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Photos: The Candy Cane Streetcars and Buses From L.A.'s Holiday Past

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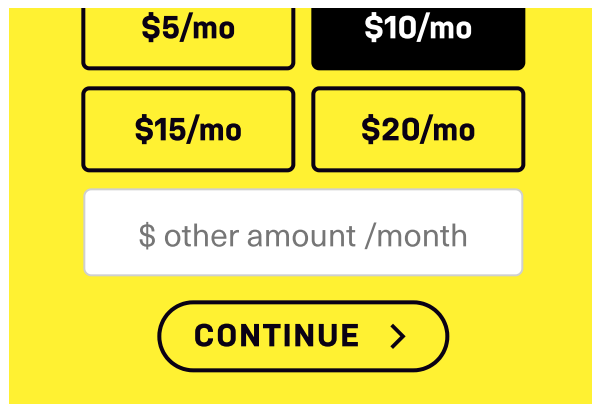
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Candy cane-stripped street cars and buses once roamed the streets of L.A. delivering holiday cheer and visits from Santa.

While other cities still roll out cool, [holiday-themed](#) and [vintage](#) trains and buses this time of year, L.A. seems to have left the holiday transit spirit in the past.

Known as the "Candy Cane Streetcars," the vehicles were specially painted with red and white stripes for the season beginning in November 1948, according to [L.A. Magazine](#). Sponsored by the Downtown Business Men's Association as an effort to promote shopping at department stores and fixed-rail streetcars, the tradition began with [two decorated fixed-rail streetcars and one bus](#). The maiden voyage carried 100 orphans to Pershing Square for a tree-lighting ceremony. There 3,000 peppermint candy canes were handed out to the orphans and other children who had gathered.

The cars and buses were painted by employees of the Los Angeles Transit Lines (LATL), who would paint the cars white and then use masking tape to block the white portion while they spray-painted the red. Also painted on the side of them was a message for people to “make a Christmas wish on a candy cane car or coach.”

The popularity of the Candy Cane Streetcars quickly caught on, and by 1950 there were 15 specially striped streetcars, buses and trackless trolleys roaming the streets for the holiday season. According to L.A. Magazine, LATL would get 50 to 100 calls a day from kids of all ages to find out where they could ride one.

As the decades went on there were other holiday-themed rides as well, including when Santa would ride the bus to visit kids, or buses were decked out in other holiday designs. Matt Barrett from Metro's Research Library & Records tells LAist, "The transit system has celebrated the holidays in various ways over the past 100 years, with toy drives and fundraising, special liveries (paint jobs), and in a few years, a school outreach program where local schools decorated Metro buses with holiday themes."



Santa and a giant Snowman on Wilshire, circa 1955 (Photo courtesy of the [Metro Library and Archive](#))

In 2000, Metro did roll out a holiday-theme decorating contest for select bus lines, which even featured visits from Santa. But those designs were, well, not quite as classy as the Candy Cane Streetcars.



*Division 18's (Carson) Entry for the Holiday Bus Decorating Contest
(Photo courtesy of the [Metro Transportation Library and Archive](#))*

Here's to wishing Metro will get inspired and bring back the candy cane stripes for next years holiday season.



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