

VINTAGE TROLLEYS

Traditional, old-technology streetcar lines have been revived or created in a number of cities, including Dallas, New Orleans, Seattle, and Memphis. Known as vintage trolley lines or, if streetcars native to the local area are used, heritage trolley lines, these systems were originally conceived as tourist draws but have become part of the local transportation network. Often, the latter role was neither planned nor foreseen; it happened because people simply began using the trolleys for transportation.



San Francisco's Market Street Railway uses restored PCC streetcars

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planting grass in the trackway or embedding the tracks in the street. They have simple overhead span wire, and cars designed to historic patterns are small.

All current vintage trolley lines are low-speed, and thus best suited for collector and distributor functions. However, traditional design cars could be built to run at high speeds on modern light rail lines between the city center and an outlying community, then at low speeds for collector-distributor functions on historic-design trackage within that community and in the city center. This is, in fact, how historic interurban lines functioned.

Among the challenges of vintage streetcars, as with any form of rail transit, are the up-front expenses that must be faced. Many vintage streetcar operations have been able to take advantage of existing tracks upon which to operate. In some cases, these have been original railroad or streetcar tracks resurrected from abandoned operations. In other instances, vintage streetcar operation has been overlaid on a modern provide short-haul or shuttle service over a small portion of the line. Without these existing tracks, the cost and construction will be incurred. Moreover, opposition to laying tracks in neighborhood streets and erecting overhead wires may arise among residents of settled areas. Hence, the inclusion of a line in the initial construction of a new

Vintage trolley lines have several significant advantages over modern light rail lines. First, they are much less expensive to build and operate, costing perhaps one-tenth as much as a modern, high-tech system. Roadbed, track, and power supply—not merely the cars—are built to historic standards. Restored older cars or trolleys built new to historic designs range in cost from \$200,000 to \$800,000 per unit, compared to up to \$3 million for some modern light rail vehicles. Most vintage trolley lines also hold down operating costs by making extensive use of volunteer labor, both for maintenance and operation.

The second advantage of vintage trolleys is that they fit into a traditional community. Modern light rail systems can be comparatively intrusive, with wide rights-of-way, complex overhead wiring, and large, international style LRVs. In contrast, vintage trolley rights-of-way are small and can be rendered almost invisible by



Vintage trolleys in Portland, Oregon, were built new to resemble a streetcar type popular in the city in the first part of the century.

VINTAGE TROLLEYS (Cont'd)



In Dallas, the McKinney Avenue Transit Authority operates a wide variety of antique trolleys. This one originally ran in Australia.

community could be included in a public facility financing package to avoid impacts later.

Another challenge is the use of actual vintage streetcars. Vehicles that are 40 to 80 years old, even if refurbished, may not be up to the day-to-day demands of heavy transit use. Travel speeds and passenger controlled if the vehicles are to serve reliably without breakdowns. Thus, as mentioned earlier, most vintage vehicles are utilized on low-speed branch and feeder lines. Those that provide service on heavily traveled main lines like San Francisco's Market Street Railway require a high degree of maintenance and care to carry out this role. If no vintage streetcars are available, new cars built upon traditional designs are required, generally at higher prices. These expenses are likely to be far less than for light rail, but far greater than the cost of other transportation alternatives for a small community, such as buses.

Finally, the use of volunteer labor, certainly a key ingredient in the success of many vintage lines, brings with it certain limitations, as well. In many such operations, full-time service cannot be reliably maintained, limiting operating hours to weekends or summertime, when more volunteers are available. Other services, like telephone information and the publication of timetables, may have to be sacrificed unless the vintage streetcar can be integrated into the community's regular transit operation, which can oversee these ancillary duties.

In summary, vintage streetcars have proven to be a popular and viable local transit option in a number of communities. Understanding their strengths and limitations is an important first step in deciding whether they are an appropriate transportation strategy in a given situation. The successful operations listed below may be able to provide some help.

Dallas, Texas	McKinney Avenue Transit Authority	(214) 855-0006
Galveston, TX	Galveston Park Board of Trustees	(409) 762-2903
Memphis, Tennessee	Memphis Area Transit Authority	(901) 722-7100
Portland, Oregon	Vintage Trolley, Inc.	(503) 323-7363
San Francisco, California	Market Street Railway	(415) 863-1775
San Jose, California	Valley Transportation Authority	(408) 299-8600
Seattle, Washington	King County Metro Waterfront Streetcar	(206) 553-3000