

Now it's our turn!

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<http://www.trams.bc.ca/newsletter/Jan10.pdf> -

While most of us who met in Bombardier's office in downtown Vancouver already had a pretty fair idea of what was going to be involved in the operation of the two Brussels trams during the Olympic Games in 2010, the October 22 meeting was our first chance to meet the people from Bombardier who were going to coordinate the operation, and to hear at first hand what Bombardier's expectations were.

Cameron Mar of Bombardier's Project Engineering and SYSTEMS Division led us through a Power Point presentation on the proposed operation. Eero Kuitunen is in charge of the actual train operation and later fielded questions about the cars and the operation in general.

One of the first slides he presented showed the organizational chart for the project and who, either by name or by function, was to be responsible for each position or task. In general, Bombardier and the people who work for and with it, including us, are to be responsible for all aspects of the actual train operation and the cars' mechanical / electrical maintenance.

Actual maintenance will be carried out by a chief technician from Europe as well as three technicians from systems in the United States which are using these or similar Bombardier cars.



What this means is that a technician will be available on very short notice during the hours of operation. For its part the City of Vancouver will look after infrastructure, security, and the cleaning of the cars and facilities.

The City is contracting out many of these responsibilities. (Members may already have noticed the presence of security guards along the right of way.) Eric Mital is the overall manager of the entire Olympic line project.

It might be helpful to review the main features of the Olympic Line operation.

Two low-floor Flexity streetcars are being loaned to the operation by Belgium's Brussels Transport Company. (Flexity is the product name for these very flexible and very attractive high speed vehicles. See the photo of one above.)

It is expected that the cars will arrive in Vancouver on or about December 5 after which they will undergo examination and testing by the Bombardier technicians.

The cars are actually brand new, only having been nicely broken in during their time in Brussels. Prior to the arrival of the Brussels cars, our existing heritage trams will be moved to a secure storage site.

During their time with us, owing to their length, one Brussels car will be housed in the car barn while the other will be parked in a secure, fenced area beside it.

Prospective drivers will take part in right of way familiarization and classroom training dealing with the operating rules and procedures from November to December.

After the cars have been vetted by the Bombardier technicians following the cars' arrival in Canada, on board training will begin and will continue until the start of operations on January 21. Operation will then take place seven days a week, eighteen hours a day until March 21, the end of the Paralympic Games.

During the Games, operation will begin at 0630 hours and continue until 2430 each day.

As for our responsibilities, those of us who plan on operating the cars should be aware that we are going to have to commit to a minimum of eight hours every week, carried out in shifts of between four and eight hours.

No one will be asked to drive more than twelve hours a day, and after ten hours, the operator must have at least eight hours off before his or her next stint.

Crews participating will be provided with the Olympic volunteer uniforms and will officially be known as Volunteer Streetcar Drivers.

Washroom facilities have been promised in trailer units

(not Porta-Potties!), and supervisors will take over for breaks. Each car will have a driver but no conductor. City staff will provide crowd control at stations.

We have asked for an on-board information person to relieve drivers from the distraction of answering questions.

At those times when only one car is in operation, a fifteen minute headway will be maintained; with two cars the headway will be shortened to 7-8 minutes. While this is very tight scheduling, as both Mathew Laird and Jerry Plante have stressed in recent e-mails, the important point to keep in mind is SAFETY! SAFETY! SAFETY! The schedule is less important than safety.

Since no fares will be charged, it is very likely that the cars will be swamped, especially on holidays, weekends and at the beginning of the operation when the cars are quite new.

What about the cars themselves? Unlike the DHR cars, they are high speed, all electric (no air), low-floor cars capable of 70 km. per hour.

Control of both acceleration and braking is by means of a single lever on the left hand side of the operator, which also incorporates a dead-man control.

While the operator's panel may appear extremely complex to those of us familiar with the DHR and more traditional cars, the functions are fairly logical, and it is only a matter of learning which symbol means

what function.

While the original training manual was written in French, there is no labeling in French to learn, and as this is being written the car operating manuals are being translated from French to English.

The only key is to open operator's cab door. After that, no key is required to operate the car. Therefore the cab door must be closed when not in use, but remember to not leave the key in the cab, or you will be locked out.

All of the doors on a given side of the car can be opened at once (essential for speedy loading and unloading) or only the front door next to the operator. Unless the driver chooses otherwise, the default opening position is the right hand set of doors in relation to the direction in which the cars are traveling.

This means that the default will work for the Olympic Village, but the choice of side will have to be changed to the left hand side at Granville Island, since the default would open the wrong set of doors. If all this technology makes people uncomfortable, experienced motormen on the High Level Bridge Division in Edmonton who were used to the more traditional type of streetcar usually could make the transition to the Siemens-Duwag #601 LRV in about two or three afternoons.

As many of you will have noticed, the track from Granville Island to the

Olympic Village has been totally replaced with modern concrete ties and welded rail. While the familiar clickety-clack will no longer exist, the new track is capable of handling the high speed trains of the Olympic Line.

To discourage metal thieves, where possible, all ground and bonding wires have been covered with asphalt.

That the members of the DHR have been given the opportunity to operate a modern, high speed transit system is probably a testimony to the fact that the Society's members have proven that "volunteer" does not mean "amateur." It is an opportunity for us to show that we are capable of operating a highly professional system.

*Further details about the project can be obtained at Bombardier's site at: www.vancouverstreetcar.bombardier.com