

HEADLIGHTS



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COVER

The upper end of Howard Street
features many restored older
buildings and a large number
of antique shops. Despite
somewhat heavy overhead,
the light rail line blends well
into the environment.

Photo by Charles J. Lietwiler

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WHEN THE MAY 1965 issue of
Headlights was published, it sported a
new masthead which changed the
appearance of the cover. This was the
culmination of other changes which
were made after the *Headlights*
editorial office was relocated from
Pittsburgh to New York in 1960.

It is appropriate that exactly 30 years later this issue
launches another new format for *Headlights*. We are
pleased to welcome Sandy Campbell to the publication staff
as Art Director. Sandy has many years of experience
in the publishing industry and is a graphic designer by
profession. His talents are clearly displayed in this issue
in which he did all of the layout work and some of the
photography. He joined the Electric Railroaders'
Association with his father Ed in the early '70s and also
put together the article on the Paris RER which appeared
in the October–November 1979 issue of *Headlights*.

The rest of the *Headlights* staff will remain. Arthur
Lonto will continue as Interim Editor assembling
material for future issues. We welcome articles and
pictures from members for publication in *Headlights*.

Again thanks to Sandy Campbell for joining the
Headlights team. We welcome comments and suggestions
from our readers concerning our new look.

The Way It Was A passenger waits to board PCC 7336 along Liberty Heights Avenue on Sept. 3, 1955, the last day of service on Route 32.



Richard S. Short, Sprague Library

Light Rail Returns to Baltimore

The long road to restoring a lost heritage by Frank Miklos



Sandy Campbell

The east coast's first new-generation light rail system began limited revenue service in Baltimore on April 3, 1992, adding a new chapter to a city with an interesting transit history.

For many years the City of Baltimore was confronted with an identity problem. Its proximity to the nation's capital put it at a disadvantage for the tourist trade, and the larger east coast cities of New York and Philadelphia were close enough

to overshadow it. Except for a couple of large office buildings, Baltimore's downtown did not have the big-city look that was characteristic of so many American urban areas.

STREETCARS PHASED-OUT AS CITY MATURES

The transformation of Baltimore began in the early 1960s with the development of the Charles Center, an office complex in the heart of the city. For a

Baltimore Light Rail Today Car 5020 stops at Lexington Market on Howard Street. Abandoned shops and theaters line the once-fashionable street. A number of redevelopment projects are in the planning stage spurred on by the presence of rail service.

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 brief time after it opened, the Center was served by PCC cars on Baltimore's last two streetcar routes. But the city had been under pressure for years to



Charles J. Lietwiler

Opening Day Car 5005 with Governor William Donald Schaefer at the controls breaks the banner to officially open the new light rail line on May 12, 1991.

rid the streets of trolleys to help speed the flow of traffic. And so, in November, 1963, the two lines were closed.

This anti-streetcar policy was the legacy of the city's traffic czar, a commissioner named Henry Barnes who was given the task of solving the problem of growing congestion in the 1950s. Mr. Barnes – who was later hired by New York City – was a strong believer in one-way thoroughfares with traffic lights synchronized to allow vehicles to travel without a red light if they maintained the posted speed limit.

Barnes' tidy, one-way flow of traffic could not be applied to avenues with streetcars hogging two lanes, so Barnes campaigned to get rid of them. No consideration was given to upgrading the streetcar system, or converting certain arteries to the exclusive use of transit

vehicles. Given the traffic commissioner's hostility towards streetcars, it was surprising that they lasted as long as they did.

The privately operated Baltimore Transit Company invested just enough in its streetcars to maintain operational and safety requirements. Their last two lines were heavily patronized and utilized a large fleet of vehicles that required two carhouses and an outdoor storage yard. Baltimore Transit simply didn't have enough money to purchase any new buses to replace them. As a result, their PCCs hung on.

The city tried to force Baltimore Transit's hand by reversing the flow of traffic on Lombard and Pratt Streets, used by the No. 8 streetcars. The company in turn modified its track arrangements to accommodate the new one-way traffic patterns. But when the city shrewdly agreed to assist Baltimore Transit in financing the purchase of new buses, the last of its PCCs were retired.

BALTIMORE BUILDS A SUBWAY

The pace of development in downtown Baltimore intensified in the 1970s, with a massive effort concentrated on the



Charles J. Lietwiler

A two-car train heads south on Howard Street at the intersection of Lombard.

nearby Inner Harbor. City officials recognized that more than just free-flowing vehicular traffic would be needed to provide the required access to the Harbor's attractions. Plans were proposed for a rapid transit system operating through the center of the city in a subway and above ground in the outlying areas. Funding was provided for an initial line running between Charles Center and Owings Mills in the north-west suburbs.

Approval of the subway system took many skeptics by surprise. Some

citizens questioned whether Baltimore could justify the need for a heavy rail transit system. Others felt that improved bus service or a less elaborate rail transit system were better answers. Many in the transit industry speculated that Baltimore sought a subway only to keep pace with nearby Washington, D.C.'s Metro.

Work on the Baltimore Metro began in 1977. The subway opened in 1983 with a line as far as Reisterstown Road. An extension to Owings Mills opened in 1987. (See sidebar, The Baltimore Metro, page 8.)

ALTERNATIVES TO HEAVY RAIL EXPLORED

While the subway was under construction, some other proposals for improving Baltimore's public transportation were being advanced. Advo-

cates of improved commuter rail service called for adding off-peak service to existing schedules and restoring commuter service to several lines that were used only for freight. This stemmed from an experiment in the early 1960s, when an RDC car was operated on the Baltimore & Annapolis railway to test the practicality of restoring passenger

(continued on page 7)



Charles J. Lietwiler

Ruxton Station Cancelled The long passing track at Ruxton was the site of a projected station, but opposition from nearby residents forced the MTA to run non-stop through this community.

Overpass at North Linthicum The interurban flavor of the former Baltimore & Annapolis Railroad is captured in this view of a light rail car on an overpass at North Linthicum.

(Below) Welded rail and concrete ties were unheard of in the days of the B&A Railroad.

Sandy Campbell



Frank S. Miklos

BEFORE THE DAYS of the Metro and the Central Light Rail Line, Baltimore boasted one of America's most interesting streetcar systems. There were miles of urban street trackage and long stretches of private right-of-way. At the close of service in 1963, there were only two very long lines mostly operating on city streets.

(Top Right) The Sparrows Point line was built to high standards with modern signals, attractive stations and a well-maintained right-of-way. In its final years, the line was served by PCCs. Pictured here is one of the streamliners passing through the busy industrial complexes which characterized the eastern end of the line.



A Look Back at Baltimore's "Light Rail" Heritage

Sprague Library Collection

(Right) A two-car Sparrows Point train crosses the famous Bear Creek trestle enroute to Baltimore on August 10, 1950 having come from the busy Bethlehem Steel Company plant.

(Bottom Left) Diversity was the word on the Baltimore streetcar system. A sharp contrast to the well-built right-of-way on the Sparrows Point line was this stretch of Route 51 served by PCC 7005 in 1952.



Sprague Library Collection

The Baltimore & Annapolis Railroad The B&A Railroad ran electric interurban cars until 1950. When the passenger service was replaced by buses, the line was retained for diesel freight service. That too, was cut back as freight customers shut down or started shipping by truck. Today the B&A route beyond Glen Burnie has been dismantled and is used as a biking trail. Future light rail extensions along this right of way are not out of the question, although there is some resistance from the hikers and bikers who use what is now known as the Baltimore & Annapolis Trail.



Sprague Library Collection

(Below) The days are numbered for electric service on the B&A Railroad in this view taken on January 22, 1950. Replacement buses are lined up on the adjacent roadway in Linthicum and the people on the right-of-way give a clue that a fantrip was in progress. This same trackage is now used by trains on the new Baltimore light rail line.



Herman Rinke, Sprague Library Collection

service to that line. While the response was generally favorable, nothing ever came of it.

The aging MP-54 MU cars which held down the commuter service on the Northeast Corridor line to Washington were temporarily replaced by a fleet of air-conditioned MUs that were leased from N.J. Transit. These modern cars generated an increase in ridership, leading to an expansion of service under the State of Maryland.

Maryland established a new agency known as the Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) to administer commuter rail service. MARC wanted to purchase a fleet of MUs for that service, but the size of the order was too small to attract any interest from car builders. Therefore, MARC chose to purchase electric locomotives and a fleet of push-pull cars.

Restoration of rail service on the Pennsylvania Railroad's Northern Central line was also proposed. A plan for establishing light rail service on that line was submitted as early as the 1960s. While the idea received a good deal of press coverage, it was overshadowed by the plans for the Baltimore Metro.

An attempt to satisfy the demand for improved bus service came with the reconstruction into a transit mall of Howard Street in downtown Baltimore. This new facility had decorative landscaping, ornamental lighting and passenger shelters which were designed to make the bus service more attractive to the riders. Unfortunately, the transit mall arrived at the very time that the last of the big retailers on Howard Street were closing their doors.

The construction of the mall left Howard Street torn up for months, aggravating the situation. Most shoppers had forsaken its stores in favor of the trendy boutiques and specialty shops in the glitzy new Inner Harbor retail complex. Only the traditional Lexington Market continued to draw customers, perhaps because there was a station for it on the new subway line.

GOVERNOR ADVOCATES LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM

The transit scene in Baltimore took a surprising twist when the city's mayor, William Donald Schaefer, was elected governor in 1986. One of his first acts was to announce plans for a light rail

Baltimore's Transportation Museums

Baltimore is fortunate in having two outstanding museums devoted to its transportation heritage. A report on Baltimore would not be complete without providing a brief glimpse of these facilities.

The Baltimore Streetcar Museum

Most transit properties were so anxious to rid themselves of their "old-fashioned" trolleys that they scrapped nearly everything in sight. A few systems recognized the role that these vehicles played in the development of their transportation system and they maintained a collection of historical vehicles. Such was the case with the Baltimore Transit Company. Its vintage fleet was turned over to a group of local historians who established the Baltimore Streetcar Museum. Today this fine collection of cars provides service along a portion of the former Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad. The museum with its excellent visitors center is a few blocks from the AMTRAK Train station and the North Avenue stop on the Central Light Rail line.



Frank S. Miklos

(Top) Car 7407, which was the final PCC to operate in Baltimore, pauses for a passenger at the Baltimore Streetcar Museum's visitor center. In front of it is Peter Witt car 6119 about to depart for a ride on the museum's right-of-way.

The B&O Railroad Museum The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad also recognized its position as a pioneer in American railroading. Over the years a large collection of rolling stock and artifacts was preserved by the B&O and displayed in a former roundhouse and yard on Pratt Street. Today the museum is no longer maintained by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Local sponsors have



Frank S. Miklos

expanded the collection to include items from other railroads that served the Baltimore area.

The B&O Railroad Museum also has some electric equipment in its collection. A recent acquisition is former Pennsylvania Railroad GG-1 No. 4876, which was donated by the United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey. That locomotive gained fame when it crashed through a bumping block in Washington, D.C., and plunged into the basement of Union Station.

line that would run from Hunt Valley in the north to Glen Burnie in the south, passing through downtown Baltimore on the Howard Street transit mall. A spur would also serve the Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) Airport.

The proposed line was greeted with mixed feelings by Maryland citizens, many of whom had no idea of what was meant by light rail transit. However, the governor received support from the state legislature and the project was approved. Funding was provided for the construction of the 22.5-mile section of the line between Timonium and Glen

Burnie. Federal funds would be sought for the extensions to Hunt Valley and BWI Airport.

Among the selling points for the proposed line was the existence of available rail rights-of-way. The line to the north of the city would utilize the Northern Central line of the former Pennsylvania Railroad, while the line to the south would use a portion of the Baltimore & Annapolis Railroad's right-of-way. Ironically, any remaining stretches of vintage streetcar track were unuseable because of its unique wide gauge of 5 foot 4 inches (standard gauge is 4 foot 8.5 inches).