

President's Message



It is time again to get ready for Winterfest. This year looks like it will be another great one. As always it depends on the weather. At least one day of the three days we are in Springfield we have SNOW or its bitterly cold.

The layout this year will be bigger than the previous years. The Amherst Railway Society has allocated us an area of 83x33 feet, larger than the 70x30 we have had in the past.

Please get your registration form filled out and sent ASAP. And read the Layout Operations page. We want to have many trains running at the same time. If you want to bring a module please contact John Dunne.

The February 13th show will be in Foxboro at Christina's Function Hall. We will have a smaller layout and use the end loops. Hope to see you all at Winterfest. Mark

Starter Module Project Completed by Bob Pawlak

On November 18, 2005, 3-foot corner starter modules with Mountain Division were delivered to Dan Pawling and Mark Ferracane. This formally completed the Starter Module Project initiated last year at about this time. A total of 7 starter modules and wiring kits (five 4' straight and two 3' corner modules) were delivered.

On behalf of all the members of the Northeast Ntrak Club, I would like to thank Ed Smith and Ernie Poole for doing an outstanding job building the starter modules!!! Of course the best way for the starter module recipients to express their thanks to Ed and Ernie is to follow through and finish their modules and then start bringing them to shows.

Northeast Ntrak, 41 Easy Street, Lowell, MA 01850-1731, Web Site - www.northeastntrak.org

Winterfest 2005

Springfield, MA January 28-30

There is still time to register and join in the fun of Winterfest 2005, the Eleventh Annual Northeast NTRAK Convention to be held in conjunction with the Amherst Railway Society's "Big Railroad Hobby Show" at the Eastern States Exposition Center, the Big "E", in West Springfield, MA on January 29-30. Winterfest 2005 will feature a series of clinics on Friday night; large layout operations and model, module, and photo contests at the Big "E" on Saturday and Sunday; and the traditional Saturday evening banquet with a guest speaker, presentation of contest awards, commemorative British pint glasses and T-shirts, door prizes, etc. The Hilton Garden Inn, Springfield's newest hotel and our convention center, is directly across the street from the Basketball Hall of Fame and minutes away from the Big "E", downtown Springfield, and Springfield's AMTRAK station. The "Big Railroad Hobby Show" offers three buildings full of layouts, exhibits, manufacturers and dealers in what, without a doubt, is the largest annual train show in New England. For more information and reservation forms see the "Winterfest 2005" section at Northeast NTRAK's website, www.northeastntrak.org. See y'all there!....

Ntrak Tales by Bob Gatland

What show coordinator hasn't gotten a good case of the "sweats" while worrying about modules that haven't shown up yet over the years I've gotten all kinds of excuses ranging from "I thought the show was...tomorrow, next week, what show?" to car problems. Here is my nomination for the best "Where's Your Module" response.

This occurred at the 1990 record setting layout in Syracuse. The layout was coming along pretty well, but there was one major problem a corner module was missing. The usual frantic phone calls finally got through and we found out why the module wasn't going to make it to the show. The owner was in the process of

getting a divorced and made the mistake of leaving it where his soon to be ex-wife could wield control over it, and she did. There was no way that his ex-wife was going to let him get his hands on it. The solution to the problem of the missing module was to start building a new one on the spot. I wish I had a picture of this module. It could have been the basis for a nice "How Not To" article.

My memory is faint on this, but I believe that a "real" corner module was rounded up the next day before the show opened. I'm not sure if they actually pulled the emergency module out of the layout or if it just self-destructed when it was unclamped.

Show Schedule

Jan 28 to 30 Winterfest, Amherst Railway Society, Big "E" Exposition Center, Springfield, MA
Set-up Fri Noon to 5pm, and Sat 7am.
Show 10am to 5pm on Sat and Sun.
John Dunne 508-697-7635

Feb 13 Mystic Valley Show, Christina's Function Hall, Foxboro, MA
(Point to point w/end loops)
Set-up 7am Show 10am to 4pm
Ron Wood, 603-889-0741

Feb 19 & 20 Museum of Our National Heritage, Lexington, MA
(Normal layout w/end loops)
Set-up Sat 8am Show 10am to 5pm
Sun noon to 5pm
Bob Pawlak, 781-862-2485

Apr 2 & 3 Greenberg Show
Shriners Auditorium, Wilmington, MA
Set-up Sat 8am Show 10am to 4pm
Sun 9am 10am to 4pm
Dan Pawling, 617-244-5261

?? Hooksett Lions Club, Hooksett Memorial School, Hooksett, NH
Set-up 8am Show 10am to 4pm
Ron Wood, 603-889-0741

May 19 Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Dr., Boston, MA
Set-up 7am Show 9am to 3pm
Robert Pawlak, 781-862-2485



READY ON TRACK NUMBER ONE

NJ Transit F40PH-1, # 4111, pokes its nose out of the Hoboken NJ terminal train shed ready for its next commuter run. This flash picture shows how well the reflective safety strip works. Photo by D. Pawling, Sr.



ALL TRAINS STOP FOR ORDERS

reads the semaphore recently rescued and installed in the Danbury Railway Museum railyard. Beyond is a New Haven RR RDC. Photo by D. Pawling, Sr.

New Members

Peter Mathews
19 Porter Street
Billerica, MA 01821-2846
978-667-7906
cpmath@aol.com

T. Mark Herder
51 Winn Hill Road
Sunapee, NH 03782-2202
(603) 763-2051
teherder@verizon.net

DCC System Improvements and New Radio Pole

By Bob Pawlak

At a train show where we set up a small rectangular layout, perhaps 19' x 23', we typically run all three mainline tracks with DC throttles to get the bugs out and then eventually convert the Red Line to run Digitrax DCC. This is usually done by simply disconnecting the DC throttle(s), connecting all Red Line wires across any gaps into a continuous loop, and then connecting the club's DCC Command Unit to the Red Line with 2-pin male and female connectors on the end of a single wire from the Command Unit.

The Command Unit is usually placed on top of one of the Club Boxes. It has several female Loconet connectors, a short programming track, and a short test running track where DCC throttles and locos can be set up and tested. The primary radio receiver for the battery powered radio throttles is built in the Command Station. This minimum DCC system arrangement is usually satisfactory for a small layout.

The first improvement that can be made to the minimum arrangement is to distribute the DCC power better by connecting a DCC power extension cord between the Command Station and a point midway around the rectangle. The cable for this purpose is marked every several feet with a band of violet tape (as are most DCC related cables) and has been available for more than a year.

The second improvement that can be made is to provide and distribute more DCC power by using the club's Booster Unit and another DCC power extension cord. This is an appropriate addition when you want to also run DCC on a second mainline track (the Yellow Line for example) or the layout grows to twice the size and you want to have two separate power blocks (using gaps) for the Red Line. The Booster Unit has additional female Loconet connectors and plugs into 110 VAC anywhere around the loop but must also be connected to the command station via a 6-conductor Loconet cable. The above-mentioned equipment has also been part of the club's DCC system for over a year.

When the battery of a radio throttle becomes marginal or you need to plug into the system for some other reason, it is convenient to have other places inside and outside the layout where you can connect to Loconet. 4 additional UP5 Digitrax Connector Panels have been purchased for this purpose along with the Loconet cables needed to chain them

together and connect them to the Command System. The best way to connect these little 2" x 3" panels to the layout is with 2 - #6 x 1/2" sheet metal screws into the bottom edge of a module or sky-board. Hopefully, club members will allow the addition of 2 small holes in their modules for this purpose.

For a larger layout such as at Winterfest in a hostile environment caused by radio interference from other DCC systems, etc. it is recommended that another radio receiver be put up high on a pole and be centrally located on the layout to improve reception of signals transmitted by the radio throttles. John Wallis of the Raleigh, NC Ntrak Club was the DCC Master for the Worlds Largest Layout at Chantilly, VA and recommends that the auxiliary radio be about 4' above the bottom edge of a typical module. The radio needs 12 VDC from a "wall wart" power supply and also needs to be plugged into the Loconet.



I have built and tested a new Radio Pole Unit for our club's DCC system and plan to bring it to the Greenberg show on December 21 for further testing. The unit consists of a small box containing a Digitrax UR91 radio receiver at the top of a plastic pipe, another small box containing a Digitrax UP5 connector panel at the bottom of the pipe, and a wooden piece clamped to the pipe part way up. The wooden piece hooks over the top of a standard sky-board and a 2" C clamp holds the lower box to the bottom of the back of a module. With the recent purchase of the Radio Pole Unit, connector panels, and wire to connect everything together we are in much better shape to do a typical large show and be almost fully prepared for Winterfest. We will still always need to borrow 3 or 4 Booster Units, perhaps some additional connector panels, and more Loconet wire from other participating clubs when we do Winterfest.



Mystic Valley Railroad Show November 21, 2004



Our layout at the Mystic Valley RR Show in Foxboro, MA at Christina's Function Facility.

Foxboro Show Review By Ron Wood

On Sunday November 21, 2004, Northeast N-Trak displayed a 22' x 10' layout at the Mystic Valley Railway Society show in Foxboro, Mass. Club members in attendance included Roland Kelley, John Dunne, Mark Ferracane, Steve Cappers, Dennis Yip, and Ron Wood. New member Jim Muller arrived early to help us set up and it was a big help. Thanks. Jim and James Byington also stopped by the layout during the day to renew dues. It was good to see them again.

Originally, we were allotted a space to fill of 23' x 15'. We were unable to achieve this due to low member participation hence the smaller size. Most members brought at least two



Here is Ron Wood talking with Jim Byington who stopped by to say hello with his son. It has been a long time but Jim says his son is working on three modules purchased from Chuck and that we might see them again in the near future.



John Dunne, Mark Ferracane, Dennis Yip and Ron Wood at Mystic Valley Show.

modules. Thanks to Mark Ferracane for bringing the yard, two of his own modules, Dennis Yip's module, the club boxes *and* the DCC! That works out to over 28 feet of modules! Much has been written lately about gaining member interest and participation. I won't rehash it here except to say that we need more frequent meetings and workshops. Hopefully, a lot of folks will be able to attend an upcoming workshop at Dan Pawling's house which is going to be on a weekend day most likely.

Don't know what else we can do. Just some more food for thought: we were approached at the Bedford Boomers show to do a model train show in March, 2005 in Milford, NH. I told them we would get back to them. I feel that right now we have a hard enough time doing our regular shows on the schedule. Until we get more active members with modules up and running, I suggest we slim down our schedule for next year. Ron.



What would a train show be without Dennis taking his nap. As you can see he has learned from Jeff Pawling that it is better to lay down to nap then sitting.

If your looking for an internet site with links to many rail pictures try: www.railfan.net

Pacific Northwest Railroading Answers

1. Which city has the busiest railroad junction in the Pacific Northwest?

- Spokane, WA.-Somewhat busy.
- Portland, OR.-Many junctions, not a whole lot of trains.
- Seattle, WA.-Runner up.
- Vancouver, WA.-Vancouver Wye, BNSF, UP and Amtrak trains galore.**
- Grand Junction, ID.-Not even close.

2. Which of these cities is located on BNSF's Columbia River Sub?

- Pasco, WA.-Wishram Sub
- Wenatchee, WA.**
- Portland, OR.-Fallbridge Sub
- Wishram, WA.-Fallbridge and Wishram subs
- All of the above.

3. If you were standing next to a SP branchline in Oregon during the 1980is/ early 1990is, which type of locomotive were you most likely to see?

- SD40-2 -SP didn't even have SD40-2's.
- SD9 - Couldn't throw a stone over the rails without hitting one.**
- GP9 - Not very popular on the grade ridden Oregon Lines.
- SD40T-2 - Common on the mainline, not the branchlines.
- GS-4 - SP4449 hasn't made that many trips on those branchlines!

4. Which of these PNW passes never had a railroad on it?

- Pengra Pass - SP's Cascade Crossing.
- Stevens Pass - GN/BN/BNSF.
- Santiam Pass - Corvallis & Eastern built two miles of railroad with a boxcar to "claim the pass".
- St. Paul Pass - Milwaukee Road in Idaho's Bitterroots.
- None of the above**

5. James Hill, son of the ìEmpire Builderî Jim Hill, built his mansion in what locale?

- Seattle, WA.
- Spokane, WA.
- Hillyard, WA.
- Boise, ID.
- Maryhill, WA.- A mansion and a stonehenge monument.**

Greenberg Show
December 18 - 19, 2004



Peter Wisniewski is demonstrating his newest toy. He installed a camera in a Kato Genesis engine. On the TV you can see the picture coming from the camera.

have a guest that wants to help set up be there guide in helping them not to damage other people's modules & equipment. Please be aware that a lot of these modules have had a massive amount of time, energy, love and dollars put into them and that can be wiped out too easily.

The show seemed to be better attended on Saturday then on Sunday. I did not get the final count of attendance. The dealers seemed to be doing well on Saturday..



(Standing) Peter, Jim and Erine, with Dan on his knees.

The Greenburg Train Show
by Dan Pawling

There were a lot of familiar faces that came to see the show from the previous years. We had 19 modules, thanks to R Hoven, B Pawlak, R Kelley, D Yip, M Ferricane, D Pawling Jr. Other members that showed up and helped were P Wisniewski, J Muller, S & J Consigli, A Pawling and girl friend Jenna and D Lawson. Frank Dignan and Scott Cliborn and his father. If I have forgotten you and what you did, or if my information is incorrect let me know. It is important to me to be as accurate as possible.

As an assistant to the original show coordinator Ernie Poole I planned the layout with his input. Ernie handled the contact with Greenburg but showed me the information and gave me an idea as to how it is to work with them. Ernie showed up Friday night to draw the layout on the floor. Some members set up Friday night. Saturday morning set up was a bit slow. We were just starting to run trains and trouble shoot electrical problems when the

doors opened to the public. The trains should be running before the doors open to the public.

I have seen this at other shows and I think that there are a couple of ways to improve on the set up time. The first is to keep socializing to a minimum during set up time. When you are done with your own stuff help those who will accept your help. Please ask if the club members want help and don't be insulted if they do not want help. Most of the time if they turn down your help it is because they have a system they want to stick to. This helps prevent damage to there modules. There is always a need to help with set up of club equipment and provides a good training ground for new members and visitors that want to help. Other ways to complete the set up on time are don't be late, come earlier, be

Message from VP Dan Pawling
The Tuesday night fix up, build new
& run trains meeting 7:00pm to
10:30+pm

There has been a lot of activity in my basement five new modules being work on and two more in planning. The paper mill end loop is making slow progress and I am working on some ideas as to how to finish up. I will be taking a trip down to the Providence North Railroad Club to take a look at there paper mill to try to understand that process better.

There will be some weekend help session planed in the near future to help member complete there modules or get started. Please call to find out when they will be held. If you are building something come prepared with the parts that you will need. Hope to see some new & old faces. **Have a great New Year.**



Dan in front of the Passanger Station modules of Rand Hoven and Dennis Rockwell.



This is were you could find Bob quite a few times at the Greenberg show. It gave him a chance to get away from the crowds that were viewing his Bridge Canyon layout and asking questions.

organized, and call a club member to help you set up or bring a friend or potential club member.

The pack up is a lot easier and seems to happen in about an hour. An observation brought to my attention is that some of us seem to be in a big rush to get packed & get out and in the process are damage equipment. Slow down ask for help

Another note that is important is if you

Welcome Back to
Bob Sgroi

After a short time away from the club Bob is back and building a module. We are looking forward to having his module at a show.

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