

Member Response

by Bruce Wedlock

Friends, I read with great interest Ernie's article in the January newsletter. As one of the newer members of *Northeast NTrak* and one without a module, I would like to offer some perspectives on some of the issues Ernie raised. Joined the club almost three years ago because I was looking for an opportunity to engage in a railroading hobby with an eye toward a retirement activity. So I visited Greenberg and discovered *NTrak*. While I'm not prepared to devote all my free time to *NTrak* at present, I have tried to be a helpful member by attending some shows (Wakefield and the two Greenberg shows) and the Annual Meetings. I purchased a good deal of Stan Brink's rolling stock so I could run a train, but I am as yet without a module.

My first module ideas were to model the Narragansett Pier Railroad, a short line from Kingston Station on the New Haven to Narragansett Bay. I have collected a good deal of material for this project (newspaper and magazine articles, topo maps, aerial photos, and personal tours of the area) but after a year of this research, I decided that this was too ambitious a project for the present time and a first module. So I have scaled back my plans to something a bit more manageable.

When I joined the club, I had just moved into a rented duplex in Winchester and had no facilities for woodworking. That has changed, as I spent much of my spare time setting up a wood shop in the basement. So now I can do the bench work. The idea of a module kit which could be assembled with hand tools and a drill would be a big help for those without more extensive woodworking equipment. This

could also attract those who live in apartments and other small or temporary quarters. I would enjoy helping with this project now that I have a good wood shop with machinery to mill stock.

To go along with the module kits, we need to offer some instructional help to new members like me in building their modules. I attended a number of sessions at Ernie's on Thursday nights, but I didn't really learn the basics of laying track and ballast, mounting turnouts with machines, etc. Generally, work progressed and I watched, but I was never given a hands-on job to do. Hands-on, in my opinion, is the only way to learn these skills. One evening I brought an engine and Kadee coupler which I needed help to install. But when I tried another on my own, it was sufficiently different and the directions were sufficiently obscure that I just put it all back in the box.

Choice of equipment materials is a big question that faces the newcomer. The options are bewildering. Should I use Peco or Atlas track? How do I mount it? Ballast and Weathering? What kind of couplers? Whose engines work best? What about controllers? To the experienced the answers seen obvious, but to the newcomer, indecision breed paralysis.

While one makes time for what one feels is important, sometimes schedules just don't match up. In 1992 and again in 1993 I could not attend the "Winterfest Workshops" as Marjorie and I had made prior plans. Other family responsibilities meant that I could not attend Wakefield or the fall Greenberg show. Bad scheduling, not a lack of interest.

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Springfield Wrap

by Ed Smith

The Amherst Railway Society Show in West Springfield was another successful show. We joined up with members of Valley *NTrak*, Long Island *NTrak* and Northern New Jersey *NTrak* to present a large U-shaped layout with 5 blocks and plenty of track time for everyone. The paying public filled the Better Living Center to capacity making it hard to even move around, nevermind serious bargain hunting. This weather cooperated and show attendance topped 13,000 again.

After a full day of train running and crowd control, we all met back at the Howard Johnsons for our "traditional" pizza dinner accompanied by videos and slides. Around midnight the party broke up so everyone could get rested for another day with the crowds.

Sunday has always been the lighter day for crowds at the show and this year lived up to expectations. The was more room to move around, but the bargain were all snapped up on Saturday. By 5 o'clock we had already started take-down and by 6 we were all ready to go home for a well deserved rest.

On the way back down the Pike some of us met at the first rest area for a quick Roy Rogers meal and some light conversation about the show. We were tired but we will be ready for next



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In the past I have called show coordinators to ask what we could do to help and got this basic response, "Show up and we'll find something for you to do." Well, we've showed up and helped carry stuff in, strung a lot of curtain and rope, done some tower duty and run a train or two. While I don't feel like an outsider, neither do I feel like an insider either. While I struggle to get my cars on the rails at our first show, Marjorie asked one of the members if we could use his plastic launcher. The reply was "No!" so we now have our own.

At the 1992 Annual Meeting I volunteered to be on the special event committee, but never the committee never had a meeting. While members are cordial and friendly, they could show more interest in new members and *their NTrak* plans. I think the club needs to reach out to new members to encourage and help them get on board. Remember that the quality of the club members' modules is quite high, and that can be very intimidating to the

newcomer. While a hermit could learn to build a quality module, it's much faster and more fun to work together, building closer bonds of friendship and support in our hobby.

The concept of a multi-level dues structure has merit. Lacking sufficient volunteers to run matches at my gun club, I persuaded the club to institute the Work Incentive Fee. The club dues were increased by \$10 and members were given \$1 per hour credit (up to a \$10 limit) for specified volunteer work, such as scoring targets at a match. Those who did no work added to the treasury. Maybe \$5 for a module at a show and \$1 for each hour of setup and takedown work for those without modules?

I hope these experiences and ideas will help the club to refocus. I think it is a wonderful group with a great deal to offer.

Down East Model Railroad Association 19th Annual Show

Our next show is the Down East Model Railroad Association Model Train Show on Sunday March 13 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Middleborough High School (See the enclosed flier). Ed Omiccioli is our coordinator. Please call him at 508-877-8524 if you plan to bring modules.

The show features: Model Train Dealers, Operating Layouts, Railroad Historical Societies, Local Railroad History, Exhibits, Door Prizes, White Elephant Table (15% commission), Books Historic Photographs, Homemade Food, Movies and More!!!

Their club building in North Carver will also be open to the public (donation at the door.) They have N, HO, O/On2 and G scale layouts operating.

Northeast NTrak

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