

President - Dan Pawling Vice Pres - Mark Ferracane
Treasurer - Chuck Tremblay Editor - Roland Kelley

Editor - Northeast Ntrak, 41 Easy Street, Lowell, MA 01850-1731, or
e-mail: NortheastNtrak@msn.com Web Site - www.northeastntrak.org



President's Message

Annual meeting, Saturday June 25th at Noon

Will be held on June 25th at 12:00 noon at Geof Smith home.

Directions on Page 3.

Old Colony Rd Hull, Ma 02045

So it is important that you all come to the annual meeting to get your votes in for the next officers of the club, decide what the new & improved show schedule will be, what new projects are for the next year, & eat good food with all of our model rail readers buddies. Maybe if we are lucky we can run some trains on Geof's new layout. Please **RSVP** to Geof Smith **by June 10th** and ask if there is anything you can bring to help out.

Meeting Agenda:

Notes from absentees: Roland Kelly on News Letter, Chuck Tremblay on treasury report, & no show coordinators should call or email me & let me know what your 2011 to 2012 plans for Ntrak are.

Club Notes:

Show Schedule:

Show Coordinator notes:

Possible Future Changes for 2012_13 season:

Election of officers:

Enjoy the cook out:

Northeast Ntrak Dues, due in June: The dues are the same amount as past years of \$20.00 you can bring it to the annual meeting on June 25th. After the first of August 2011 there will be a **late fee** of \$5.00 and dues will be \$25.00. So please remember to send in your dues on time. Please send your dues to Chuck Tremblay Northeast Ntrak Treasurer 59 Greenside Way Methuen, MA 01844.

Letter to the Editor

Well, we had another season of shows. But I am Disappointed. We had to cancel a number of shows this year due to lack of Participation of Members. Not Good. On the other hand we have gained a few new members. Welcome Aboard!! I noticed one thing this year, we are not helping each other enough. What I mean is that members are showing up for shows, running their trains and leaving, For us to survive we need commitment for all members who attend shows. Next Season I hope we can get back to the basics. Show Coordinators MUST make sure that if a member shows up without a Module, that they have to Wait to see if there is ANY Running Time available. They must stay to Help breakdown the layout. I have been a member of this club since 1991, I have seen many things change and some good and some bad. Lets make 2011/2012 (Our 25th Year) the Best!! Ok, now I will get down off my Soap Box! Mark Ferracane

Possible Show at Belmont Commuter Rail Station by Bob Pawlak

Ed Jones of the Belmont Lions Club asked me during the Museum show on February 19 if Northeast Ntrak would do a show at the Belmont Lions Club commuter rail station building in Belmont Center sometime in the future. I visited the building and spoke at length with Ed Jones a few weeks later. I said I would pass my findings on to Dan Pawling, our President, and we would probably discuss it as a group at our annual meeting. Dan said "It sounds like a great place to do a show. It will need a coordinator and would have to work in with the other shows that are going to be considered."

The building was an operating railroad station built in 1908 adjacent to the commuter rail line that goes from South Station through Porter Square Cambridge, Belmont Center, Waltham, etc. The Lions bought the building, modified it, and now use it for regular meetings, etc. The station platform is currently used as a regular station stop for the commuter rail line, however, ridership from the Belmont station stop is relatively light and the T is considering stopping commuter rail service to Belmont. I think usage is light because there is very little parking available near the station.

The waiting room of the station is in excellent original condition with continuous bench seating on 3 sides of the room with other nice wood paneling, etc. The ceiling is high. The lighting is sufficient. The floor is level and tiled. There are two large windows along one wall looking south. But there are no windows or direct door opening onto the platform next to the rails on the north side of the station building. This means you could hear and feel a train stop, but couldn't see it from the room.

The room is about 23' x 27' with the entrance at one end. This means our Ntrak layout in the room would probably be a 14' x 18' rectangle with 3' corners to provide about a 4-1/2' aisle all around the layout. This arrangement would make the use of stanchions possible.

The room is one full story above the street level outside. There is a very wide and long ramp leading up to the station platform that was originally used for baggage wagons to service trains. There is a narrower ramp that breaks off the main ramp and goes through the end of the building, through the kitchen area, and eventually winds into the large room of the station. Otherwise access to the large room is via the wide ramp for half the trip and then up a flight of stairs for the rest of the trip. This is the route that the public would also use to enter the building. A 4-wheel cart would be available to help haul modules and equipment up the ramp.

Parking could be a problem but I told Ed that it might take about 7 Ntrak people (and 7 cars) to support a layout and he felt he could arrange sufficient parking for these cars plus others for visitors.

The Lions have an annual schedule similar to Northeast Ntrak in that June through September is quiet time for club activities. December is not a good time since other Lions Club activities (**continued page 2**)



**Another Story from My Grandson
Raymond
Photo & Story by Ray Decatur,
forwarded by D. Pawling, Sr.**

The note below from my grandson, Ray, was accompanied by the photo shown above. Ray is a US Navy medic reservist who serves with the Marine Corps. You may have to squint at the picture real hard, because the equipment is camouflaged so well. Thanks again Ray for sharing with us. XO & Cheers, Grandpa.

Hi Grandpa --- Sometime ago I took this picture of US Marine Corps tanks loaded on flat cars. The tanks look pretty fresh and clean. I don't know if they have just arrived or are being shipped out. If you look closely you can see the DOD (Department of Defense) reporting marks. Norfolk Southern runs the line here and in addition to moving military gear, they bring in coal for the oldest functioning steam plant in the US. Best regards, Ray

You think we had a lot of snow this past winter? Well this is a picture from my nephews wife taken in Tahoe. They have a place there and she also has an office there for UPS. Below right is a picture taken from inside the UPS office in Tahoe and you are right that is the depth of the snow outside. The photo on the left shows two engines trying to get thru the snow. Photo's by Chris Martin.



Check this out

Thought you would like to see how the new new high speed train tracks are being laid from St Louis to Chicago. For those who live in the Springfield area and have seen all the machines running up and down the tracks, here is a link to a video that shows you how the concrete ties and rail are put in place.

The road bed was raised 13 inches to accommodate for the new high speed rail line between St. Louis, MO. And Chicago, IL. There are only two of these track laying machines in the world, one here and one in Europe.

“This is what the railroad has been doing thru Auburn, Chatham and Thayer, etc. the last few weeks has really had traffic messed up preparing for Hi Speed Rail. Thought it was interesting. I have seen all of these machines running up and down the tracks but not able to see them in operation like this of course.”.

I wonder what all those laborers who laid the first cross country tracks would think if they could only see this!

[Http://www.wimp.com/traintrack/](http://www.wimp.com/traintrack/)

(continued from page 1) dominate that month. They do a Christmas party with Santa arriving by train, face painting, etc. Perhaps a show at the beginning of April school vacation week in 2012 would work relative to our other shows.

It seemed that a 2-day show would be better to distribute set up and tear down effort with hours like the museum show, i.e., 10 AM – 4 PM on Saturday and noon to 4 PM on Sunday. We could also probably set up on Friday afternoon.

Ed was very solicitous and accommodating. He would very much like to have a train show in the historic railroad station – something for the kids in town. He feels publicity would be no problem and there would be plenty of help available from the Lions members.

9.6V Rechargeable Batteries by Bob Pawlak

When you first plug your DCC throttle into our Digitrax system, the battery voltage is momentarily displayed on the throttle. Continued use of the throttle gradually reduces the voltage of the battery until it becomes too low to provide proper performance of the throttle. If you begin to have trouble controlling your train, chances are, the first thing you should try in order to solve your problem is a fresh battery in your throttle.

At Winterfest this year I was having trouble launching a DCC train. David Kolb of Jersey Ntrak checked my throttle and suggested I change my battery. In his opinion the new Digitrax Duplex system (Northeast Ntrak recently added the Duplex feature to our system) "eats" typical 9V alkaline batteries. Dave thinks such batteries now only last about an hour. His recommendation was to use 9.6V rechargeable batteries with the highest value of milli-ampere-hours (mAh) available on the market. Dave loaned me a fresh 9.6V rechargeable battery and I ran my train without any further problems.

After discussing the situation with Dan Pawling and Mark Ferracane, two of our club officers and also regular DCC users at shows, I volunteered to buy some rechargeable batteries and a charger for Northeast Ntrak to conduct some experiments.

It turns out that a 9.6V rechargeable battery has an additional cell built into the standard shape factor to give it the higher initial voltage after a full charge. As a result, the battery voltage stays high enough for a longer operating time before a throttle battery needs to be changed. Although about 6 to 8 times more expensive than regular alkaline batteries, rechargeable 9.6V batteries can be recharged in about 2 hours and can be recharged about a thousand times. This means they are much more cost effective in the long run.

After several hours on the web making various comparisons, I bought a package deal (from Amazon.com) of 3 Maha Powerex 9.6V rechargeable NiMH batteries with 230mAh capacity (normally \$11.65 each) and a Maha Powerex MH-C490F Stealth 2 hour 9.6V Battery Charger for \$59.25 plus shipping and bought a two-pack of Maha Imedion 9.6V rechargeable "Ready When You Are" batteries for \$20.95 plus shipping (normally \$13.79 each). The charger can supposedly charge 4 batteries at a time in about two hours. The Imedion batteries supposedly retain 85% of their charge after one year, which is superior to the less expensive Powerex batteries.

Both battery types have 230 mAh endurance. Dave Kolb also told me that "Rick" of Brooklyn Ntrak said he knew of a source for 500 mAh batteries but I have been

unable to find "Rick" or a web source for anything higher than 250mAh (in the regular 9V shape factor).

It is my opinion that the wire and connector on the wall-wart power supply for the charger and the charger itself are somewhat delicate and will require some "tender loving care" if they are to survive general use by Northeast Ntrak members. They cannot be just thrown into the club box or the DCC equipment bag along with other stuff. The 5 rechargeable batteries need some sort of tracking control or they may "disappear" from shared use by the club. Therefore, I decided to retain custody of the charger and batteries for several shows while we experiment with the batteries/charger and determine how best to utilize them for the benefit of everyone using DCC throttles at shows.

The new batteries fresh from their package register higher in the "good" range of my battery tester compared to a fresh alkaline battery. I ran my battery-powered track cleaning train on Bridges Canyon at the Greenberg show with a fresh Imedion rechargeable battery. It ran much faster and longer without slowing down than it would have run with a fresh alkaline battery. Although these are good first indications, I think more testing is required before drawing any final conclusions about the new batteries.

I have labeled and numbered the rechargeable batteries. If members would like to use one in their DCC throttle or one of the club throttles during a show I would like to keep track of initial voltage, duration of use, and final voltage when returned at the end of use. If you prefer to use a standard battery, I would like you to give me the same information about its use for comparison purposes. Hopefully, with cooperation from DCC throttle users during the next several shows, I will eventually be able to report on a performance comparison of the different battery types.

Annual Meeting at Geof Smith's House in Hull, MA Directions to the Annual Meeting

From North or South on Rte. 3:

Take Exit 14 for MA-228 toward Hingham/Rockland

Stay on **MA-228** into Hull (MA-228 will become Nantasket Ave.)

Immediately past the Nantasket Inn,

Turn left onto **Water St** (it is only one block long)

Continue through stoplight onto **Bay St.**

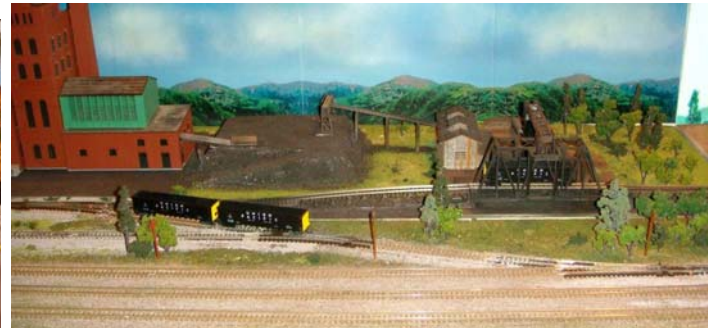
Take first right onto **Marginal Rd.**

Continue onto **Hampton Cir.** (bear right)

1 Old Colony Road is the corner of **Hampton Cir** and **Old Colony Rd** (first street on left) It'll take about 20 minutes to drive from Rte. 3 to the house. **Cell: (617) 272-6913**

Some of the Outstanding Modules in Our Club. Animation is the Key Word

is Fay's newer module with the running coal car unloader. This has a button so the viewer can run it. Again because of this a great attraction for them.



Above is the Bridge module of Bob Pawlak. It is the biggest draw at all the shows it is displayed. If you have noticed more and more of the modules from club members have animation. If you watch the people coming to the shows they enjoy looking when there are things moving on the layout. One of Bob attractions to viewers is the three trains running on his layout all the time.



Another module that is well liked by the visitors is the carnival or circus module. Both seem to draw many happy viewers. All these modules are great crowd pleasers. One more module and it is new this year but is well liked by the viewers is Toshiyuki Abe's wind and solar module seen below. These modules are some of the crowd pleasers in our group. Thanks.

Next is Ken Harstine's module with the moving bus. This is a very well liked module. Any time you look at it there are people standing looking at it. It is always a big draw.



Next are two modules by Fay Chin that again because of the animation have the viewers interest. The module pictured above is an old one that Fay is updating and has a crane that works to load and unload the containers. In the next picture