

TMER&L #L8



Type: Steeplecab Locomotive

Built: 1935

Seats: n/a

Length – 45' 8"

Weight – 107,400 lbs.



During the early 20th century, expansive electric trolley and electric interurban rail lines sprawled across America, predominantly in the upper Midwest. During this time, The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company (TMER&L) built and operated 383 miles of interurban railroads and Milwaukee's once-expansive streetcar network. Often being the only mode of transport to towns and areas along the line, such as the town of East Troy, these interurban lines were responsible for carrying both supplies and passengers into their vicinity.

During the 1910s, electric "steeplecab" locomotives (named for their elevated cab and sloping ends) were popular with trolley systems, often being used to ferry standard freight cars interchanged with nearby steam-powered railroads to local businesses and factories. TMER&L custom built their own steeplecabs throughout the 1910s, 20s, and 30s, with all locomotives being different from one another and L8 being the largest.

During its early years, L8 and the other steeplecabs were used in small freight moves along TMER&L's lines, but as traffic shifted to trucks, L8 and other locomotives and work equipment were scrapped or moved to the Lakeside or Port Washington power plants. L8 was moved to the Port Washington plant, which opened September 1,



1935. L8 and a former box motor car were used to bring hopper cars from the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad loaded with coal brought in from ships. In 1963, the TMER&L's successors went out of the interurban rail business and sold L8 and the small remaining electric trackage at Lakeside and Port Washington to the power companies.

In 1977, L8 was donated to the Wisconsin Electric Railway Historical Society after the Port Washington operation ended. The society had begun a museum operation on the sole remaining TMER&L line in Wisconsin; a six mile segment of ex-interurban trackage between East Troy and Mukwonago. Ever since, L8 has remained at the East Troy Railroad Museum, restored and operational as an important part of Wisconsin history. Painted in an old Transport Company dark green scheme, L-8 is a fine-looking unit that earns its keep moving unrestored or broken equipment and supplies along the East Troy Railroad.

