North Shore #761

Type: Steel Interurban Car
Built: 1930
Modernized in 1949 and 1957
Seats: 52
Length – 55' 3"
Width – 8' 8"
Height – 12' 7"
Weight – 103,800 lbs.

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, WI, to the Catskill Mountains of New York on interurbans. One of these interurbans was the Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad.

The "North Shore Line" ran fast interurban service between the loop in Chicago and downtown Milwaukee. Trains would ride on the elevated rail system in downtown Chicago, squeezing between skyscrapers on tracks owned by the Chicago "L" until reaching the outskirts of the Windy City, where they joined their own tracks, speeding along at over 90 mph through North Chicago, Racine, and Kenosha. Trains would then run on the streets of Milwaukee, stopping at traffic lights and dodging cars until reaching their terminal at Sixth and Michigan.

Roger Puta photos

Due to new interstate highways and a postwar car-centric society, the North Shore Line and almost all of the other interurbans were forced to shut down after losing revenue. The last North Shore train pulled into Milwaukee just before 3:00 am on January 21, 1963. Car 761 was one of the final cars to operate on that frigid last day.

Car 761 was built in 1930, and in 1957, received the special "Silverliner" paint scheme it now wears. The car was one of the few North Shore cars preserved. It traveled between several transit museums and it ended up at the Michigan Transit Museum in 1977. It was eventually traded to the East Troy Railroad Museum for another unrestored car.

Following a multi-year restoration effort by more than 20 volunteers, car 761 returned to operation in 2021, 58 years after it last ran under its own power. It took more than 1,000 volunteer hours and $42,700 to complete the project.