

Indianapolis and the 31st annual Hoosier Traction Meet

Well over a hundred people again met at the Clarion Hotel in quiet western Indianapolis to review various aspects of the mass transportation industry, especially electrically powered rail-based systems for urban and regional mobility. The 2014 gathering occupied all day and evening on **September 5–6**. The date coincided with the 150th anniversary of groundbreaking for our host city's first **streetcar** line.

The Indiana capital's original mule-drawn streetcars were supplanted in turn by electric streetcars, electric-powered trolley buses, and today's motor buses operated on 31 routes under the brand *IndyGo*.

Meanwhile, for forty years Indianapolis also was the hub of a system of electric trolley cars operating on rails in 12 directions well beyond the city through the rural countryside to crossroad passenger stops, county seat towns, and cities all over central Indiana.

Incidentally, Indianapolis streetcars did not reach the location of the Meet. But one of those 12 **interurban** lines operated just across Crawfordsville Road from our site and stopped for passengers at Girls School Road.

Our Hoosier Traction Exhibition drew crowds.

Exhibition manager *Richard K. Baldwin* again filled the hotel's Grand Ballroom with **exhibitors**. As usual, this aspect of the Hoosier Traction Meet was open to the public free of charge.

For ten hours on Friday and eight hours on Saturday, this room hosted lively conversation and admiration of products from the smallest of model traction components to books telling about the largest of urban mass transportation systems.

If "a picture is worth a thousand words," then *Bob Olson's* operating miniature trolley line was worth a million words in demonstrating how streetcars draw their electric power from a bare copper wire overhead and return it through the metal rails which support and guide the cars.

The Hoosier Traction Meet's audio-visual presentations covered mass transportation in three centuries.

Auditorium manager *William M. Shapotkin* scheduled speakers on a wide variety of mass transportation subjects. Incompatible electronic formats canceled the "repeat" of one session. The problem was straightened out so that the "repeat" was shown later in the day, as scheduled. We believe in a spare for everything, so meanwhile Bill substituted an unscheduled subject, "Streetcars of Dubuque, Iowa," in the time slot of the canceled session.

The 1800s saw the start of fixed-route fixed-schedule mass transportation in numerous cities in America and elsewhere. Presentations reflecting this era included *David Miller* with "Sesquicentennial of Indianapolis transit" and *Bruce G. Moffat* on "Chicago's North Side 'L.'" That rapid transit line, thriving today, is an outgrowth of steam railroad service inaugurated 'way back in 1885.

The 2014 Hoosier Traction Meet is over, but the next Meet is coming on September 11–12, 2015. You can expect the 2015 prospectus about June in the same place you found this review. Or contact: R-Benedict-11@alumni.uchicago.edu or 3511 N Pittsburgh Ave Chicago IL 60634-2837

The 1900s included the “big” years of electric traction—and of mass transportation as a whole. In “Chicago south suburban transit,” two million-mile operator *John LeBeau* told of a large territory once served by an electric interurban railway and suburban trains of the big steam railroads, but where motor buses have accommodated local travel needs of a growing number of potential transit passengers in recent decades.

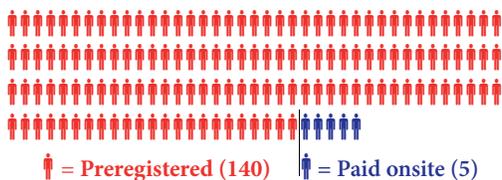
Aaron Isaacs presented “Minneapolis–St. Paul streetcars” and supplemented Minnesota’s largest transit system with a bonus showing of the street railways elsewhere in the state.

Interurban railway travel alongside Lake Erie was the subject of two different speakers. *Earl Clark* traversed the western half of the lake shore along the line of an aptly named company, “A ride on the Lake Shore Electric.” And *Ken Springirth* narrated the eastern half, “Cleveland to Erie by trolley,” an odyssey over the tracks of four separate railway companies.

Prognostications for rail mass transit in the remaining years of **the 2000** century were offered by *Charles H. Bogart*. How many of them will come true? Time will tell, and then we’ll try to keep you up-to-date.

Those are only some of the 11 different presentations, three of which were shown twice so that you had choices of meal or “break” times without missing subjects.

How many people attended the 2014 Meet?



We counted people picking up badges at the greeter station who were entitled to auditorium admissions. The statistic thus includes some of the exhibitors. Unregistered visitors to the exhibition are in addition to the 145 individuals symbolized in the graphic.

Perhaps because of the **1/2 price** offer for **preregistrations**, **96.6%** of the auditorium payments were made in advance. Thank you! The same **1/2 price** arrangement is planned for 2015.

There was a significant uptick in **first-time attendees** among the preregistrants from 12 in the previous year to **28** persons in 2014. The Meet’s increased Internet presence may deserve much of the credit for this development. *Tom Morrow* at trolleybuses.net and *Charles H. Bogart* and *Doyle Mills* at HoosierTractionMeet.com have enabled the Hoosier Traction Meet to appear online.

A “frequently asked question”:

“What are the colored markings on my name badge?” Answer: They are validations indicating that you signed up to attend recent Meets.

A red dot is for 2012; an orange pennant denotes 2013. A violet marking indicates 2014; it’s a slotted circle if the badge was prepared in advance for a person who preregistered in ample time (as many folks did), or a blob if your badge was validated onsite.

You may have achieved all three validations on one badge if you returned it each year before leaving the Meet.

What will be the color and symbol for 2015? That’s a trade secret! But you’re welcome to attend on September 11–12, 2015 and find out.