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CITY, NEWS

Where do old T cars go after retirement?

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by Angela Yang



The MBTA is auctioning off seven old T cars through the end of January, with plans to donate those that don't sell to the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine. COURTESY AUCTIONS INTERNATIONAL

Maintaining one of the oldest subway systems in the country, Boston has retired its fair share of train trolleys. Seven of them are currently on auction at a starting price of \$500 on **Auctions International** through Jan. 28.

These cars have run on the tracks for decades, with the oldest dating back to the late 1970s. They are no longer operational and all salvageable parts of the trolleys have been stripped off.

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Director of Communications Joe Pesaturo wrote in an email hundreds more cars from the Orange and Red Line are next in line for disposal within the coming years, and 404 new cars will roll in to replace them.

“Old cars are retired after they are no longer capable of providing safe and reliable passenger service,” Pesaturo wrote.

“About ten years ago, the T disposed of the old Blue Line fleet.”

Disposal, according to Pesaturo, means they are sold to the highest bidder — usually for the scrap metal.

But what happens to the trolleys that don't get sold?

Since approximately 1951, subway cars from the T have made their way to the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine. CEO Jim Schantz said the MBTA effectively donates the cars that were not purchased.

“In some cases, there are things that are complicated to scrap,” Schantz said, “and they even have to pay somebody to take them apart.”

While some of Boston's retired buses can be sold to small private operators, its rail and subway cars are too customized to perform well in the resale market, Shantz said.

“So the alternative is the junker, and that's not doing anybody any good,” Schantz said. “In our case, we've always had very good relations with the T over the years, and they are happy to have their history preserved someplace.”

Seashore Trolley Museum adds new trolleys to its collection in accordance with the MBTA's rail car renewal cycle. The last additions came when the city switched out its Blue Line a decade ago, and the next will come soon as the city begins to dispose of its Orange and Red Line cars.

Rashida Royster, 44, of Jamaica Plain said she believes the city should try anything to prevent its retired rail cars from going to waste.

“I think the U.S. can be very wasteful with certain things that we have that we no longer use,” Royster said. “So I think if they did turn it into scrap metal or something else, it would be much better for the city and for the environment.”

Jamaica Plain resident Dencis Pena, 40, said he would prefer the old trolleys be recycled rather than in a museum.

“I know there’s many people who haven’t seen [the cars],” Pena said, “but other than that I don’t know why you would want to keep it if you can reuse it.”

Claire Kim, 26, of Roxbury said she likes the idea of putting unsold and unusable subway cars on display.

“Both works because donating something is doing something for the society,” Kim said. “And reusing is also the way to reduce waste.”



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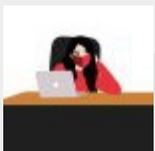
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