



Name of Property: The St. Charles Line
City, State: New Orleans, Louisiana
Period of Significance: 1893-1952
NHL Criteria: 1 and 4
NHL Theme: V. Developing the American Economy
 3. Transportation and Communication
Previous Recognition: 1973 National Register of Historic Places
National Historic Context: XIV. Transportation
 F. Urban Transport (Trolleys, Streetcars, and Subways)

NHL Significance:

- The St. Charles Line is the oldest operational street railway in the United States. At their peak, streetcars traveled more than one billion miles and carried nearly sixteen billion passengers annually nationwide. The St. Charles Line is the only streetcar system dating from that period to remain in operation and is an intact vestige of a once-ubiquitous transportation system.
- The line is representative of street railway systems and the urban growth patterns they engendered between the 1890s and the 1920s when streetcars reached the height of their popularity in the United States. By facilitating outward mobility and suburbanization, streetcars strongly influenced the growth of cities and suburbs, today reflected in the urban character of many American cities, including New Orleans.
- The St. Charles Line is also significant for its thirty-five Perley Thomas streetcars. These arch-roofed, steel-bodied streetcars represent an evolution in the engineering of street railway technology, exhibiting improvements that increased the safety, efficiency, and flexibility with which streetcar systems could operate, and allowing for even greater expansion of street railway systems in a variety of urban conditions.



- The cars have continuously operated on the line's tracks since 1923-24. Of the tens of thousands manufactured, the St. Charles Line's thirty-five Perley Thomas cars are the only conventional streetcars to have remained in operation within their original system.

Integrity:

- The St. Charles Line maintains remarkable historic integrity through the continued maintenance of the Carrollton Transit Station, the Perley Thomas streetcars, and the associated tracks and equipment. Adamant local support for the line's preservation and federal grant funding to restore the rails, cars, and transit station have resulted in a conventional, electrified streetcar line that is unmatched in its authenticity, scale, and completeness.
- The Perley Thomas streetcars that run on the St. Charles Line have been meticulously restored to their original appearance and design. Components are regularly inspected and all repairs are conducted by master craftsmen in the Carrollton Transit Station.
- The Carrollton Transit Station retains a similarly high degree of historic integrity. Each of its utilitarian spaces retains the essential physical features to express not only its use, but also its workmanship and design as a car barn facility. Several expansion campaigns completed during the period of significance allowed the car barn to continue its use as a functioning storage and maintenance facility for the St. Charles Line, a period that has lasted 120 years, from its electrification in 1893 to the present.
- The historic character of the neutral ground and the neighborhoods it traverses contributes to a remarkable degree of integrity of feeling, association, and setting for the St. Charles Line.

Owner of Property: City of New Orleans, operated by the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (NORTA)

Acreage of Property: Approximately 35 acres

Origins of Nomination: In 2012, the St. Charles Avenue Association successfully petitioned the NORTA Board of Commissioners to allow the designation of the St. Charles Line as a National Historic Landmark. The Association raised funds to complete an NHL nomination, for which research and documentation began in early 2013.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- The St. Charles Line is an internationally acknowledged symbol of the heritage and culture of New Orleans. Designation as a National Historic Landmark will recognize its role in the growth and character of New Orleans, as well as its unmatched historic significance and authenticity.
- Designation will highlight the dedication of New Orleans' citizens, whose decades of study, documentation, and advocacy have preserved the unique character and ensured the longevity of the St. Charles Line.
- Designation will also encourage the continued preservation, operation, maintenance, and restoration of the railway.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments: Per the recommendation of Dr. Stevens, a discussion of race and segregation on the Line has been added to the nomination.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Stevens moved, Dr. Carson seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 12/06/13):

Dorothea B. Martin, President, Maple Area Residents, Inc., New Orleans, Louisiana

Patrick Tucker, Uptown Triangle Neighborhood Association, New Orleans, Louisiana

Susan G. Guidry, Councilmember, District A, City of New Orleans, Louisiana

Louis J. Volz, III, New Orleans, Louisiana

The Honorable Mitchell J. Landrieu, Mayor, City of New Orleans (owner/HEO waiver received)

James Smoak, President, Touro Bouligny Association, New Orleans, Louisiana

Advisory Board Recommendation: