

From: Leo Casey,
Director of Public Relations
N.Y.C. Transit Authority
370 Jay St., Brooklyn 1, N.Y.
ULster 2-5000, Exts. 4134-35

For: IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tues., Oct. 30, 1956

The end of an era comes in Brooklyn early Wednesday (Oct. 31) when trolley cars on the only two remaining lines, Church Avenue and McDonald Avenue, make their final runs.

Forty diesel buses, some of them new, will replace the 34 trolleys accommodating 40,000 persons daily on the Church Avenue line.

To cover part of the area serviced by the six trolleys on the McDonald Avenue line, which carries 6,000 persons daily, the Vanderbilt Avenue bus line B-69 will be extended from its present terminal at 19th Street and Prospect Park W. to McDonald Avenue and Cortelyou Road. The southern section of the route is serviced by the IND "D" Culver elevated rapid transit line, from Cortelyou Road to Coney Island.

The trolleys, all of the 1000 series, went into operation more than 20 years ago. All except one will be turned over to the city for disposal, either as scrap or sold to other cities or countries. The one car, No. 1000, first of that series used in Brooklyn, was sent by trailer-truck Thursday, October 25, to a trolley museum, "Trolley Town" at Branford, Conn.

- more -

The last Church Avenue trolley will leave the terminal at Rockaway and Hegeman avenues, Run 63, at 4:50 a.m. It will run on Church Avenue to the 39th Street Ferry Terminal at 39th Street and First Avenue, arriving at 5:30. Leaving the Ferry Terminal at 5:36, it is due at McDonald Avenue at 5:52, where passengers will be transferred to a Church Avenue bus. Then, instead of continuing its route on Church Avenue, the trolley will turn south on McDonald Avenue to the 16th Avenue Loop, go around the loop, back on McDonald Avenue, north to 20th Street, to Prospect Park W., to 19th Street and then pull into the 9th Avenue Depot at 10th Avenue and 19th Street at 6 a.m.

The bus which has picked up the trolley passengers will continue on to the Rockaway and Hegeman Terminal. Motorman on the trolley will be Anthony J. Kenny, 663 58th Street, Brooklyn.

First bus of the B-35 Church Avenue line will leave the 5th Avenue Depot at 5th Avenue and 39th Street at 4:18 a.m. and leave the Rockaway and Hegeman Terminal, where it will start picking up passengers, at 5 a.m. The bus will follow the same route on Church Avenue as the trolley, going to the 39th Street Ferry Terminal. It will make its return run from the Ferry Terminal at 5:50 a.m.

Last trolley on the McDonald Avenue line going to the end of the line at Coney Island will be Run 13, leaving Prospect Park W. Terminal at Prospect Park W. and 20th Street at 2:27 a.m. It will go south on McDonald Avenue to the West 5th Street Depot at Coney Island, leave Coney Island at 3:04 a.m., arrive back at Prospect Park W. and 20th Street and then pull into the 9th Avenue Depot at 3:34 a.m. Its motorman will be Salvatore Affatigato, 470 First Street, Brooklyn.

Last trolley car on the McDonald Avenue tracks, however, will be Run 14 which will leave Prospect Park W. Terminal at 5:02 a.m., go on McDonald Avenue to the 16th Avenue Loop, turn the loop and, at 5:11 a.m., run back up McDonald Avenue to Prospect Park W. and 20th Street and then into the 9th Avenue Depot at 5:20 a.m. Motorman will be Myer Feitelberg, 2 Oakland Place, Brooklyn.

Extra dispatchers will be stationed at various spots along the Church, McDonald and Vanderbilt lines to expedite the efficient changeover from trolleys to buses.

The street railway was born in New York City in 1832. John Mason, a banker, laid rails in Fourth Avenue from Prince St. to 14th St., hitched a pair of horses to an ornate railway coach, and gave urban travelers the smoothest ride thus far devised. Passengers deserted the horse-drawn omnibuses, jolting over cobbles, for the more comfortable cars.

For the next half century New York grew as trolley lines spread throughout the five boroughs. Nearly a century later the trolleys were still the main form of urban transportation throughout the nation. When electricity began replacing horses in the late 1800s, the street car railways entered their greatest boom. In 1890 there were 1,260 miles of electrified track in the country; in 1902, this had grown to 22,000 miles, which more than doubled by 1917. The greatest concentration of street car trackage was in New York City. The first gasoline bus had been introduced in 1905, on Fifth Avenue but the myriad of street railway companies viewed it more as a curiosity than a possible competitor.

The vast trolley empire started to crumble about this time -- 1917 -- but not because of the motorbus. The jitney -- usually a seven passenger touring car with a jobless owner out to make a day's pay -- made its appearance in Los Angeles in 1917, and swept the country like wildfire, driving trolley companies into financial collapse.

Actually, the jitney could not transport people as cheaply as the trolley. But, then unregulated and untaxed, the jitneys moved ahead of the trolleys, along the same routes, skimming the cream of the rush hour trade. The street car companies, required to maintain non-rush hour service for the occasional passenger, could not survive.

In May, 1919, some sixty-two companies, operating 534 miles of track, were in receivership, and the collapse was just beginning. In one 13-month stretch in 1919 and 1920, 56 more companies, with 1,908 miles of track, went into receivership. In some eastern areas, jitneys outnumbered trolleys. President Woodrow Wilson appointed a commission to look into the debacle of urban transport in America.

Some of the companies survived, but were weak. Too weak to rehabilitate the lines which had been allowed to run down before the jitneys were brought under control and subjected to the same regulations as trolleys. Capital for rebuilding was scared off by the miles upon miles of rusting, abandoned track. To save the cost of rebuilding these lines, the companies that did survive went for buses.