

Opening Day of San Francisco's 'F' Line - September 1, 1995!

The opening day of this marvelous line was a thirteen-year dream come true. Some of us had endured the 'Last PCC' trips in the early 1980's, with the surviving PCC cars running their last miles only on weekends until they were gone. Of course, San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) stated they would keep the tracks on Market Street for special occasions but we had heard that type of promise before. Remember, San Francisco was the very last United States city with streetcars on its main downtown thoroughfare and now it would be gone. This impending event hung over these last trips like a black cloud. We were all seeing something about to happen that we knew would happen when the Boeing Light Rail Vehicles started to arrive. And it did, September 19, 1982 was the end of streetcar service on Market Street. At the same time, the city's venerable cable car system was shut down for renovation. Faced with a loss of tourist revenue, certain city officials suggested that the dormant streetcar tracks on Market Street be used for a summertime Historic Trolley Festival.

On June 22, 1983, Major Diane Feinstein piloted Car #1, opening five consecutive summers of trolley festivals featuring San Francisco PCC cars 1006, 1040 and 1128 (repainted as Saint Louis 1704, it's original number) along with cars from Portland, Oregon, Blackpool, England; Hiroshima, Japan; Melbourne, Australia; Orel, Russia; Hamburg, Germany; Oporto, Portugal, Veracruz, Mexico along with some older San Francisco trolleys.



Former Muni Class B 178 was borrowed from a local museum and Boeing LRV 1213, still equipped with trolley poles, was part of the parade. Figure 1 shows Muni 1128, repainted as Saint Louis Public Service 1704 along with Oporto 189 and Muni Class B 178 are shown at Duboce & Market. Car 1704 is sitting on the truncated tracks on Market Street that would not be re-extended to the Castro district until 1994.



Figure 1 - Trolley Festival Activity at Duboce & Market.

The success of this festival gave new life to the dream of an 'F' line. There were several charters on the Market Street tracks. At this time, all cars had to use the Twin Peaks tunnel to get from the Geneva facility to downtown. There were temporary portals into the subway just west of 17th & Castro, which are used occasionally today by the LRVs. The most notable use was when the Church Street station flooded at one time. LRV exited the tunnel and traveled down 17th Street and Church Street and re-entered the subway at the tunnel portal very close to the location in the previous photo. Momentum on the planning of the line accelerated. One time and only one time that we know of, on August 25, 1985, a two-car train of Boeing LRVs was chartered for a trip down Market Street under the control of motorman Harry Peat. Only trolley pole equipped cars can operate on Market Street due to the trolley coach wires. Only two San Francisco LRV's had trolley poles installed and 1213 how resides operational at a museum in Oregon.



Figure 2 – SLRVs 1212 & 1213 on Market Street.

Because of annual trolley festivals and continuous charters, funding for rebuilding the surface track was secured under a project called the Market Street Transit Thoroughfare. The surface rail trackage east of Van Ness was rebuilt during the last 1980s and to celebrate this completion, a mini-trolley festival was held on November 21, 1989. At right, is Orel 106, bedecked with balloons, operated by motorman David Strassman at 5th & Market. This four-wheel car has a surprisingly smooth ride, unlike a Birney Safety Car.



Then during 1989, MUNI had the opportunity to obtain PCC 2133 from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). After placing standard gauge trucks under the car, the car was taken over the planned route for testing. These cars were eight inches narrower than Muni's own PCC Cars but Muni was interested in these cars as they had been completely re-wired by Philadelphia in their General OverHaul (GOH) program in the mid-1980s. The pre-World War II cloth-insulated wiring had become a real problem in PCC cars as they were nearing 50 years old.



Figure 3 – Philadelphia car 2133 at 8th & Market.

The preceding photo shows car 2133, now Muni 1064 at 8th & Market in San Francisco on November 23, 1990. This car routinely traversed the intersection of 8th & Market in Philadelphia when running on Route 47, the first all-PCC route abandoned in 1968. This car demonstrated the operational benefits of acquiring more Philadelphia cars mainly because they had been completely rewired in the SEPTA General OverHaul (GOH) Program in 1980-1981. The cars and spares were purchased in 1992 and 1993, resulting in fourteen operable cars. They would all be renumbered 1050 through 1063 with car 2133, unmodified, as 1064.

Note: At Trolleyville, we do not refer to these cars as ex-SEPTA cars. We tend to refer to them as ex-Philadelphia cars or ex-PTC cars. It was the Philadelphia Transportation Company that bought 210 of the all-electric PCC cars and gave them loving care until the beginning of the decline of the privately owned transportation company in the late 1950s. SEPTA treated these cars as “red-headed stepchildren” from the day that they arrived until the day that they managed to finally rid themselves of the cars in 1992.

Only mini-festivals were held between 1990 and 1993 as Mayor Agnos was not as committed to returning the streetcars to Market Street as Mayor Finestein had been. Phase three of the track-rebuilding was for the section between Duboce Avenue and 17th & Castro was completed in 1993, restoring tracks to Market Street ripped out during construction of the Market Street subway. The final phase, Phase Four, for rebuilding the tracks from Duboce Avenue to 11th street was finally let in December 1994 so the tracks would be ready for opening of the F-line in 1995.

The fourteen ex-Philadelphia cars and three of the Muni “Torpedos”, double-end PCC cars, were sent to Morrison Knudsen’s Hornell, New York plant for complete refurbishment at a bargain cost of \$462,000 each. Total cost of that contract was \$12,200,000, including spare parts. Back-up controllers were installed in the ex-Philadelphia cars and the suggestion to paint each car in a different livery representing

various transit companies that ran PCC cars was adopted. All of the ex-Philadelphia cars were accepted in 1994 with the three “torpedoes” accepted later. The cars did not even venture onto Market street until two weeks before opening day but when they did, the complexion of the entire area changed. Note in Figure 4 that most of these cars were pulled out of service exactly 8 years after the GOH program on the car was completed, whether the car was operable or not. The GOH program was estimated to add eight years life to the cars. After that SEPTA had their excuse to “pull them off the streets” and tell Philadelphians that the cars were too old and worn out for future use. Naturally Muni would expose that huge lie for the ‘whopper’ that it was. As of last month, these cars have been in service for another fourteen years.

Roster: Muni's Philadelphia PCC Cars						
Muni Number	Muni Livery	PTC Number	Delivered to PTC	SEPTA Overhaul Complete	Out of Service Date	Sold to Muni
1050	Muni wings	2119	Aug. 48	9-30-81	Sep. 89	Oct. 92
1051	Muni green	2123	Aug. 48	10-9-81	Oct. 89	Oct. 92
1052	Los Angeles	2110	Aug. 48	8-31-81	Aug. 89	Feb. 93
1053	Brooklyn NY	2721*	Mar. 47	6-26-81	Sep. 13 '92	Feb. 93
1054	Phila. Silver	2121	Sep. 48	2-25-81	Dec. 88	Nov. 92
1055	Phila. Green	2122	Sep. 48	2-27-81	Dec. 88	Nov. 92
1056	Kansas City	2113	Aug. 48	12-30-80	Dec. 88	Nov. 92
1057	Cincinnati	2138	Sep. 48	5-15-81	Apr. 89	Nov. 92
1058	Chicago	2124	Aug. 48	8-29-80	Sep. 88	Nov. 92
1059	Boston Elev	2099	Aug. 48	7-10-81	Jun. 89	Nov. 92
1060	Newark NJ	2715*	Feb. 47	10- -79	May 88	Nov. 92
1061	Pacific Elec	2116	Aug. 48	12-7-81	Dec. 89	Nov. 92
1062	Louisville KY	2101	Aug. 48	11-28-80	Nov. 88	Nov. 92
1063	Baltimore	2096	Aug. 48	10-17-80	Sep. 13 '92	Nov. 92
1064**	Muni grey	2133	Aug. 48	4-23-81	Jan. 89	May 90

* 2715 and 2721 were originally two man cars, and had their conductor booths removed in 1955.

SEPTA 2715 was the pilot General OverHaul car.

** Muni 1064 is currently under restoration at Duboce St. yard.

Figure 4 – Former Philadelphia PCC Data.

As we have stated before, opening day was a gala affair and Trolleyville was there. All the cars were lined up on Market Street for a parade led by the Mayor. The scene before the parade started was reminiscent of the introduction of PCC cars to the cities over half a century earlier. Visitors milled around the cars, walking through them, most of them believing that the cars actually came

from the cities for which they were painted. On the next pages are some scenes photographed by Trolleyville early that morning.





The initial line ran to the Transbay Terminal and kept that terminus until March 2000. Figure 5 shows the initial route and the planned extensions almost all of which have since been built. In that month, the F-line extension to Fisherman's Wharf opened amid much fanfare. The streetcars swarmed with riders. Muni had rolled out every operational historic car for the opening parade, but did not intend to put them into regular passenger service. The PCCs and Milan trams were thought to be sufficient to meet demand. The very first day, though, Muni realized what a hit they had on their hands.



Figure 5 – System Route

The historic cars were pressed into service as Embarcadero shuttles from the Ferry Building to the Wharf. These soon became regularly scheduled runs. The Milan Cars had some initial noise problems and wiring in the Newark cars had never been replaced so they started having ‘mysterious’ electrical problems. So the wisdom in acquiring the re-wired ex-Philadelphia cars now became apparent. Class B, car 162 would be purchased from the Orange Empire Railway Museum and thoroughly rebuilt. Recently, San Francisco appropriated the money to renovate car 1040, reputed to be the last PCC car built in North America; Car 1, the 1912 Holman product which is the first car San Francisco Municipal Railway owned; the four remaining torpedoes, 1006, 1008, 1009 and 1011; and to completely rewire all eleven of the ex-Newark cars. The Newark cars will be equipped with Westinghouse equipped during this upgrade. This is critical for the future as Westinghouse PCC electrical gear is still available unlike the G.E. components.

These cars have a bright future. A cover for the cars is planned for next year at Geneva and this line, originally projected for seven car base service, now sees twenty cars.