

Discovering Ogden's Streetcar History

By
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As the city of Ogden embarks on a new generation of transit service with the creation of the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) bus rapid transit (BRT) facility, discoveries made during construction of that BRT system harken back to the city's transit history. Construction crews removing pavement along a portion of Washington Boulevard in May 2021 uncovered a set of streetcar rails near the center of the road. Other segments of rail were discovered as crews worked their way east along 25th Street. The rails, encased in concrete and buried beneath a thick layer of asphalt, proved to be the remains of the Ogden Rapid Transit (ORT) streetcar system that operated along the city's streets between 1900 and 1936.



Old rails and ties buried under concrete and asphalt on Washington Boulevard

Construction of a streetcar system had begun in earnest along Utah's Wasatch Front within a few years of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869. Connecting to the transcontinental line meant better access to goods not yet available in the Utah Territory and access to national markets for agricultural and mineral products produced in Utah. It also afforded far easier and faster travel in and out of the Utah Territory for the purpose of emigration, business activities, and leisure. To avail themselves of the economic opportunities the Transcontinental Railroad presented, several wealthy Utahans, including then-president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Brigham Young and businessmen like David Eccles and Simon Bamberger, created railroad companies to build a number of different rail lines connecting major cities along the Wasatch Front to the transcontinental system via Ogden. While many of these early rail systems focused solely on transporting freight, several incorporated passenger service into their operations. Soon thereafter, the tendrils of streetcar systems spread throughout communities such as Ogden and Salt Lake City to further extend the reach of rail transit.

The ORT was incorporated in May 1900—relatively late in the context of transit development along the Wasatch Front. The company claimed Thomas Dee as president, E.M. Allison, Jr. as vice-president, George Matson as secretary, H.H. Spencer as treasurer, and David Eccles, N.C. Flygare, and J.W.F. Volker as board members.¹ The starting capital for the venture was \$100,000 divided into 1,000 share valued at \$100 each. David Eccles was the largest shareholder having purchased 90 shares.² A portion of the funding was used to buy the Ogden Electric Railway

Company, which had operated an electrified streetcar system in the city since 1890 after taking over the former mule- and steam-driven streetcar system operated by the Ogden City Railway since 1883.

The purchase gave the ORT rights to the existing streetcar routes and facilities, though plans for the new company included upgrading or replacing most of the existing equipment. New trolley cars, which were said to be the “latest and most modern” with a style “that of a regular railway passenger coach” and a seating capacity of 40, were ordered immediately,³ and the bonding of new rails, installation of new ties and ballast, and rewiring of the overhead electrical catenary was



Mule-pulled streetcar in front of the Broom Hotel on the corner of Washington Avenue and 25th Street; ca. 1890; Photo from Utah State Historical Society



Steam-driven streetcar in front of the Broom Hotel on the corner of Washington Avenue and 25th Street; ca. 1890; Photo from Utah State Historical Society

¹ *Deseret Evening News*. 1900. “Ogden Rapid Transit Co.” May 18, Salt Lake City.

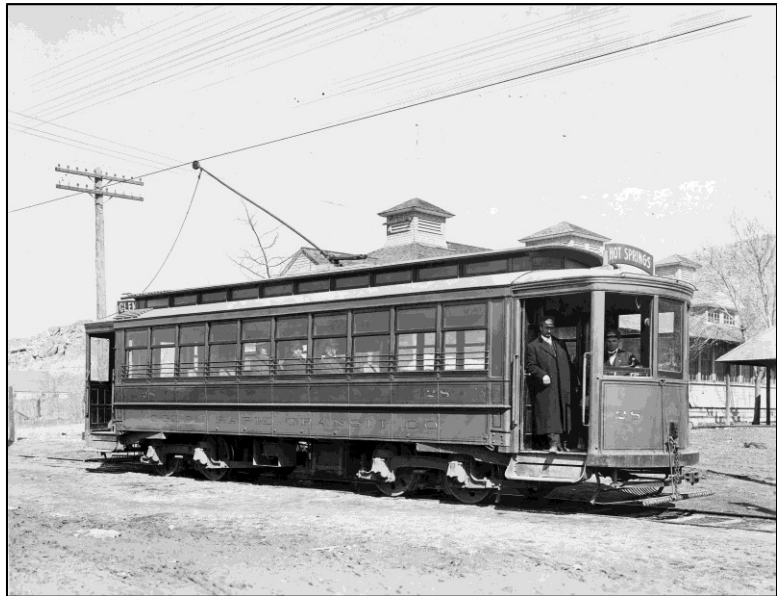
² *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1900a. “Street Railway Company.” May 22, Ogden.

³ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1900b. “New Street Cars Coming.” July 22, Ogden.

underway by early-August.⁴ The first three new cars—out of a total of eight—arrived in Ogden on August 19 to much excitement in the local media, who tracked every move of the cars upon their crossing of the Utah border and interviewed conductors and rail yard workers about their progress. A crowd of Ogden residents reportedly descended on the Rio Grande depot at Wall Avenue and 25th Street, where the cars had arrived, to see them.⁵ The remaining five cars yet to arrive were said to “be of different sizes, built especially for the Washington Avenue⁶ (sic) travel.”⁷ The initial three cars were described as follows:

The three which (sic) are here are all of light wood and are patterns of excellence. They are vestibuled, are 21 feet 4 inches long inside the car, with seats crossways of the car, like a passenger car. There are sixteen seats, capable of holding 32 people. The standing room is estimated at about 50. The cars are 29 feet 4 inches long outside, including the vestibuled platforms. They are inter-convertible cars, with rattan seats and frame backs for summer, and plush upholstered seats and backs for winter. The whole side of the care is removed for summer travel. The cars were manufactured by Barney & Smith, Dayton, [Ohio].⁸

As Labor Day 1900 approached, the ORT Company was expediting improvements to their line so it would be ready to meet the holiday travel demand. Among the other improvements being implemented at this time was the construction of a second parallel track along a 5-block section of Washington Avenue between the Ogden River and 24th Street to create a double-track area where streetcar traffic was sufficiently high to result in travel delays as cars had to wait at spurs and switches for other cars to pass. As 1900 came to a close, the ORT



Typical ORT streetcar; ca. 1908; Photo from Utah State Historical Society

Company had accomplished much in getting their new venture off the ground and into the modern era of electric streetcar service. They could then turn their attention full-force to planning the future of their transit system, which included increasing the number of cars in

⁴ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1900c. “The Street Car System.” August 14, Ogden.

⁵ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1900d. “They Have Come.” August 20, Ogden.

⁶ Present-day Washington Boulevard was referred to as Washington Avenue until sometime after 1936.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

operation for more frequent service and extending the system into other parts of the city and surrounding areas.

The year 1901 appears to mostly have been one of refining existing operations and planning for the ORT. In July of that year, the city council of Ogden voted to establish Paving District No. 1, which would serve to collect new taxes and fees from property owners to pave roads and install curb and gutter within the district.⁹ The district's boundaries encompassed Washington Avenue between 23rd Street and 26th Street. Among the directives charged by the council to the new paving district was to require the



Center-running ORT tracks along Washington Blvd; looking north from just south of intersection with 25th Street; ca. 1900; Photo from Utah State Historical Society

ORT “to pave all the space between the different rails and tracks and also a space two feet wide outside of the outer rails of the outside tracks of the Street Car (sic) company.”¹⁰ The ORT initially protested the requirement but ultimately acquiesced with a counteroffer to only pay for paving their facility along two blocks in 1902 and to see to paving the remaining blocks in the district at a future date due to the expense of the undertaking.¹¹ The city extended the boundaries of the paving district one block north to 22nd Street in November 1902 and once again directed the ORT to bear the cost of paving around their streetcar line—this time stating the company was to “pave a strip in the center of Washington Avenue ... 21 feet wide being that portion of the street between its tracks and rails and for two feet on the outside of the outer rails.”¹² A year later, in December 1903, the city issued an order for the ORT to pave in and around their line on 25th Street using sandstone blocks.¹³ The 1901 and 1903 directives to pave around their facilities was the first of what would be many orders to the ORT by the city to either carry out paving projects in and around their tracks or provide funding to the city to do so. Such future orders would become a point of contention between the ORT and the city and lead threats of fines, foreclosure, track removal, and revocation of licenses to operate the streetcar system.

As the dust quite literally settled around the paving project, the ORT continued ahead with improvements to their system and plans for more to come. A number of new streetcars were

⁹ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1901. “An Ordinance.” July 17, Ogden.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1902a. “Washington Avenue to be Paved.” March 1, Ogden.

¹² *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1902b. “Notice of Intention.” November 7, Ogden.

¹³ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1903a. “Council to Repave Twenty-Fifth Street.” December 15, Ogden.

ordered for use along the 25th Street and 22nd Street lines, and plans were in place to extend the 25th Street line further east to the Nob Hill neighborhood (east of Harrison Blvd.).¹⁴ Additionally, parallel tracks were constructed along the major routes thereby creating an extensive double-track system that allowed schedules of 7.5 and 15 minutes between cars depending on the route.¹⁵ By early 1903, the ORT system included 8 miles of streetcar lines. By the end of June of that same year, the company boasted 11 miles of track along with 18 passenger cars.¹⁶ The average fare to ride the system was reported as 2.95 cents.¹⁷

January 1904 saw another directive from the Ogden city council to the ORT to make improvements to their facilities as part of the city's broader roadway improvements. The ORT was ordered to remove their existing rails and tracks along 25th Street between Wall Avenue and Washington Avenue "and lay in place thereof, heavy girder rails not less than six inches deep, and to pave between the rails of such track and for a space of two feet wide outside of the rails of said track, with sandstone paving blocks."¹⁸ The ORT did not contest this directive and set about complying with the order. By late-February the company had ordered the requisite steel rails from the Lorraine Steel Company of Pittsburgh.¹⁹ The lack of protestation on behalf of the ORT may have been a calculated act as part of their efforts to extend their system throughout the city, as they had, according to numerous newspaper accounts, protested most of the preceding pavement orders issued by the city council. No more than a week after the purchase of the new steel rails had been announced, local newspapers reported that the ORT had applied to the city council for a franchise to operate a new streetcar line along Wall Avenue from 25th Street to 28th Street. The council agreed to grant the franchise request with the conditions that the franchise to operate the line could not be sold, given away, or transferred without permission of the city and that all uniformed firemen and police officers could ride the system free of charge.²⁰

The success of the ORT streetcar system and others like it in Salt Lake City spurred no small degree of competition to gain a piece of interurban market. Among the ORT's most notable competitors at the time was Simon Bamberger and his electric railway system. Bamberger had been financing the construction of passenger rail lines around the Salt Lake Valley since the early-1890s. He had largely focused on extending service to popular destination points such as Becks Hot Springs and, in 1895, set his sights on extending a line north from Salt Lake City to the Lagoon Resort (now Lagoon Amusement Park in Farmington) that he had recently built. Bamberger's vision included extending his rail line beyond Lagoon to Ogden and had petitioned the Ogden city council in January 1904 to allow him a rail franchise to enter the city and use a portion of the ORT's existing line near Wall Avenue. Bamberger had rescinded his petition

¹⁴ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1902c. "Street Car Company." March 29, Ogden.

¹⁵ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1903b. "Ogden & Northwestern Road Will Have New Engine and Cars." March 12, Ogden.

¹⁶ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1903c. "Ogden Rapid Transit." July 23, Ogden.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1904a. "Notice of Intention." January 22, Ogden.

¹⁹ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1904b. "Steel Rails for Street Have Been Ordered." February 24, Ogden.

²⁰ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1904c. "Franchise Given the Rapid Transit." March 1, Ogden.

shortly thereafter while he worked through financial challenges but re-issued it in 1905 while citing additional plans to extend his rail network through Ogden. The ORT, fearing Bamberger would succeed in tying up franchise rights for routes they wanted for future development, set to work obtaining as many rights to expand their system as quickly as they could. Among the new lines they proposed was an extension of the route from Glenwood Park (now known as Lorin Farr Park) near 17th Street to the Sanitarium (now Rainbow Gardens) at the mouth of Ogden Canyon.²¹ The extension was ultimately granted, and construction crews commenced work on the line in late-April 1906. Construction was to be completed no later than June 10th so that the ORT could complete their line to the canyon before Bamberger, who also had been granted a franchise for a line to that destination, had completed his line.²² It is unclear if the ORT made the June 10 deadline, but the line had indeed been completed by the end of June 1906. Specific streetcars providing service to the canyon stop were scheduled to leave the Broom Hotel station at the corner of Washington Avenue and 25th Street every 30 minutes between 6:45AM and 10:15PM, and the fare was to be 5-cents each way.²³ The ORT had tentative plans to extend the line through Ogden Canyon in the future, but abandoned that plan, at least for the time being, when they faced challenges securing the right-of-way.²⁴

The competition between the ORT and Bamberger came to a head in downtown Ogden in late-April 1906 as the two companies each vied for primary position as the transit service provider for the community. Bamberger had been granted a franchise for streetcar service along 25th Street from the depot on Wall Avenue to Grant Avenue, then north to 21st Street, and east to Washington Avenue.²⁵ On April 13, the *Ogden Daily Standard* newspaper, predecessor of today's *Ogden Standard Examiner*, reported the following:

Today at 1 o'clock two flat cars, driven by a repair motor belonging to the Rapid Transit company, moved down Twenty-fifth street (sic) and stopped at the intersection of Lincoln. A gang of twenty men jumped from the cars, grabbed rails and ties, which they unloaded onto the asphaltum of the street. With spike and hammer a temporary track was commenced leading up the street in the direction of Grant [Avenue]. This action of the Transit company caused a large crowd to gather and many were the speculations as to the significance of the move. Presently, another car loaded with ties, in charge of Superintendent Flygare, came alongside the track. Under the direction of Mr. Flygare and Assistant Supt. Bailey rail-laying was resumed and the road will be advanced as far east as Grant avenue (sic). The track is on the south side of the street, makes a double line of rails for a block, and is being done under protection of the blanket franchise which the Transit company has. Superintendent Flygare intimated that

²¹ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1905. "Surveying a Road to Canyon." June 8, Ogden.

²² *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1906a. "Eccles has Teams at Work." April 30, Ogden.

²³ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1906b. "Cars for the Canyon." June 30, Ogden.

²⁴ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1906c. "Stops Work on Canyon Road." October 10, Ogden.

²⁵ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1906d. "Ogden Rapid Transit Blocks Bamberger." April 13, Ogden.

tracklaying was not being done to block Bamberger, but to prevent Bamberger from blocking the Ogden company, which evasive way of putting the answer is equivalent to declaring that the march which Bamberger stole on the Transit company has been returned and Bamberger is now blocked by the local concern.²⁶

This move by the ORT prevented Bamberger from completing his franchised route, which was under construction but had been delayed due to a shortage of track materials, without coming to an agreement with the ORT to either use their tracks for a portion of his line or obtain a new franchise on a different route from the city. The *Ogden Daily Standard* surmised that “a merry war for supremacy of the coveted streets” was imminent.²⁷ It is unclear from public records how this situation was resolved. Conflict between the two companies arose again in early-1907 when the Ogden city council, which included N.C. Flygare of the ORT as a councilman, granted the ORT a new 50-year franchise to “maintain and operate a street railway system ... over the streets and alleys of Ogden.”²⁸ Simon Bamberger’s attorney, a Mr. Hollingsworth, petitioned for a clause to be added to the franchise compelling the ORT to grant Bamberger “the right to pass over certain tracks which (sic) where constructed over the right of way (sic) secured by him [in 1906] for his interurban railroad.”²⁹ The clause was rejected on the basis the proposed clause was not reciprocal in that no such requirement of passage over Bamberger’s lines was included. With the clause denied, Bamberger’s only recourse was to exercise his right of eminent domain to use the ORT’s track where they both owned right-of-way.

As the ORT maneuvered to protect their rights to streetcar service in Ogden, they had to contend with the challenges of their growing system. The electrified system had been operating off of power provided by Ogden City’s power plant. As the population of the area increased, street lighting was installed, and the streetcar system expanded, the demand for electricity began to outstrip the capacity of the power plant. The ORT had begun to supplement the power supply by constructing their own power plant operated by a coal-fired boiler, but it, too, proved inadequate as demand grew. It also generated electrical current that was largely incompatible with the newer streetcars being put into service by the ORT. By early 1906, power supply issues were becoming more frequent and causing delays and stoppages along the streetcar lines. The ORT limped along as best they could running under periods of reduced power supply but eventually entered into an agreement with the Utah Light & Railway company to become their new power supplier. Under the agreement, Utah Light & Railway would build a new power house with new motors and transformers “to change the current generated by the [power plant]” to one suitable for the new streetcars.³⁰ The old ORT power house was to be retained in the event the new plant suffered any type of failure or reduced output. Within a few months, Utah Light & Railway had acquired land on the corner of 23rd Street and Moffitt Lane (between Washington Avenue and Adams Avenue)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1907a. “Franchise Granted to Co.” January 22, Ogden.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1906e. “Car Line to Have New Power.” January 10, Ogden.

for the purpose of erecting an electrical substation that would supply both the ORT and the community at large.³¹

With their new 50-year franchise in place, the ORT commenced a period of system expansion. In the spring and summer of 1907, they added a second track to the line running from Glenwood Park to the mouth of Ogden Canyon. Later that summer, plans were announced to build a new streetcar line from Ogden to North Ogden.³² By mid-September, the line was in operation with new 41-foot long street cars, and a few months later the ORT announced plans to construct a line across a proposed viaduct over the Ogden rail yard at 24th Street, if and when said viaduct was built. The proposed viaduct streetcar line would extend as far west as the Intermountain Sugar factory near Wilson Lane and 1900 West.³³ Plans for the viaduct, which was to be a tolled road built under franchise to the railroad companies using the rail yard, were scrapped—for the time-being—when the railroad companies rejected the franchise offer. This action apparently angered leaders of the ORT who believed the railroad companies would likely resurrect the viaduct plan and that its eastern end would extend east of Wall Avenue, thereby blocking right-of-way where the ORT eventually planned to construct yet another streetcar line. In late-December 1907, shortly after it had been announced the viaduct would not be built, the ORT employed one of its tried and true pre-emptive strikes of rapidly laying temporary track to secure their right-of-way. On December 24, the *Ogden Daily Standard* reported that “To the viaduct tangle was added another knot yesterday, when the Ogden Rapid Transit company, with a gang of tracklayers, ploughs and material commenced an extension from Wall [Avenue] east on Twenty-fourth street (sic) to their car line ... A temporary structure of ties and crooked rails covers the ground at the east approach to the viaduct and while the company announces the beginning of a long contemplated improvement, the main purpose of the trackage seems to be to prevent the railroad company from coming east of Wall [Avenue] with the elevated highway.”³⁴ The actions of the ORT spurred the mayor of Ogden to insert himself into the fray and settle the matter by ordinance directing the issuance of the franchise for the viaduct. The viaduct was to extend as much as 156 feet east of Wall Avenue despite the presence of the hastily laid ORT tracks.³⁵ With the viaduct’s construction settled, Simon Bamberger declared his intention to seek a franchise for an interurban line over the structure to the “county road” (presumably 1900 West), which once again pitted Bamberger and the ORT against each other. Despite the row that ensued, neither company ever built a streetcar line across the viaduct, which was constructed in 1909.

In 1908 and 1909, the ORT embarked on another series of system improvements and expansions, including extending the line on 17th Street, building a line through Ogden Canyon to Huntsville, extending a line south from 25th Street along Wall Avenue, and building a new line to Plain City via Five Points, largely to accommodate freight traffic associated with sugar beet crops. For this

³¹ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1906f. “Sub-Station for Power Company.” February 14, Ogden.

³² *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1907b. “North Ogden Street Cars.” July 26, Ogden.

³³ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1907c. “A Trolley Line over Viaduct.” December 6, Ogden.

³⁴ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1907d. “Viaduct is Not to be Built.” December 24, Ogden.

³⁵ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1908a. “Viaduct is No Longer in Doubt.” January 2, Ogden.

latter line, farmers of the Plain City area contributed labor to the project by helping to construct the grade—the rail bed—on which the trackage would be laid. Construction efforts on these new tracks were temporarily stopped in early-1909 when the ORT used its role as the primary passenger and intra-urban freight carrier as leverage against Ogden City to gain more favorable terms for rights-of-way along select city streets.³⁶ The impasse focused largely on the ORT's access to, or lack thereof, portions of Wall Avenue near the Union Depot, where the city was attempting to placate heavy rail operators such as the Union Pacific Railroad, and the steam interurban carrier, Simon Bamberger, who were concerned the ORT would be a station or depot in the area that would cut into the business being done there by the existing carriers. The ceasing of work on system improvements by the ORT was done, at least in part, as a form of protest over what they saw as favorable treatment granted to “outsiders” at the expense of the local concern (i.e., the ORT).³⁷ The city council appeared on the verge of conceding to the ORT's demands by granting the desired right-of-way/franchise, and the ORT signaled publicly that they would resume construction activities with the understanding the franchise was imminent. A few days later, the city council offered the ORT the franchise but did so with the condition that the streetcar company could not establish an interurban connection (i.e., connections to other communities) or any terminals on Wall Avenue then or at any point in the future. The ORT vehemently opposed the proposed restrictions and effectively stated that the company would reject any franchise offer that contained them. Ultimately, the city and the ORT met half-way, and a franchise for extending streetcar service along Wall Avenue as far south as 32nd Street was granted. The prohibition on the ORT building a terminal was removed from the conditions of the franchise, but the ban on interurban connections was retained.³⁸

While the short-lived stand-off between the ORT and the city council played itself out, construction of the streetcar line through Ogden Canyon had continued as one of the ORT's few exceptions to ceasing work during the dispute. Construction of the line through the narrow canyon was challenging to say the least. Bedrock outcrops of concrete-like conglomerate formed precipitous obstacles that required the removal of thousands of tons of rock using explosives. River crossings required construction of bridges and importation of large derricks to dredge boulders from the bed of the Ogden River.³⁹ As Spring dawned in 1909, a work camp of an estimated 75 laborers was established in the canyon to help facilitate work on the streetcar grade. Work progressed in sequence with the grade being prepared first and followed by installation of the trackage, which was then used to haul construction materials to the moving worksite and waste materials, such as excavated bedrock, away from the site.⁴⁰ After several months of fits and starts caused by natural landslides and supply chain issues, the line through Ogden Canyon was completed for most of its intended length by the end of June 1909. The first passenger cars

³⁶ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1909a. “There Will Be No Extensions in the City.” March 10, Ogden.

³⁷ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1908b. “Ogden Rapid Transit it Aroused.” March 30, Ogden.

³⁸ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1909b. “Granted a Franchise on Wall.” March 30, Ogden.

³⁹ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1909c. “Contracts on Canyon Road.” March 17, Ogden.

⁴⁰ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1909d. “Ogden Rapid Transit Camp.” April 2, Ogden.

made the journey from Ogden to the end of the of the canyon line on June 26.⁴¹ The continuation of the line into the Ogden Valley would occur within the next few years.

The 1910s were a decade of change and growth for the ORT and the streetcar system in Ogden. The company continued extending its routes along existing routes to reach further to edges of the city and built new lines into neighborhoods and communities



Center-running ORT double-track along Washington Blvd; looking north from intersection with 25th Street; ca. 1920 ; Photo from Utah State Historical Society

that had until then lacked streetcar service. The popularity of the streetcar system through the downtown area prompted the ORT to double-track nearly all of the Washington Avenue line as well as sections of the 25th Street line. The ORT's efforts to build, operate, and maintain the streetcar system in Ogden had always been done in concert with the city's management of its roadway network. While the ORT had been granted right-of-way via franchise agreements, the city maintained ownership of the roads across which the streetcars ran. The city endeavored to modernize its infrastructure and pave the historically dusty and muddy roads and otherwise improve automobile travel as personal vehicle ownership grew in popularity. To this end, the city embarked on a plan that required the ORT to bear the cost of paving those portions of roads in and around their streetcar tracks and to remove the electrical catenary poles that ran down the centerline of Ogden's roadways—center-located poles were to be relocated to the edges of the roads or sidewalk areas, and all new construction was to place the poles on the sides of the road. The cost of relocating catenary poles and paving around its tracks was no small investment for the ORT, representatives of which spoke loudly and passionately against the requirements at many city council meetings. Though the ORT frequently issued threats to abandon all service in the community over the orders related to the poles and the paving, they repeatedly acquiesced and complied with the directives. Unlike prior orders to pave, the ORT was allowed to employ concrete for pavement purposes instead of sandstone blocks, which helped reduce the cost of the effort. Among their biggest undertakings by the ORT in regard to complying with the city's orders was relocating the center-running catenary poles from the downtown sections of Washington Avenue and 25th Street. The ORT erected dozens of steel poles along the sides of the road to which they agreed to mount new arc lights, which would, for the first time in Ogden's history, provide an illuminated downtown district. This new path of lights, which was

⁴¹ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1909e. "Opening of Canyon Line." June 26, Ogden.

completed in July 1913, was referred in local newspapers as “The Great White Way.”⁴² A similar effort was carried on the following year along a portion of Wall Avenue.

The cost of paving around its extensive web of streetcar lines and relocating catenary poles began to take a financial toll on the ORT when it also began to lose revenue due to decreased ridership. This drop in passenger traffic was due in part to the increasing popularity of personal automobiles, which effectively eliminated the need for public transit options for many residents of the area. In an effort to remain financially solvent, the ORT merged with its sister company, the Logan Rapid Transit (LRT) Company, in 1914 or 1915 to form the Ogden, Logan, and Idaho Railway Company.⁴³ The resulting company operated an extensive system of streetcar routes through the Ogden Area (see the map insert below).

Five years after the ORT merged with the LRT, a new company—the Utah Rapid Transit Company—was incorporated with A.P. Bigelow as president and took over the former ORT Ogden streetcar network.⁴⁴ The corporate takeover was ultimately for naught. The financial burden of constantly paving and repaving roadways around its tracks while continuing to experience decreases in revenue led the Utah Rapid Transit Company to violently protest directives from the city to bear the cost of the paving. In 1922, the company threatened to remove its tracks along 25th Street if the city would not rescind its order for the streetcar company to pave around its tracks.⁴⁵ This set off an angry furor amongst property owners along the contested route, who wanted the tracks to remain but who did not want to have to bear the cost of the pavement themselves. Similar threats were made by the Utah Rapid Transit Company in the ensuing months for other portions of their system when orders to pave were issued by the city. The row over the 25th Street section was ended when adjacent property owners eventually voted to pay for the streetcar company’s share of the paving costs themselves rather than lose access to the streetcar line. Little did they know their investment would be relatively short-lived. In 1923, the Ogden streetcar system operated at a financial loss of nearly \$24,000 and by 1928, the system was seeing year-over-year decreases in revenue of nearly \$19,000.^{46 47} As a result, the Utah Rapid Transit Company filed multiple applications to the city to discontinue service along portions of its system as a cost-cutting measure. The first route on the chopping block was a portion of their system between North Ogden and Pleasant View.⁴⁸ A similar proposal to abandon the line to Plain City was made but rescinded shortly thereafter when the local school

⁴² *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1913a. “Work to Start on Brilliant White Way.” June 14, Ogden.

⁴³ Strack, Don. 2021. “Railroads in Utah.” Accessed online December 24 at: https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/r/RAILROADS.shtml

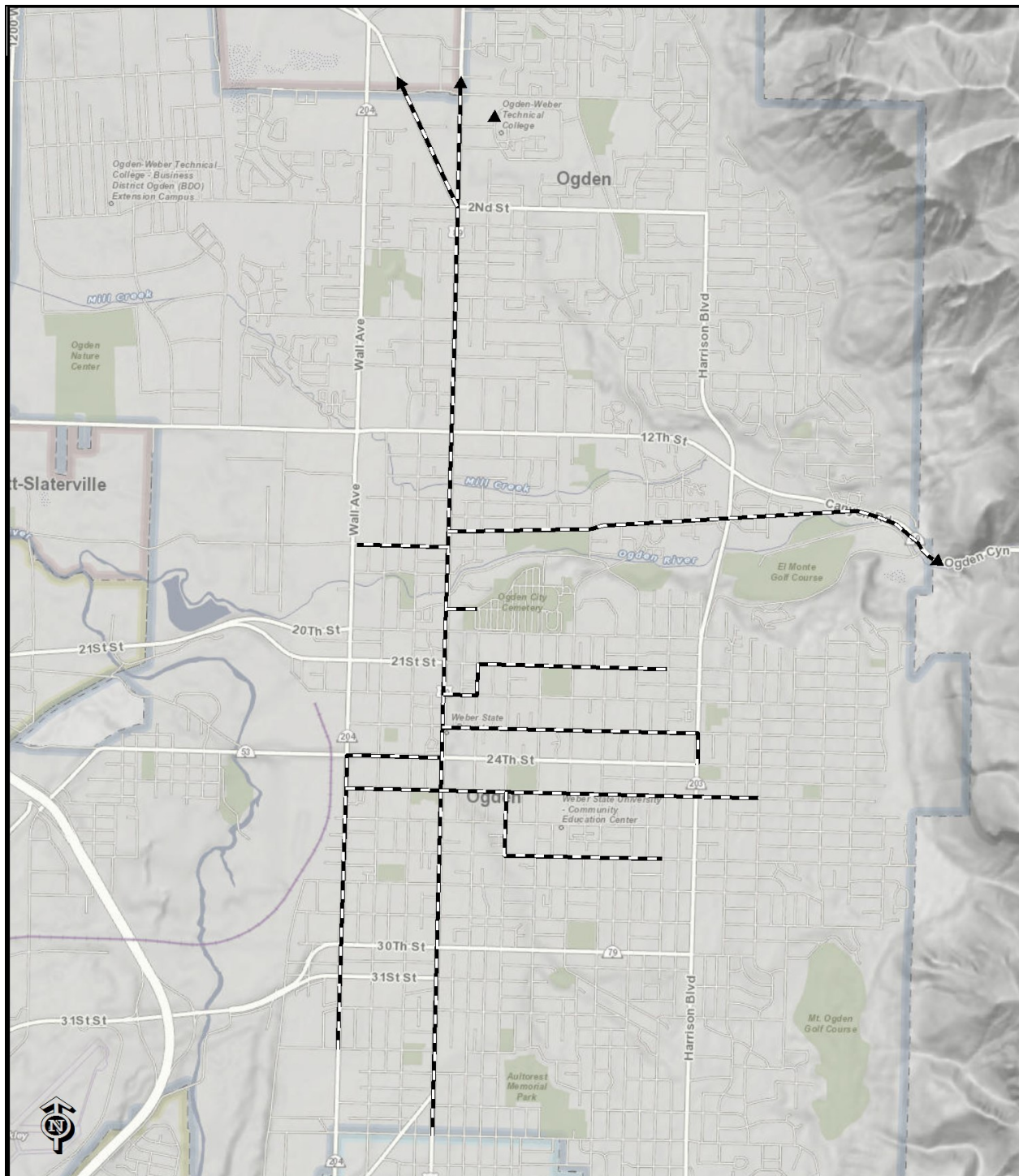
⁴⁴ *Ogden Daily Standard*. 1920. “Utah Rapid Transit Files Incorporation.” July 12, Ogden.

⁴⁵ *Ogden Standard Examiner*. 1922. “Resist Tearing Up of Tracks.” April 20, Ogden.

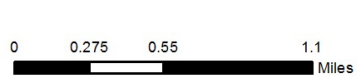
⁴⁶ *Ogden Standard Examiner*. 1924. “Ogden Street Car System Loses \$24,000 in Year.” March 28, Ogden.

⁴⁷ *Ogden Standard Examiner*. 1928. “Ogden Transit Line Reports Drop in Income.” April 14, Ogden.

⁴⁸ *Ogden Standard Examiner*. 1926. “Rapid Transit Company Asks Permission to Abandon Line.” May 14, Ogden.



Ogden Rapid Transit System - 1914



— Streetcar Line

Basemap taken from Utah AGRC Lite Imagery

board announced that it would scrap its plans to use new buses to transport students to school and would continue funding student access to the streetcar line.⁴⁹ The streetcar lines on 28th Street and in Ogden Canyon were abandoned in 1933, and in 1935, the Utah Rapid Transit Company made the decision to abandon streetcar service in Ogden altogether and switch to offering public transit via gasoline-powered buses.^{50 51} In November 1935, the state road commission granted the Utah Rapid Transit Company permission to remove all of its tracks from Washington Boulevard between 36th Street and 2nd Street.⁵² Although historical records indicate the removal was carried out, the discovery of the buried tracks along Washington Boulevard in 2021 during construction of the new bus rapid transit line suggest otherwise.

The Ogden streetcar system's final demise was a somewhat ignoble one given its storied history. The Utah Rapid Transit Company was placed into receivership on June 27, 1936, on a petition by the First Savings Bank for failure to pay on debts owed them.⁵³

In late-November 1936, a federal judge ordered the public sale of the Utah Rapid Transit Company.⁵⁴ At the time of the sale, which was occurred on December 5, the companies liabilities (e.g., its debts) were listed at nearly \$2,000,000 of which nearly \$990,000 was debts owed on bonds and \$860,000 was interest that had accrued since 1920.⁵⁵ A single bidder—noted local businessman George S. Eccles—attended the sale, offering \$30,000 for the company.⁵⁶ Eccles never restarted the streetcar system, and the abandoned rails were soon forgotten—some apparently removed, and others buried over with layers of asphalt upon which their successors, the gasoline-powered buses, carried on the legacy of public transit in Ogden.

⁴⁹ *Ogden Standard Examiner*. 1926. "Agreement on Car Line Made." October 10, Ogden.

⁵⁰ *Ogden Standard Examiner*. 1933. "Abandonment of Service Okehed." August 23, Ogden.

⁵¹ *Ogden Standard Examiner*. 1935. "Transit Company Pushes Bus Order." August 6, Ogden.

⁵² *Salt Lake Telegram*. 1935 "Commission Okehs Car Tracks Removal." November 14, Ogden.

⁵³ *Salt Lake Telegram*. 1936a. "Ogden Street Car System Auctioned." December 5, Ogden.

⁵⁴ *Salt Lake Telegram*. 1936b. "Ogden Transit Sale Ordered." November 23, Ogden.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Salt Lake Telegram*. 1936a.