

## REVIEW N

# Wheels of Time's award-winning Mack bus is tops in N transit

Review and Photos by Bill Cawthon

San Francisco Municipal Railway No. 2162 (#90241), MSRP: \$25.95  
New York City Transit Authority No. 6022 (#90482), MSRP: \$25.95

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**M**ACK proudly claims the first bus was a Mack and the first Mack was a bus. Although it is best known today for trucks, the Mack brothers' first successful product was a 20-passenger, 40-horsepower sightseeing bus built in 1900. That first bus racked up a million miles in eight years of ferrying tourists around Prospect Park, New York. Volume production began in 1904 and Mack buses could be found as far away as Boston, New Orleans, and even Havana, Cuba.

The first Mack with a six-cylinder engine was the AL bus of 1926; the company continued to innovate and introduced its first streamlined, rear-engined bus, the CT, in 1934. With a variety of models, Mack produced thousands of buses and trolleys in the pre-war years.

After World War II, Mack offered only one bus model, the C41. It was joined by the C-47 in 1947 and the 50-passenger C-50 in 1950. By then, General Motors was the dominant manufacturer in the bus market and Mack was getting a reputation for building heavy, durable buses that lasted a long time but were costly to operate. That led to the 1954 introduction of the C-49 with a lighter superstructure. The C-49 was the last volume-produced Mack bus. When production ended in early 1960, Mack had already decided to exit the bus business.

Production of the C-49 Bus totaled 1,409 units built from 1954 to 1960. Despite the relatively small production run, the C-49 saw service with municipal fleets in most of America's leading cities. Boston, New York, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles all placed significant orders for the Mack transit bus. Fifty went to the Toronto (Ontario) Transit Commission.

### Vehicle of the Year

Wheels of Time has recreated the Mack C-49 in N scale and it's a very fine replica. The N Scale Vehicle Association named it their New Vehicle of the Year in 2009 and the honor is well-deserved; not only did Wheels of Time do their homework very well, they produced the bus in both of its major variants: a city transit bus with both front and rear doors and a suburban bus with just the front door set.

We got a chance to check out two of the Wheels of Time transit bus models. The first is decorated for the San Francisco Municipal Railway, these days known as the Muni. One of the oldest publicly owned transit systems in America, the Muni started ordering 48-passenger C-49DT (diesel transit) buses in 1955. In a series of six orders, the Mini procured 450 C-49s and ended up with the largest

fleet of the Mack buses. The C-49 fleet remained in service into the early 1980s.

The second is a replica of the 49-passenger buses sold to the New York City Transit Authority in 1956. The NYCTA bought 318 Mack buses that operated until the 1970s. The Wheels of Time model has the two-tone green livery that replaced the former green-and-white paint scheme in 1958.

Both models are worthy of close examination. The tooling is excellent right down to the lug nuts on the wheels and the rear radiator grilles. The paint is smooth and thin enough that the details come through clearly. The pad printing is sharp and opaque with even the thin characters of the S.F. Municipal Railway logo well defined.

The models feature interior and full glazing and wheels with rubber tires. One nifty feature is the destination signs over the windshield. It's not enough that they are there and printed; they are reversible, allowing one bus to display two different routes. Our Muni bus sample comes with "38 Geary/East Bay Terminal" or "32 Embarcadero/S.P. Depot destination" signs. The NYCTA bus 6022 can be configured with either "B55 Richmond Hill/Ridgewood" or "B49 Ocean Avenue/Shore Blvd" route markings. The method is ingenious: the signs are printed on a small plastic block that can be popped out by using the included small black tool to gently push the block outwards. Then one simply selects the desired route and reinserts the block.

Wheels of Time also very thoughtfully produces multiple unit numbers and unnumbered versions for each livery. In addition to the Muni and NYCTA versions, the current double-door offerings include: Boston MBTA, Chicago Transit Authority, LA Transit, Milwaukee & Suburban Transport Co., Alameda-



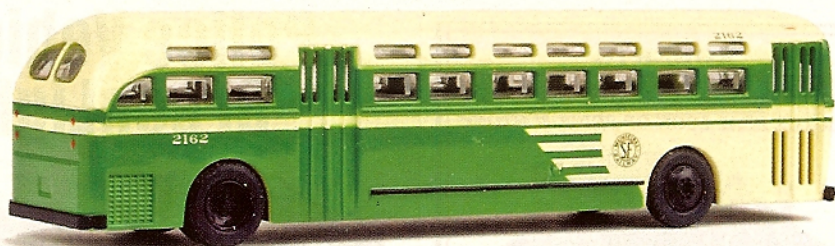
Wheels of Time has created an outstanding vehicle replica in N scale. These Mack C-49DT transit buses are real gems and it's easy to see why they won the New Vehicle of the Year award from the N Scale Vehicle Association.

Contra Costa Transit, Toronto Transit Commission, and Denver Tramway. The single-door bus is available decorated for Greyhound.

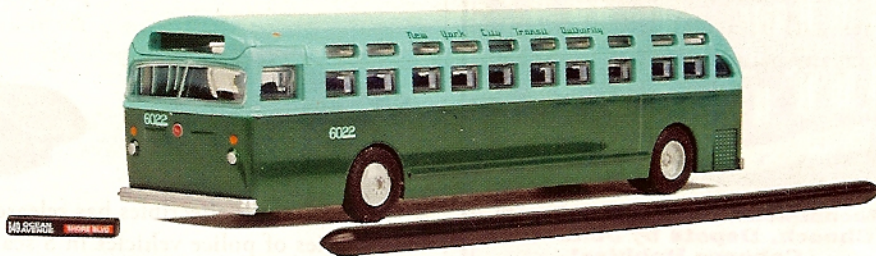
### A Worthy Addition

This is a wonderful model suitable for the late Transition Era through the beginning of the modern diesel era. In fact, the models are so nice, I almost wish Wheels of Time would devote all of their time to vehicle replicas. As it is, I certainly hope they try their hands at some more bus replicas, maybe some of the more modern buses produced by MAN and Neoplan when they were supplying American transit operators.

For the time being, check out the current models; they're well worth the price of the ride.



The paint is smooth, and separations are well defined. The fine characters in the Muni logo are easily readable and sharp.



The destination signs can be changed, a first in an N scale bus. The signs are printed on small plastic pieces that can be popped out with the supplied tool shown next to the bus.