NMRA Mid-Eastern Region

The Local

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SEARCH

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2026 Holiday Edition

By Greg Warth, Editor and Publisher



A Thanksgiving / Harvest display built by Frank Reed and his wife inside the Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads in Virginia Beach (Photo by Greg Warth).

A seasonal autumn harvest theme is a common presentation for model railroad layouts this time of year, primarily because it reflects the thoughts and the activities of most of the people these days. These memories are fostered by decades of what Americans did in the early days of this country and still do today, making a living off the land. This theme also triggers the beginning of the Holiday Season, starting with Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas or Advent and finally the New Year's Celebration. It tends to be a fun and entertaining time of year when we extend love, compassion and gift-giving to our families, friends and fellow man. What better way to enjoy this time than to include the joy of model railroading with them, which by nature and tradition has always been a method of fellowship? And why else would we call November National Model Railroad Month? So, spread the joy of the Season and do it with trains!

From the Editor's Desk…



The 2026 MER Convention

By Greg Warth

I enjoyed helping with the "Tracks to Tidewater" Convention, hosted by our Tidewater Division this year. It all seemed to go smoothly thanks to the excellent work of the Convention Board and Committee members who put it all together. Of course the biggest help was seeing what others have done before and trying to emulate those practices as much as possible, but also adding our own flavor to make it a little different, like presenting each clinician with a convention car kit to remember us by and to thank them for their service. The Company Store and the Contest Rooms were big hits. The T-Trak Modular layout presented by the Chesapeake Division was definitely worth a look. This was one of the first layouts to be evaluated for the new NMRA Modular Railroading Achievement Program (AP) Certificate since it was approved on July 27, 2026 during the Scenic Express National Convention in Chattanooga, Tennessee. This represents a standardization in the AP evaluation of T-Trak modules so that when that standard is used, the modules will be compatible with each other and will pass the AP evaluation. In addition, the evaluators created another achievement certificate to challenge those who wish to improve their skills and make it to the status of Master Model Railroader. This creation of compatibility standards is perhaps artificial, but nevertheless helpful, since we can now bring our modules to any T-Trak meet and be sure they will fit in.

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BYMRR .store

BYMRR Train Store

The layout tours were very inspiring in many different ways. These outings have always been one of my favorite activities during these conventions. Since I live in Virginia Beach, most of these layouts have already made it to the pages of *The Local.* The Plasser American prototype tour was also quite interesting as we learned about the modern advances in maintenance-of-way equipment.

In the Contest Room, there weren't as many entries as we would like to have seen, but the ones that were there were certainly very well done as you will see in the "Contest Results" article later in this issue.

The Banquet was also very enjoyable as we watched the awards being handed out to the contest winners. The keynote speaker Bill Shafer outlined his interesting 40 year railroading career with Norfolk & Western and Southern Railroads and ultimately as Strategic Director of Norfolk Southern.

I greatly enjoyed the Convention, met up with a lot of friends from prior conventions and learned a ton of new things about railroading as I always do. These gatherings are sincerely one of the best benefits of being a member of the NMRA. If you do one thing this November, I hope you can **convince a friend to join**. They will be forever grateful. **The dues are now only $50/yr**.

Once again, I would like to thank our outstanding editorial staff and proofreaders for all their hard work, not only for this issue but for all previous issues that I have prepared under their guidance:

Alex Belida, MMR,

Martin Brechbiel, MMR,

And previously, Jack Dziadul, MMR

And special thanks to all our authors. Without them, we would have nothing to show you.

Warm regards and

Happy railroading!

Always be humble and kind. - Tim McGraw

Greg



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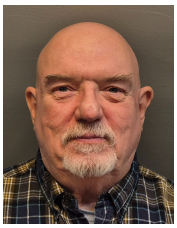
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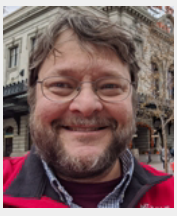
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From the Business Car

By Jack Dziadul, MMR – MER Business Manager
November-December 2026

Executive Handbook Calendar

Continuing with our (selective) postings from the EHB calendar:

- November 1 – The link to *The Local* is distributed to the membership and posted to the MER website.
- November 1 – Treasurer sends 2027 budget forms to MER Board members.
- November 1 - The Vice President sends the Division Annual Report form and the NMRA Insurance Compliance form to Division Superintendents.
- November 1 – The Vice President requests current copy of Division By-Laws from Superintendents for bi-annual compliance review.
- Mid-November – Board members review budget requests from their respective committee chairs.
- November 30 – Submit material for Jan/Feb Local (i.e., report on recent convention, call for 2027 Director-at-Large nominations, President's column, Business Manager's column, AP update, etc.)

2026 Elections

Thank you to Scott Unger for his four-years of service as MER President.

Congratulations and thank you for the following who have stepped forward to serve.

- President – Gary Brown
- Vice President – Michael Maurer
- Secretary – Rick Stoneking
- Treasurer – William Wurtzell

Election Results for MER 2026 Executive Officers Election						
Candidate	Electronic		Paper		Total	
	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%
	1389 Ballots		111 Ballots		1500 Ballots	
	340 Voted	24.48%	26 Voted	23.42%	366 Voted	24.40%
President						
Gary Brown						
Votes tallied:	329	23.69%	26	23.42%	355	23.67%
Abstentions:	11	0.79%	0	0.00%	11	0.73%
Vice President						
Michael Maurer						
Votes tallied:	328	23.61%	26	23.42%	354	23.60%
Abstentions:	12	0.86%	0	0.00%	12	0.80%
Secretary						
Rick Stoneking						
Votes tallied:	330	23.76%	26	23.42%	356	23.73%
Abstentions:	10	0.72%	0	0.00%	10	0.67%
Treasurer						
William Wurtzell						
Votes tallied:	334	24.05%	26	23.42%	360	24.00%
Abstentions:	6	0.43%	0	0.00%	6	0.40%

2027 Elections

The Nominating Committee will be recruiting candidates for three Director-at-Large positions for the 2027 round of Region level elections. Candidate Statements for these MER positions are due May 30, 2027. (I'll be repeating this paragraph for the next few issues.)

MER Conventions

Tracks to Tidewater is now in the books, but it is never too late to thank the volunteers who spend months planning and executing these important annual events. So, thank you Tidewater team for what you have done and the South Mountain team for what is to come. Dan Peele did a great job managing his first go as Contest Chairman. We do, however, need more entries. Let's think about what we can enter next year.

Below are some notable statistics regarding this convention, courtesy of MER Convention Registrar Kirk Bateman.

One hundred and forty-six people registered for the 2026 MER convention. Of those registrants, 33 brought along a spouse or significant other, and one registrant attended with their child. One hundred twenty-nine of the convention registrants were from the MER. Seven registrants came from other NMRA regions. Ten non-members joined us this year.

All divisions within the MER were represented, as shown in the following table:

Mid-Eastern Region	
Division	**Registrants**
1 New Jersey	9
2 Potomac	10
3 Philadelphia	9
4 Tidewater	34
5 James River	18
10 South Mountain	2
11 Susquehanna	9
12 Carolina Southern	2
13 Carolina Piedmont	24
14 Chesapeake	12
Total	**129**

Business Manager's report to the MER Board

Business Manager's report to the MER Board of Directors below, with some minor updates.

Business Manager Report to the MER Board of Directors

Jack Dziadul, MMR

Completed / In process / Ongoing

- Bi-monthly articles submitted to *The Local*
- Distributed monthly roster reports to Divisions and MER officials in a timely manner (within 48 hours of receipt from Soddy Daisy)
- The Business Manager with Superintendents and Soddy Daisy to assist with resolving membership roster issues. These are generally limited to 1-3 per month and are typically NMRA HQ data input errors that are promptly resolved. The Division Superintendents and Clerks do a very good job of promptly reviewing their rosters and assisting with resolving any data issues.

- NMRA HQ was notified of the 2026 election results:
  - President Gary Brown
  - Vice President Michael Maurer
  - Secretary Rick Stoneking
  - Treasurer William Wurtzell
- The Directors and Officers liability insurance policy was renewed with Affinity Non-Profits. The premium was $977.
- NMRA sends dues rebates to each Region semi-annually based on memberships as of February and August. The amount of each check is calculated at $1 per member excluding discounted memberships (students, Rail Pass, family memberships). These rebates are passed through in whole to the Divisions. The rebate checks in 2026 were in the amounts of $1,396 and $1,375, for a total of $2,771 benefiting the Divisions. The Business Manager and Treasurer Bill Wurtzell worked together to reconcile and distribute the payments.

Membership Statistics

MER Membership		2025		2026								
Division		Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
1	New Jersey	175	178	172	171	176	175	175	169	172	174	175
2	Potomac	222	222	221	221	220	223	224	221	219	219	217
3	Philadelphia	236	235	230	230	230	233	237	233	228	226	223
4	Tidewater	98	101	99	100	105	105	108	113	112	114	117
5	James River	132	128	130	130	129	132	129	135	136	134	139
10	South Mountain	64	62	59	59	59	60	59	59	59	56	56
11	Susquehanna	180	177	175	169	168	167	165	162	157	148	159
12	Carolina Southern	113	115	113	113	112	113	113	108	110	111	106
13	Carolina Piedmont	187	180	185	188	194	198	194	199	197	194	190
14	Chesapeake	104	104	103	104	104	104	101	105	101	103	102
Mid-Eastern Region		1511	1502	1487	1485	1497	1510	1505	1504	1491	1479	1484

Overall MER membership has declined by 27 (2%) over the past eleven months. Some of the monthly fluctuations are the result of late dues payers being dropped from the roster, then added back in a later month as dues were brought current. Congratulations to Tidewater, James River, and Carolina Piedmont for growing their Divisions.

Merchandise Sales and Inventory

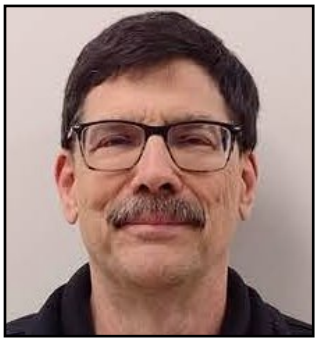
- Freight cars – MER reduced its inventory of 310 freight car kits with 40 cars sold at the Tidewater convention. Alan Hardee is the primary custodian.
- **Personnel Matters**
- Assistant Business Manager John Hoyt has been an indispensable contributor to the office of Business Manager. John is responsible for the MailChimp communications in addition to his other MER volunteer work as a one-man Ballot Committee.

- The Business Manager will be serving through December 31, 2027. MER has ample notice to consider successors. Let me know if you would like to discuss this position. I am hoping that with this more formal early notice that the Board will have plenty of time to name a successor.
- **Business Manager Position History**

1.	Jack Dziadul, MMR	2025-2027
2.	Howard Oakes	2019-2025
3.	Bob Price, MMR	2013-2018
4.	Fred Miller, MMR	2005-2012
5.	Rita Lynam	2001-2004
6.	Nelson Garber	1996-2000
7.	Stan Knotts	1993-1996
8.	Clyde Gerald	1982-1993
9.	George Owen	1972-1982



One of the layout tours featured a very detailed large G scale layout built by Dieter Steinhoff (Photo by the Editor).



Kurt Thompson, MMR

NMRA Achievement Program Update

By Kurt Thompson, MMR

Update for November/December 2026:

Since the September/October report, the following AP certificates have been earned. When you see these individuals please recognize them for their accomplishments.

Division	Modeler	Certificate Earned
Carolina Piedmont (13)	**Daniel Fisher**	Master Builder - Scenery
	Kevin O'Connor	Association Official
Chesapeake Division (14)	**Alan Feldman**	Model Railroad Author
	Tom Casey	Association Official
New Jersey Division (1)	**Rick Stoneking**	Association Volunteer



Mark Nieting's Lionel display at the MER Convention (Photo by the Editor).

Upcoming Conventions/Meetings…



UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

- 2027 — South Mountain Division — Location: Hilton Garden Inn, 65 Priority Dr., Martinsburg, WV 25403. Details TBA.

MER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE

- January 9, 2027 at 1:00PM - Virtual. Zoom link will be sent to the membership shortly before the meeting.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

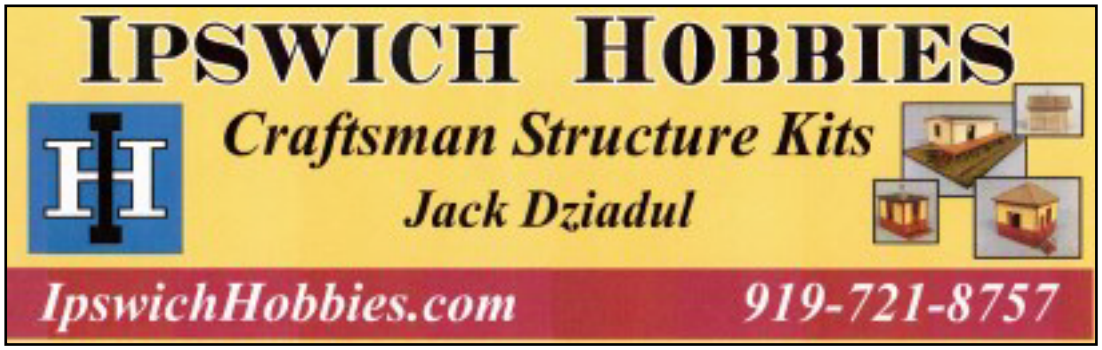
October, 2027 Hilton Garden Inn, 65 Priority Dr., Martinsburg, WV 25403
Details TBA.

Advertising in *The Local*

If you have a model railroading business and would like to place an ad in *The Local*, please contact the **Editor**. The rates per year are shown on the right.

Your ad may appear as text, photo, art, or any combination thereof. Art must be of high quality and camera-ready. Formats must be in txt, doc/docx, pdf, jpeg, bmp or tiff only. The content must be related to model trains or railroads or provide a benefit specifically to model railroaders. If you need help with your ad, please don't hesitate to ask the Editor.

Advertising Rates (per year)	
Divisions & Clubs	Free
Clinics & Education	Free
Convention Ads	Free
Full Page - Color	$100.00
1/2 Page - Color	$60.00
1/4 Page - Color	$35.00
Business Card	$10.00
Text Only	$7.00





2026 MER Convention

Tracks to Tidewater: Contest Results

By Dan Peele, Contest Chairman

(Photos by Bob Bridges and Randy Foulke)

First things first; thanks to John Robey and his team in Tidewater for hosting a great convention. Also, a big thank you is given to all the volunteer evaluators for their efforts to make the contest successful.

Once again, allow me to congratulate all the winners, award sponsors, and our MER Photographers. Most importantly, thank you to all our modelers and module builders who shared a sampling of their talents under the NMRA's Celebration of Models. All who entered the contest room and module layout room enjoyed viewing our modelers' skills on display.

We had twenty-seven entries spread over twelve contest categories submitted by fourteen modelers. Twelve of the models earned the modeler a Merit Award. At least one of our modelers (Bill McAleese) completed all the requirements for an Achievement Program category. Here are the winners.

Best in Show and First Place Individual Module

Congratulations to William "Bill" McAleese for his A&P Interchange Module. Bill also earned a merit award for this module.



The Chuck Hladik Award and

First Place Diesel Locomotive



Congratulations to Christopher "Chris" Conaway for his scratch built Lima LS1200 Diesel Switcher. Chris also earned a merit award for his diesel switcher.

The Philadelphia Division New Modeler Award,

First Place Offline Structure,

and

Popular Vote Favorite Model



Congratulations to Gregory "Greg" Leiphart for his Southside Hotel. Greg also earned a merit award for this nice hotel.

The PJ Mattson Memorial Award, and

First Place Non-Revenue / Maintenance of Way Car



Congratulations to Don Winn for his scratch built GN Water Car. Don visited us again from the Lone Star Region and earned a merit award for his efforts.

First Place Traction Car



Congratulations to Don Winn for his AE&FR Interurban.

First Place Freight Car



Congratulations to James "Jim" Murphy for his scratch built Depressed Center Flat Car with Giraffe Load. Jim also earned a merit award for this model. Jim also has two other interchangeable magnetically mounted loads for this car.

First Place Online Structure



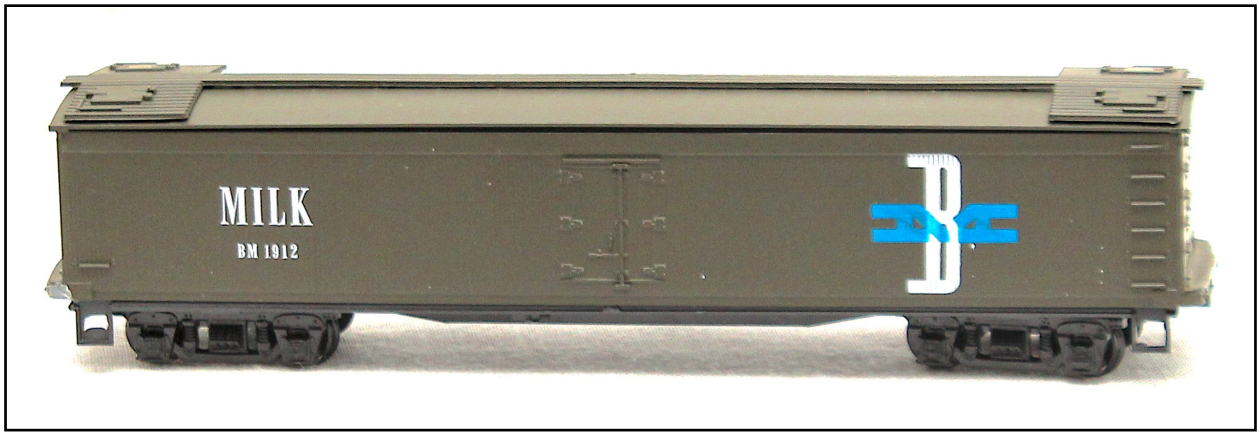
Congratulations to Mark Nieting for his CNW BA Tower.

First Place Offline Display



Congratulations to Don Winn for his Griswold Feed & Seed.
Don earned a merit award for his efforts.

First Place Passenger Car



Congratulations to James Murphy for his B&M Headend Milk Express.

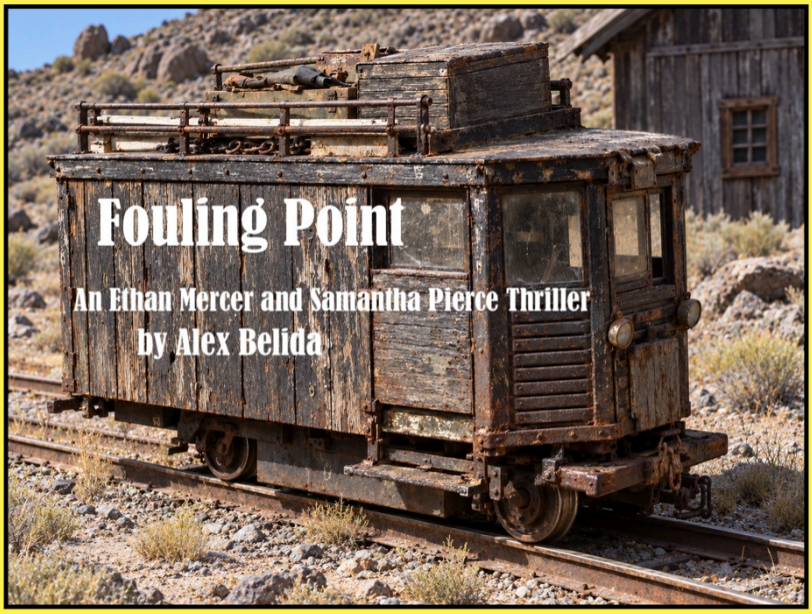
First Place Caboose



Congratulations to Robert "Rob" Rousseau for his Southern 516 Caboose.

	First	Second	Third
Freight Car	Jim Murphy, MMR B&M Depressed Center Flat Car	Glyn Thomas, MMR L&HR Zinc Hopper Car	
On-Line Structure	Mark Nieting CBW BA Tower	Glyn Thomas, MMR Easton Station, CNJ	Bob Minnis, MMR Call Box 40
Off-Line Structure	Greg Leiphart Southside Hotel	Glyn Thomas, MMR Philadelphia Watch Factory	
Individual Module	Bill McAleese A&P Interchange	Bill McAleese A&P Station	Bill McAleese A&P Altburgh Yard

Once again, thanks to all contest entrants, evaluators, award sponsors, and visitors to the 2026 Tracks to Tidewater Contest Room. A special thank you goes to Robbie Alvis, without whose assistance I do not know how I could have managed the contest. Also, thanks to Bob Bridges and Randy Foulke for their outstanding photography.



For virologist and model railroader Ethan Mercer, threats move faster than ever imagined. For journalist Samantha Pierce, the truth is never where it's supposed to be. Together they uncover a hidden reality: railroads have become the perfect conduit for espionage and covert operations. *Dead Rail* and *Blind Siding* by Alex Belida, MMR of the Potomac Division are available on Amazon in paperback and for Kindle, and on e-books at Apple and Barnes and Noble. And coming soon… *FOULING POINT*



Chesapeake Bay & Western: Industrial Coal Dock with barges and tugboat (Photo by the Editor).

More Than Certificates:

The Value of Entering the Contest Room

By Scott Wooddell (Photos by the Author)

This year, I had the opportunity to attend both the NMRA National Convention in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in July and the Mid-Eastern Region Convention in Virginia Beach, Virginia, in October. Both conventions offered a tremendous variety of activities, including clinics, layout tours, operating sessions, and opportunities to connect with fellow model railroaders. One activity I made a point of including at both conventions was spending time in the contest room.



Photo 1: A "Rock City" barn diorama displayed in Chattanooga at the NMRA National Convention.

At the National Convention in Chattanooga, I enjoyed examining the many outstanding models on display. The craftsmanship, creativity, and attention to detail were impressive, and I found myself studying how others had approached various aspects of construction, detailing, painting, and weathering. One particularly interesting feature was the Rock City barn build (**Photo 1**), which challenged modelers to create their own interpretations of the iconic barns advertising the famous Chattanooga-area attraction. I had intended to build a model for this event myself but unfortunately ran out of time before the convention. Nevertheless, I enjoyed seeing the creativity and different approaches demonstrated by those who participated. It was a wonderful example of how a common theme can inspire modelers to try something new, share their work, and learn from one another. Looking back, I wish I had completed my entry, and the experience reinforced my belief that we should all make an effort to participate in these opportunities rather than simply admire the work of others (**Photo 2**).



Photo 2: Fully detailed station displayed at the National Convention.

At the MER Convention in Virginia Beach, I had the additional opportunity to volunteer as an evaluator in the contest room. I was assigned to a team with three other evaluators, two of whom were Master Model Railroaders (MMRs), to evaluate the Construction category. Working alongside such experienced modelers was an educational experience in itself, as we examined the techniques, workmanship, and complexity involved in building each entry. This gave me a different perspective on the models and the evaluation process. Rather than simply admiring the finished models, I was able to take a closer look at the work involved in creating them and gain a greater appreciation for the craftsmanship that goes into producing a quality model.

Both experiences reinforced something I have believed for quite some time: **More NMRA members should be entering their models in convention contests.**

The Contest Room Is for Everyone

One of the things that struck me during these conventions was the wide range of modeling abilities represented in the contest rooms. Some models demonstrated exceptional craftsmanship and attention to detail, while others were much simpler in their construction. That variety is something we should encourage. Every modeler starts somewhere, and even the most accomplished Master Model Railroaders had to learn the basic skills of the hobby. What matters is the effort we put into our work and our willingness to continue learning and improving.

Unfortunately, I know many talented model railroaders who have never entered a contest. Some believe their work isn't good enough, while others are intimidated by the evaluation process or simply don't see the value in participating. I believe these modelers are missing out on one of the most valuable opportunities the NMRA provides.

You don't have to be a Master Model Railroader, build a perfect model, or even be interested in winning an award to enter a contest. The contest room provides an opportunity to share your work, learn from others, and receive recognition for the time and effort you have invested in your modeling. Perhaps more importantly, it can help you become a better modeler.

Learning Through Evaluation

Volunteering as an evaluator at the MER Convention gave me a greater appreciation for the evaluation process. Evaluating a model involves much more than deciding whether it looks good. It requires carefully examining the techniques used in its construction and recognizing the effort and skill demonstrated by the builder.



Photo 3: Evaluators hard at work discussing the model they are examining.

One of the most valuable aspects of the NMRA's Achievement Program is the constructive feedback modelers can receive through evaluation (**Photo 3**). Perhaps your structure has excellent construction and detailing, but the finish could be improved. Maybe your rolling stock model demonstrates outstanding craftsmanship, but additional documentation would help evaluators better understand its conformity to the prototype. This feedback can help identify areas for improvement and guide future projects.

A model does not have to earn a Merit Award for the experience to be worthwhile. The knowledge gained through evaluation can be far more valuable than a certificate. There is also much to learn simply by walking through the contest room, examining other models, and discovering techniques that might be incorporated into your own projects.

Recognizing Quality and Effort

My experience at the MER Convention also prompted me to think about the importance of maintaining meaningful standards in our contests. Among the outstanding entries were a few models that appeared to have received relatively little attention to craftsmanship or finish. What made this particularly noticeable was that some were entered by a very experienced and capable modeler who clearly possessed the skills to produce work of a much higher standard.

There is an important distinction between a beginning modeler who has put forth their best effort and an experienced modeler submitting something that falls well below their demonstrated abilities. Beginners deserve encouragement and recognition for taking the initiative to participate, while all modelers should be encouraged to take pride in their work and strive to do their best.

When a contest category has only one entry, an award can sometimes seem more like recognition for participation than craftsmanship. While participation is certainly important, awards should remain meaningful reflections of the quality and effort demonstrated by the modelers.

The solution is not to discourage entries or make contests more exclusive. Quite the opposite. **The best way to strengthen our contests is to encourage more modelers to participate.** Greater participation brings a wider variety of models into the contest room, creates more opportunities to recognize outstanding work, and provides additional examples from which everyone can learn (**Photo 4**).



Photo 4: Scratch built freight car entered in the contest room at Chattanooga.

A Challenge to MER Members

As I reflect on my experiences in Chattanooga and Virginia Beach, I would like to offer a challenge to every member of the Mid-Eastern Region: **Bring a model to the next NMRA convention or meet you attend and enter it in the contest room.**

It doesn't have to be a large or complicated project. It might be a freight car you've weathered, a structure you've built, a locomotive you've detailed, or something you completed years ago but have never displayed outside your own layout. Don't worry about whether your model is good enough to win. Instead, think about what you might learn from the experience.

Experienced modelers can help by encouraging others to participate, sharing their knowledge, and helping first-time entrants understand the evaluation process. Consider volunteering as an evaluator as well. My experience at the MER Convention was both enjoyable and educational, and it gave me a new appreciation for the work involved in supporting this important part of our hobby.

The contest room should be more than a place for competition. It should be a showcase of the creativity, craftsmanship, and dedication of our members. Every model on display has the potential to inspire someone else, whether it is an award-winning scratchbuilt structure or a modest kit representing a modeler's first serious attempt at developing new skills.

Building a Stronger Modeling Community

The NMRA provides many opportunities for us to enjoy and improve our modeling skills. Clinics teach us new techniques, operating sessions introduce us to different approaches to running our railroads, and layout tours inspire us with the creativity of fellow modelers. The contest room should be viewed as another important part of that same learning experience (**Photos 5 and 6**).

My visits to the contest rooms in Chattanooga and Virginia Beach reminded me of the tremendous talent within our organization. They also convinced me that many outstanding models are sitting on home layouts and workbenches that deserve to be shared with the rest of us. Imagine walking into a future MER Convention contest room and finding the tables filled with models representing every skill level, scale, and area of interest. Think of the conversations, shared techniques, and inspiration those models could generate.



Photo 5: Very well constructed and detailed maintenance-of-way car displayed in Virginia Beach at the MER Convention.



Photo 6: An off-line relief structure displayed at the MER Convention.

Ultimately, the success of our contests should not be measured simply by the number of ribbons or certificates awarded. It should be measured by the participation they encourage, the creativity they inspire, and the modeling skills they help develop. After missing my opportunity to participate in the Rock City barn build in Chattanooga, I intend to make a greater effort to follow my own advice at future conventions.

The greatest reward of participating in a contest isn't necessarily winning an award. It's becoming a better modeler, inspiring others, and contributing to a stronger model railroading community.

T-Trak at the MER Convention

By Scott Wooddell

What began as a way to keep members of Harford Associates for Railroad Modeling (HARM, www.harm-web.org) connected during the COVID-19 pandemic has grown into an impressive collection of N scale T-TRAK modules displayed at train shows, museums, and other venues throughout the region. Most recently, these members of HARM brought their T-TRAK modules to the 2026 Mid-Eastern Region (MER) Convention in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The convention provided another opportunity to share our work with fellow model railroaders, demonstrate the versatility of T-TRAK modular railroading, and to participate in pursuit of the NMRA's new Modular Railroading Achievement Program certificate (**Photo 1**).



Photo 1: Here are several modules built by Bill McAleese; structures on the far corner are Metcalf paper structures. Bill presented a clinic at the MER Convention about these structures.

A Railroad Born During COVID

Like many model railroad groups, HARM faced an unusual challenge when the COVID-19 pandemic brought our regular Tuesday evening operating sessions to a halt. HARM has a long tradition of members gathering weekly to operate on one another's layouts, and suddenly we found ourselves unable to get together. Rather than simply waiting for things to return to normal, we decided to try something different.

The idea was straightforward: provide members with T-TRAK* modules that they could work on at home. About a dozen HARM members participated in the original project, each receiving modules delivered to their homes. Members were encouraged to add whatever scenery, structures, or other details they wanted, with no requirement for a particular theme or scene. Once completed, the modules were collected and assembled into a simple oval T-TRAK layout in the basement of one of the HARM members. Cameras were positioned around the layout, and a system was established that allowed members to view and control trains remotely from their own homes.

Although we couldn't gather in person, we could still enjoy running trains together. The project provided an opportunity to remain connected, share our modeling efforts, and continue participating in the hobby during a particularly challenging time. What started as a temporary solution turned out to have a much longer life than anyone originally anticipated.

Growing Beyond the Basement

When regular operating sessions resumed, the T-TRAK modules didn't disappear into storage. Instead, several HARM members continued building additional modules, often taking on larger and more ambitious projects. While the original modules were relatively simple, newer additions have included more elaborate scenery, detailed structures, and increasingly complex track arrangements. Some members have also begun exploring ways to incorporate more realistic railroad operations into the modular layout, moving beyond simply watching trains run around a continuous loop.

The modular format offers tremendous flexibility. Individual modules can be combined in different arrangements depending on the available space, and members can contribute as many or as few modules as they wish. Several times each year, HARM members find opportunities to assemble their modules, sometimes as a standalone HARM layout and sometimes in cooperation with other T-TRAK groups. These displays have included the Great Scale Train Show in Timonium, Maryland; a local senior living community in Baltimore; and the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg, where the modules were displayed among the museum's collection of full-size locomotives and railroad equipment. Each event provides an opportunity to share model railroading with the public and demonstrate what can be accomplished using the T-TRAK modular standard (**Photo 2**).

Now we can add the **2026 Mid-Eastern Region Convention** to that growing list of venues.



Photo 2: Opportunities to do some switching operations on a T-Trak quad module. Module built by Bill McAleese.

HARM T-TRAK at the MER Convention

The MER Convention in Virginia Beach provided an excellent opportunity to share our T-TRAK modules with fellow NMRA members from across the region. Unlike a typical public train show, a regional convention brings together model railroaders with a wide variety of interests, experiences, and modeling skills. The layout demonstrated how independently constructed modules, each reflecting the interests and talents of its builder, could be combined into a cohesive railroad using a common set of standards.



Photo 3: - Endcap modules built by HARM member Alan Feldman.

Throughout the convention, HARM members spent considerable time answering questions from attendees interested in learning more about T-TRAK. Many of the discussions focused on the standards themselves, including module dimensions, track placement, electrical connections, and how modules built by different individuals and groups can be connected to form a larger layout. Members also shared information about module construction, scenery techniques, and the relatively simple process of getting started. These conversations provided an opportunity to introduce other modelers to the flexibility and accessibility of T-TRAK, while demonstrating how the standard can accommodate everything from simple beginner projects to highly detailed modules (**Photo 3**).

For HARM, participating in the convention represented another milestone in a project that began simply as a way to keep our operating group connected during the pandemic. This particular setup also provided an opportunity for something new: having modules evaluated under the NMRA Achievement Program.



Photo 4: A Pennsylvania Railroad steam passenger train passes through a modern Amtrak station module built by HARM member Ken Poznaniak.

A New Opportunity: The Modular Railroading AP Certificate

The NMRA's new **Master Builder – Modular Railroading Achievement Program certificate** provides an opportunity for modelers who enjoy building modular railroads to receive recognition for their craftsmanship. Modular railroading has become an increasingly popular part of the hobby, with standards such as T-TRAK, NTRAK, Free-Mo, and Free-MoN allowing individuals and clubs to combine their work into larger layouts. The new certificate recognizes the modeling skills involved in creating high-quality modules, including trackwork, electrical systems, scenery, structures, and overall craftsmanship. [*There is also a public outreach education component to this AP category that is available for module modelers.- Ed.*]

One important aspect of the certificate is that modules can be evaluated for Merit Awards, just as other models can be evaluated through the Achievement Program. Earning a Merit Award requires a score of at least 87.5 points out of 125, so simply constructing a module to meet a particular standard is not necessarily sufficient. Modelers must demonstrate a high level of quality, complexity, detail, and craftsmanship to achieve the required score. Additionally, each qualifying module must be displayed and operated at a minimum of three events. This requirement not only encourages participation in the modular railroading community but also demonstrates that the module is constructed well enough to withstand the rigors of transportation, repeated setup and teardown, and reliable operation. Together, these requirements challenge modular railroaders to develop their modeling skills while creating modules that are both visually impressive and durable enough for regular use.



Photo 5: More switching operations on a quad T-Trak module. Built by Bill McAleese.

Bill McAleese's Outstanding Achievement

One of the highlights of HARM's participation in the MER Convention was the work of member **Bill McAleese**, who submitted several of his T-TRAK modules for evaluation. Bill brought an impressive collection of modules, including two quad modules, two single modules, and three corner modules. Together, these seven modules represented a substantial investment of time and effort, with each demonstrating his modeling abilities.



Photo 6: Bill McAleese with his first place and Best of Show awards for this junction module. Trackwork includes a double crossover. Tower includes a detailed interior.

The results were outstanding. Bill's modules earned **first, second, and third place in the convention competition, along with Best in Show**. These awards were a well-deserved recognition of the quality and craftsmanship he brought to his work. Even more significantly, the evaluations provided Bill with enough qualifying Merit Awards to meet the requirements for the new Modular Railroading AP certificate. His modules satisfied both the required number of qualifying modules and the total square footage requirements. With the modeling and evaluation requirements completed, Bill now needs to finish his

Bill's accomplishment is particularly noteworthy because the Modular Railroading certificate is a new addition to the Achievement Program. His success demonstrates that T-TRAK modules, despite their relatively small size and standardized construction, can provide ample opportunities for detailed, high-quality modeling worthy of Merit Awards. Even a small T-TRAK module can incorporate sophisticated scenery, carefully constructed structures, realistic details, and other elements that demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship. Congratulations to Bill on his outstanding showing at the convention and on reaching this important milestone toward earning the new certificate!

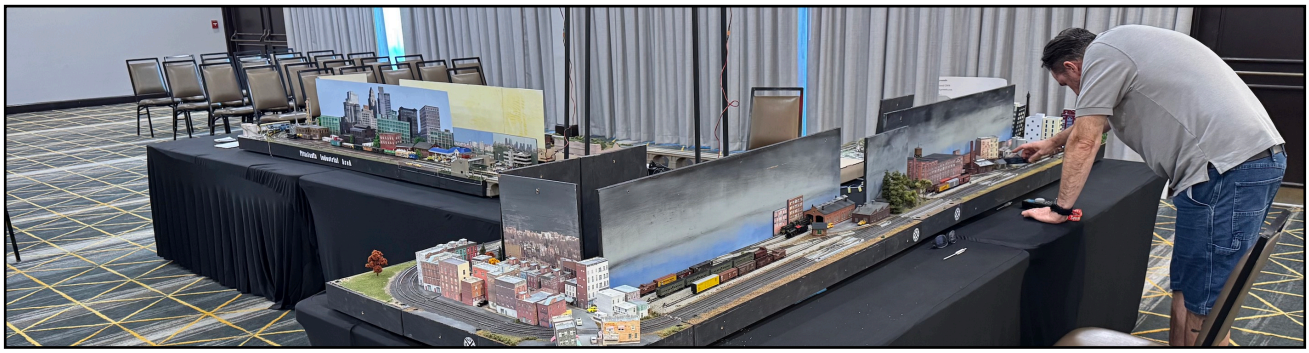


Photo 7: Overall view of the modules being displayed in a "T" configuration for the MER Convention.



Photo 8: Rural scene with station, handcar shed, and water tank. Module built by HARM member Scott Wooddell.



Photo 9: Evaluators hard at work applying the standards to one of Bill McAleese's modules.



Evaluators gaining experience with the new Modular Railroading evaluating criteria.

What's Next for HARM T-TRAK?

Although the original COVID-era project served its purpose of keeping our members connected, the HARM T-TRAK effort has developed into something much more permanent. Members continue to build and improve modules, experiment with new ideas, and explore the potential for more involved operating sessions. As the collection grows, so do the possibilities for larger and more interesting layouts. Bill's success with the Modular Railroading Achievement Program may also inspire other HARM members to have their own modules evaluated, providing another incentive to improve modeling skills and take on more challenging projects.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the entire experience is how it demonstrates the value of fellowship in model railroading. A project that began during a period when we couldn't meet in person has become something that regularly brings us together, whether we're building modules, assembling a layout, operating trains, or sharing our work with others. From a basement filled with remotely controlled trains to a display at a regional NMRA convention, HARM's T-TRAK journey has certainly come a long way.

And we're not finished yet.

**T-Trak modules are available for purchase online at Midwest Model Railroad, Etsy, and eBay -Ed.*



HO Covered Hopper from the Cincinnati Division

Hello once again to NMRA, MER, Division Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Directors, News-Letter Editors, Web Masters, Facebook Managers and members in-general.
We previously reached out to you in the Fall of 2022 and in subsequent ads since then.

We are getting in touch with you once again with a request to publicize and promote Cincinnati Division 7's limited-edition, HO scale, N&W HC-46 ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper cars that we have for sale. This car is unique in that it is a repaint scheme with patched-out data.

The following link provides details about it as well as pricing, shipping and ordering information.
https://division7mid-centralregionnmra.godaddysites.com/car-projects

It would be greatly appreciated if you would make your membership aware of this limited-edition freight car by publicizing it in your Region's and/or Division's web page, newsletter or email blast.

We thank you in advance for your support!

T-TRAK SWITCHING MODULE

BY Fred Miller, MMR

After building two 12” T-Trak modules, I thought it would be fun to build a switching module to mate with those two modules (**Photo 1**). I also wanted to go a step further and provide self-contained DCC power and locomotive controls as well as fascia controls for operating the turnouts including visual status indications.



Photo 1

Background

The T-Trak standards are a set of guidelines for building modular, N scale model train layouts using Kato Unitrack. Key standards include module height, depth (max 14”), and using common track lengths and spacing (33mm). The standards are important for consistent, aligned track placement so multiple modules can operate together.

My two original modules were 12” wide but I needed more space for the switching module. I chose to do a double width module while still following the T-Trak standards. I used a PC design tool called Scarm-2 to choose and lay out the Kato Unitrak track locations (**Photo 2**).

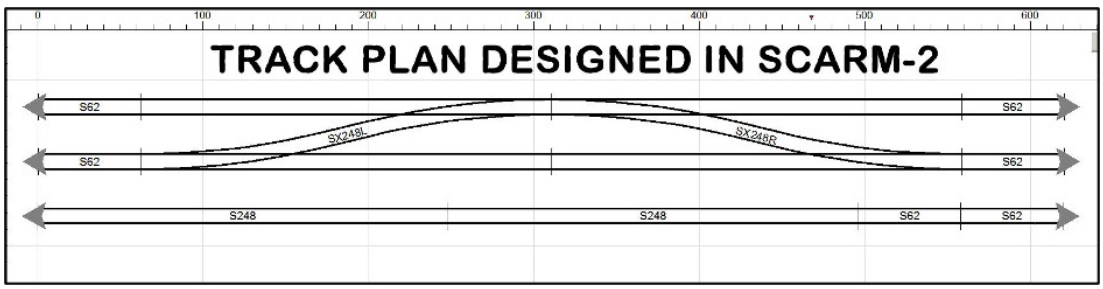


Photo 2

Construction

The starting point for my project was a Rslaser T-Trak Kit for a double wide base (**Photos 3 and 4**).



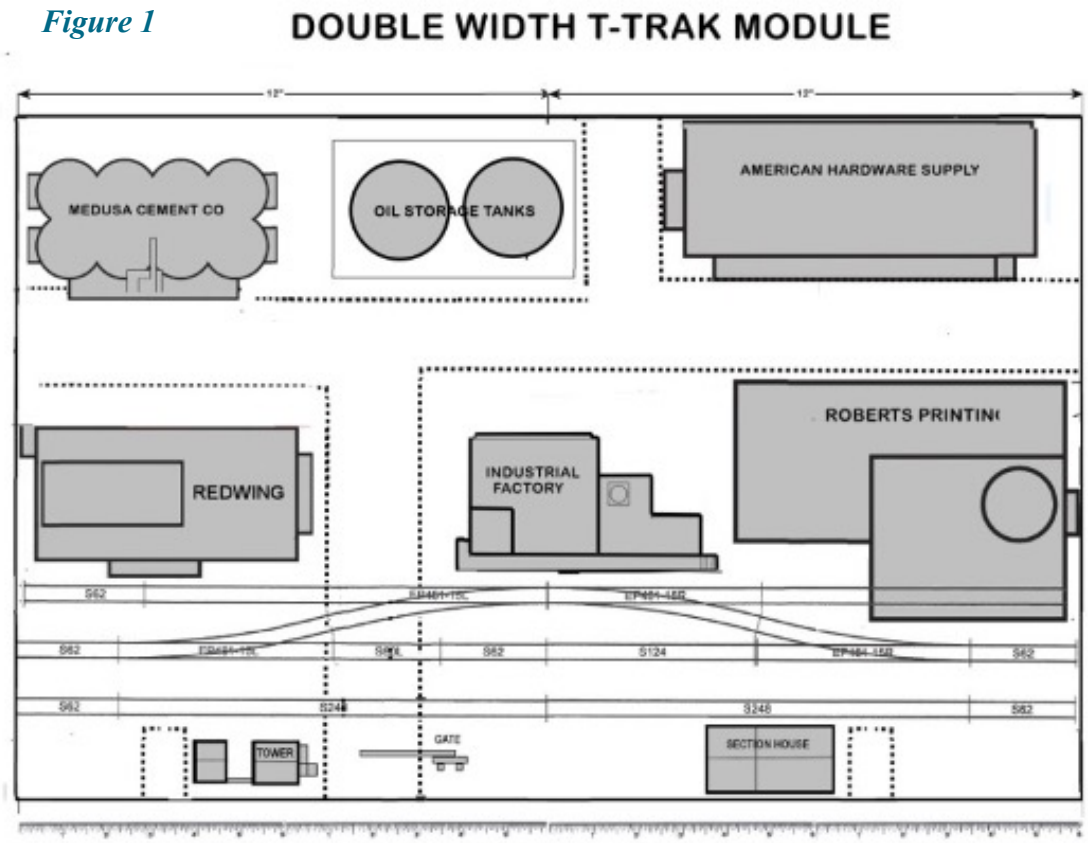
Photo 3



Photo 4

The kit includes a basic standard size frame to be constructed with laser cut plywood components including strengthening pieces. The Kato Unitrack components were assembled and positioned following the standards and my layout design. The locations for the industry switching tracks are located in a third track accessed from the inner main line (**Figure 1**). Six industrial buildings were selected to populate the module Several of these buildings were heavily kit-bashed to fit the available space. A few railroad related structures were also included in front of the mainline.

Figure 1



The roads were constructed with Plastruct stucco patterned styrene sheet painted a dark grey and road stripes were added using white graphing tape. Several cars and trucks were also included on the roads and a few people were positioned throughout (**Photos 2 -6**).


2



3


4


5


6

Switching Operations

In order to enable switching activity on the standalone T-Trak module, I built two 9" extensions (**Figure 2**).

Attaching these two extensions to both ends of Track No. 2 of the switching module, gives just enough track to perform runarounds while switching the industries. (**Photos 7, 8**).

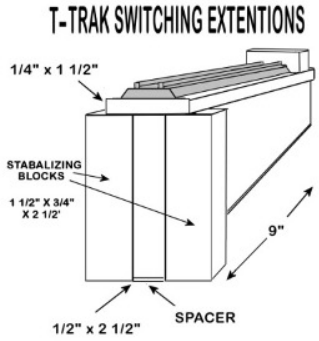


Figure 2

Photo 7



Photo 8



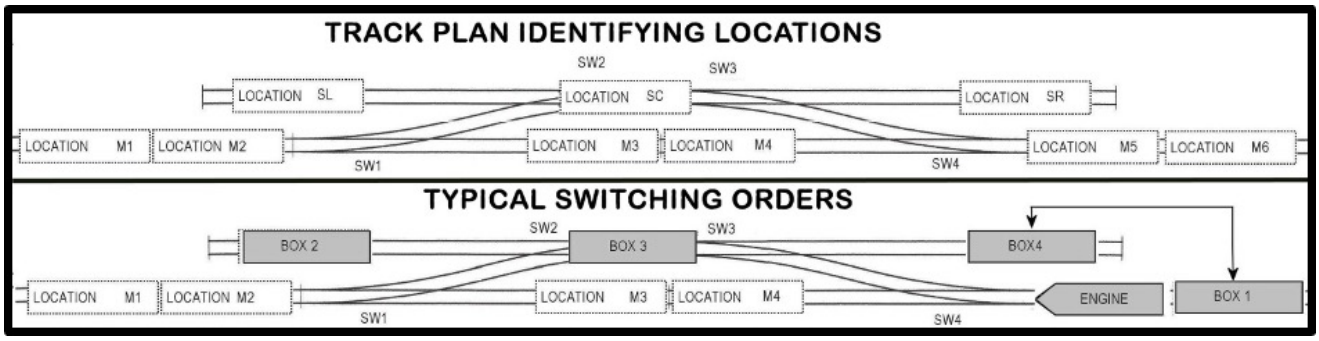


Figure 3

Various switching orders have been compiled such as the above order which calls for switching out a box car in the industry Location SR with a new car just arrived behind the loco. An existing box car at the center location presents a challenge to the switching moves (**Figure 3**).

Electronics

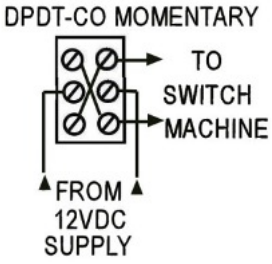


Figure 4

The turnout solenoids used in the Kato Unitrak double track crossovers are activated by a momentary 12V DC power source. The polarity determines the point positions. My fascia control panel and circuit use two DPDT Center Off momentary toggles to send the required polarity of the 12V DC. An Arduino Nano micro based circuit senses the polarity of the pulse sent to the turnouts and lights up LED indicators showing the turnout positioning. That position is retained in the micro EEPROM memory and restored at subsequent power ups.

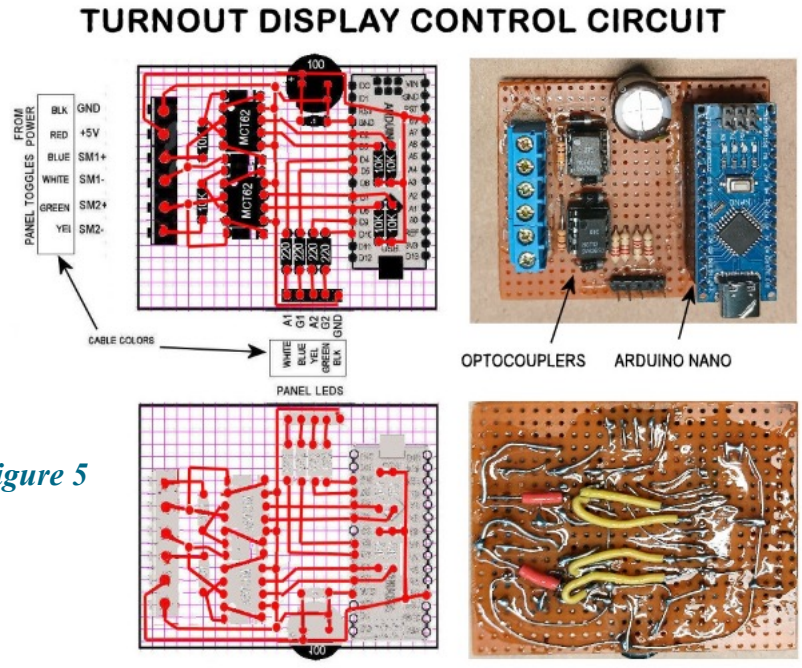


Figure 5

Optocouplers are used to sense and isolate the 12V DC momentary pulses sent to the turnout solenoids.

Diodes and extra power supply filtering on the board are used to protect the opto couplers and the Arduino Nano micro from the solenoid's back EMF (**Figure 5**).

The Nano drives the turnout position indicator LEDs on the fascia control panel (**Figure 6**).

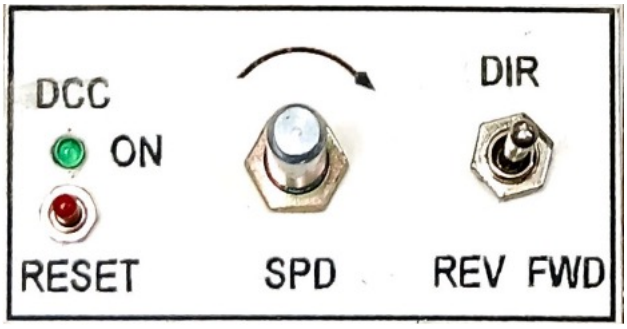


Figure 6

The project module includes a self-contained DCC Power Source and Locomotive control throttle. The DCC is generated on an Arduino Uno with a motor control shield. Another Arduino Nano micro interprets the throttle controls from the fascia strip components and sends the applicable commands to the DCC Power Board.

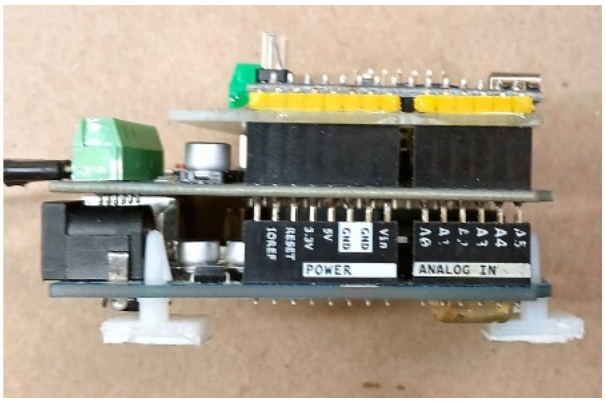


Photo 9

Provision is made to detect a DCC short and shuts down the DCC Power. The control panel indicates the presence of DCC as well as a Reset button to restore the DCC power in the event a short was detected. The DCC track power is active after a five second delay at startup, or short Reset (**Photo 9**).

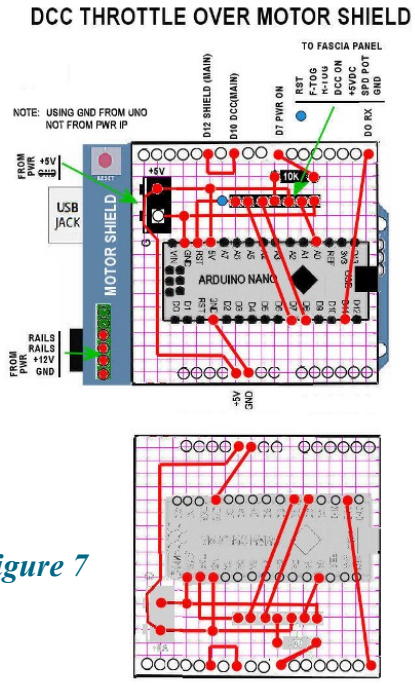


Figure 7

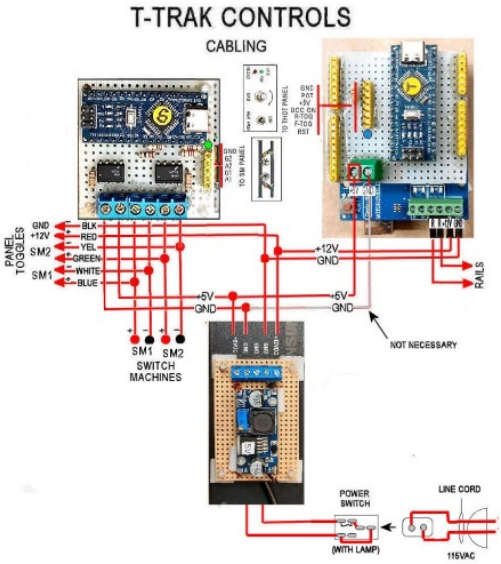


Figure 8

110V AC Power is supplied to the module in the front panel. A power adapter supplies the 12V DC for the turnout solenoids. An onboard 5V DC power regulator board converts the 12V to 5V for the Arduino boards.

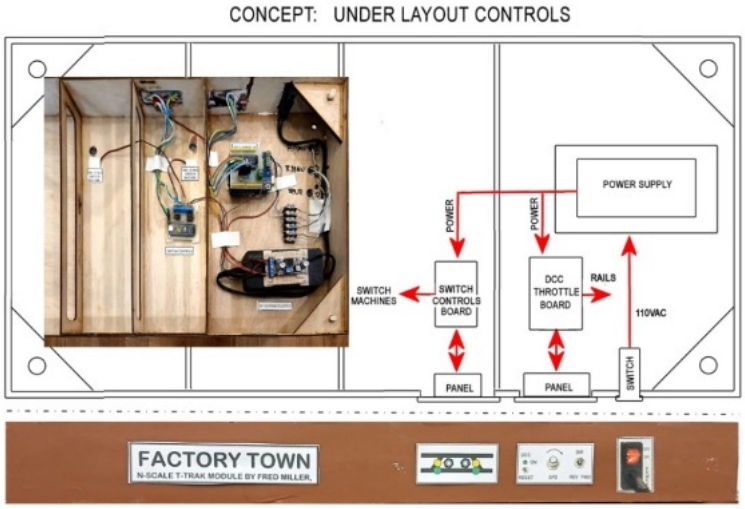


Figure 9

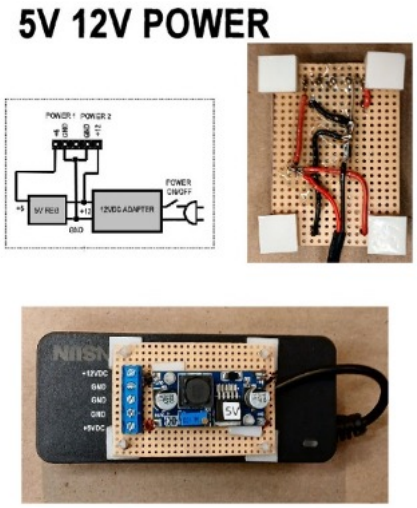


Figure 10

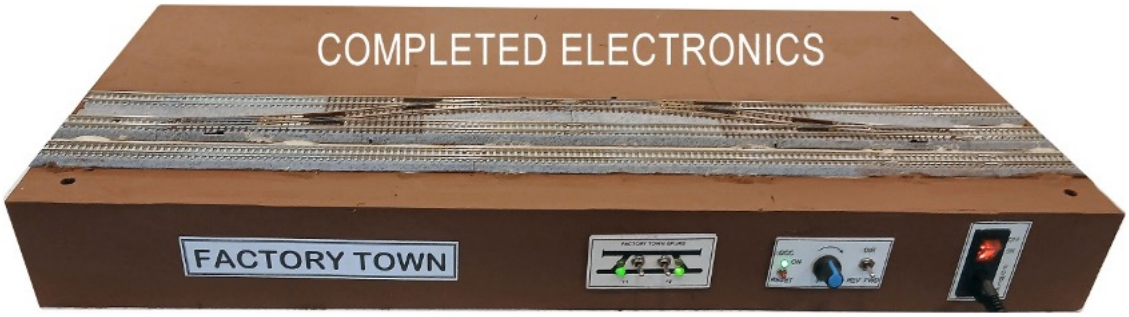


Photo 10

Software

As indicated earlier the DCC Power is generated on an Arduino UNO with a motor driver shield. The UNO software is a modified version of a DCC++ BASE STATION sketch originally developed by Gregg E. Berman. My modified sketch receives 'commands' from the Arduino NANO and supplies the DCC commands to the track. The NANO software senses direction and speed settings from the fascia controls. The software also generates commands for the headlight, bell and whistle as appropriate (**Figure 11**).

SERIAL COMMANDS SENT FROM THROTTLE TO DCC CMD STATION

<1> TrackPower ON, <0> Track Power OFF
<t 1 L s d> L=Loco Addr , s=speed, d=Direction (1=FWD, 0=REV)
<f LL x> L=Loco Addr, x=below Function command values
Function command values are 'logical Anded' for combinations

DCC FUNCTION CODES

FCT	ASCII CMD VAL	TYPICAL DECODER FUNCTIONS
NONE	128	F0-F4 OFF
F0	144	HEADLITE
F1	129	BELLS
F2	130	HORN

Figure 11

Addendum

Both the Factory Town and the earlier Home Sweet Home modules won Gold Medals in Barclay Community Art Shows in 2025 and 2026, respectively.

Purchased Items for this Project

(Figures 12 and 13)

Purchased Items for T-Trak Module - Factory Town

IMAGE	Electronic Components	Price (less S&H)
	12VDC Adapter Power supply	$ 12.99
	5VDC power regulator	$ 1.20
	Arduino UNO Microcontroller	$ 9.99
	(2) Arduino NANO Microcontrolers	$ 10.66
	HiLetgo UNO L293 Motor Shield	$ 7.49
	(2) DPDT Toggle Switches	$ 2.00
	(2) MCT61 Opto-Couplers	$ 2.00
	Misc LEDs, Breadboard headers, wire and resistors	$ 10.00
	Illuminated Power switch and recepticle	$ 6.00
	TOTAL ELECTRONIC PRICES	$ 62.33

Figure 12:

Electronic Components

PURCHASED ITEMS FOR FACTORY TOWN MODULE

Purchased Items for T-Trak Module - Factory Town

IMAGE	Layout Components	Price (less S&H)
	N scale T-Trak (double wide) RslaserKit #3808	$ 40.50
	Kato SX248R Double track single crossover (20-230)	$ 49.00
	Kato SX248L Double track single crossover (20-231)	$ 49.00
	(4) Kato N-Scale 20-054 2 7/16" Concrete tie straight track	$ 8.93
	Kato N-Scale Concrete Tie Double Track Straight 2-7/16" (20-042)	$ 8.89
	George Roberts Printing (Walthers #933-3231)	$ 40.99
	(2) Walthers #933-3893 Oil Storage Tank @$25.99	$ 51.98
	Medusa Cement Co (Walthers #933-3218)	$ 31.99
	American Hardware Supply - N-Scale Kit -- Walthers- #3253	$ 58.99
	Red Wing Milling Co. Walthers #3212	$ 40.99
	5 Sheets 3mm Foam Boards 11.8x7.8 Rectangle PVC Sheet	$8.99
	JL Innjovation East Junction Section House kit #JL1260	$18.69
	JL Innovation Bagwell Junction Tower Kit #jli290	$25.09
	Osborn Model Crossing Signal #OSB3004 ,Gate #OSB3114	$7.98
	100 N-Scale figures (Used half dozen)	$ 12.99
	(24) N-Scale trucks and cars (Used half dozen)	$ 22.99
	TOTAL LAYOUT PRICES	$ 477.99

Figure 13: Layout Components

Norfolk Southern 1210

By Jack Dziadul, MMR

(Photos by the author unless otherwise noted)



Photo 1: Completed Module.

Sometimes small gestures have a memorable impact. Tidewater Division, the host of the Tracks to Tidewater 2026 MER convention, provided a convention car to each of the clinicians. That was a novel and creative idea. I received NS 1210 **(Photo 1).**

The Accurail kit is a model of a Norfolk Southern 50' boxcar factory painted in the road's final gray paint scheme. There were two numbers in this special run, 1210 and 1240. Accurail is considered by many to be one of the better quality manufacturers of the "shake-the-box" genre of model freight cars in HO scale. They are easily recognized by their highly detailed underbody floor detail.

The prototypes were built by American Car and Foundry in 1959 at its St. Louis plant. They were constructed with diagonal panel roofs and dreadnaught ends. Each car had 1 ½ doors, configured as one 8' Youngstown door, and one Thrall-type 4' plug half door. The 250 car series was numbered 1201-1450.

This NS production run was designated for paper service. In 1957 Weyerhaeuser acquired through merger the Kieckhefer-Eddy paper mill in Plymouth, North Carolina. My model of 1210 is lettered "WHEN EMPTY RETURN TO AGENT NS RW. PLYMOUTH, NC VIA SERVICE ROUTE" in addition to standard markings. Repaints after 1963 included black ends.

The "Made in the USA" kit was packaged in the Accurail signature white box. The end panel **(Photo 2)** reads "MID EASTERN REGION 2026 CONVENTION NORFOLK SOUTHERN 1210."

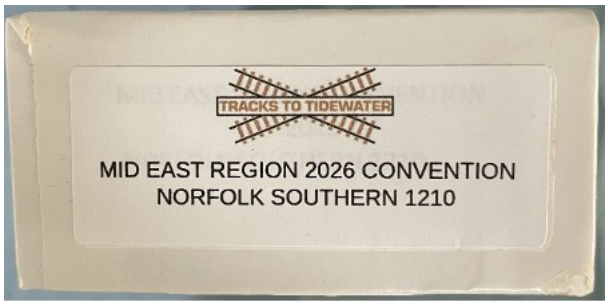


Photo 2: Box end panel.

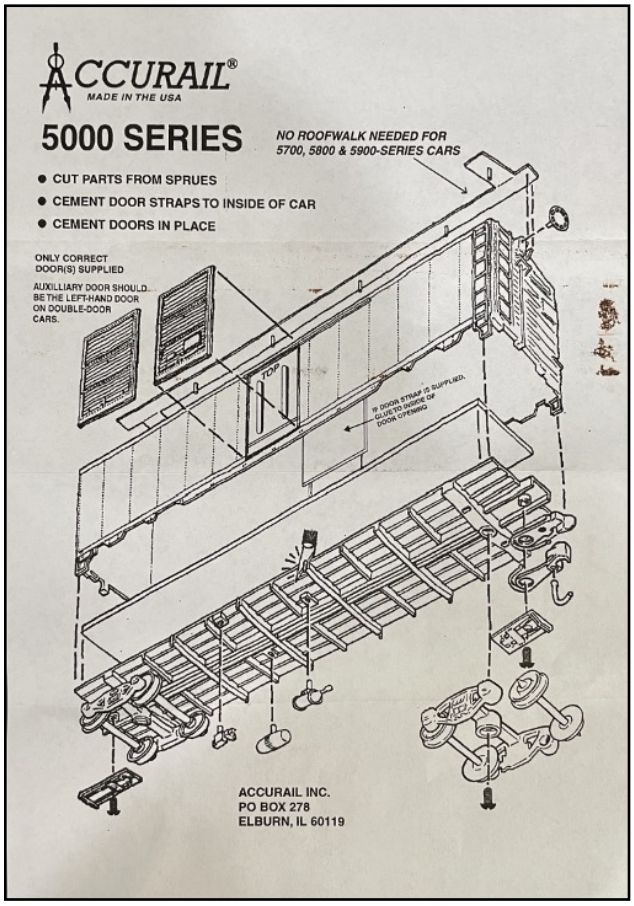


Photo 3: Instruction Sheet.

The single-page instruction sheet **(Photo 3)** included an isometric drawing that clearly illustrated the assembly steps.

The ladders, grab bars, stirrup steps, door stops, and the half doors were all molded on details **(Photo 4)**. Tack boards are molded to the car body ends and to the doors. The roofwalk and brake wheel were factory installed.

My upgrades include InterMountain 33” metal wheels in lieu of the provided plastic wheels, Kadee No.5 knuckle couplers instead of the Accumate couplers provided, tack board detail, chalk mark decals from National Scale Car ND-135, and air hoses.

I sprayed the car body and trucks with Dullcote to lessen the plastic sheen and prepare the surface for weathering.

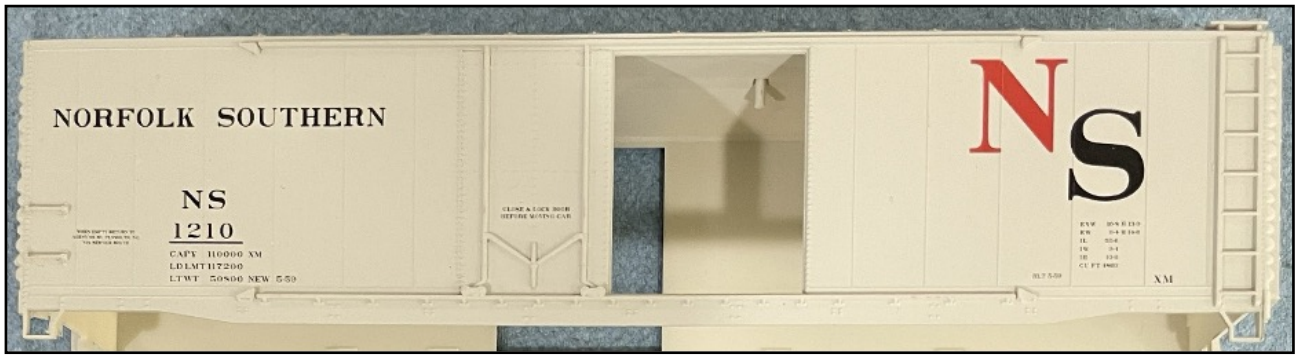


Photo 4: Car body with molded on details. Lettering is crisp and opaque.

The wheel faces, springs, couplers, and brake pads were painted a rust color. The axles and backs of the wheels were painted black. I did not add a train line or other piping, and none came with the kit. Potential future upgrades include brake release levers. The four screws came black, which was convenient.



Photo 5: Weighing the car.

NMRA Recommended Practice RP-20.1 Car Weight calls for one ounce plus ½ ounce for each inch of body length. HO scale NS 1210 is 7" long. Therefore, we need a model car weight of 4 ½ ounces. Our car weighed in at 4.65 ounces; close enough **(Photo 5)**.

Prototype 1240 was one of 49 cars later converted to a cushion coil underframe. These cars had a special logo, which the Norfolk Southern Railway Company Historical Society calls the "Swan" logo **(Photo 6)**. Rob Rousseau commissioned Highball Graphics to produce a special run of Swan logo decals. These are available as a direct order from Rob. (railroad@nc.rr.com $5 per set).



Photo 6: NS 1357 showing "Swan" logo and DF markings. Photo by Rob Rousseau.

This Accurail kit was a quick and easy project. More super-detailing could have been achieved, of course, if one chose to invest more time and dollars on the kit. But I recall the question that the late Jim Kellow always challenged us with "When do you call it done." I am calling my version of NS 1210 done (**Photos 7-11**).

Thank you to NS historian Rob Rousseau for assistance with this article.



Photo 7: Completed model with chalk marks and light weathering.



Photo 8: Tack board on A car end and chalk marks.



Photo 9: Chalk marks decal, tack board details, light weathering.

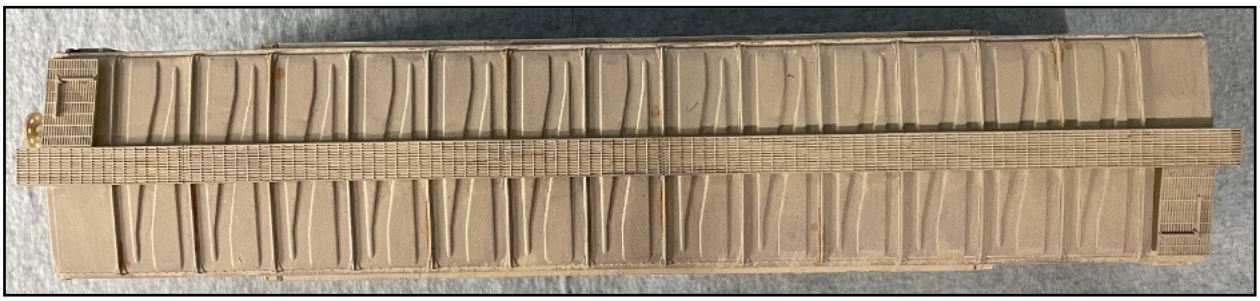


Photo 10: Roof top with light weathering (diluted gray acrylic paint).



Photo 11: Underbody, Kadee couplers, Intermountain wheels.



All Aboard for Tacoma for the Puget Sound Express, NMRA 2027 National Convention

By Magnus Christerson and Robin Peel, Co-chairs, NMRA 2027 National Convention

Sounder photo credit: © 2025 Michael Douglas-Sawyer



Sounder train 908, part of the regional light rail system, runs west at speed through the Puyallup River Valley with 14,000 ft. Mt. Rainier in the distance.

The Puget Sound Express (PSX), the 2027 NMRA National Convention, will be held in Tacoma, Washington, August 10–15, 2027.

We are planning a first-class gathering for model railroaders from across North America and around the world, and **registration is now open**.

Visit 2027.NMRA.org to:



- **Register for PSX 2027**
- **Sign up for the convention newsletter**
- **Join the Convention Facebook Group**
- **Volunteer, present a clinic, or teach a hands-on session**
- **Explore the latest program, hotel, and travel information**

Early-bird registration is **$150 U.S. for NMRA members** and **$175 U.S. for nonmembers**.

PSX 2027 will feature **more than 60 layouts**, about half offering operating sessions, along with **100+ clinics, tutorials, hands-on activities, prototype tours, and much more**. Modeling with the Masters sessions will begin on Monday, August 9, and the **National Train Show** will take place August 14–15 at the Tacoma Convention Center.

A major highlight will be the **American Rail 200 Symposium**, organized in partnership with the **National Museum of Railroad History & Innovation**, celebrating 200 years of railroad history, innovation, and impact in North America. Learn more in our convention newsletter #2.

We also need **many volunteers** to help make the convention a success. If you would like to help, present a clinic, or serve as an instructor, please complete our volunteer form.

Tacoma has been a major railroad center for more than a century and remains an active rail hub today. Beyond the convention, visitors can enjoy the spectacular scenery and attractions of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle-Tacoma International Airport offers excellent connections, including nonstop service from the U.K.

Register, subscribe, and get involved today at 2027.NMRA.org.

We look forward to seeing you in Tacoma!

Magnus Christerson and Robin Peel
Co-chairs, NMRA 2027 National Convention

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From the Divisions…

Branch Lines

As *The Local* Editor, I have the distinct pleasure of receiving a copy of all the Division newsletters, which are all very informative and creative to say the least. Here are links to those publications and to their Division Websites for easy access:

Divisions	Newsletters
1 - New Jersey Division	*Train Orders*
2 - Potomac Division	*Potomac Flyer*
3 - Philadelphia Division	*The Dispatcher*
4 - Tidewater Division	*The Callboard*
5 - James River Division	*Crossties - Index*
10 - South Mountain Division	*Wheel Report*
11 - Susquehanna Division	*Sidetracks*
12 - Carolina Southern Division	*The Brass Pounder*
13 - Carolina Piedmont Division	*The Herald*
14 - Chesapeake Division	*The Relay*

Other NMRA Links:	HOME	Benefits
Bulletin	NMRA Partners (Discounts)	Events
Archives	Education	Turntable
Submit Articles	Videos	Clinics

Send in Your Articles

We are always looking for new articles, tips, ideas, photos, and comments from our readers. If you have been awarded an AP (Achievement Program) Certificate or an MMR (Master Model Railroader) award, please consider writing an article about it so others can learn how you did it. We always enjoy looking at new layouts, dioramas, and models that our members have created. If you would like to contribute to The Local, please send an email containing your article and photos to The Local Editor.

The Local welcomes and encourages articles, photographs, and model railroad related material as contributions to our members' education and enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. The Editor will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send paper/photo originals without retaining back-up copies. Editors, by definition, reserve the right and have the responsibility to make corrections, deletions, and changes to accommodate space. If your item is time-sensitive in any way, please advise the Editor. Otherwise, stories and photos that are accepted are published in approximately the order in which they were received.

We love our authors and we love our jobs in creating *The Local* for you to enjoy. We receive many articles with great content and we are always anxious to publish them. However, so many articles that we receive are not in a good format and require many hours of work to get them ready for publication. When you are preparing your article to send to the Editor, please follow the instructions presented here. It won't require any more work for you in writing the article, but it will save us many hours of proofreading and publishing time. Depending on the size of the article, it may take as many as 10-12 hours to actually get it in the newsletter. We can save at least half that time if it comes to us prepared according to the instructions.

How to Submit an Article for The Local

(Please Follow These Steps Carefully!)

1. ***Please read*** the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on "Preparing Your Manuscript for Publication in The Local."

2. Compose and submit your text in Word format (.doc or docx).

3. Use Times New Roman font in 12 pt size.

4. The title should be **centered** and in **bold.**

5. Directly under the title should be "By (your name)" - centered, not bold. If you are an MMR, put it there.

6. If the photos are yours, enter in parentheses (Photos by the author) right after your name.

7. Enter your text with no paragraph indents. Justify the text so it is even on both sides.

8. In your text, refer to your photos this way: (**Photo 1**) - in parentheses, bold and blue.

9. Between paragraphs in your text, write "**Insert Photo 1 here**" where you want the photo to appear. DO NOT put your photos there. Otherwise, we just have to take them out.

10. Include the number of the Photo in the file name of the Photo so we know which one goes with which number.

11. Photos must be clear and sharp or they cannot be accepted. JPG, GIF, TIFF and PNG formats are acceptable.

12. Photo captions should be listed at the end of your article, or in a separate Word file, and numbered with the same number as the photo.

13. Send your text and your photos separately by email to The Local Editor. They can all be sent in the same email as long as the total file size is less than 25 MB. If the size is larger than that, you will have to split them into two or three emails.

What Happens to Your Article after You Send It In?

First, the substance and context of the article has to be reviewed. Is it original? Has it been used before, or published elsewhere? Was it borrowed from someone else's work? Is it an appropriate topic for our newsletter? We've had to reject a few articles because they were more about rail fanning than they were about model railroading.

Then the text is carefully reviewed line by line by four different sets of eyes to check for typos, grammatical errors, wording or phrasing problems that have to rewritten to be more understandable. Punctuation has to be corrected. If there are photos in the text, they have to be removed. Photos frequently require editing to make them look brighter and more appealing. File names of the photos have to be changed to include the number of the photo.

After the proofreading is finished, the text has to be entered into the publishing program, paragraph by paragraph, sometimes line by line. The text often has to be resized to make it fit properly without looking inconsistent. When we come to a point where a photo has to be inserted, it has to be resized so that it fits in with the text and in the right order with the proper caption. If a photo is missed, the whole article may be have to be redone in order to get the photo in the right place.

It's just like putting a model together in many ways. You start with the raw materials or the parts that come in a kit. The materials and instructions for the kit are what the author provides. In this case, the various parts include the words that have to be put together properly. Then the paragraphs and the photos may have to be rearranged. Then you have to fit the pieces into the right places, so that they make sense and look appealing. There are many details that have to be added or corrected. Eventually, we glue them all together by converting them from Word into a pdf file.

What Kinds of Articles Do We Like to See?

1. Anything about modeling, whether it be about just putting a kit together, kit bashing, scratchbuilding, or just adding details or weathering to a model.
2. Any type of "How to…" article, as long as it is about model railroading.
3. New tips or techniques, or even old ones used in a new way.
4. A tour of your layout or that of a friend, including its name, location, theme, era, scale, size, best features and biggest challenges.
5. Summary of a model railroad conference you visited.
6. Tell us about your workbench, or any special tools you use.
7. Tell us how you fixed a problem you encountered with your model or layout.
8. If you received an AP or MMR Certification, explain how you did it, what were the challenges. What would you recommend to others working on the same project.
9. New electrical techniques that you performed, new automations, how you set up signals, how you installed sound or flashing signs, billboards, or other details.
10. Scenery techniques, mountains, water, river rapids, trees, forests, ground cover.
11. Building a bridge or trestle.
12. Photographing your layout or model.
13. How to recruit more people into the hobby.
14. Your summary of a clinic you attended.
15. How we can help each other.

Special Notes for Authors (MUST READ before submitting an article):

Please only send us your own creative work or that for which you have written permission to use so we can give that source proper credit. We need to avoid any copyright infringement situations. If you have previously published your article or photo in any other magazine or newsletter, including a Division or Regional newsletter or your own website blog, it cannot be reproduced in The Local without written permission from the magazine publisher, editor, and author or photographer. Also, *Please read* the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on "Preparing Your Manuscript for Publication in The Local." If this is your first submission to The Local, please fill out and return this Media Agreement Form to the Editor, which gives us permission to use your material and verifies that the work is yours, or that you have obtained written permission to use it. Once your article is approved for publication, and you have qualified for 42 or more points in the Author Category of the Achievement Program (AP), you may submit a Statement of Qualifications Form along with a Record and Validation Form to your Division AP Manager to receive your Author AP Certificate.

NMRA Membership Programs and Savings

The NMRA has several money saving programs and discounts exclusively for NMRA Members.

Check out the ones listed on this page!

NEW TRACKS MODELING

"Where Mentors Help Modelers Build Better"

Joy to the World

By Greg Warth, Editor

So here we are, at the best time of the year, some would say, with the Holidays upon us. Halloween was fun; it always is. Thanksgiving is a great time for families and friends to gather together. Christmas, a wonderful time devoted to giving kindness and love for each other, will be here before we know it. Of course the joy is mixed in with a lot of business, rushing around, shopping and commercial interference, but that's okay. I've often wished that the peace and love we wish for others during this time could spread to the rest of the year. I think it can if we all make a conscious effort to do so. But we often get busy again with our lives and that spirit goes away quickly in January when the bills pile up. And then we have to get ready for the dreaded tax season.

There are always lots of ups and downs in our lives. But there is one thing that doesn't change much. The enjoyment we get from creating miniature versions of the world around us is relatively steady and remains rewarding whatever else may be happening around us. I don't mean to say we should hide our heads in the ground cover of our layouts. We can still participate in the busy life around us, but we also know that there is a space and time when we can retreat from it for short periods and maybe even make fun of it with humorous scenes. Involving your children and others in the family and including friends and neighbors in that scenery makes it even better.

So, maybe find (or schedule) some time to have fun with your trains, and invite your neighbors and friends over for an Op session, or just to watch and let them run some trains. Always have some cookies and hot chocolate or eggnog ready for them. Get the children to look for surprises in the scenery. Put a few Christmas trees and other decorations in the mix.

If you don't have a layout, that's okay. You and your family can make a holiday village very quickly using a simple oval of track and an inexpensive train on a small table containing lighted village houses, snow and trees scattered around. That makes me feel better just thinking about it.



Christmas Village at the Museum (Photo by the Author)

Thanks for reading *The Local* and again thanks to all who helped me put it together.

Have some great Holidays and Happy Railroading!