

# BUS HISTORY ASSOCIATION 2018 CONVENTION

Dayton and Cincinnati, OH – Wednesday, June 6<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>

*All photos by Kevin Nicol, unless otherwise indicated*

The Bus History Association held its 2018 annual convention in the Buckeye state, Ohio. This was the first time that the BHA had returned to Ohio since 2000 when the annual convention was in Cleveland, on the southern shore of Lake Erie. This time, the BHA targeted the southwest corner of the state with two cities, Dayton and Cincinnati serving as host cities for the convention.

BHA members arrived in Dayton on Tuesday evening (or before) for the Wednesday start of the convention. Dayton is one of only six cities in North America to operate trolley coaches. This would be the second year in a row where the host city operated trolley coaches. In June 2017, the BHA visited Vancouver, BC, the only Canadian city to still operate the quiet, emission free vehicles (the other active systems are Boston, Philadelphia, Seattle and San Francisco).

The host hotel for the Dayton portion of the convention was the Crowne Plaza on East 5<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Dayton. The hotel was ideally suited for the transportation enthusiast as it was only a block away from Wright Stop Plaza, the main downtown transit terminal for the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority (GDRTA). The terminal is named after the Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, the inventors of flight. Even though the first flight occurred elsewhere (Kitty Hawk, NC), the Wright brothers were born and raised in Dayton and their legacy is proudly proclaimed throughout the city.

## DAY ONE – Wednesday, June 6<sup>th</sup>

The trolley coach would be the focus of the first day of the convention. GDRTA provided two trolley coaches for a tour of their trolley coach network. One vehicle, Brown Boveri Corporation (BBC) # 110, is part of their historic fleet. Originally delivered to Edmonton Transit in 1982 as # 110, it was one of two BBCs that were acquired by the Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority (predecessor to GDRTA) in the mid-1990s.



The second vehicle was a 1998 Skoda/ETI trolleybus (# 9805). A few retirements have occurred from the original order of 54 trolley coaches, assembled locally by Electric Transit Incorporated. Only 33 of the ETIs remain active.

Upon arrival just opposite the hotel, the BBC trolley # 110 was having issues with the regenerative braking system. While this is not a concern with level areas, RTA officials were concerned about taking the trolley bus up and down hills. Downtown Dayton is basically at

the bottom of a bowl in the Miami Valley. As all of the trolley routes depart the downtown, they eventually go up slight grades to service the outer suburbs. With the regenerative braking problem issue, the decision

to keep # 110 in the downtown area was made. BHA members were given a short ride in the BBC to the Wright Stop Plaza (*lower left photo on previous page*). At this point, everybody switched to a third trolley, # 1404, a Gillig BRT styled trolley. The RTA is in the process of renewing their trolley coach fleet and took delivery of 4 Gillig BRT trolleys with Vossloh-Kiepe electrics, in 2014. Two of the trolley coaches (# 1401-02) were delivered as dual mode buses while the other two (# 1403-04) were battery electric versions with extended off wire capabilities. Dayton RTA recently placed on order for 26 new Gillig BRT trolleys, with an option of another 15 once additional funding is secured. The new trolleys, scheduled to start delivery in early 2019, will be battery electric versions and will operate under wire on the existing portion of trolley routes but will operate under battery power under planned routing extensions to the suburbs. Bus # 1404 had been repainted into a sharp green and silver paint scheme.

Local trolley historian Tom Morrow helped to plan the routing for the trolley fan trip. Dayton RTA operates 7 trolley routes but at the time of our visit, route 4 was the only route that had regularly scheduled trolley buses. Routes 1 and 2 had a morning tripper run with a trolley but most of the other routes were affected with construction in some way.

After a quick trip outbound on route 2 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, we returned back downtown to the Wright Stop Plaza. The BHA group assembled in the RTA Boardroom on the second floor where we were greeted by Mark Donaghy, Chief Executive Officer of the RTA. Mark provided all members of the group with a goodie bag which was appreciated by all. After a few minutes greeting the group, Mark turned the presentation over to Tom Morrow who gave a PowerPoint presentation on the history of trolleys in Dayton. After the presentation, the group assembled back on the trolleys, including # 110 for a quick ride to the garage at 600 Longworth Street. At this point, BBC trolley # 110 would remain at the garage for the rest of the day (*photo above right*).



BHA members were given a walking tour of the main garage, including the service area. In addition to the trolleys, we were also able to photograph the other diesel buses and hybrid buses in the RTA fleet. The diesel bus fleet consists of all Gillig, both the standard "Advantage" style and the newer BRT model. Dayton has always had very colorful paint schemes and the current fleet consists of many shades of green, gray and yellow. After the tour, we assembled the three generations of trolleys outside for a nice lineup photo (*photo at left*).



After the garage tour, the trolley tour of Dayton continued. An optional lunch stop was scheduled on Brown Street. While most people elected to go for lunch, a few people decided to remain on the trolleys for a ride on route 5 Far





Hills all the way to Stroop Road. This line goes through one of the more upscale neighbourhoods in Dayton which provides a very scenic ride. A photo stop was made on Far Hills Avenue (*photo at left*).

After lunch the BHA headed to the Northwest Hub via route 8-Salem. The Northwest Hub is one of the main transfer points for the RTA system and is serviced by a number of routes. It is also the Greyhound depot and a brand new Prevost X3-45 was boarding when we arrived. Greyhound passengers who are

destined to downtown Dayton have to board an RTA bus from the Northwest Hub. Greyhound moved their terminal from downtown to the Hub in 2009.

The other reason for travelling to the NW Hub is that the RTA also has a small storage building on site, in behind the Greyhound Terminal. This is where the rest of the historic trolley fleet is kept. None of the vehicles at this location are operable but the RTA does hope to restore them at some point in the future. Included are three Flyer E800 trolleys, a Marmon Herrington and a Flyer E700A (*photo at right*) that still proudly proclaims that it is a "1971 trolley bus".



After viewing the fleet, the tour continued via the West Hub where we were able to photograph some more of the in service fleet. We then headed back downtown but stopped for a group photo (*below left*) along the way. Our arrival back at the hotel was at 4:00 PM which allowed some time for BHA members to get dinner or take more bus photos prior to the BHA annual meeting in the evening.



At the BHA annual meeting, it was mentioned that the 2019 convention will be in Ottawa from June 6 to 8 with the possibility of a pre-convention day on June 5. Watch for more details in a future issue of "Bus Industry".

After the meeting, Tom Morrow, Dave Decsman and Kevin Nicol showed slides of Dayton trolley and city buses

over the years. After a long day, BHA members retired to their rooms for the night to try to get as much sleep as possible. The next day of BHA activities would be just as long as the first day.

## DAY TWO – Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup>

The BHA chartered an MCI J4500 from Buckeye Charters, a local charter company from Huber Heights, a Dayton suburb northeast of downtown.

We departed the hotel at 8:00 PM and headed 27 miles east to Springfield, Ohio. The local transit service is provided by Springfield City Area Transit (SCAT) and their Transit Center is located at South Center and West High Streets.

The 9:10 AM pulse produced three buses, each of a different make and model. One Gillig 30' low floor (*photo above*), one Chevrolet Arboc and one El Dorado Passport cutaway bus arrived. The Passport had a colorful wrap for the Greater Springfield area. While we were downtown, we observed another Buckeye J4500 which was destined to the afternoon Cincinnati Reds game at the Great American Ballpark.



Our next stop would be at The Ohio State University, 46 miles away. The University is officially referred to as "The" to reflect the national stature of the institution. Previously, it was known as OSU which could also be confused with Oregon State and Oklahoma State University. The transit service at the University is known as CABS, an abbreviation for Campus Area Bus Service. Earlier in 2018, the University opened up the Herrick Drive Transit Hub, which is right beside Ohio Stadium, also known as the Horseshoe. The stadium provided an excellent backdrop for photos of the CABS buses.

The CABS fleet consists of Gillig low floor buses in both diesel and CNG versions (*photo above left*). The fleet also has a small number of Gillig Phantoms, but due to the reduced service levels of the summer semester, there were none in service on the day that the BHA was in town.

From the Herrick Drive Hub, the BHA proceeded to the Northland Transit Center on Cleveland Avenue North. A number of COTA (Central Ohio Transit Authority) routes service the Center including CMAX, the BRT route that travels north and south on Cleveland Avenue. Every other trip short turns at the Transit



Center so BHA members were able to get some photos of the CMAX equipment. Gillig BRT CNG buses are used with a branded paint scheme of light and dark blue, red and white (*photo at right*).

Lunch was next and the BHA proceeded to the Northern Lights Shopping Center where a number of food choices were available within a short walking distance.

After lunch, our next stop would be in downtown Columbus. The BHA had planned to visit the McKinley Avenue garage, but final

confirmation was never received so the decision was made to venture downtown instead. The intersection of Broad and High Streets are serviced by most of the routes in the downtown area, including CMAX. The CBUS (downtown circulator) and AirConnect (direct service to John Glenn International Airport) routes also use specially branded equipment and are close to the intersection of Broad and High as well.



During the scheduled hour downtown, BHA members were able to get photos of the numerous Gillig buses operated by COTA. Included were diesel and CNG versions of all lengths, 30', 35 and 40'. Some people even checked out the State Capitol building or even went for a short bus ride on the CBUS route. All in all, it was better stopping downtown instead of the planned garage visit.

Our next stop would be at Government Square in Cincinnati. After a ride of 109 miles, the BHA arrived just in time for the afternoon rush hour. Government Square is one of the main transfer points of Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA, commonly referred to as Metro), the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) and the Cincinnati Bell Connector streetcar.



Government Square is also serviced by Clermont Transportation Connection which services the County of Clermont located east of Cincinnati. CTC operates 2 Gillig BRT buses (*photo at left*) which are used on the 4X route to Amelia. A number of cutaways are also in the CTC fleet and there were quite a few departures during the time that the BHA was present.

TANK has a number of express routes to Newport, Covington and points beyond in northern Kentucky. Their fleet consists of all Gilligs, most of which are the standard Advantage design in both 35' and 40' lengths, in both diesel and hybrid. They also have suburban Gillig BRT buses with high back seats that are used on some of the longer express routes. TANK also services downtown Cincinnati with the South Bank Shuttle. Replica trolley type vehicles are used that links the downtowns of Cincinnati, Newport and Covington.

Cincinnati Metro operates a varied fleet of buses. Included are New Flyer models (DE30LFR, D40LF, DE40LF, DE40LFR and DE60LF) and Gilligs (Advantage, Advantage suburbans and Phantoms). A number of their routes service Government Square so numerous afternoon peak periods departures were able to be observed and photographed. One of the more unique models operated by Metro are the New Flyer DE30LFR (*photo at right*). These were the only units of this model produced and Metro operates four. BHA members were able to see one operating on route 28 during our time at Government Square.



Cincinnati Bell Connector is the name of the streetcar line that was implemented in September 2016. Five low-floor Urbos 3 streetcars were ordered from Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles (CAF) of Spain for the line. They were numbered upwards from 1174 which was the last PCC streetcar delivered to the Cincinnati Street Railway in the early 1950s. The new LRVs are numbered 1175 to 1179. A few BHA members went for a short ride on the line during the time at Government Square.

The Great American Ballpark was only a short ten minute walk away from Government Square and a number of BHA members walked over to photograph the handful of charter coaches that were in town for the afternoon Reds game.

After approximately one and a half hours at Government Square, the BHA boarded our charter bus for a short ride across the Ohio River to the host hotel for the Cincinnati portion of the convention. The Holiday Inn Cincinnati-Riverfront (600 W. 3rd Street, Covington, KY) was conveniently located in Covington and was only a short 10 minute bus ride on the South Bank Connector from downtown Cincinnati. A number of BHA members departed the trip here and checked into the hotel for Thursday night. The remaining people remained on the bus and we returned to the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dayton at approximately 7:30 PM. It was a long day with 258 total miles covered but everybody had an enjoyable time.

## **DAY THREE – Friday, June 8<sup>th</sup>**

The Friday of the BHA convention was reserved for a TANK tour. The activities for the day started a little later than normal, at 12:30 PM. This later start allowed people who stayed in Dayton for the Thursday night sufficient time to drive to Covington for the second part of the convention. The people who checked into the Covington hotel on Thursday night had the morning free to themselves.

TANK provided two buses for the afternoon tour. One of the buses was a Gillig BRT suburban used on the express routes. It was the other bus that attracted our attention the most, however. Bus # 209, painted in the livery of "The Green Line" is a 1950 GMC TDH-3612 which is part of the impressive historical collection that is maintained by TANK. The lack of air conditioning on the bus, even though it was a hot and humid day, did not deter BHA members for going for a ride on the GMC Old Look. The old look was driven by Bus





History Association member Nick Lang, who is one of only two drivers allowed to drive the ancient bus. Our first stop of the day would be at the recently opened Covington Transit Center. Our buses parked on the street (*photo at left*) while the revenue service buses would go into the building which is underneath a parking garage. After a short time at the terminal, we headed to the TANK garage (3375 Madison Pike, Fort Wright, KY). The GMC Old Look performed flawless during the five mile ride to the garage.

At the garage, BHA members were greeted by the friendly TANK staff. On display outside was the rest of the TANK historical collection which included an AM General D9635 (*photo below right*), a Flixible Metro, a Gillig Phantom and a GMC TDH-4517 which was also painted in the Green Line paint scheme.

TANK also provided all BHA members with a goodie bag which included a very nice TANK coffee mug.

While at the garage, we were also able to photograph some of the other vehicles in the TANK fleet, mostly Gillig Advantages in both diesel and hybrid versions.



After our garage visit, we boarded a newer Gillig hybrid # 715 (*photo below left*) along with Gillig BRT suburban # 888 for a ride to the Florence Transit Hub Park & Ride (8030 Mall Road, Florence, KY). This was a ride of 9 miles on the freeway so clearly bus # 209 remained at the garage and the hybrid was substituted. We were at the Hub for about half an hour and a few TANK vehicles pulled into the terminal during that time. The afternoon rush hour was just starting and the terminal has an increasing number of trips as a result.



After the Florence Hub, we headed back to the hotel for 4:00 PM arrival. Upon arrival at the hotel, operator Nick mentioned that he was about to start work at Government Square and offered anybody who was interested a ride to downtown Cincinnati. Even though we had already been there the

After the Florence Hub, we headed back to the hotel for 4:00 PM arrival. Upon arrival at the hotel, operator Nick mentioned that he was about to start work at Government Square and offered anybody who was interested a ride to downtown Cincinnati. Even though we had already been there the

day before, a number of BHA members took advantage of the opportunity to spend a few more hours in downtown Cincinnati. Even though this was a shorter day, viewing the historic collection of TANK was one of the highlights of the convention.

## DAY FOUR – Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>

The last day of the BHA convention would concentrate on the greater Cincinnati area and areas slightly north. Our charter coach for the day was a Van Hool TX-45 of Croswell VIP Motorcoach Services (*photo below left*), driven once again by BHA member Nick Lang.



Our first stop of the day would be at the Croswell garage, located in Williamsburg, Ohio, approximately 30 miles east of Cincinnati. The Croswell fleet consists of MCI J4500, Van Hool C2045 and TX-45 models. Some of the older Van Hool buses are painted in the red and white colors of the University of Cincinnati. Also present was an MCI J4500 that was wrapped for the Cincinnati Bearcats, the team name for the University sports teams.

Heading back to Cincinnati, our next stop would be at the Queensgate Garage of Cincinnati Metro (SORTA). While at the garage, bus enthusiasts Marcus French and Jim Bainter (a Metro driver) helped to pull out vehicles and pose them nicely in the morning sun. As we had seen before, the Metro fleet has quite a bit of variety so one of each type (except artics which are not kept at this garage) was pulled out for photography. Included was a Gillig Advantage, fully wrapped for Skyline Chili, which is a local Cincinnati institution. Some BHA members were anxious to try the famous Skyline chili as there was a store right across the road from our host hotel in Covington.

One of the buses brought out for photography was a Gillig BRT hybrid (*photo at right*), specially branded for Metro\* Plus (route 90). This express service, started in summer 2013, directly connects the busy Montgomery Road corridor to Uptown, downtown and The Banks. Only 10 Gilligs are wrapped for this route so even though BHA members had seen some downtown in the two days earlier, it was good to get a posed photo of one without traffic congestion in the way.



Our next stop would be the Cincinnati Bell



Connector streetcar. Metro graciously provided a Gillig Phantom for the trip between the Queensgate garage and the car barns. Even though it is only about 1.4 miles between the facilities, operator Jim Bainter provided a roundabout route that highlighted some local Cincinnati history. Along the way, Jim pointed out some abandoned tunnels from the Cincinnati subway. The tunnels, approximately two miles in length were constructed during the early 1900s in anticipation of a rapid transit subway for Cincinnati. However, the Great Depression resulted in increased costs and political bickering and the entire project was abandoned in 1928. There are no future plans to make use of the tunnels, so it was fascinating viewing this somewhat infamous example of Cincinnati transit history.

The car barns for the Cincinnati Bell Connector streetcar are located at the northern end of the line at 1915 Race Street. We were welcomed by Transdev employees, who are the contractor for the line. Our group was split up into two and we were given a comprehensive tour of the car barns. Transdev requires that all people on site at the car barns wear a safety vest which necessitated the need for the two groups. One group would tour inside while the other group remained outside the barns. While on the outside tour, revenue cars would pass by on Henry Street which is at the northern end of the line (*photo above right*).



After the tours, we walked to the Findlay Market Station, which was only about a block away from the car barns. The BHA group then boarded a revenue service car and travelled to The Banks station, located at the southern end of the line. Our charter coach was parked a short distance away from the station and we then proceeded to our lunch stop at West 4th and Philadelphia Streets in Covington KY. A number of fast food choices were available. We were running slightly behind schedule due to the car barn tour so lunch was shortened slightly to allow the afternoon schedule to proceed as advertised.



After lunch, we headed north via I-75 to the Hamilton County Fairgrounds (7801 Anthony Wayne Avenue). This is where the historical collection of the Cincinnati Transit Historical Association (CTHA) is kept. The CTHA is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving transit information, photographs, ephemera and memorabilia relating primarily to the Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana region. CTHA President Tom McNamara and a number of the members had spent the morning preparing six buses from their fleet for BHA members to ride

and photograph. Included were a GMC TDH-5105 painted for the Cincinnati Street Railway (*photo at left*), a

former TANK GMC New Look bus, a GMC TDH-4512 painted for The Green Line, a GMC T8H-5307A from COTA, a Golden Gate Transit GMC-T8H-5305 and an Ohio Bus Lines GMC SDH-4501. The hour that the BHA spent at this location photographing and riding buses went by very quickly.

Our final stop of the day would be at the Middletown Transit Station in Middletown, Ohio which is located north of Cincinnati. Transit service in Middletown, as well as neighbouring cities Hamilton and Oxford, is provided by the Butler County Transit Authority. In addition to providing local service in the three cities,



BCTA also provided intercity routes that link all of the three cities in a triangle. BCTA previously had a fleet that consisted of used vehicles from a number of cities including Toledo, Dayton and Canton but Gillig BRT buses delivered since 2014 have gradually resulted in the retirement of most of the used vehicles. The Gillig BRT buses are in a standard paint scheme but have been branded for the three different services. Our arrival at the terminal was for 4:30 PM which was for the last arrivals of the day as the buses headed back to the garage after this point. The friendly

drivers did stick around for a while though which resulted in the opportunity for some good photos. The Middletown buses have a wrap at the rear of the bus stating "Bright past, brighter future" (*photo above left*). Also present in the parking lot of the terminal were two other buses arranged by the BCTA. A Ford cutaway used in the intercity services was displayed along with a Gillig BRT, branded for Miami University in Oxford. The transit service in Oxford and Hamilton does not run on Saturdays so the extra effort by BCTA to allow BHA members to see the equipment from the other services is appreciated.

After Middletown, we headed back to the host hotel where we arrived just after 5:15 PM. This brought the 2018 convention to a close and all BHA members were in agreement that this was a very good convention. As with any successful convention, there are a number of people who deserve special mention. CTHA members Tom McNamara, Jim Bainter, Nick Lang, Marcus French and James Rodecker helped in setting up most of the convention. Gina Douthat from TANK and Mick Douthat from the Holiday Inn Cincinnati Riverfront were a husband-wife team that helped with the Covington portion of the convention. Dayton trolley expert Tom Morrow and Dayton RTA CEO Mark Donaghy provided invaluable assistance for the Dayton portion of the convention.

The BHA convention for 2019 will be in Ottawa, Ontario from Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>. There is the possibility of a pre-convention day on Wednesday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. OC Transpo is expected to open their new light rail line at the end of 2018 so it will be a very good time to explore the Capital of Canada. Plan now to join the BHA in Ottawa in June 2019 !