



## CityDig: When Candy-Cane Streetcars Rolled Out Holiday Cheer

By **Nathan Masters** - December 12, 2013

It would be more Scrooge than Santa to dwell on the fact that these candy-cane streetcars were designed to bolster two ailing business models, the downtown department store and the fixed-rail streetcar. After all, Angelenos loved the festive paint job. Anywhere from 50 to 100 people, many of them children, called the Los Angeles Transit Lines (LATL) office each day to learn where they could ride one.

Sponsored by the Downtown Business Men’s Association, the striped vehicles—two fixed-rail streetcars and one bus—made their debut in November 1948, ferrying more than 100 orphans to a tree-lighting ceremony in Pershing Square. A trade group calling itself the Los Angeles Tobacco & Candy Table distributed 3,000 peppermint candy canes to children in attendance.

To dress the cars in their holiday livery, LATL workers painted the vehicles entirely white, applied masking tape, and then spray-painted the red stripes in a spiral pattern. Lettering on the side urged Angelenos to “make a Christmas wish on a candy cane car or coach.”

It became [an annual tradition](#). In 1949, LATL drove one of its candy-cane buses to the Paramount Pictures lot, where Bing Crosby stepped aboard and crooned a few bars of “White Christmas” for an audience of journalists. By 1950, 15 specially painted streetcars, buses, and trackless trolleys were in service, rotating among the various transit lines to spread holiday cheer throughout the city.

*Above: Photograph courtesy of the [Metro Transportation Library and Archive](#).*

*Nathan Masters of the [USC Libraries](#) blogs here on behalf of [L.A. as Subject](#), an association of more than 230 libraries, cultural institutions, official archives, and private collectors hosted by the USC Libraries and dedicated to preserving and telling the sometimes-hidden histories of Los Angeles.*