

Sacramento in Transit – A History of Public Transit In Sacramento

1. Rail transit, in the form of light rail, came back to Sacramento the Spring of 1987
2. Sacramento's first public transit began in 1858. By the 1870's horse drawn streetcars ran on tracks in dirt streets. This is the 'G' Street line, in front of the old Governors Mansion.
3. In 1889 the horsecar system was converted to electric battery cars, which were replaced over the next two years by the overhead wire trolley system. Notice the trolley pole on top of this converted horsecar.
4. By the turn of the century, Sacramento's trolley system had spread out to all parts of the urbanized area. Ridership had increased so dramatically that larger double truck (two wheelsets) cars built. These new streetcars were double the size of the early trolleys, seating over 40 passengers. Notice the enclosed middle section with open ends – unique to California cities.
5. Typical of urban destinations in the early days was the amusement park. Sacramento had its Joyland in Oak Park, which featured a giant roller coaster, ferris wheel and swimming pool. The trolleys carried patrons by the thousands to Joyland on weekends throughout the Summers.
6. Also typical of city trolley systems was serving the main train station. Here we see the old Central Pacific Station at 2nd and 'H'. Notice the other two forms of transit – bicycles and walking.
7. By nine-teens Sacramento had three intercity carriers. This is the River Auto Stages, a predecessor to regional Greyhound Bus Service, which operated from downtown to several surrounding cities.
8. Life was tough on the early bus systems, with paved highways often ending after leaving the county, and flat tires a common experience. This is Del Paso Blvd about 1915.
9. King of the intercity transit carriers were the interurban streetcars. Sacramento had two systems; the C.C. T. that ran south to Lodi and Stockton, and the big Sacramento Northern Railway shown here at 8th and 'J', which ran north to Marysville-Yuba City and Chico, and also southwest to the Bay Area. The big cars were not only more comfortable and reliable than the auto or bus of the day, but with operating speeds of up to 70 mph – a whole lot faster. Notice the elegant dress style of the passengers.

10. By the late teens the local bus had arrived, used primarily as a feeder to the streetcar lines.
11. Ridership on the streetcars continued to grow into the 1920's, with transit systems often garnering over 70% of all trips into the central city. In 1925, the SP built a new railroad station at 4th and 'I' Street, and the trolleys were given a well landscaped turnaround loop. The SP building, now served by Amtrak, is still in use today.
12. Sacramento's streetcars, operated by P.G. & E. since 1906, did very well during the 1920's. This mid-twenties view of 'K' Street and 10th shows an active downtown with the automobile already making a strong presence.
13. In 1929, P.G. & E. made their last order of trolley cars. These streetcars featured leather seats and an automatic treadle operated rear door.
14. The 30's was a tough decade for transit, although more so in the east and midwest than in California. As auto ownership increased, transit ridership went down. Stan's drive-in, on Stockton Blvd, was a popular spot for motorists for decades, and a typical example of automobile entertainment of the day.
15. The late 1930's saw the first major abandonments of streetcar lines, replaced by rough riding gas powered buses with manual transmissions.
16. 1940 saw the end of the interurban systems in Sacramento. Here we see a Sacramento Northern interurban car on the West Sacramento side of the Tower Bridge, just a block from the beautiful new Raley Field.
17. WW II intervened in 1941, and most trolley replacements were put on hold around the State, and the Nation. Most small California cities had ended streetcar service by this time, but the Sacramento Northern still operated a small fleet of single truck cars until 1947.
18. Elsewhere, in San Diego, trolleys operated until 1949, some on long stretches of private right-of-way that San Diego Transit wishes they still had today.
19. In Los Angeles, two streetcar systems were operated. The famed Pacific Electric red cars ran on over 1000 miles of track to all corners of the vast Southern California region. Here we see a two car unit on Highland Avenue in Hollywood, heading for Van Nuys.
20. L.A.'s other system, Los Angeles Transit Lines, ran a large fleet of streetcars primarily on local lines radiating out of downtown. LA was one of the many U.S. cities that ordered the PCC Car that was developed during the 1930's. When

introduced in 1936, the PCC's were smoother, quieter, and actually faster to 20mph than V-8 autos of the day.

21. San Francisco in the 1940's, as well as today, has by far California's most effective transit systems. With the world famous Ferry Building in the background, famed Market Street had four tracks to serve two trolley systems for several decades, and is still one of the premier transit corridors in the world today.
22. Across the Bay, the Key System ran interurban type cars from Oakland and Berkeley neighborhoods across the Bay Bridge into the City until 1958.
23. The Key also operated local streetcars, like the #10 route in Piedmont, to serve Downtown Oakland until 1948.
24. Back in Sacramento, the last trolleys were abandoned in 1947. In many cases the tracks were pulled out of the street before paving (as seen here in Curtis Park).
25. The streetcars were replaced by G.M. diesel buses with automatic transmissions. Not long after this, a G.M executive uttered that famous statement "What's good for GM, is good for America"
26. Meanwhile back in L.A. In 1947 the streetcar tracks on the side of a roadway were placed in the middle of a new Hollywood Freeway for the P.E.s Van Nuys service. Five years later the trolleys were replaced by buses and the tracks torn up to become more freeway lanes. Forty –plus years after that, a tunnel was built through the Hollywood Hills, for well over a hundred million dollars, for the new Red line Subway.
27. And back in Sacramento, the 1950's saw annual decreases in transit ridership, with public ownership by the City of Sacramento beginning in 1955. The one highlight of the decade was the introduction of the A/C bus in 1959.
28. In 1961, the first federal transit bill was introduced by President Kennedy. It was so unpopular, that it had to be tacked onto a housing bill to get it through Congress. During the 60's California's transit ridership continued its decline, but the S.F. Bay Area planned and then constructed the regional BART System.
29. By the late 1960's, Sacramento's community leaders realized that the Cities local bus system simply could not meet the growing regional transportation needs. By 1970, the population of the urbanized portion of the County had surpassed that of the City, yet 90% of the local bus service was within the City Limits. Something had to be done!
30. State Legislation was enacted in 1971, creating a new Sacramento Regional Transit District (this legislation was spearheaded by Senator James Mills, who a decade later would come to be known as the Father of California's light rail).

SRTD, which now had a dedicated funding source (1/4 cent Sales Tax) collected within the County, and a seven person City/County governing Board, began operations April 1, 1973.

31. Expansion of new bus routes into suburban County neighborhoods, along with a mid-70's gas shortage, saw transit ridership grow 125% from 1973 to 1976. To accommodate the growth, RT had to lease old buses from other parts of the country, shown here parked under the Business 80 Freeway.
32. However, by 1980 business and community leaders again realized that transit needs were not effectively being met. Looking at the map we see the 1920 version of Sacramento with its boundaries roughly Alhambra on the east and Broadway to the south. Thirty years later we're looking at State University on the east, with City College/Sutterville Road to the south. About a 250% increase. By 1980 Sacramento had grown to become an area 6-7 times the 1950 size. Although the buses were doing well, in most cases a coach operator could only make one trip from a distant suburb to downtown during the peak period. Higher capacity had to be the answer.
33. The Sacramento community was now facing other problems too. Air pollution was now making its presence felt. This is Hwy 50 looking west towards downtown Sacramento.
34. And then we had freeway madness, which Sacramento residents came out strongly against. Sacramento leaders began to look at alternatives – what could be done?
35. San Diego decided to try a new concept, and opened the U.S. first light rail line in 1981. It was low cost, and very successful.
36. Sacramento began its own evaluation of high capacity, fixed guideway systems in its major corridors. Light rail was chosen as the preferred alternative for the region.
37. During the early 1980's, Sacramento became the first city in the country to convert funds from an abandoned freeway project (I-80 Bypass) for use in establishing rail transit.
38. Making use of abandoned and lightly used rail rights-of-way, and then turning the downtown portion of the route into two pedestrian friendly malls, light rail was beginning to take shape.
39. Acceptance testing commenced in 1986 between Watt Ave and the I – 80 Freeway in the northeast, and Downtown Sacramento. This gave the public an opportunity to see light rail 'in the flesh'.

40. On Friday, March 12, 1987, light rail opened to standing room only crowds. They came from as far away as Chico and Modesto – and they loved it. Six months later, the second route along the Folsom Corridor also opened to large crowds.
41. But RT's Board leadership didn't stop with just light rail; beginning in the early 90's a new fleet of CNG buses were ordered and a new fueling facility constructed.
42. And in 1999, RT purchased a fully restored original Sacramento Streetcar; currently used for special events.
43. We've covered Sacramento's transit history (and little bit of the rest of the State) from 1858 to the present; from early electrics, through several designs of buses, to the present light rail operation.
44. Although this is the end of this slide show.....
45. You are in for some entertaining and educational presentations from Dr Scotts staff and consultants. Thank you.