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President's Message

Well, The annual meeting is coming up June 8th, and are you going to attend? We will be discussing the shows for next year and other topics. The meeting will be held at Fay Chin's home. He has sent invitations with directions. If you have not received yours yet please contact Fay. One of the topics will be shows, last year we pulled out of a number of shows due to LACK OF MEMBER PARTICIPATION. For the club to grow we need more members to attend shows with modules. We have gained a few more members this year. I am asking our Senior Members to help by mentoring the newer Members and showing them the ropes. Also, at the annual meeting Dan Pawling will be taking orders for NEW club shirts. It is important that all members have a club shirt and wear it at the shows.

The end of this month I will be going to the N-Scale Collector Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. The convention will feature an NTRAK layout that will make the layout in Chantilly, Virginia in 2004 look small. The convention center is over 200k square feet in size. The layout will cover over 150k square feet. WOW!

I will also be selling the Club Cars at the Swap-A-Ramma on the Friday of the Convention. I hope we can move some more cars.
Til September,
Mark

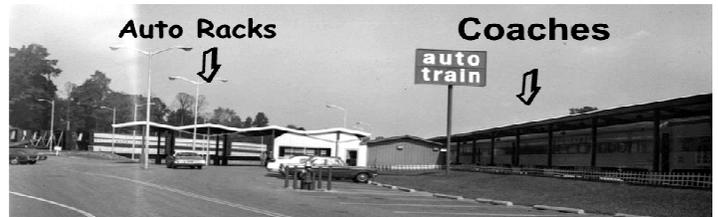
Your Annual Dues are due in June

Renewals of Northeast Ntrak membership dues (\$20) are due before June 30, 2008. You can bring cash or check to the annual meeting on June 8, 2008, or send your check before June 30, 2008, to:

Chuck Tremblay, Treasurer
Northeast Ntrak
59 Greenside Way
Methuen, MA 01844

Chuck sends \$9 of your \$20 for renewal of your national NTRAK membership. It requires a lot of work on Chucks part to get the information ready and forward to Natiional. If they are not into the National on time they will drop you from the mailing list. So please help out by paying your dues of \$20 for the 2008-2009 year by June 30, 2008. THANK YOU.

History of the NTRAK Auto-Train Modules *by Ernie Poole*



I took my young family to Florida in the spring of 1975, to visit with my grandparents who wintered there. It seemed natural to me, to take the new Auto-Train service from Lorton, Virginia. We drove down in one day from Boston. After an overnight in Washington, DC and some sightseeing, we boarded the train for a 4:00pm departure.



It was quite scene as all the autos were checked in, marked with magnetic signs on the drivers door, people were directed into the waiting room, and the train was serviced. My camera was working overtime as the autos were loaded into their respective carriers for the trip to Sanford, FL. Alas, the borrowed camera was defective, and the photos were useless. The auto carriers were backed three abreast, into stub tracks that ended at a loading ramp. Atop the ramp was three adjustable loading racks that look much like a shortened auto carrier truck you see on the highway. The cars were, (and still are in the case of Amtrak) driven up the ramps and into the first carrier, then driven through the carriers over plates between the cars, to the end. All the cars at that time were the bi-level boxcar like carriers you see on the modules. The company later used tri-level auto racks in combination with the original double deck cars. (continued on page 4)



N Scale Sound has Come of Age **by Paul Azevedo**

Yes, you can have your cake and eat it too! The SoundTraxx TSU-750 Micro-Tsunami DCC sound decoder assures that much.

Measuring 1.00"L x 0.50"W x 0.22"D , the new SoundTraxx Micro-Tsunami is the world's smallest 16 bit decoder. Just like it's big brother, the Micro-Tsunami has 22 sound effects including: Exhaust Chuff, Dynamo, Bell, Whistle (long & short), Air Pump, Steam Release, Coupler Clank, Cylinder Cock, Brake Squeal & Release, Side Rod Clank, Snifter Valves, Blower, Injector, Johnson Bar / Power Reverse, Pop Valve and Fireman Fred. An Equalizer, Dynamic Digital Exhaust (DDE), and fully adjustable Reverb are included.

The function keys for the Micro-Tsunami are as follows: Bell (F1), Main Whistle (F2), Short Whistle (F3), Steam Release (F4), Function Outputs (F5 & F6), Light Dimmer (F7), Audio On / Off (F8), Water Stop (F9), Injectors (F10), Braking (F11), & Coupler Clank (F12). Several Hyperlight effects are available, including On-Off, Dimmable, Mars Light, and Firebox Flicker. The TSU-750 also offers a new "Dyno-Light" effect, which gradually increases lighting intensity as the dynamo speed increases.

The Alternate Mode Selection (CV 30), enables the user to reassign function keys F9 - F12 down to the F5 - F8 keys. This Function Key swap allows older throttles with only 8 function keys, to access the other sounds which are more commonly used.

The Equalizer Control (CV 153) has 3 pre-set EQ settings for optimal sound of the TSU-750. This allows the user to cut and boost the sound pressure level (SPL) at 7 octaves: 62Hz, 125Hz, 250Hz, 500Hz, 1KHz, 2KHz & 4KHz. Setting this CV to "1" will pre-set the EQ for a micro speaker (3/8" - 1/2"); "2" is for modest sized speakers (1"-2"); and a value of "3" is for much larger speakers (up to 4"). Don't forget the speaker baffle. Isolating the back wave from the speaker output is essential to increase the SPL. I have found that placing a small piece of a cotton ball in the speaker baffle will marginally improve the SPL. If the speaker is firing upward, directly against the coal load in the tender, then placing a cotton ball in the tender will help increase the SPL.

The Audio Reverb (CV 161 - CV 164 & CV 169 - CV 172), Dynamic Digital Exhaust (DDE), and the Back EMF (CV 212) enables the user to select various parameters of reverb. The DDE settings (CV 177 - CV 190) enables the user to recreate the sound parameters of a steam locomotive under various road conditions. By adjusting the Reverb Control (CV 161), Output (CV 162), Delay (CV 163), Feedback (CV 164), as well as Whistle, Bell, Exhaust, and Air Pump Reverb (CV 169 -172) the user can create "spatial presence" which simulates the effects of terrain features (hills / valleys), or Multiple Units consists. The sound produced can appear to be a loud chuff on a gradient, a hard working freight loco pulling a string of cars as it approaches road speed, or a passenger locomotive as it takes off from a station. Setting (CV 212), the Back EMF, to a lower

value will allow the decoder to perform as an engine under load. A higher value will negate the benefits available to the user.

If you are unfamiliar with DCC sound decoder installation you should consider having this decoder installed by an accomplished hobbyist. The TSU-750 must be hard wired, which is much more involved than a simple "plug & play" DCC decoder installation. Top Hobby Trains on Staten Island, NY is where I had my TSU-750 installed in my new Kato GS-4.

All in all, N scale sound in steam locomotives has indeed come of age!

Show Schedule for 2007 – 2008:

**June 8:
Annual Business Meeting at Fay Chin's home.**

Business Success and Failure, AutoTrain

from Wikipedia, the encyclopedia

The *Auto-Train* began operations on December 6, 1971. The service enjoyed remarkable success with travelers, and reported profits for the first few years. Before long, the Auto-Train Corporation's ambitious leadership was looking to expand into other markets. A second service, from Louisville, Kentucky to Sanford, was inaugurated in May 1974. It operated only until September 1977, however, reportedly having lost millions of dollars. Two *Auto-Train* derailments in 1976 and a major derailment in 1978 disrupted service, and cost the company more than \$6 million in lost revenue. Debts accumulated, including millions in taxes, leading to cutbacks in maintenance that slowed operations. Eventually the company was forced into bankruptcy; and though the *Auto-Train* retained much of its popularity to the end, it terminated its services in late April 1981.

Several smaller companies scrambled to pick up the *Auto-Train's* former customers. A company operating as Auto-Bus carried its customers in buses and their cars in trucks, operating between Pennsylvania and Florida. Another company, Autolog Corporation, offered a service to carry cars by truck between the Northeast and Florida, though not providing transportation for the customers themselves. There were also several companies that hired drivers to take cars individually to their owners' destinations. No one else, however, offered a service quite like that of the *Auto-Train*, namely transporting a car and its passengers simultaneously to and from Florida.

While their service ultimately failed (as so many American passenger train services had previously failed in the decades prior to Amtrak's startup in 1971), Garfield and Auto-Train Corporation had identified a service that people wanted.



The 2007 Brooklyn Ntrak Fifth Annual Hangar Show
by D. Pawling, Sr. with John Gillen, BNT

One of NYC's mayors said that "New York City is a circus." On June 24, 2007, I was a player in two of the acts and had "walk-ons" in a few others. One act was the Fifth Annual Hangar Show sponsored by Brooklyn Ntrak. The second act was the Metro Transportation Authority/ NYC Transit Bus Division's Annual Road-éo at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. These activities are in collaboration with the Floyd Bennett Field unit of Gateway National Recreation Ares, National Park Service. In contrast to the drenched and dreary weather in 2006, the day was bright, dry and breezy. The big hangar doors were open. There was a pleasant flow of air through the building for a while -- until the wind increased to about 15 mph and gave the modules a good dusting, but at N-scale we almost called FEMA.

Show host was Brooklyn Ntrak (BNT). Guests were New Jersey Central (NJC), Long Island Ntrak (LINT) and Northeast (NE). Walking thru those big doors, one stops to gather in and make sense of the scene inside.... aircraft on the fringes, Ntrak layout in the middle - and - center foreground - John Dunne and Ron Cavanaugh - as if they had anticipated my arrival! (Shucks, fellers!). Beyond, the other crews were finishing the set-up.

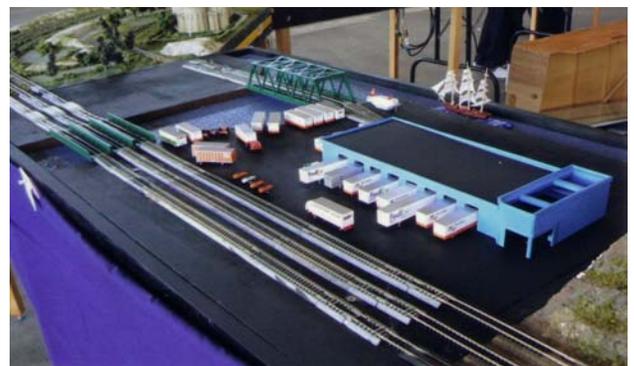
The layout was a compact "U-shape" with the Red Line as the outside spine and with two ovals on the inside corners and the other two on the ends of the legs. On Sat-urday each of the ovals had trains running on the Yellow, Blue and Green lines. Red Line



DCC trains were confined to the ovals and spine of the legs, there being wiring problems on the yard connecting the two legs; this condition was cleared up for the Sunday running of the full layout. I admire the fearlessness of some (BNT?) module builders for straying from "straight arrow" trackage. One

example is seen in the photo of Ralph Dickar helping power thru a transition. Look beyond to see the X-over and wiggle on Red and Yellow; Blue divides to cross a creek, join with Green, rejoin Blue, has an x-over to Red before returning to standard 3-traks at modules edge. Wild!! No apparent "economic benefit," but model RR'ing is fun! Right? Right!!! Also pictured is Joe McClean's (BNT) first, and in-progress, module, striking in its simplicity, coloration and placement of structure. A channeled "river" crosses the module to meet another body of water flowing along the back edge of the module. The main lines cross the river on low level plate girder bridges; the Green Line is double-tracked on a taller through truss in the rear. The lack of scenery on the left focuses attention on the trans-load operation and then on the sailing ship in the background. I hope that Joe will keep the ship on the module as it transforms an industrial scene into something completely unexpected. Great showmanship!!!

Many thanks, John Gillen for the invitation to the show and for the ride at day's end through "downtown" Coney Island to the subway. We had "walk-ons" in other acts in the city circus - the lights of the Cyclone roller coaster and the Ferris wheel at



dusk, the people costumed for the earlier Annual Mermaid Parade (including the girl with the long, sea foam green hair). And thanks, BNT, CNJ, LINT and NE for a super and well-attended show.



(Continued from page 1)

The day we rode the train, it was sixteen passenger cars long, plus about the same number of auto carriers. As cuts of the auto carriers finish up loading, they are closed up, pulled out by a company switcher, and assembled on a track next to the passenger cars. When all of the auto carriers are loaded and assembled, the departure sequence starts. The train crew has seated all the passengers by now, the blue flag is removed, and clearance onto the main line is established. Since the Auto-Train is the longest passenger train ever to operate in the US of A, the departure had to happen with a sequence they called "doubling out".



The sequence goes like this. The locomotives couple onto the passenger car set at the platform, and pull the train out onto the main, clear of the switch and then stop. Now the switcher, at the back of the auto carrier set, shoves its cars out onto the main and couples them up to the rear of the train. The switcher cuts off, a brake test is completed, and southbound clearance is given. It was a pretty spectacular sight for any train fan, to see this long, red, white, and purple beauty start its journey. The two GE U-36's (the company ultimately had ten of them) were taxed to limit on this train. Tom Hoover told me later that the Auto-Train locomotives spent more time in throttle notch 8, than any other units that he saw come back to GE. They were completely spent.

The train runs through the night stopping only once in Rocky Mount, SC for in-transit service and inspection. At about 9:00am, the train arrives at the Auto-Train property in Sanford, some 500+ miles to the south. The auto carriers are pulled of the rear and routed to the unloading ramp by the switcher, again three groups on adjacent tracks. The passenger portion of the train is then positioned at the platform, and detraining begins. Almost immediately the autos are driven off the train, (the carriers are spotted with the autos facing the ramp) and

were brought to the platform parking area, where passengers and cars are reunited. Surprisingly, the place is a ghost town once again, in just half an hour. The whole sequence would be repeated northbound in just a few hours. It was bigger than life to watch the choreography of the entire operation.

Hard economic times and two grade crossing accidents saw the demise of the operation in 1981. All the equipment save the locomotives, were older, refurbished cars and were very difficult for the company to replace. The service was restarted by Amtrak several years later, and survives today. When last I checked, it was one of the few Amtrak trains that actually turns a profit.

The modules represent the Lorton terminal in the 1973 to 1975 era. They are representative of the operation as best I could duplicate it on a module allowing for some operation. The Railbox boxcar was a gift shop. The building in Auto-Train colors is the waiting room and ticketing area. Water and electric details are shown on the service platform, opposite the passenger-loading platform. The locomotives were serviced on site at both terminals, and fueled from trucks as you see on the modules. In today's Amtrak operation, the locomotives are serviced up in Washington, and run light back and forth to Lorton. Amtrak also replaced the original buildings with a much nicer modern brick structure that can be seen today, on the same site.



Below center and right column are pictures of Ernie's Auto-Train and module.



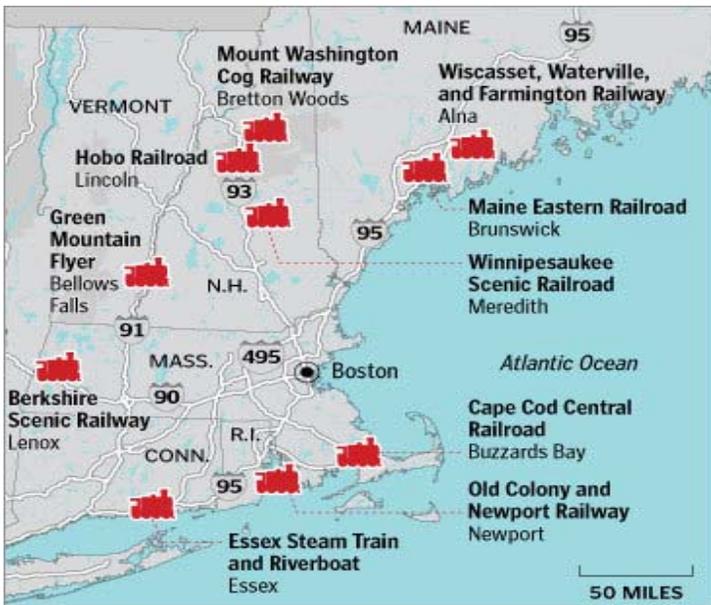
The module pair has been displayed in a number of cities over the years, and has won some nice awards, including a first place in Philadelphia, PA in 1987. Another place they were very well received was a show just 15 miles north of Lorton near Vernon. Hard to believe that was fifteen and twenty years ago. I hope you enjoy the modules and the history. I sure did.

Ride Trains this Summer

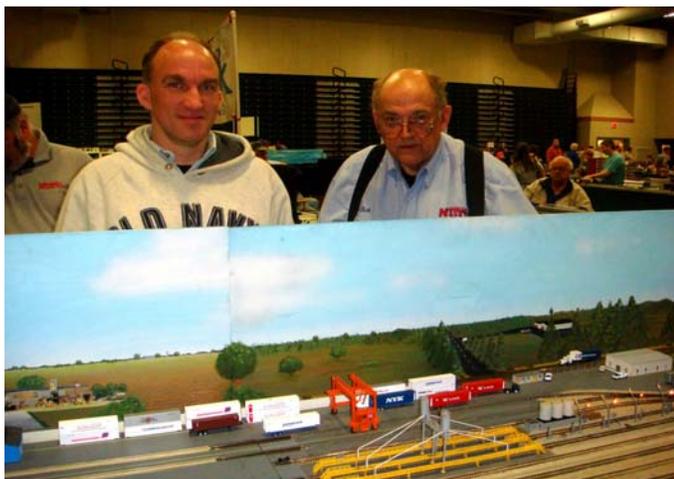
If you are looking for something to do this summer maybe you should consider taking a train ride on one of the areas many tourist railroads. For details you might want to check out:

http://www.boston.com/travel/explorene/specials/family/galleries/ride_the_rails?p1=email_to_a_friend

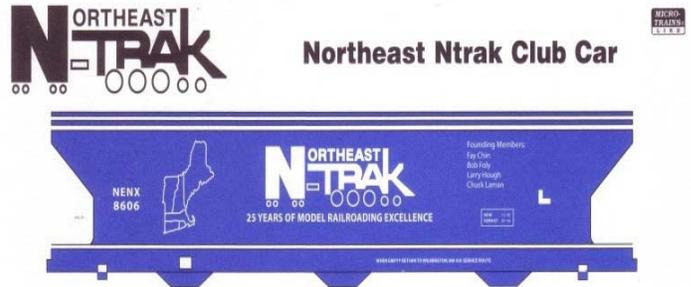
You will find ten ways to ride the rails this summer. Below is a map of there locations from the web site.



With gas prices as high as they are this would give you some fun train trips and not driving far from home. Check out the web site.



Charles and Dick Brotherton in front of there modules at the Hooksett Lyons Club show in Hooksett, NH in April. They are still recovering from flooding at there home this summer.



Have you gotten your Club Car yet? If not what is holding you back. They will be available at the Annual meeting and you can save the shipping charge. If not send your check made out to "Northeast Ntrak" for \$29.00 plus \$7.50 for shipping and handling to:

Northeast Ntrak
c/o Mark Ferracane
51 Cordis St
Wakefield, MA 01880.

Keeping Clean By Cotton Bowen Northern Virginia Ntrak

This article was published in the May 2008 issue of the NV NTRACK Newsletter.

Do you want your trains to run smoothly? Do you want carefree operations? We all want to have smooth and carefree operations at each of our set-ups. Aside from good track maintenance, solid electrical connections, and well designed modules with track and turnouts that are properly laid, there is one other factor that heavily contributes to smooth operations-clean wheels and tracks.

Serval years ago, when we were doing the Altoona Show, our trains started running jerkily and stalling out. We bright-boyed the tracks, nothing improved. Obviously the tracks were dirty; we were not getting them clean. Our wheels were getting a coating of dirt and electrical power was not flowing to the motors. What was happening? Dirt is an insulator, it impedes the flow of electricity to the wheels and then to the motors. If the point of contact between the wheel of a prototype locomotive and the tracks is the area the size of a dime, think of the area of the point of contact between an N-scale locomotive and our tracks. Is is miniscule. Anything that is between the wheel and track that does not conduct electricity is an insulator. Again, dirt and tarnish are the enemies of dependable and smooth transfer of electricity from the tracks to the motors.

In desperation, we started wiping the tracks with alcohol-soaked paper towels. The towels came up with black, greasy deposits. Eureka! Operations improved and we were back in business with smooth operations.

In my estimation, there is a process that goes on at all our

shows, at least to some degree. Did you ever see the commercials on television where one of the up-scale retailers advertises an air-cleaner that uses a positive and negative grid to suck dirt out of the air in your house? Guess what? Our positive and negative tracks do the same thing! Dirt in the air is attracted to the tracks by the positive and negative charges and settles on the tracks. Some portions of this dirt is an oily residue collected from the air, not tarnish from oxygen working on the tracks. If you want to remove the oily residue, then one must use a solvent of some type, commercial track cleaner, Goo-Gone, lighter fluid (be careful its very flammable), or alcohol (again its flammable) to dissolve the residue on the tracks and by wiping the tracks with some kind of absorbent carrier that applies and removes the offending deposit.

A bright-boy will not remove greasy deposits; after a few minutes of use, even a clean bright-boy will clog with the contaminant and just start to smear it around. That was what happened to us in Altoona. To prevent this from happening, I use a piece of felt attached to the end of a dowel cut at a 45 degree angle. Others use paper towel wrapped around a stick of some type. It all works!

If you are using a felt pad, soak it occasionally with your favorite solvent, and after wiping the tracks, blot it with a clean paper towel. It is amazing how much crud transfers to the paper towel.

My recommendation is to not use a finger with a paper towel. That technique encourages damage to the modules, paper towels drag over scenic work snagging on various parts of the display and fingers tend to hit nearby scenic work and operation systems, just ask Edd Braithwood about his signal lights getting bent.

Now that we have dealt with the greasy deposits, we're only half done. Remember I mentioned tarnish! Did you ever see the tracks change color when you used a bright-boy on them? They change from bronze to silver. What is happening? Tracks are made with an alloy of metals, some of which will tarnish, just like brass, bronze and silver tarnish when exposed to oxygen. This tarnish also acts as an insulator. Now that we have removed the contaminant that clogs the bright-boys, we can remove the tarnish with a bright-boy. Have you ever noticed the gold colored deposits on the bright-boys after rubbing down the tracks? That is, in part tarnish. After using the bright-boys, it is a good idea to clean them too; otherwise, you are just moving old tarnish over new tarnish. What ever you are accomplishing is diminished by the lack of a clean rubbing surface on the bright-boy. I rub mine down with my favorite track cleaner and a paper towel. Edd tells me he uses soap and water. Whatever works, the goal is to keep the bright-boy effective by maintaining a clean gritty surface, vice a gritty surface covered with track crud.

There is one last note to make on track contaminants. Dust, fiber and other filament type contaminants is the enemy of your locomotives. Periodically we need to either vacuum or blow loose material off the tracks. Loose filaments wrap around axels and impede the smooth rolling of both rolling

stock and locomotives. Loose filaments or loose ballast also get sucked up into the transmissions. If enough ends up in the transmissions, they create a drag on the motor, this causes overheating and eventually failure of the motor. After replacing the motor in my Kato Nozumi Bullet Train, I can attest to that chain of events. Leonard White found a wad of fuzz in the transmission of my locomotive when he repaired it after it failed to run. Either a vacuum cleaner or a can of high pressure air like we use on keyboards is a solution to the problem.

Now that we have a common foundation of knowledge, let's keep that trains running by keeping the tracks clean! Next, cleaning locomotives and rolling stock; but that is for another edition.

Show Report:
Hooksett Lyons Club, Hooksett NH
 By Daniel F. Pawling Jr. (Assistant Coordinator)

Mike Walker Coordinator for the Hooksett Lyons show was not able to attend because of an important family event. Mike did an excellent job setting up alternative coordinators (Bob Pawlak, Mark Ferracane & myself) to take his place as well as managing to contact participants to be in the show. He followed it through to the end till he was sure that the show was set to go. Great effort Mike the show was appreciated by many and thanks from all of us NTrakers. The show went together very well and there was a good showing of members. The attendance seemed to be improved from previous years but I neglected to get the count. This show is important because it gives the NH member a close place for them to show. This show seems to remain constant in dealers and has a good quantity of club layouts and emerging clubs in the show. I would like to see it on next year's schedule. Have a great summer everyone & we will be seeing you in September. Keep an eye out for the new schedule in the news letter.

Your Editor will be taking July and August off so there will be no newsletters until September. That does not mean that you can not send me articles for the September issue throughout the summer. Always looking for articles. Have a great summer everyone. Look for the September Newsletter at the end of August. Roland