

South Shore #24



Type: Steel Interurban Car

Built - 1927

Modernized in 1947

Seats - 50

Width - 10' 1"

Height - 13' 5"

Length - 80'

Weight - 77 tons



From 1890 to 1910, America was hit by a massive craving for fast, reliable electric trains, dubbed "interurbans" that ran between cities all over the country. In 1920, there were over 15,000 miles of interurban tracks, and one could ride all the way from Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, to upstate New York only by the use of interurbans. During this time, an electric utility baron by the name of Samuel Insull controlled a monopoly over the Chicago electrical grid and its interurban routes. For years, Chicagoans used the frequent, reliable, and fast trains to commute to work, shopping centers, and even school!

In the mid 1920s, Insull bought the Chicago Lake Shore and South Bend Railroad, an electric interurban route that operated between downtown Chicago and South Bend, Indiana, by means of Gary and Michigan City. When Insull bought the railroad, he modernized the company by ordering new all-steel cars, building new stations, and renaming the company the Chicago South Shore and South Bend.



Car 24 was built in 1927 by the Pullman Car Company, and then began serving the railroad for over 55 years as a coach car. During the second World War, some of the cars, including 24, were modernized by increasing the length and capacity of the car due to increased ridership. A new interior was also put in, along with large sealed windows and air conditioning.

The "orange cars" were so reliable that they ended up working almost 60 years for the South Shore Line. In 1983, the cars were finally phased out and retired. However, by that time, the South Shore Line was one of the last interurban lines in the country, with most others being abandoned due to the rising popularity of the automobile, and rail preservationists stepped in and saved around half of the iconic "orange cars." Car 24 eventually joined several other South Shore cars, including identical sister car 25, at the East Troy Railroad Museum and was restored to operation.

ETRM currently has six restored and operational South Shore cars, and another is being restored by our volunteers. Car 24 was restored to operation and turned into a dining car. The South Shore and other interurbans once experimented with dining service, but it never truly picked up the popularity it did on the competing steam railroads. 24 now wears an ETRM paint scheme and is named the "Beverly Shores" (after one of the stations on the South Shore Line). The car can seat 50 and includes a full bar on ETRM's popular seasonal dinner trains and charters.

