

= Astoria Riverfront Trolley =

The Astoria Riverfront Trolley is a 3 @-@ mile ( 4 @.@ 8 km ) heritage streetcar line that operates in Astoria , Oregon , United States , using former freight railroad tracks along or near the south bank of the Columbia River , with no overhead line . The service began operating in 1999 , using a 1913 @-@ built streetcar from San Antonio , Texas . As of 2012 , the service was reported as carrying 35 @,@ 000 to 40 @,@ 000 passengers per year and has been called a " symbol " and " icon " of Astoria . The line 's operation is seasonal , normally during spring break and from May through September .

Volunteers from the non @-@ profit Astoria Riverfront Trolley Association ( ARTA ) operate the service and maintain the streetcar and tracks , but the city of Astoria has provided some funds for certain purchases , including a new car barn in 2001 and a contribution to the cost of purchasing the streetcar . The car was on loan from San Antonio for the first seven years , but was purchased by ARTA in August 2005 . By 2004 , the Trolley had become " one of Astoria 's most popular features " and " a main attraction in the city of Astoria " .

= = Pre @-@ opening history = =

The idea of creating a heritage streetcar system in Astoria , as part of efforts to redevelop and revitalize the riverfront area , had first been raised in 1980 , long after the closure of the city 's streetcar @-@ transit system , which operated from 1892 to 1924 . An attempt by city officials to acquire a trolley car in 1986 was dropped in the face of high insurance costs .

When Burlington Northern abandoned its freight railroad line from Portland to Astoria in 1996 , the city of Astoria purchased about 6 miles ( 10 km ) of BN right @-@ of @-@ way and track in and around downtown Astoria for possible future use , an action known as " railbanking " . The remaining 92 @-@ mile ( 148 km ) section of the Portland ? Astoria line was sold by BN to the Portland and Western Railroad in 1997 and kept intact . After Astoria officials learned that a genuine vintage streetcar already in Oregon was not in use and was available for possible lease , they approached its owners and negotiated a five @-@ year lease . The car was ex @-@ San Antonio Public Service Company No. 300 and was owned by the San Antonio Museum of Art , but had been in Oregon since 1990 and had been used on the Willamette Shore Trolley line , in Portland , from 1990 through 1994 . In November 1998 , Astoria mayor Willis Van Dusen signed the five @-@ year lease , which specified a rent of just \$ 1 per year , and car 300 was moved to Astoria the following month . Since 1995 , it had been stored in a closed museum near Gales Creek , Oregon , known as the Trolley Park ( and formally as the Oregon Electric Railway Museum until that museum moved in 1996 ) . Although the car had been in regular use until fewer than four years earlier , it had been stored outdoors since that time and was now in need of extensive restoration work .

After raising \$ 40 @,@ 000 in donations , volunteers refurbished car 300 and repainted it from the yellow paint scheme it had worn in Portland ( inherited from San Antonio ) to a new red @-@ and @-@ green livery , with " Astoria Riverfront Trolley " lettered along the side , above the windows . To avoid the expense of installing trolley wire and associated support poles and electrical substations , the electric motors of the trolley are powered by a diesel generator mounted on a trailer that the car pulls when westbound and pushes when eastbound , the same arrangement that car 300 had used when running on the Willamette Shore Trolley .

= = Route and service = =

Service was inaugurated on June 8 , 1999 , on a 2 @.@ 7 @-@ mile ( 4 @.@ 3 km ) route from Portway Street to 36th Street . The principal boarding location was at the Columbia River Maritime Museum ( at 17th Street and approximately the middle of the route ) , and initially there were no other set stops . Several designated stops were added later , and some of these include a bench and small shelter . Passengers are still permitted to flag @-@ down the trolley in between the posted stops .

The route runs parallel to the Columbia River 's bank , and the river is visible most of the way . In a few places , the tracks are carried on low trestles over the water . The line passes through the NRHP @-@ listed Downtown Historic District , and its westernmost section passes under the Astoria ? Megler Bridge . To the east of the Maritime Museum , at 20th Street , it passes a former Spokane , Portland and Seattle Railway depot built in 1924 . The fare has always been \$ 1 , with an all @-@ day pass available for \$ 2 . Around 2006 , operation was extended east from 36th Street to 39th Street , making the line about 3 miles ( 5 km ) long .

During the first few years , the line operated from March or April through December , daily in summer months and otherwise Fridays through Sundays . Since about 2005 , it has typically run daily from May through September , and sometimes also during spring break . Hours of operation are noon to 7 p.m. daily , Memorial Day to Labor Day , with more limited dates and hours in late spring and early fall . A round trip takes about 50 minutes . The car makes a trip approximately once an hour in each direction , but there is no exact schedule . Volunteers from the trolley association operate the car , with a two @-@ person crew consisting of a motorman and a conductor . Boarding takes place at the rear door , where the conductor assists people in boarding , collects fares and identifies sights along the route while talking about the city 's history .

The trolley line has been credited by local officials with being instrumental in bringing about redevelopment of the downtown waterfront area , among them the chairman of the Port of Astoria Commission , the executive director of the chamber of commerce and the chairman of the Clatsop County Commission . Mayor Willis Van Dusen , another of the trolley 's supporters , was quoted in a 2004 Daily Astorian article as saying that the trolley " has become almost a logo for the city , second only to the Astoria Column . "

= = Facilities and acquisitions = =

Benches and shelters were installed at several stops along the line in 2000 and 2001 . In 2002 , a new car barn was built on Industry Street , at the line 's west end , where the trolley car is stored and maintained . The 4 @,@ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot ( 370 m2 ) building is owned by the city of Astoria . In 2004 , the Sunset Empire Transportation District opened a new bus transit center near the trolley line , at Ninth Avenue and Marine Drive .

In 2005 , the San Antonio Museum of Art ( SAMA ) , which had previously been unwilling to sell car 300 , agreed to allow the Astoria Riverfront Trolley Association ( ARTA ) to buy it . The price was \$ 50 @,@ 000 , and it was paid for almost entirely with donations , but with the city of Astoria contributing \$ 5 @,@ 000 . The purchase was completed in early 2006 .

In 2010 , the car was fitted with a GPS tracking device , and the Astoria @-@ Warrenton Chamber of Commerce makes location information available to the public on its website . The data is updated online every two minutes while the trolley is running .

= = Car 300 history = =

ARTA 's only streetcar is No. 300 , nicknamed " Old 300 " and built in 1913 by the American Car Company for the streetcar system in San Antonio , Texas . It served San Antonio until the abandonment of streetcar service there in 1933 and was acquired at that time by the San Antonio Museum Association , former parent of the San Antonio Museum of Art . In 1981 , SAMA opened in a former Lone Star Brewery building located along the tracks of the Texas Transportation Company . As an additional attraction for museum visitors , car 300 was restored to operating condition , and in October 1982 it began providing public rides along a short section of track behind the art museum . This heritage trolley service was discontinued at the end of 1985 due to budget cuts , and the trolley car , by then already nicknamed " Old Number 300 " , went back into storage .

No. 300 was brought to Oregon in June 1990 by Gales Creek Enterprises ( GCE ) , the then @-@ new operator of the Willamette Shore Trolley line in Portland . GCE was leasing the car from the San Antonio Museum Association . Car 300 was the main streetcar on the WST line through the 1994 season , but in 1995 the city of Lake Oswego decided to give the operating contract for the

WST instead to the Oregon Electric Railway Historical Society , and that group substituted its own historic streetcars to provide WST service . GCE moved car 300 to storage at the Oregon Electric Railway Museum , located near Glenwood ( and Gales Creek ) at that time . Meanwhile , the San Antonio Museum Association was dissolved in 1994 , and the San Antonio Museum of Art became car 300 's owner .

In 1998 , Astoria officials learned of the car 's availability and secured a five @-@ year lease agreement with SAMA . The car was brought to Astoria in December 1998 to be restored , and it inaugurated the Astoria Riverfront Trolley service in June 1999 . In 2003 , the lease agreement was extended for another five years , but in 2005 this was superseded by an outright purchase , after SAMA agreed to sell the car to the Astoria Riverfront Trolley Association .