



1946: We Vote for Trams, BC Electric Ignores Us



Exhaust: Just Needs a Nice Lilac Scent!

Hey, a little diesel exhaust won't hurt you. That was General Motors' line for decades. With time, more research found out what was harmful in bus emissions. In a morbidly fascinating 1961 article in *Metropolitan Transportation*, GM engineer SW Sinks said diesel exhaust was safer than that of gas or propane motors. His own figures, though, showed that diesel engines emitted more oxides of nitrogen and formaldehydes.

Then things got odd, really *really* odd. The discussion in 1961 turned to putting *perfumes* in diesel fuel. That year, for example, the Chicago Transit Authority spent \$8,000 on fragrances in an attempt to make the foul output from diesel engines less objectionable. (The article did not specify whether CTA used American scents or swankier stuff from, say, Chanel in France).

All of this might make a good Addams Family skit: "Here's a nice arsenic/polonium/strychnine cocktail for you, Uncle Fester. It's your favorite. Pina colada flavor!" These guys, however, were dead (get it?) serious.



"New Yorkers Loved the Buses"

Hawaiian Cliff Slater says it was great that General Motors ripped out most of the trams on Manhattan over 1935/36. After all, "New Yorkers loved the buses." But *New York Times* letters say otherwise:

Recent articles on the Madison Avenue buses failed to mention their most serious and dangerous fault—the unbelievably foul fumes which they emit. (WH Crossman, April 2, 1935)

Buses may be a trifle faster than trolleys, but give me the latter any time. Cleaner air, less jolting and swaying, more room. (HG, April 6, 1935)

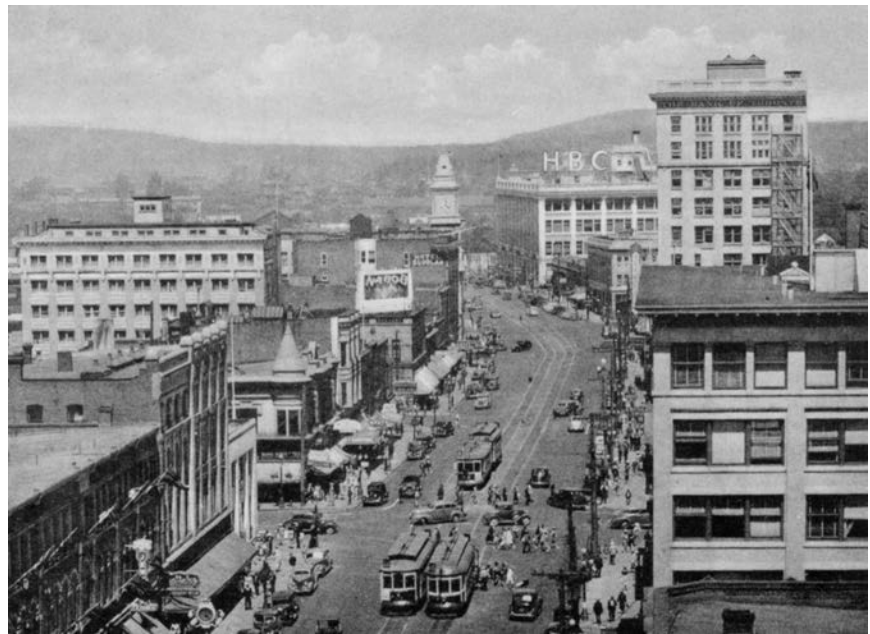
...the chief objection in buses is the awful fumes they exude. (JW, April 7, 1936)

Stroll along our avenues and breathe in the oil fumes coming from the exhaust of the buses. For that reason I prefer the old-fashioned trolley cars. (Ed Grant, April 7, 1936)

..the real solution [was] obtained by the American Transit Association, which decided that mass transit for large cities should be by trolley..(Norman Rinke, July 6, 1936)

As for the First and Second Avenue buses, these on a warm day have no more ventilation than the Black Hole of Calcutta. (L. Carter, June 17, 1936)

I find traveling on the new buses very unsatisfactory. The fumes from the gasoline seem to pervade the entire atmosphere. (Joseph Levi, June 17, 1936)



Douglas St. is Streetcar Alley in the 1940s (Wally Young).



An NYC Third Ave. Railway tram.