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Joe Mendoza

Muni Metro

**Bay Area Rail Transit Album Vol. 2:
San Francisco's Light Rail lines
+ streetcar & cable car lines**



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Dedicated to my mother, Lora Mendoza, who, when I was a child, took me on shopping trips into San Francisco, where we rode on the streetcars.

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Thanks to Jack Tillmany for the use of photos from his extensive collection, and to Terry Monohan and Ken Moore for all their help.



An L line light rail vehicle exits the Twin Peaks Tunnel at West Portal

Cover photos:

Top: Modern light rail vehicle at West Portal.

Bottom Left: PCC Streetcar on Market Street.

Bottom Right: Cable cars on Powell Street.

Frontispiece: Modern light rail vehicle exiting the Sunset Tunnel, June 2010.

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A modern J line Light Rail Vehicle passes an F line PCC at Church and Market Streets.

San Francisco Municipal Railway, Early years

In a special election held on December 30, 1904, the voters of San Francisco authorized the city to create the San Francisco Municipal Railway. This railway, referred to as “Muni”, would be the first publically owned transit system in the United States; however, it wasn’t until 1912 that the new railway was built. In that year, the franchise of the Geary, Park and Ocean Railroad’s cable car line on Geary Street expired; instead of renewing the franchise, the city took control of the line. The new Municipal Railway quickly began the transformation of the cable car line into the Geary Street electric streetcar line. Muni removed the cableway and replaced the old tracks from Market to 5th Avenue and built new tracks as far as 33rd Avenue. The Municipal Railway also built a new branch along 10th Avenue from Geary to Golden Gate Park.

On December 28, 1912, the Municipal Railway opened the two Geary Street lines. The branch to the park was originally intended to be the more important branch and was designated the A line, the line to 33rd Avenue was designated the B line. The A line was to have been extended through the park and then down Judah Street. This extension never occurred; instead the N line was built, through the Sunset Tunnel below Buena Vista Heights, to Judah Street (see pages 62-70). The A line never became as important as initially envisioned, and in 1932, the A line was the first streetcar line abandoned by Muni.

When the Municipal Railway was founded, San Francisco had several private transit companies; the United Railroads was the largest (In 1921 the URR would be reorganized as the Market Street Railway). On June 25, 1913, both the A and B lines were extended down Market Street, over tracks shared with the URR’s Stockton Street line, to the Ferry Building. The same day also saw the B line extended along Balboa and Cabrillo Avenues to the ocean. By August, a loop at the beach completed the B line.

The next 3 years saw an explosive expansion of the Municipal Railway. The rapid growth was fueled by plans for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915. The relatively inaccessible corner of the city, where the exposition was to be held, needed increased streetcar service.

The Presidio and Ferries Railroad was a small independent streetcar company with one major line on Union Street and a small branch from Union to the bay. The line was heavily damaged during the earthquake of 1906. After the earthquake the line was electrified, but, because the company did not have deep pockets, and because the franchise for the line was about to expire, the line was lightly rebuilt, where possible the electric cars ran over the existing cable car tracks. In March of 1914, the city gained control of the expired



From the author's collection

In 1912, the A and B lines were the first two streetcar lines to be opened by Muni. In 1913, the B line was extended from its original terminus at 33rd Ave. to the beach. Above is a B line streetcar at ‘Playland at the Beach’, an amusement park at the end of the Geary Street line.

franchise of the Presidio and Ferries Railroad's Union Street line and the city rebuilt the line to Municipal standards. The route re-opened it as the E line on February 10, 1915.

A completely new line, the D line, was built along Van Ness Avenue and began operation on August 15, 1914. The D line ran from the exposition grounds along Van Ness to Geary Street, and then shared the A and B lines' route along Geary St. to Market St. and the Ferries. On the same day the H line began operation along Van Ness from the exposition grounds to the corner of Van Ness and Market. The H line was later extended down 11th Street and Potrero Avenue as far as Army Street (now Caesar Chavez Blvd.)

The most ambitious of the first 6 lines was the original F line. It opened on December 28, 1914. The F line ran from Market Street along Stockton Street, past Union Square, through a 911 foot long streetcar tunnel (San Francisco's first streetcar tunnel, now used by automobiles and electric trolley coaches). The F line continued up Stockton Street to Columbus, through North Beach to North Point Street, and then west to the exposition grounds. Thirty years later the F line was extended down 4th Street to the Southern Pacific



From the collection of Jack Tillmany

Among the streetcars operating on Muni's opening day, December 28, 1912, was Municipal Railway car #1, the first publically owned transit car in the United States. Car #1 was restored to its original condition in 1962 to honor Muni's 50th anniversary. It is now undergoing another restoration and will be back on the F line in time for Muni's 100th birthday. In the above photo, Streetcar #1 is passing the Orpheum theatre while on fan trip, circa 1962. Streetcar #1 and the first batch of city owned cars were known as type A cars. The first 20 type A cars were built by the same car builder as were the California Street cable cars. Car #1 is technically a California type streetcar (see pg 99), but with side panels below the openings at the ends. Later, windows would be installed in the open sections, and then removed again during restoration.



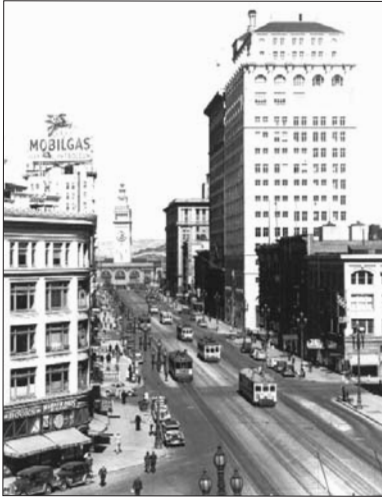
Embarcadero

298 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94105

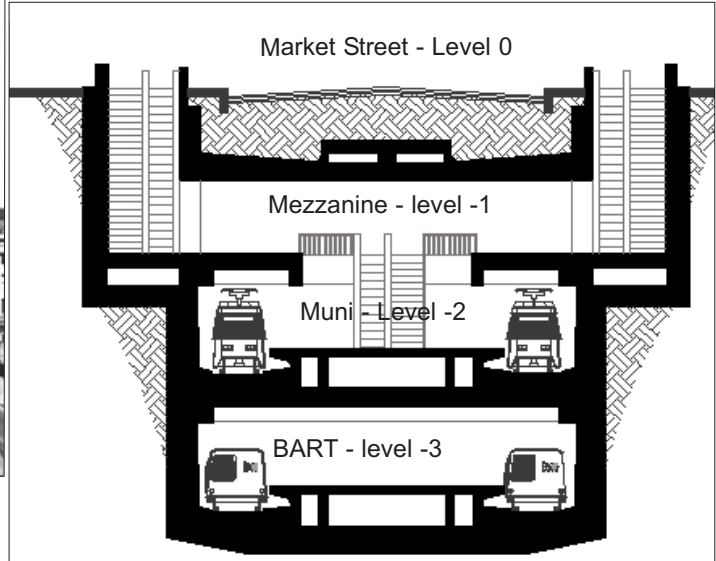
Opened: BART - May 27, 1976

Muni Metro - February 18, 1980

From the collection of Jack Tillymany



Lower Market Street, ca 1940, thirty years later this would become the site of the Embarcadero Station.



The Embarcadero Station is the first underground station in Muni Metro's Market Street Subway. When the Market Street Subway opened in 1980, passengers on the J & N lines saved 15 minutes of time over what it had taken to travel on the surface of Market Street. Passengers on the K, L & M lines saved about 20 minutes.

This station is one of four similar stations along Market Street that Muni Metro shares with BART, the regional rapid transit system. A mezzanine is above the Muni platforms, and BART platforms are below. BART passengers pass through the Muni station on their way to BART, but there is no direct connection between the two systems. To transfer from Muni Metro to BART, or visa-versa, requires ascent to the mezzanine level, leaving the paid area of one system and entering the paid area of the other.



The escalator to the BART platforms passes through the Muni Metro station.



Enclosed, secure bicycle parking is on the mezzanine level (just above the light rail vehicle in photo, behind the bicycle mural).



View of the Muni Metro platform from the galleries on the mezzanine. The elevator to the platform is at the center right of the photograph. A bridge leads from the mezzanine to the elevator. All underground stations on the Muni Metro are wheelchair accessible.



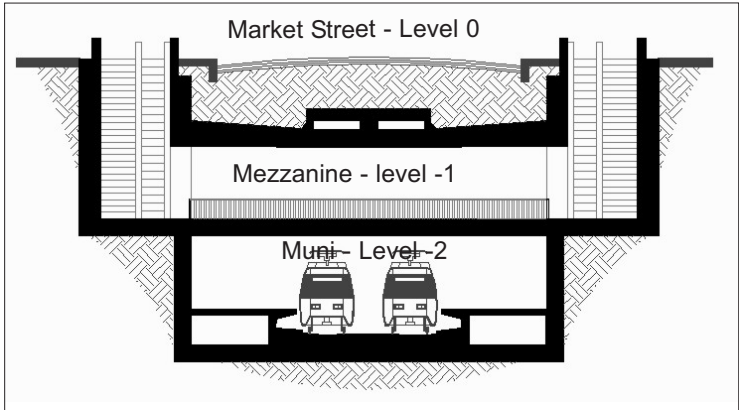
Church Street

Church & Market St., San Francisco, CA 94114
Opened: June 11, 1980

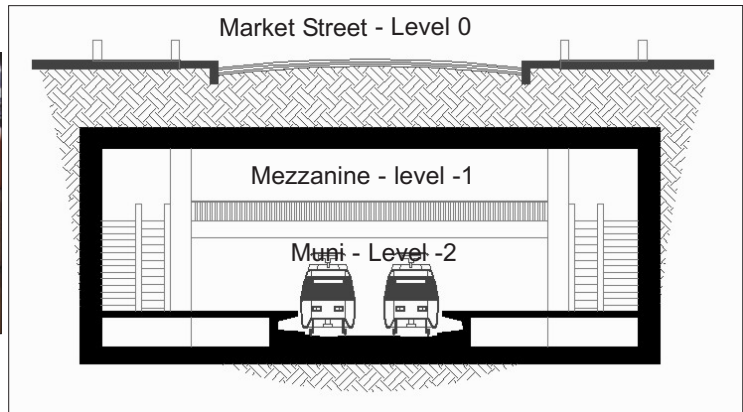
Between the Van Ness Station and the Church Street Station a flying junction permits the J and N lines to leave the Market Street Subway without interfering with the other lines. Switches and crossovers are also provided between the 2 stations.

The Church Street Station is the first station in the cut and cover part of the subway, and it is the first station with side platforms.

This station was featured in the movie "48 Hours" with Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte.



Escalator and stairs to the Church Street Station. The direction of the escalator is reversible.



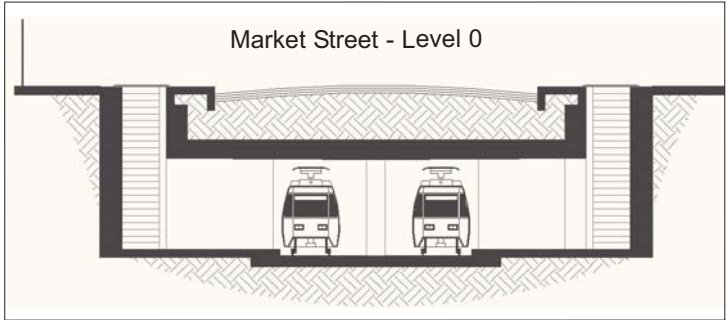
Entry barriers and station agent's booth, mezzanine level.



Eureka Valley (Abandoned)

Market & Eureka Streets, San Francisco, CA 94102
Opened: June 1, 1918.
Closed: February, 1972

The only underground ghost station in San Francisco is the Eureka Valley Station, just a few yards west of the Castro Street Station. The Station was open from 1918 until 1972. It closed during the construction of the Market Street Subway.



Early plans, from before 1918, had the Sunset Tunnel joining the Twin Peaks Tunnel before

reaching the east portal at Castro Street. Eureka Valley was meant to be a transfer station between the two tunnels, but in 1928, when the Sunset Tunnel was built, its east portal was built several blocks to the north, and the two tunnels remained separate.

When plans for the Muni Metro were developed, it was found to be less expensive (for Muni), and more convenient (for most passengers), to build a new station at Castro and Market than to upgrade the old station to modern light rail standards.

Right: The eastern end of the Twin Peaks Tunnel was built to accommodate connections to a Market Street subway. After leaving the Eureka Valley Station on a down slope, the tracks then rose steeply to emerge within the center of Market Street, just to the west of Castro Street.



From the collection of Jack Tillmany



Not much is left of the Eureka Valley Station. Above are views of the station as seen from a passing light rail vehicle; to the left are stairs that once lead to the entry kiosk, and now leads to emergency exit; to the right are steel columns where ramps to the surface were built during the Muni Metro construction.



J Church

Opened: Streetcars – August 11, 1917
Light rail up-grade – June 17, 1981

San Francisco is a city of hills and barriers; in the early 20th century it was easier to reach the East Bay cities of Oakland and Berkeley from Downtown San Francisco, than it was to reach the southwestern districts of San Francisco. Today's Muni Metro system originated in the City's early plans to use the new public streetcar system to reach these districts.

The first of these new lines, the second J streetcar line, was constructed between Market Street and Noe Valley. The line was built in an open cut through Mission Park (now Dolores Park) and a new private right-of-way that wound itself around, whether than over or under, the Church Street Hill. Between 18th and 22nd streets, Church Street has an extremely steep slope (19.2%). Noe Valley had been reachable via the Castro Street cable cars, but the new J line was a more direct, and much quicker, way for Noe Valley residents to reach downtown. The J streetcar line opened on August 11, 1917. In 1925 there was a proposal to extend the J streetcar line through the newly widened Bernal cut; this plan was not achieved until June 19, 1993 (see pg. 42).

The J Church line, the first of the surviving lines to open, was the last line to be converted to Muni Metro (June 1981), but in the 1990's it was the first to receive the Breda light rail vehicles.



Left: A light rail vehicle, on the J line, is about to turn towards the entrance to the Market Street Subway at Duboce and Church Streets.

Below: The safety island for waiting passengers on Church Street at Market is wider than most safety islands, and contains a small transparent shelter.





A handicap accessible stop is at the bottom of the private right-of-way through Dolores Park (Church and 18th Street).



Above: A Breda Light rail vehicle is loading passengers at Church and 18th Street.

Right: Young boys are hitching a ride on the back of a J Church streetcar in Dolores Park near 18th Street, ca. 1948.



From the collection of Jack Tillmany



From the collection of Jack Tillmany

Above: A streetcar, on the J line, is approaching the top of the private right-of-way through Dolores Park, ca. 1948.



Left: One of the original Boeing light rail cars is at the top of the hill in Dolores Park, ca. 1989.

Below: It's a warm autumn afternoon at the same location in 2009.

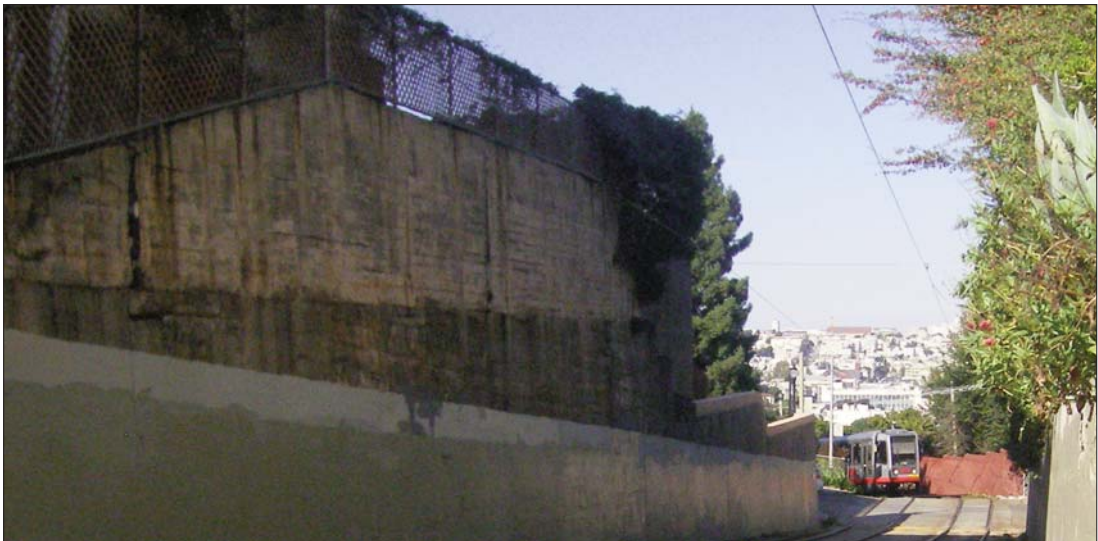


Right: After crossing 20th Street, the Muni-Metro enters a serpentine right-of-way in order to avoid the steep hill on Church Street.

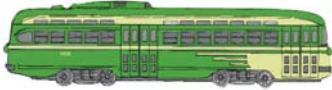


From the collection of Jack Tillmany

A J Church streetcar is in its private right-of-way at 21st street, ca. 1946.



A Muni Metro light rail vehicle is approaching the same spot, autumn 2009.



F Line

Opened: Streetcars – September, 1995

On September 22, 1982, San Francisco’s Cable cars were shut down for re-building. This included complete cableway and track reconstruction. The Market Street Subway had just opened and the streetcar tracks on Market Street had not been removed. While the cable cars were shut down, San Francisco initiated a Trolley festival on the unused tracks. Historic cars from Muni were used, along with cars borrowed from other transit agencies and from trolley museums. The trolley festival ran from June 24, 1983 through September 26. It was a success and was revived the next year and for several years after that.

The festival’s success lead to a permanent streetcar line, using historic cars, on Market Street. For this new line, the F line, the tracks on Market Street were rebuilt beginning in 1989. A fleet of used PCC’s were bought from Philadelphia and rebuilt by Morrison Knudsen. The PCC’s were modified for wheelchair access. The F line opened in September 1995, from Castro Street to the Trans-Bay terminal. The line was extended to the end of Market Street and along the Embarcadero to Fisherman’s Wharf in March of 2000.

Additional PCC’s have been bought from Newark, New Jersey. These streetcars, (originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota), have been rebuilt for service in San Francisco. Used ‘Peter Witt’ type streetcars, a type that was popular during the 1920’s, have been bought from Milan, Italy. The Italian cars were in good shape and only received minor modification needed for handicap access.



Steel gates with planters block off the plaza at 17th Street. On the rare occasions when the ramps at the Eureka Valley station (pg. 27) need to be accessed the gates can be rolled open.



At the 17th Street & Castro end of the F line, 17th street has been closed and a small plaza with movable seating has been created. Seen here is the Milan “Peter Witt” type streetcar #1811, August 2010. Streetcar #1811 is painted in Milan’s original yellow and white color scheme from the 1920’s.



Left: PCC streetcar #1076 is beginning its journey to Fisherman's Wharf as it turns the corner from 17th Street into Market Street. Castro Street and the marquee of the historic Castro Theatre are to the right. Originally from Minneapolis, by way of Newark, #1076 is now painted in the pastel color scheme from Washington DC.

Below: Streetcar #1078 (at the safety island at Market & Noe Streets) was originally from Minneapolis by way of Newark, it is painted in the green, cream and black color scheme of San Diego.



PCC Streetcar #1051, originally from Philadelphia, in the simplified green and cream paint scheme that Muni streetcars wore in the 1960's, is turning into the terminal loop at Noe Street. This streetcar is dedicated to Supervisor Harvey Milk, a strong supporter of public transit. Street car #1078 is in the background.

Right: No. 1264, one of the last 2 of San Francisco's Boeings SLRV's is awaiting restoration. The Duboce Street portal of the Market Street Subway is at right. Johnstown #351 can be seen above the portal.



Below: The Pharr Division facility of the volunteer society, the Market Street Railway. At right is the former Market Street Railway car #798, in the process of being restored. The white front was a patented safety feature of the MSRy.



Right: Streetcar #351, from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is to be restored as a "Teaching Trolley" with on-board educational displays. Behind #351 is streetcar #189, from Porto, Portugal. The US mint is above the streetcars.



The volunteer organization that is restoring these cars is the (third) Market Street Railway; it was founded in 1976 and named after the private company that was absorbed by the Municipal Railway in September 1944. The first MSRy traced its origins to the Market Street Railroad which began operating with steam powered streetcars in 1860; it later converted to horse cars and cable cars. In 1882 the MSRR became part of the newly organized Market Street Cable Railway Co. In 1893 the MSCRy Co. was merged into a new railway, the (first) Market Street Railway, controlled by the Southern Pacific. The first MSRy was merged into the United Railroads in 1902. Following bankruptcy in 1921, the United Railroads was reorganized as the (second) Market Street Railway. In 1944 Muni acquired the second MSRy.