

# Silesian Interurbans



*Tram type 116Nd in Bytom*



*Tram Moderus Alfa*



*Modernized tram 105Na*

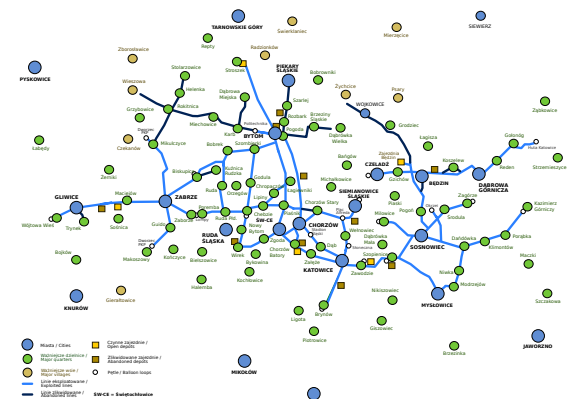


*Tram type 105N-2K*

**Silesian Interurbans**, one of the largest tram (street-

car) systems in the world, has been in existence since 1894. The system is spread over more than 50 kilometres (east-west axis) and covers thirteen towns in the Upper Silesia metropolitan area (Southern Poland) and their suburbs (Katowice, the capital town of the region, Będzin, Bytom, Chorzów, Czeladź, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Gliwice, Mysłowice, Ruda Śląska, Siemianowice Śląskie, Sosnowiec, Świętochłowice, and Zabrze), which is densely industrialised (coal, coke, steel and other industries; though decreasing since the 1990s) and inhabited by more than 2 million people.

## 1 Basic information



*Silesian Interurbans network*

- Total system length: **200 km lines (342 km of single track)**

- Number of routes: **26**
- Number of revenue vehicles: **371**
- Number of vehicles on-duty daily (Mon-Fri): **ca. 300**
- Number of depots: **5** (Będzin, Chorzów-Batory (currently main repairing works, not a regular depot), Bytom-Stroszek, Gliwice, Katowice-Zawodzie)
- Longest route length: **22.45 km** (Route 21)
- Shortest route length: **1.34 km** (Route 38)

(March 2006)

## 2 History

The system was established in 1894 as a **narrow gauge** (unique 785 mm (2 ft 6 <sup>29</sup>/<sub>32</sub> in) gauge) **steam interurban railway**. The first line was 36.5 km long and connected Gliwice with Piekary Śląskie through Zabrze, Chebzie, Chorzów and Bytom, another connected **Katowice** and **Siemianowice**. After four years (in 1898) electrification started. In 1912 the first short 4 ft 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in (1,435 mm) standard gauge line was built in Katowice. In 1913 a separate standard gauge system connecting Bytom with suburbs and villages west of the town was opened. After **World War I** and the **Silesian Uprisings** the region (and the tram network) was divided between **Poland** and **Germany**, and international services appeared (the last one ran until 1937). In 1928 another standard gauge system was established in Sosnowiec, Będzin and Dąbrowa Górnicza (the so-called **Dąbrowa Coal Basin** - a region adjoining the **Upper Silesian Coal Basin**). Between 1928 and 1936 most of the original narrow gauge network was regauged to standard gauge (although the last narrow gauge line, **Siemianowice Śląskie-Chorzów**, remained till 1952), which allowed a connection with the new system in Sosnowiec (a service between Chorzów and Sosnowiec through Katowice was established in 1931).

During **World War II** the German authorities decided to merge all the systems, and they have remained as one united network to the present day (though the old boundaries are still easily traceable). The new route numbering system introduced in 1940 to integrate the systems is still used. In 1951 the system was taken over by a state-owned company (**WPK Katowice**) and until the 1970s it was widely extended and partly modernised, reaching its maximum length at the end of the 1970s (ca. 235 km). Since the late 1960s the classic rolling stock has been replaced by modern cars based on **American PCC** technology. In the 1980s some of the non-modernised, rural lines were abandoned (the longest one from Bytom to Wieszowa with a branch to Stolarzowice).

The end of the 1980s brought changes in Poland (the **Round Table** talks and the fall of **communism**), but unfortunately that did not improve the tramway service in the region - on the contrary, the condition of the tram company (**Tramwaje Śląskie S.A.**) has been steadily deteriorating since the middle of the 1990s. The last new line was built in 1980–1982 (between Sosnowiec and Załęże). At the end of the 1990s the Bytom - Chorzów - Katowice line was to be upgraded to **light-rail (LRT)** standards. Due to a lack of funds, the investment was carried out only partially (including the purchase of 17 **Citadis** Type new **low-floor** cars produced by **Alstom**) and the journey time on a highly overcrowded line did not change.

## 3 Present day

Today, the chronic lack of funds is visible on every step. Only most urgent repairs are being conducted and the condition of the rolling stock (mostly 15–35 years old) and the infrastructure is bad. In 2006 two lines (8 Bytom-Dąbrowka Wielka and 25 Będzin-Wojkowice) were closed, but their current replacement with buses is very unsuccessful. Line 12 Chorzów-Siemianowice was closed on December 31, 2008. On August 31, 2009, lines 1 and 4 were partially closed on the large section covering Gliwice town. Also Lagiewniki - Bytom section of line 7 was closed in 2009, here because of bad track condition. Most of the track and all catenary from all abandoned lines was dismantled in 2006-2010. Even though the tramway speeds are not high and some relations tend to lose competition with buses, they reach central areas of towns and cities closed to road traffic and avoid most traffic jams. However, the great potential of the system that was and still should be a backbone of the regional transit seems to lie wasted.

On the other hand the Silesian Interurbans are the last such system in **Europe** - rural and suburban single track routes with **passing loops** often leading to deserted places, interesting types of **signal system** (also old signals hand-operated by the drivers), some old **rolling stock** and most picturesque rural and industrial sights. Thanks to these 'features' the Silesian Interurbans are very often visited by tram-fans, not only from Poland. The brightest star of the system is Route 38 in Bytom (along Piekarska Street) still serviced with classic, four-wheel **N** type cars with wooden seats and hand-operated slide doors. Besides, lines 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 14, 17, 18, 26 and 27 guarantee exceptionally scenic views and are definitely worth visiting, while other scenic lines, 12 and 25, were dismantled.

## 4 Routes

List of tram routes operated by Tramwaje Śląskie S.A. as of June 2012:

*Peak frequencies and hours of service are for Mon-Fri only*

## 5 Rolling stock

**Revenue cars** (*brackets: number of units in working order (April 2008) / dates of production*):

- **N Type** - classic four-wheel car (2 / 1949, 1951)
- **102Na Type** - articulated car, body based on Polish PCC - **13N Type** (3 / 1970–1973)
- **105N/Na Type** - short car, with electrical system based on PCC technology (314 / 1973–1992)
- **111N Type** - bi-directional version of 105Na Type (6 / 1993)
- **116Nd Type** - low-floor articulated **Citadis LRT** car (17 / 2000–2001)



*N-type-based snow plough*

**Non-revenue cars:** ca. 50 cars, mostly of **N** and **4N** Types, though many other interesting units are in the working order (including driver education cars, general works cars, **overhead wires** maintenance cars, **snow ploughs**, platform trailers and one **tamping machine**).

**Museum cars:** a set of classic **N** type motor car with a **4ND** Type passive **trailer** produced in the 1950s, renovated in 2000–2001.

## 6 See also

- **Silesia** – Upper Silesia
- **Tram**
- **Interurban streetcar**

## 7 External links

- **Tramwaje Śląskie S.A.** – official webpage (Polish)
- **Trams & Interurbans in Silesia & Dabrowa Region** (Polish) (English)
- **Fan-page**



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