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Trolley Cars in a Jam: Time to Roll, but Nowhere to Go

JAKE MOONEY

Life in New York is a story of square footage. All over the city, apartment dwellers fret about finding enough space for a growing family, or squeezing that one last chair into a crowded living room.

Jan Lorenzen and Arthur Melnick of Brooklyn are facing a similar quandary, albeit on a somewhat larger scale.

Mr. Lorenzen and Mr. Melnick, the founders of the nonprofit Brooklyn City Streetcar Company, need to find a home for 11 abandoned trolley cars, weighing 20 tons apiece, and they need to find one fast.

The cars have resided at the Brooklyn Navy Yard since 2001, taken there by a different group, which had hoped to build a trolley line along the Red Hook waterfront. When that plan fell apart and the group was evicted for not paying rent, the cars stayed.

"We consider them abandoned property," said Eric Deutsch, president of the development corporation that manages the navy yard, now an industrial park. "We'd love to find somewhere else for them to go and somebody who wants to take them, but ultimately they can't stay here."

Enter Mr. Lorenzen and Mr. Melnick, who have proposed trolley lines in Coney Island or in the planned Brooklyn Bridge Park. In a predicament that was first reported in *The Brooklyn Paper*, a weekly, Mr. Deutsch has said they can have the cars free but must find a way to move them and a place to put them (Manhattan Mini Storage, anyone?) while they perform repairs.

Considering the cars' size - each is 50 feet long and 10 feet high, bigger than most city buses - the task is easier said than done.

"We've gotten a few bites, and we're looking at a few things," Mr. Melnick said, "but it's difficult. Land is at a premium in New York these days."

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