for both the front and side destination boxes for our fleet of PCC Cars. Thanks to Art's work, we will soon be ready to order the roller curtains on which the destinations are printed.

### \*THE FARE BOX SALE FUND RAISER\*

I sold all five of the Cleveland series 5 fare boxes previously announced as a fund raiser and that money went back into the SDVT General Fund. Street car restoration is expensive and this really helps. We located more of these fare boxes and the fund raising continues.

---

**Upcoming Work Party Dates:** Work Sessions are now being held Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays from 10am to 2pm. *Due to security requirements, please contact Dave Slater / 619-222-5442 for authorization to be on the Trolley grounds.*



## Plans for Depot Property Upgrade Announced

Dave Slater—SDERA President

With the passing of each month, our numbers of new members are growing, and current members are re-newing in droves. This means that we have a lot to offer our community at large. SDERA is a major stakeholder in the redevelopment of the Bay Marina area. The progress building of the new Best Western Hotel complex near us on Bay Marina Drive is very rapid. As many of you may know, this is owned by the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation. They are good friends of SDERA, and we look forward to continuing the cordial relationship.

We now have our very first long term lease on the Depot and the 1.1 acre parcel that it sits on! This has been a very long process, and the outcome is mutually beneficial to all parties! The bulk of the negotiating work was completed by member Bud Sonka who has worked with me on similar projects dating back to the mid-1960's. His tireless efforts and great skills are much appreciated by me and our Board. It has taken nearly 17 months for this round of negotiations, building on the efforts of past-President Jim Price. As some of you may know, Bud suffered a series of strokes in August. He is recovering nicely thanks to a lot of good luck, great staff at the facility, and the hands of God on his shoulders. In spite of all this adversity, Bud continued to finalize this huge project from his hospital bed with the help of myself and member Tom Fengler, also a very skilled negotiator, long time newspaper man, and friend of our combined families.

Our parcel will also be redeveloped in concert with the Bay Marina Redevelopment Project. Bud and I also worked on this project. Here is what I am told will take place, in and for the benefit of both SDERA and the City of National City: Harrison Avenue will be permanently closed, and the pavement removed, along with the trees and the fence on the east and south sides. Our south parking lot will have all the pavement removed, and the lot graded for proper drainage. Then, decomposed granite will be applied to both areas just as it was at the inception of the Depot. A wrought iron fence will be installed on the south and east sides, with an electric motor powered gate at the east side. West 23rd Street will be returned to two way traffic. The abandoned building and Quonset hut across the street will be razed. A temporary fence will be installed from the west side along the decking of that side of the Depot to the east side during demolition and reconstruction. Streetcar tracks will be installed and our four street cars will be moved to the south end. Landscaping and picnic tables will be installed and there will be Farmer's Markets held from time to time on the new mall walk that was the former Harrison Avenue. Two restaurants will be built across the street on the property facing the Depot. Similar things will happen on the north side of the property once the south side has been completed. Space here does not allow for a complete description of the entire project. Please come to our next General Meeting and I will tell the rest of the story...

I am told that the beginning of the demolition will commence on or about 9 October 2008 and be completed in one year. Pardon our dust while we undergo this construction process.

## Grade Crossing Finally Gets Repaired!

BNSF started repairs to the Bay Marina Dr. crossing next to the Depot on Monday, September 29. The job had been delayed while the parties involved worked out the who was responsible for which area. The \$104,000 cost of the repairs will be shared between BNSF, National City, and the Port District of San Diego. This crossing is frequently used by truck drivers coming from the Freight Terminal. Visitors at the Depot can hear the punishment that the trucks endure going over the old wooden grade crossing. Repairs should be complete in a week.

(Photo by Robert Baxter)



## What's the Catch? Trolley Lifesavers to the PCC Rescue

By Chuck Bencik

My kind of town, Chicago was. I grew up there in the 1940s and '50s. Our family had a garage, but no car. So I rode Chicago streetcars everywhere. All those years I asked myself: what is that funny little "trellis" or "gate" hanging under the front of each streetcar, with the wooden platform just behind it? Chicago had 3,200 streetcars. Whether they were Pullmans or Kuhlmanns or Brills from the 1910s, or St. Louis PCCs of the 30's and 40's, they all carried this funny contraption. Sixty years later I learned what it was.



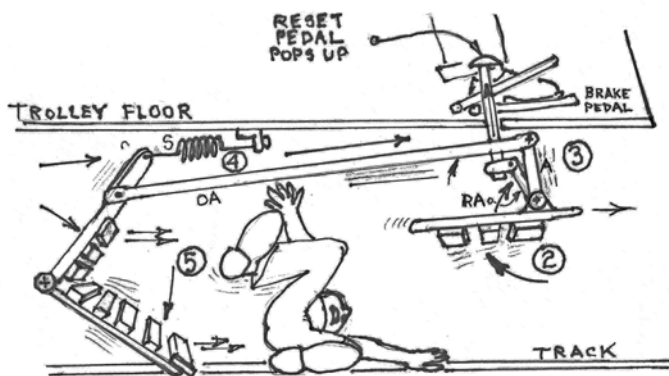
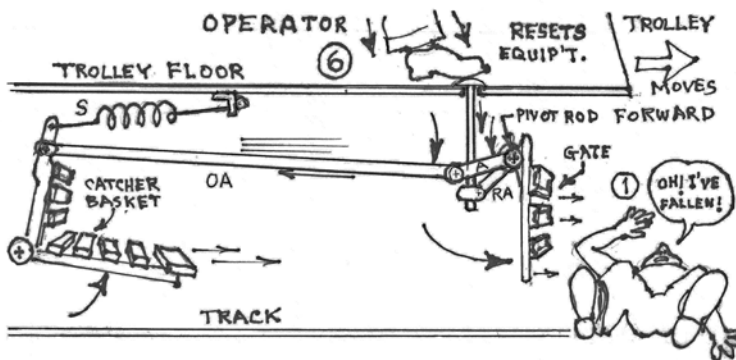
This assembled H-B Lifesaver, seen here with hanging brackets attached, was removed from PCC 1121 in Tucson.

Chuck Bencik photo

Last November, four SDERA guys went to Tucson to strip parts from PCC 1121 needed for San Diego Vintage Trolley's three PCCs. On first seeing her, I was astounded: the old derelict still had a complete set of that mysterious contraption. I studied it, and suddenly realized: it was a "body catching" device, meant to save anyone who fell under the trolley from being crushed by the motors. None of our three PCCs had this device. We had to cut this one off, bring it back, and make three of these "catchers," or our PCCs would be incomplete. But try as we might, we couldn't unscrew, pry, or cut it loose before it was time to leave.

I took another trip to Tucson in January, armed with an electric grinder, heavy wrenches and prybars. As 60 years' worth of rust and dirt rained on my head, it finally came loose. I took it back San Diego, and brought it to the Depot. Bob Recks and I photographed it from every possible angle. Bob, ever the soul of generosity, took it on himself to take it all apart. He measured the parts, made working drawings, and manufactured three sets of the metal parts. Gene Calman contributed enough 3/4" oak to make the 8 wood laths for each catcher rescue "basket." Ron Sutch, Paul MacGregor and I assembled the three new "safety catchers" and installed them on our PCCs.

We have since found out that this device is the Hudson - Bowring Lifesaver, invented in the 1920s by a British firm. It replaced the "spring-mattress" catchers often seen on early trolleys, and in silent screen comedies. Electrician Larry Hall was able to figure out how to adjust all the parts so that pushing the front "gate" drops the wooden catcher platform down, and stepping on the resetting pedal raises up the catcher "basket" after it is cleared. The attached diagram shows the two configurations, retracted and dropped, and the approximate settings of the operating rod and wrist links. Note particularly how the resetting pedal is raised when a large, heavy object on the ground causes the gate



## Special Visitors Watch PCC Car Move



Photo by Ron Sutch

Retired San Diego Electric Railway streetcar operators Marjorie McLaughlin and Ed Herold visited the San Diego Trolley shops August 29th to watch as the San Diego Vintage Trolley car 529 was supposed to be moved across the Main Line. The photo to the left shows them across from the San Diego Trolley A Building at the end of the Orange Line (12th & Imperial station) while, behind them, MTS staff make the first attempt to move the car to the C Building for paint removal.

Marjorie trained under Ed to run streetcars while so many men were off fighting World War II. When the streetcars were retired she stayed on for over three decades with San Diego Transit as a bus operator and is in the San Diego Transit Hall of Fame at their headquarters. Ed is wearing his original uniform from his days as a streetcar operator on the SDERy. He proudly brings it out for special events and shows that it still fits! Between the two of them, they are a wealth of knowledge and make watching SDERy slides fascinating! It

is a blessing to have their experience to explain long lost details in some of the photographs. Both frequently join us for our General Meetings.

Behind them in the photo, Trolley workers struggled with the result of running streetcar wheels on a Class 1 railroad - a derailment! The original wheels are too narrow and the flanges are not deep enough to stay on the rails at switch points. The car finally made it to the paint shop using some "Wreck Dollies" from the San Diego Trolley (see the PCC Car Project Update on page 2 for more details).

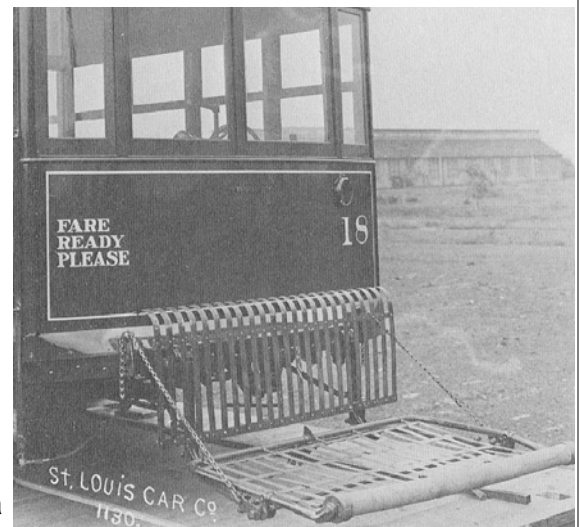
## What's the Catch? Trolley Lifesavers to the PCC Rescue

(Continued from page 4)

to swing back. The operating cycle is as follows:

- 1) Pedestrian falls in front of moving trolley.
- 2) Forward moving trolley gate swings up as it passes over pedestrian's body causing
- 3) arms "A" and "RA" to rotate up, which lifts the Reset Pedal.
- 4) Spring "S" contracts, pulling the operating arm "OA" forward, allowing the catcher basket to drop.
- 5) Pedestrian is scooped up in catcher basket, as operator brings trolley to a stop.
- 6) When Lifesaver apparatus is cleared, operator steps on reset pedal, which raises the catcher basket, sets the gate vertical again, and resets the three arms OA, A, and RA.

The contraption really works. We've gotten emails describing at least two "saves" -- a dog on the tracks in Washington, DC, and a man on Market St. in the mid-1970s. Names are currently being taken for volunteers to test the H-B Lifesavers when our three PCCs get running again.



Safety catchers on trolleys as late as 1926 were variations of this 1917 St. Louis Car Co. lightweight built for Albuquerque. (From "St. Louis Car Company ALBUM" by Andrew D. Young - Interurban Press 1984)



**San Diego Electric Railway Association**  
d.b.a. **San Diego Electric Railway**  
**PO Box 89068**  
**San Diego, CA 92138**  
**(619) 474-4400**

**SDERA is at the historic National City Depot,  
off I-5 at Mile of Cars Way — take Bay Marina  
Drive West to Marina Way, then right.**

**Open Thursday through Sunday, 9 AM — 5 PM.**

**Depot phone: call (619) 474-4400**

**Visit us on the Web! [www.sdera.org](http://www.sdera.org)**

*To submit items to the Newsletter, contact Chris Higgins  
via e-mail ([webmaster@sdera.org](mailto:webmaster@sdera.org)) or phone (858-521-  
0895). Items need to be submitted by the 18th of the  
month prior to publication.*

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
San Diego, CA  
Permit No. 2606

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Attention Members: Please look carefully at the mailing label. 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.**  
Life: \$400, Regular \$25, Family \$35 (please include names), Regular \$25, Senior (60 +) \$15, and Juniors 17 and below \$15.

## Upcoming Events

**Monthly meetings** are normally held at 7:30 PM on the 2nd Saturday night at the National City Depot. We normally have an optional no host dinner at Keith's restaurant at 3rd and National City Blvd at 5:30. (In Mar, June, Sept, & Dec, we have potlucks at the depot.) Plan to arrive at 7pm to see the bookstore, chat, and buy raffle tickets. The raffle starts at 7:15 PM.

**Saturday, October 11** - Jason Ballard will show us videos and stills of both the June 1st and Sept 21st runs to San Diego by ATSF Steam Loco 3751. Barbara Thomson has supplied us with many still shots of the 2nd appearance of 3751 with the 24 private cars attached. Additionally, Jason will show a video after the break on the restoration of 3751.

**Saturday, November 15** - Annual Dinner and Election of Officers and Directors. Tom Carnes presents "The California Southern Depot and what it represents. Tom will tell the causes and effects of the California Southern and other stories related to

the Depot. The National City Depot Originally bore the name California Southern after the railroad company which finished the second transcontinental route into California. One cannot underestimate the historical significance of the entry into California of this central route. From the land boom that followed to the reduction of the power of the big four and the Southern Pacific to the coming dominance of the Los Angeles region all of this and more would follow in the wake of the Santa Fe and its branch line the California Southern.

Elections will be held for 4 Board of Directors positions (2 one-year & 2 two-year seats). Nominations may be made from the floor or made to Secretary Chris Higgins at (858) 521-0895.

**Saturday / Sunday, December 13 & 14** - Great Train Expo, San Diego County Fairgrounds, Del Mar

**Next Board Meetings** - October October 13 and November 10 at 7:00pm at the National City Depot.