BSRA Entertainment Report for March 1, 2014

LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for March 1, 2014)

March 1, 2014. Long-time ERA and BSRA member, Seashore Trolley Museum instructor, and 35 year WCBS Newsradio 880 meteorologist for Todd Glickman travels around the world working with companies that invest in research at MIT. This gives him the opportunity to ride transit systems around the world. In this show, we got to see his recent travels to Asia, featuring Taiwan, China, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, plus a few surprises from a recent trip to Europe. All through the show, he showed us numerous interior as well as exterior photos of both rail vehicles and stations, with some photos of signage and fare payment infrastructure, and some iPhone video clips. He started the show describing the parts of his life history that led to his introduction to Seashore Trolley Museum by way of meeting a fellow radio broadcaster there.

The first images we got to see were a video from inside a Bangkok (Thailand) SkyTrain while in motion. They formerly ran in 3 car trains, but as demand has grown, they have started running in 4 car trains. Like several metro trains that we got to see later in the show, they are fully passable along the length of each train without requiring passengers to open doors between cars, such that from the passenger's point of view each train is one large articulated car. Nearly all of the SkyTrain cars are covered in ad wrap. SkyTrain (Bongkok Mass Transit System, BTS) is a private company, as is MRT (Metropolitan Rapid Transit), the company that runs the Bangkok Metro (subway), and they have separate fare collection, even at stations where their routes connect, although fare collection is planned to become integrated eventually. Fares are put on plastic RFID tokens. The Bangkok Metro runs 6 car trains, and features platform screen doors in all stations. Both systems feature very modern trains, and SkyTrain is scheduled to get platform screen doors. Bangkok also has a third rail transit system, the Airport Rail Link, which does not have the platform screen doors, but has trains running at up to 80 mph (126 km/h). This line runs express trains even though it only has 2 tracks along most of the route -- each station has sidings for local trains to load and unload passengers, theoretically without obstructing the express trains, although in practice, it seems that imperfect coordination of express and local train schedules causes express trains to get stuck behind local trains some of the time.

Next, we saw the Hong Kong Metro (Mass Transit Railway, MTR). This is now a privately run system (privatized in October 2000), and although it has one of the highest farebox recovery ratios in the world (186%), it gets most of its revenue from its real estate business. The Hong Kong Metro lines assist with development of the real estate, so even with a lesser farebox recovery ratio, MTR Corporation Limited still has an incentive to run the metro lines. The Hong Kong Metro trains are also very modern (including easy passage through the trains, and interior signs that show progress along the route) and run at up to 80 mph (126 km/h), powered by 1500 V DC from overhead wires. Some but not all stations have half height platform screen doors (automatic platform gates), which provide safety for people waiting for a train, but do not keep out the weather. In the street above, Tood showed usu double decker trams covered in ad wrap, and then some "mid-level escalators" that take people up Hong Kong's hills. Although an end-to-end ride on one of these escalators can take up to 30 minutes, these escalators provide upward service only; going down requires taking stairs. Back into the Hong Kong Metro, Todd showed us that it is very clean, with cleaning staff coming by very frequently. The suburban Hong Kong Metro train stations lack platform screen doors, but the trains feature first and second class cars; one of these lines goes all the way to the border with Mainlaind China, at Shenzen, where it is necessary for travelers to pass through Immigration and Customs; a visa is not required for US travelers to go into Hong Kong, but it is required for US travelers to go into the rest of China. Note that the suburban trains differ from the urban trains in more than offering first and second class service: They also run on 25000 V @ 60 Hz from overhead wires. After showing us this, Todd showed us some more Hong Kong trams, along with some very modern double-decker buses; the double-decker trams bear considerable resemblance to the traditional British double-decker buses, whereas the double-decker buses bear no resemblance to said buses. Todd also showed us the "Peak Tram", which is actually a funicular heading into the hills of Hong Kong, with counterbalanced cable-hauled cars. Due to uneven spacing between the stations, a car must stop at certain points between

stations to permit the counterbalancing car to to make its station stops. We also some of Hong Kong's suburban light rail system, running 1 and 2 car trains under 750 V DC power, in Tuen Mun District; this system also serves Yuen Long District.

Next stop was in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), which has a light rail metro, commuter rail lines, and a Monorail. The metro is driverless, with a "railfan window" in each end of the train, the front of which served for Todd to capture a video as the train went through a tunnel (we also saw the emergency exit handle and instruction sign at the front). In contrast, like the Disney Monorail, the Kuala Lumpur Monorail has drivers, and no "railfan window"; these trains use an ALWEG monorail design and thus are similar to both the Seattle Monorail trains and the Disneyland Monorail trains, but were actually built in Malaysia by MTrans, which also built most of the infrastructure after the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis halted the construction begun by Hitachi. The Kuala Lumpur Monorail is also very crowded.

Next we saw the London Underground, starting with the Heathrow Express, and then moving to the Picadilly Line, featuring handwritten markerboards for providing service notices. Some of the London Underground stations are at depths up to the equivalent of 15 stories, and have elevators. During rush hours, the elevator operator only lets people go up the elevators, except for people with disabilities. Some museum photos rounded out the London photos.

Back to examples of east Asian public transport advancement, Todd took us to Mainland China, showing us the Shanghai Metro and the high speed train to Beijing. He showed us the Shanghai Maglev, which goes from Pudong Airport to the city of Pudong, at up to 269 mph (431 km/h). The high-speed rail trains are not far behind the Maglev in speed, traveling in regular service at up to 230 mph (368 km/h). In either case, when 2 trains pass by, the effect of the wind on the windows is quite impressive. Stations and trains are kept very clean, with even the trains being washed frequently, required due to the deposits of smog, which is a severe problem in Chinese cities. Unlike Amtrak's Acela, the high-speed rail trains also feature reserved seating. The Shanghai Metro is very clean; some stations in the Shanghai Metro feature platform screen doors (full height in some cases and half height in some cases). Some lines have driverless trains. Shanghai Metro trains run on 1500 V DC power from overhead wires.

Singapore has its own Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) that is also very advanced, again featuring driverless trains and platform screen doors. In addition, some of the stations connect to people movers (also fully automated) that run in figure-8 loops to provide branch service from some MRT stations.

Taipei (Taiwan) also has high-speed rail service, featuring reserved seating (as on the Mainland Chinese high-speed lines); and a metro system. The Taipei Metro (Taipei Rapid Transit, MRT) has plastic RFID tokens like those of the Bangkok SkyTrain, and many of the stations have platform screen doors (full height in some cases and half height in some cases). The high capacity lines have conventional metro trains (running on steel rails) and drivers; the medium capacity lines have driverless rubber-tired trains (similar to those of people movers, but larger); an example of the latter is the Brown Line (of which, however, the trains are painted blue and white, with no trace of brown). Every station has bathrooms, and the whole system is very clean, and has a great abundance of fire extinguishers. Taipei has expansions planned for its system, and is constructing a new line.

Todd rounded off the show with some views of Switzerland, showing trams and boats in Geneva and Zurich, and high-speed rail in between, and bi-articulated (3 segment) electric trolleybuses in Zurich (note that bi-articulated electric trolleybuses can also be found in Geneva).

SHORT FORM (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for March 1, 2014)

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