

More Feedback

by Chuck Tremblay

The last two newsletters had what may be considered controversial articles, by Ernie Poole and Bruce Wedlock, both dealing with the direction Northeast N-Trak is moving in. Let me add some fuel to the fire.

The same basic issues discussed in Ernie's article were discussed by several members in early 1990, as a result of what appeared to be a lack of participation after a show we did at the Museum of Science, in December of 1989. I quote from my notes:

"There was general agreement on the following points:

- 1) Participation was poor at most shows after the Museum of Science.
- 2) A small percentage of the members do most of the work at shows.
- 3) There is no consensus regarding the purpose of the organization.
- 4) There is the feeling that there should be more of a requirement to be a member of Northeast N-Trak than the ability to pay \$12 a year.
- 5) Some members may be intimidated by the modeling skills of others."

I guess history does repeat itself!

Following those discussions, a group of members drafted proposed By-laws and a Constitution for Northeast N-Trak, based on the same documents of the NMRA. The

idea was to propose them for discussion, modification, and adoption at the annual meeting that year. In the end, probably because the level of aggravation dropped, nothing was done.

Interestingly, these documents addressed several of the same points as Ernie's and Bruce's articles (module ownership, minimum participation, technical inspections...), as well as other areas, such as dues collection (near and dear to me, lest I digress). Maybe it is time for us to review and adopt these, or similar, documents so we are all singing from the same song book.

Ernie's article pointed out that we are a Modular Model Railroad club, I would like to define that, some of the problems, and what differentiates that from most clubs.

A modular club has a layout which is portable, and in our case owned by many people. Traditional clubs have a fixed layout (when they even have layouts). The problem with this is that the modular club presumes that the vast majority of members have modules and will participate at most shows, simple logic says no members, no modules, no show.

Ownership of modules is key to the success of Northeast N-Trak. the current lack of new modules has

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Middleboro Magic

by Ed Omiccioli

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped set up and participated in a great N-Trak Middleboro Show. Everyone arrived by 8:30 AM and started to set up immediately. Anyone with an appetite, just about all of us, had free coffee and donuts, thanks to the Middleboro Club, until the doors opened at 10 o'clock.

We were a little late getting started with operations due to a short circuit, but with Steve Cappers help we were up and running in no time. Ron Wood, Jim Byington and Malcolm Frazier were first up, followed by Bill Monroe, Mark Ferricane, Steve Cappers, Frank Dignan Paul Burke and Jeff Brown. Our layout was larger than last year as we had new modules. We ran 16-feet on the sides and 12-feet on the ends plus Ed Smith's 1-footers because of Jeff Brown's 4-foot corner.

The place was loaded with tables and sales were brisk. I seemed that everyone was in a buying mood. The weather was just right and that brought in the customers.

We started to brake at 4 o'clock and by 5 o'clock we were all out of there and on the way home.

A good time was had by all who attended and now we are looking forward to the show next year. Again thanks to everyone who

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become more apparent with the loss of members with several modules, or the lack of desire of members with many modules to bring them. The latter is not a complaint, it can be a real pain in the butt to be carrying 12, 18, 20 or more feet of module to show after show. This 'loss of mileage' is a real problem in putting on shows, and it puts an undue burden on the members with modules, and show coordinators trying to find people available to do a show. Not too long ago we could do a good show, with a large layout, with relatively few members. A few years ago we could put together 60 feet of straight modules with only 5 members, today we can only muster 132 feet total, with 4 of the same 5 members still accounting for 60 feet, 45 percent (from 13 percent of the members!). I am not including corner modules, the perennial problem. We always need more corners.

From back in our history, I recall informally defining the purpose (mission statement?) of Northeast N-Trak to be the following: 1) to promote the hobby, 2) to help members to develop their skills, and 3) to promote fellowship among the members.

Our success at promoting the hobby is evidenced by two things, our steady membership, which has seen replacement of departing members with people who are new to the hobby, and our ever increasing number of invitations to exhibit at shows, a reflection of the quality of the layouts we presented, up to now.

As for fellowship among members, our success is shown by the absence of strife at our shows and meetings. Any group will have differences, we resolve them

without shouting, or punching each other out. We all have bad days, and some people are basically ugly, but they are the minority in this club, from my perspective.

The 'Winterfest' meetings were introduced to help members learn the skills, tips and techniques needed to build operational N-Trak modules and trains. While over the years these have been successful, there is only so much time available, and these require a critical mass of people available to do presentations, an audience, and a place to hold the meeting. These are scheduled to meet the needs and schedules of the majority of members.

One beauty of the modular aspect of the hobby is that each section is independent of all the others. While under construction, it does not interfere with operation of the layout, it isn't there. If something in it doesn't work, it can be removed for repairs. This allows members of all skill levels to build a module, without fear of ruining a fixed layout's operation. In my travels on the job I seek out shows to attend away from home, and have seen shows where the best modules didn't come close to our worst, but the track work was OK and the trains ran! The modules I have built over the years were used as 'test beds' to try new methods before using them on my home layout. New methods of laying track have been tried, as well as new scenery methods, over and over, on the same module!

I guess the point I want to make is that one of the advantages of modular railroading is that your module is the place to learn. Another advantage of the modular approach with regards to learning how to do something is portability. If you need help with some aspect

of module construction I believe that any of the members of this club are happy to help, but you need to ask! You have the option with modules of having someone over to help, or bringing your module to their house to help you. In either case, you are learning on your own turf, not someone else's layout or module. Your module is a small, controlled environment, where materials are inexpensive, mistakes aren't costly, and you get to learn at your own pace (and hide your mistakes, if they really bother you!). Maybe a round-robin group of members who meet weekly or monthly to build modules is what is needed.

As for selection of materials, buy, beg, borrow, or steal a copy of 'The N-Trak Module "How-To" Book'. This book contains over 20 years of knowledge obtained by literally hundreds of people regarding N-Trak modules, shows, and clubs. It has everything you need to know to build a module, and even things you don't need to know. It specifically lists products which have proven themselves (or are required for compatibility) over the years. Again, this information is available from other members, if you just ask, but other members aren't always available just before you head to the store or when you are at home working on your module.

Scenery construction including track and ballasting are covered in-depth in several books available at hobby shops. These books all have a place in my library and still are referenced often. One point to make here is that there are several ways to do scenery and each individual has to find the one they can do best, or are happiest with the results of. Again a module is the ideal place to experiment, while putting a minimal

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amount of time and materials at risk. You may want to find out which methods hold up to the stress of module transportation best, and if you ask, I am sure any member would be glad to give you his opinions.

Your selection of equipment needs to be guided by the 'walk before you run' school of thought. Kadee couplers look great, but are not for novice N-scale modelers. In fact, most of the long trains run at shows use the tried and true Rapido coupler. If you really want to use Kadee's, walk before you run. Make a pair of conversion cars with a Rapido coupler on one end, and a Kadee on the other. These would allow you to mix Kadee and Rapido couplers in the same train. Convert a few freight cars to learn how they work and how to adjust them. When you have a handle on this, convert a

locomotive with a conversion kit designed by Kadee. When you understand this you are ready to do the locomotives which don't have kits. This example translates to turnout installation, work your way from manual operation to various difficulty levels in powered turnout control. I could go on and on, but I think you get the point. If you get stuck, ask any other member for help, I'm sure you will get the information you need.

Maybe if a member has some special skill, or a small project to share, they could write an article for the newsletter. Other members could write articles on their N-Trak plans, inviting comments and suggestions. This would help members learn something, and help take some of the burden from the editor to come up with material! Hey Ed, how about (another) article

on what you need for newsletter articles!

I agree with Bruce's comments regarding the Special Events committee, but would ask the following questions. First, does anybody know who else was on the committee?. Second, who, if anybody, agreed to chair the committee? I would bet that there was no chairman or list of volunteers, and without either one nothing could happen.

To help people getting started, I am willing to make the following offers. First, I have 3 old modules in my Garage, which are partially complete and have some easily removable scenery (remember the experiment part). They can be purchased for \$15 each, 3 for \$40. Second, if you don't want one of these, I will help members build a module from scratch. You show up with the materials (call first!). We'll get you to the point of laying track. Maybe a member with track laying or scenery skills will volunteer to work with people on those.

I guess having been in N-scale for nearly 27 years, as Bruce said some of the answers seem obvious. But they weren't always and I have tried to remember how I found (and continue to find) the answers, and passed these sources along here. I also hope that people get a hobby, whatever it is, for their own enjoyment, not to compete with, or be intimidated by, others. Build a module to the best of your ability. Bring it to a show. Ask for suggestions to improve the parts you don't like. Re-work those parts. **HAVE FUN - DO YOUR BEST - DON'T BE DISCOURAGED DON'T BE EMBARRASSED.** This is how you get the hands-on experience, improve your modeling skills, and have fun. It's also the

Greenberg Wrap-up

by Ed Smith

The Spring Greenberg Show started off with beautiful weather and questions about how we were going to fit our layout into our usual space. Unlike in the fall when we had trouble getting enough modules to build a layout, this time we almost had too many modules!

We rearranged the modules and by show time had fit in all the modules (we did shrink our aisle space near the setup yard) and had a BIG L-shaped layout operational and looking very good.

Once the layout was up and running we also had very few operational problems and the trains ran very well for the whole show.

The "Clinchfield in N-Scale"

layout as featured in Model Railroader magazine was a big crowd pleaser. Several Northeast NTrak members helped to get that layout operational and helped to operate it during the show. The Greenberg show personal contributed to our treasury for this most generous assistance. We also assisted Dave Frary in setting up his Pennsylvania modular railroad.

The weather turned bad for the brief period when everyone was trying to pack up their modules and haul them out to waiting vehicles. Luckily the rain did not last too long nor was it too heavy and by 6 PM we were all packed and on the way home to some well deserved rest and relaxation.

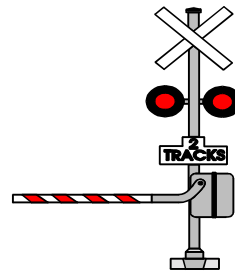


Newsletter & Club Activities

On the newsletter front, Mark Crump has volunteered to help out with production. Mark works in the publishing industry and produces newsletters, fliers, brochures, etc. for a living. He has also promised an article for a future newsletter.

Important note: The North Conway show is **NOT** being held on the Memorial Day long weekend this year. The show organizers, in response to complaints from dealers and show attendees about the traffic, crowds and available motel space, have scheduled the show for the weekend **BEFORE** the Memorial Day long weekend. So this year, head north for the show on May 21. Another change for that weekend concerns the traditional end-of-the-show-year barbeque. It will not be

held at the chalet in Conway as in past years. We were unable to rent the chalet this year and have found another nice place a little further down the road for our festivities. A map to the new location will be in the next newsletter (and yes, it will arrive in time to use it.) The menu will be similar to past years, but since we will be at a new place we may try something new. Stay tuned, there will be more about the menu in the next newsletter.



Nashua Show

By Ron Wood

Our next show is the Model Railroad Show sponsored by the Nashua Police Athletic League on Saturday May 7 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Elm Street Junior High School in Nashua, NH. On the back of the enclosed show flier is an improved Nashua map with directions.

The show features: Model Train Dealers, Operating Layouts (NTrak, HO, etc), Exhibits, Door Prizes, Railroad Photographs and More!!!

Ron Wood is our layout coordinator, (603) 889-0741. Please contact him as soon as possible if you plan to bring modules.

Northeast NTrak

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