



**BRANFORD ELECTRIC RAILWAY ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**THE SHORE LINE TROLLEY MUSEUM**

**POLICY NO.: 401 – CURATORIAL**

**POLICY: COLLECTIONS POLICY**

### **Branford Electric Railway Association, Inc. Mission**

*The mission of The Branford Electric Railway Association, Inc. d.b.a. The Shore Line Trolley Museum is to share with a diverse audience the story of the trolley and related forms of public transportation in their historical context.*

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**1.0 PURPOSE**

This policy establishes for The Branford Electric Railway Association Inc. (hereinafter BERA), guidelines for the management of the various collections involved in fulfilling its mission. These collections include street and electric railway vehicles; related transit vehicles, the infrastructure related to the operation of the vehicles, and the artifacts related to the written, printed and photographic histories of the trolley era. This policy supersedes all other BERA policies relating to the subject.

**2.0 COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE**

The Collections Committee is created by and reports to the Board of Trustees. The Committee will consist of five (5) members including the Executive Director and Curator. Decisions of this committee will be by a majority vote of the committee members as approved by the Board of Trustees. This committee will be responsible for evaluating the collections, their care and proposed accessions and deaccessions for the board. The committee will review the Collections Policy in its entirety at least every five years and recommend any necessary modifications to the Board of Trustees for approval.

**3.0 COLLECTIONS SCOPE**

The mission of BERA is "to share the story of the trolley and related forms of public transportation." The scope of BERA's collection should harmonize with its mission statement. The collection's primary focus is the history of the electric street railway in Connecticut, downstate New York and New Jersey. Secondary areas of geographic focus include other New England states, upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Quebec and Ontario. A strong but secondary topical focus of the collection is related forms of public transportation including rapid transit, trolleycoach and motorcoach, on predecessor technology such as horse and cable railways, and successors such as "light rail vehicles."

BERA also collects a limited selection of items related to manufacturers of street railway equipment which were located in New England, New York and New Jersey, or related to significant railway historical figures who were associated with the above areas. BERA also collects items that fall outside of its geographical or topical focus which complete or enhance its accurate interpretation of its focus areas and where suitable local representations are not available. BERA may collect a limited number of items which are not related to street or electric railways or public transit, but which complement the story in its historical or social context.

There are items currently in BERA's collections which would appear to fall outside of the guidelines in this section. It is not the intent of this policy to recommend disposition of these items.

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**4.0 Collections**

BERA's collections comprises items in the following categories as further described below in 4.1 – 4.5

**4.1 Vehicles**

**Accessioned:** Vehicles are the primary collection items and form the operating section of BERA. All accessioned vehicles must be owned by the BERA.

Operating some of the vehicles on BERA's demonstration railway is an effective means to interpret electric railway history. BERA will preserve, maintain and operate vehicles for the public's education and enjoyment, where it is economically feasible to do so without serious detriment to the vehicle. The collection will have some duplication, necessary from an operational viewpoint to provide operations consistent with BERA's mission.

**Non-accessioned:** Not all vehicles will be accessioned. Non-accessioned vehicles can be Utility (for maintenance or passenger use) vehicles, replicas, re-constructions or adaptations of historic or non-historic vehicles that are required or created to demonstrate significant elements of electric railway technologies where no genuine examples are available to BERA

**4.1.1 Future Acquisitions**

Vehicles that fall within the museum's scope could become available to BERA in the future. Before such items are accepted in BERA's collection, the Collections Committee will prepare a Condition, Historical value, Potential use and Impact statement.

**4.1.2 Care of Vehicles**

Each accessioned vehicle should appear and function in a manner consistent with an appropriate period of the vehicle's history.

**4.1.2 Modification of Vehicles**

It is BERA's policy to avoid modifications to accessioned vehicles that are unnecessary and/or visually obvious and/or not in keeping with the

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vehicle's history, regardless of the quality of the work involved. Any modifications must be carefully documented and put in the vehicle's file. When required by safety, necessity or practicality, certain modifications and substitutions may be permitted in the course of a vehicle restoration project.

**4.2 Spare Parts**

Spare parts are primarily non-accessioned items and will be accumulated for the maintenance and restoration of the vehicles. Some spare parts may be accessioned and/or used as exhibits

**4.3 Tools and Equipment**

BERA may house, operate and maintain authentic tools and equipment once used in the transit industry. Some of these items may be accessioned and/or used as exhibits.

**4.4 Demonstration Railway**

BERA maintains and operates a demonstration railway for the purpose of interpreting the vehicle collection. The railway is a remnant of the streetcar line between East Haven and Branford, CT. As a National Historic District, it is to be preserved with this historic appearance to the extent possible.

**4.4.1 Overhead Line, Signal and Track Materials**

Components used in the construction of the demonstration railway are generally non-accessioned. Some of these components, may be accessioned and/or used as exhibits.

**4.4.2 Wayside Structures**

Wayside structures and structural components may be collected to complement the demonstration railway. A conservation plan will be developed for these items to guide how they will be preserved and maintained in their historic state. These items are generally accessioned.

**4.5 Accessioned Archival Materials**

The archivist or Curator will prepare conservation plans, for the various types of accessioned archival material, for the Collections Committee or designee.

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These plans will be reviewed and updated as necessary and submitted to the Board of Trustees. Archival materials can include items in Sections 4.5.1, 4.5.2 and 4.5.3.

**4.5.1 Representative Railway Materials**

Representative materials of significance (including, but not limited to: transfers and other ephemera, correspondence, orders, company records, pamphlets, rule books, flyers, advertisements, uniforms, badges, and other employee items, annual and quarterly reports, passes, tokens, timetables, photographs, negatives, motion pictures, video recordings, audio recordings, posters, news clippings, tickets, maps, etc.) issued by or relating to electric railways, street railways, cable railways, horse railways, interurban railways, light rail, rapid transit and other public transit primarily within the geographical area of focus.

Representative materials presenting overviews of transit systems (including books, articles or maps covering a system, city or company, and photographs thereof) of electric railways, street railways, cable railways, horse railways, interurban railways, light rail rapid transit and other public transit in areas outside the primary geographical area.

Materials relating to the history of the transit industry in general.

Local (regional or community) histories, that help to interpret or have a relation to the development of streetcar, rapid transit and interurban lines.

Printed materials and photographs presenting a general description, history and technical information on electrification of mainline railroads.

Materials which relate to the political, industrial, technical, economic and social environment in which the transit industry operated.

Representative materials of significance (including, but not limited to: transfers and other ephemera, correspondence, orders, company records, pamphlets, rule books, flyers, advertisements, annual and quarterly reports, passes, tokens, timetables, photographs, negatives, motion pictures, video recordings, audio recordings, posters, news clippings, tickets, maps, etc.) issued by or relating to selected railroads which relate to street railway development within the primary geographical area of interest.

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Limited selection of books and maps presenting an overview of mainline, steam or freight railroads in the primary geographical area of interest, particularly if they have a relationship to the street railway or electric railway industries in within the primary geographical area of interest.

**4.5.2 Technical Materials**

Materials relating to the design, manufacture, construction, maintenance and operation of electric railways, street railways, cable railways, horse railways, interurban railways, light rail and other public transit within the primary geographical area of interest, including information on rolling stock, track, overhead, signals, power supply, structures, business procedures, accounting, etc.

Materials (including catalogs, blueprints, instruction manuals, diagrams, fact sheets, maintenance manuals, maintenance records, etc.) relating to the design, manufacture, construction, maintenance and operation of rolling stock and exhibits in the collection of BERA, or of potential future additions to that collection.

Technical histories of the transit industry.

**4.5.3 Museum –Related Information**

Publications of BERA.

Articles and publicity about BERA.

Technical publications on museum practice, including but not limited to ethics, exhibit design, archival methods and procedures, restoration, conservation, etc.

Catalogs and guidebooks from other trolley and transit museums.

Publications of museum associations, and successor or comparable organizations. Records and correspondence of the BERA.

Materials pertaining to the formation, development and history of BERA. Photographs, blueprints and other documentation of BERA's facilities and activities.

Other items that will assist in carrying out the museum's mission.

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**5.0 Acceptance and Disposal of Accessioned Items**

**5.1 Acceptance of Accessioned Items**

The Curator or the Executive Director, or their designee, are authorized to accept items (other than vehicles or major components thereof) on behalf of the museum that are intended to be accessioned as part of the collection. In doing so, they shall consider the relevance of the item to the museum's scope of collections, potential duplication, storage and care issues.

The procedure for accepting vehicles and major components thereof into the collection, whether as accessioned or non-accessioned items, is detailed in the Bylaws and in other policies, and generally will require approval of the Board of Trustees

**5.2 Disposal of Accessioned Items**

Items may be de-accessioned from time to time, for such reasons as lack of storage space, an inability to provide care, duplication, etc. When an item has been identified for de-accession, it should first be offered to other museums, historical organizations or educational organizations, either for long term loan, as a donation, or sale, depending on the acquisition history of the object and its value on the open market. Proceeds from the sale of de-accessioned items will be used solely for acquisitions and/or direct care of collections.

The Curator and/or Executive Director shall have the authority to de-accession and dispose of non-vehicle materials and report same to the Collections Committee. The procedure for de-accession of vehicles in the collection is given in the Bylaws and will require Board approval.

All dispositions should be done in an ethical manner. Items disposed of will not be given or sold privately. If no appropriate museum or historical association expresses interest then the item will be disposed of by public sale.

**6.0 Loans**

**6.1 Acceptance of Loaned Items**

Loaned artifacts may be accepted from individuals or other institutions for exhibit, operation, restoration or research purposes. Loans will be for finite time periods, and BERA and the lender for each loan will execute a written loan agreement which shall contain all material terms and conditions of the loan.

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**6.2 Outgoing Loans**

BERA may lend items from its collections to other not-for-profit organizations and government agencies. In general, outgoing loans will require the approval of the Board of Trustees and a properly completed loan agreement. Items from the BERA collections may be rented to other types of organizations at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

**Criteria for loaning:**

- i. The loan in some way furthers the objectives and purposes of BERA.
- ii. Security and conservation measures will meet BERA's requirements.
- iii. The borrower will observe the Museum's regulations regarding loans.
- iv. No modifications to BERA-accessioned property will be made by a borrower, unless permitted by BERA and performed in such a manner as to be completely reversible and not permanently alter the historic fabric of the car. Modifications that are approved by BERA and which are part of the conservation plan for the artifact are also permissible.

**7.0 Care of Collections**

**7.1 Preservation**

- A. Preservation of items in BERA's collections is an ethical responsibility.
- B. All steps necessary to preserve BERA collections will be taken, within the limits of fiscal responsibility.
- C. Acceptance of an item into a collection implies a commitment to preserve said item. BERA should not accept new items which it is not able to preserve.
- D. BERA will consider ethical disposition of existing items in its collections which it is not able to preserve.

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**7.1.1 Preservation of Archival Materials:**

Every effort will be made to keep archival materials (as defined in section 4.5) in a secure environment where temperature, humidity and light exposure are controlled. Archival materials shall be properly supported and, to the extent possible, contained in acid-free enclosures. Areas where archival materials are stored should have a monitored fire and intrusion detection system. BERA will strive to have fire suppression protection for its archival collections.

**7.1.2 Preservation of Vehicles:**

Every effort will be made to store vehicles where they will be reasonably secure from vandalism and the effects of the weather. BERA will strive to provide housing that is above the FEMA 100- year flood zone, and/or to have an evacuation plan in place to protect vehicles in a potential flood event BERA will strive to have monitored fire detection systems and fire suppression systems which protect housed vehicles.

**7.1.3 Off-Site Storage:**

BERA collections may be housed in facilities that are not on its campus. Such facilities should be equal to or better than storage that would be provided on-site.

**7.1.4 Digital Records and Collections:**

Collections and records which exist only in digital form will be an increasing part of BERA's holdings. Digital collections should be "backed up" periodically in a manner which reasonably protects against failure of digital hardware and cyber-vandalism. Digital collections should be stored in an open standard format which is not encumbered by manufacturer's proprietary intellectual property or licensing issues, and which is likely to continue to be "readable" for at least 30 years without conversion to another format.

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**7.2 Conservation**

- A. Authenticity is the prime consideration in all BERA conservation. Documentation is required prior to understanding and conservation work on any item in the BERA collection
- B. Unsubstantiated modification of any item in the BERA collections is prohibited except under the following conditions:
  - i. When the structural integrity of an item is questionable;
  - ii. When a material originally used is no longer available.

A complete description of any modifications made must be added to the curatorial catalog file of any item so affected.

Every effort will be made to keep archived materials in a secure environment that meets conservation needs with regard to housing, temperature, and relative humidity and light levels.

**7.3 Vehicle Restoration**

- 7.3.1** All restoration or major repair activity on an artifact which is part of the vehicle collection must conform to a written work plan which is approved in writing by the Collections Committee. The Committee may determine the form and structure of this plan.
- 7.3.2** A work plan may be amended at any time as needed, with the written approval of the Curator.
- 7.3.3** The work plan must specifically address any historic elements which will be removed, modified or significantly disturbed during the course of work, and provide a strategy for permanent documentation of the affected elements, e.g. by photography, retention of paint and fabric samples, etc. Such documentary evidence shall be turned over to the Curator, who shall provide for its permanent retention.
- 7.3.4** When the artifact is to be "back-dated" to a time period other than that in which the artifact was received into the collection, the work plan shall clearly identify that time period and the elements of the restoration (e.g. paint scheme, mechanical components, interior finish) which will date it to the period. Supporting documentation (e.g. books, photographs, magazine articles) should be attached or referenced.

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**7.3.5** New components and materials shall match, to the extent practical, actual historic condition. Where samples of paint, fabric, woodwork, etc. are available, they should be matched against. Where such samples are not available, the work plan should identify and document the basis for selecting these elements.

**7.3.6** The work plan shall list the projected labor, material and financial resources to complete the project and the projected manner in which the work will proceed.

**7.3.7** In the case of ongoing restorations, a work plan should be completed as soon as possible, and should document the work that has already been done.

**7.4 Collection Records**

Complete hard copy and digital records must be created and maintained for all items in the collections. These records will consist of an Accession Log, Accession Files for each individual accession and a Catalog Record for each individual item in the collection. Digital records will be on a commonly used data base which can be easily learned and used by the museum staff.

Condition Reports, historical documentation and storage locations become part of a Catalog File for each collection item. Instructions for compiling the required records and the handling of the collections will be in a Collection Manual available in both digital and hard copy formats.

Duplicate copies should be stored in a separate location.

**8.0 Collection Accessibility**

Exhibits will be open to the public and efforts will be made to make exhibits accessible according to applicable law and regulation. Non-exhibited items may be made available, although access may be restricted for safety or security reasons. Supervision may be required. The permanent collection and records are available for legitimate study, research, inquiry and examination by responsible parties. Limitations to access will include donor-stipulated anonymity.

Access, reproduction and use of the permanent collection may involve fees.

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**9.0 Collection Policy Availability**

This collections policy is a public document and will be made available upon request.

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**APPENDIX A–Document History**

08-12-2017 Adopted by The Branford Electric Railway Association, Inc. Board of Trustees. Replaces exiting policy 401 – Collections Management as adopted by the Board of Trustees 04-04-1985 revised April 1980 and Policy 402 – Car Restoration and Stabilization Projects as adopted by the Board of Trustees 12-11-2004.