



**Volume 22
Issue 11**

November, 2009

BANTRAK Newsletter

The Engineer's Cab

Alan DelGaudio



Hello BANTRAK,

It's that Happy Holiday time of year!

We're closing in on the B&O Festival of Trains – the really big “shew”, as Ed Sullivan used to say. Eric and Dave Clyde have more information for you elsewhere in this issue.

Before that we have our Thanksgiving weekend show at the Orchard Beach Volunteer Fire Dept. This will be a 14 x 28 layout featuring two new modules from Sandy Van Metre, and Steve promises not to be outdone. If you have clandestinely been working on a module and would like to get it in the B&O F.O.T., this is the best chance to preview and debug it. Just let me know.

We'd like to start set-up in the morning around 10 on Friday (a day off for many). This is a perfect opportunity to beg off Black Friday shopping unless you're on line at 3 AM waiting to save \$50 on a flat screen TV. If so, then come and join us at 10 since you're well past your lunch hour. Seriously, we plan to run for the evening, hopefully by 5 but 6 is what I told them. Run times will be Saturday afternoon and evening and Sunday afternoon. Tear down will be at 4:30-ish on Sunday. We have the modules, we need set up, tear down crew and runners!

On Saturday, November 21 and Sunday, the 22nd, we have the annual BANTRAK work session at Skip Hayes' home. We have several projects to work on. Some yard track work needs attention, and one of the 3-footer corners needs rework. Yard legs need inspection and possible repair (adjustable eye bolts). So, there is enough work for all. If your skyboard is looking worse for wear, blue side or black side, bring it. My notes above may not be comprehensive. If you have observed something else, let me know!

In keeping with the counter-chronological mode of this article, I'll briefly mention we had 2 successful shows in October, the B&O Festival of Steam and the Great Scale Model Train Show. Reports

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Next meeting...

**November 22, 2009
2:00 pm**

Skip Hayes' House

On the web...

**News, information, and
forums are all at:**

<http://www.bantrak.net/>

Disney's Christmas Carol Train

Jack Walsh



As a volunteer at the B&O Museum in downtown Baltimore, I was asked to be a Disney Cast Member and support the activities when Disney's Christmas Carol Train was at the museum. I agreed to work for them on the first two days the train was in Baltimore – Friday and Saturday. I was given a white tee shirt with the train logo on the back and the words on the front. The ten Disney employees with the train all had gray polo shirts with the Disney Train name on the pocket, so that we could find them quickly.

First a little about the train: the train has two AMTRAK Genesis engines, a baggage car, three passenger cars and a heavyweight observation car. All pieces of equipment were painted with scenes of nineteenth century London and Scrooge with snowflakes all over, including the engines. The three passenger cars were reconfigured with the first displaying copies of the first edition Christmas Carol book by Dickens and many of the costumes/clothes worn during that period. The second car had displays of the models used to construct (digitally) the various houses and rooms used in the movie and a display on how the image motions were recorded digitally. The actors played their parts on an empty stage and all their movements were recorded in three dimensions. The third car allowed you to have a digital photo of your face morphed into the face of one of the characters – Scrooge, Marley, Tiny Tim, Fan, or the little girl. It seemed that most people picked Tiny Tim. You

exited through the first half of the baggage car and were handed a sheet that had Christmas tree ornaments and a sheet that could be cut out and folded into one of the Christmas Carol Genesis engines. From here you could enter a 'blow up building' that presented a ten minute preview of the 3D movie. The observation car houses the five Disney crew who travel with the train full time. Of the five, there is only one who has ridden it from the start – 22 May in LA (would have loved to do that myself). There is also a bus that houses five more Disney crew. Yes, for this entire event there are only ten Disney people.



On Friday morning we all had to be on site at 6:45 am because all three networks, Fox and the SUN papers were going to come in to tape their reporters talking about the event. The day itself was overcast and a little chilly hanging around 65 degrees most of the day. The crowd never really backed up, so there was never a line to either the train or the theater. The day went smoothly.

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When we arrived at 8:30 am Saturday (no VIPs this time), the rain the night before had gotten under the tarp that was on the roof of the theater and collapsed the roof to the point that the top third of the screen could not be seen. With the opening set for 9 am there was a lot of activity unfastening the tarp and pulling it off the roof. By 9 am, the tarp was off, and the water was removed. But the roof was still a little low, so the first showing was done with only the Disney personnel watching to see if any of the preview was blocked by the roof. At the end of the preview, it was decided that it was OK to run the preview with the roof as it was. By this time there were already fifteen or so people in the theater line. After these people were in the theater, the line began to build again and never disappeared the rest of the day.

My job was to verify that the visitors had been on the train before they got in line for the

preview. This was so they could see how the movie was made before they saw it. At times during the day, the line would have over a hundred people waiting for the next show, and unfortunately the theater only sat 90. So, Disney had on-site Christmas Carolers, magicians and clowns to entertain the visitors as they waited in line. Most of the day, the line for the train was between an hour and an hour and half before you entered the train. But the day turned out sunny and warm, high

70's, so there were very few complaints there. There were a few people who could not understand why they had to see the train first before the preview. The vast majority took the opportunity to leave one person in line and the rest of the party went out and explored the museum.

Several of the B&O employees commented that it was the largest crowd that had ever been in the museum at one time, and that included the Thomas weekends. I talked with people who came from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio and Delaware. They were all just as impressed by the museum as they were with the train.

All in all, it appeared to be a complete success for both Disney and the Museum. Hopefully, many of those people will come back to the museum over the holidays to see the Festival of Trains (model trains that is, starting the day after Thanksgiving).



A Weekend With the MER

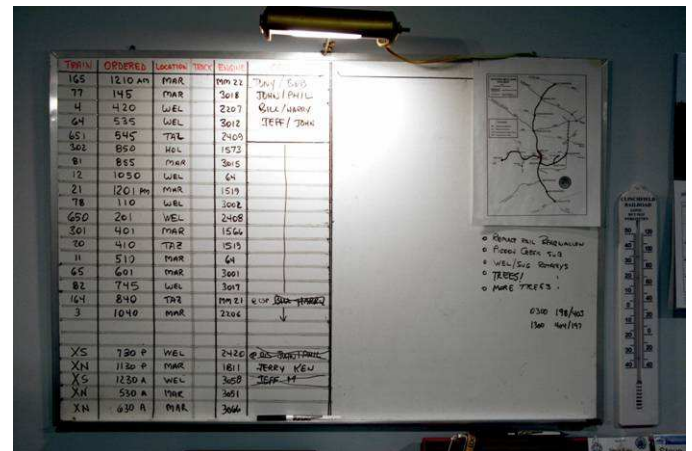
John Darlington



Phil Peters and I attended the Mid-Eastern Region (MER) Convention held in Hagerstown Thursday, October 15th through Sunday, October 18th. For those of you who are not acquainted with the overall structure of the National Model Railroaders Association (NMRA), the national organization is divided into regions, one of which is the MER. Regions are sub-divided into divisions. All NMRA members are assigned to regions and divisions based upon where they live. For instance, both Phil and I are part of the MER since both Maryland and Pennsylvania are in the Mid-Eastern Region. On the other hand, we belong to separate Divisions – Phil is in the Susquehanna Division and I am in the Chesapeake Division along with Arthur Boyd, again based upon where we live. All NMRA members can attend any activity of any Region or Division, so the chances to meet other NMRA modelers and attend their clinics and excursions are available and encouraged.

This was the first time that the MER Convention, *Western Maryland Transfer*, was held in Hagerstown in over 15 years. In fact, the previous Hagerstown affair featured a modular layout by none other than BANTRAK. The *Western Maryland Transfer* was like most such conventions in that it featured modeling clinics, model judging, rail fanning, prototypical operations and the proverbial banquet.

Phil and I are old hands at conventions, so we opted to take part in a two day prototypical operations



The orders board

activity and go light on the normal clinic/lectures. We took advantage of experiencing Time Table & Train Order (TT&TO) operations on a private model railroad. Never having operated in a TT&TO structure, I was a little apprehensive to say the least. Hearing stories about experienced operators berating or humiliating “rookies” for mistakes during operating sessions naturally elevated my pulse rate a fair amount. It did help somewhat when I learned that Phil was my teammate. After all, Phil regularly operates on a local HO layout up in Pennsylvania. However, my relief was short-lived when Phil admitted that he had had little experience operating under TT&TO rules himself.

The TT&TO class started with a 3-hour orientation session Thursday evening designed to familiarize everyone with the forms and rules used in TT&TO. The first thing that was handed out was a bound copy of the *Condensed Code of Operation Rules* (Edition 1951) which numbered 134 pages in length. In addition we were



Our host, Steve King

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3-to-1 fast clocks around the room advance three minutes for every one minute of real time.

given copies of *Train Orders* (Form 19) and *Clearance Cards* (Form A) which are key parts of all TT&TO operations. At first this was quite intimidating, but as our instructor, Steve King, proceeded with his explanations, the forms and the rules started to meld together and make sense. At the conclusion of the class, I felt that I had a fairly good working knowledge of general TT&TO operations and I eagerly looked forward to our all-day operation session on Friday.

I cannot say enough good things about our host, Steve King. First of all he is an N-scaler, which speaks for itself. Secondly, having a bunch of strangers operate his trains on his great N-scale layout, while maintaining a pleasant and helpful demeanor, speaks volumes of Steve's graciousness and self-control.

Steve's layout, located in Germantown, while not fully scenicked, is operationally complete. It is a single-track, double-tier scheme with numerous towns, sidings, yards and run-around tracks, which makes these types of operations fun and quite challenging. We broke down into two-man crews (10 in all), and Steve handed out each crew's orders. Steve had a formal time table drawn up with numerous first-class and second-class trains scheduled. Each crew, in turn, went to the

appropriate place in the layout to take control of its train. We operated on a "fast clock", and there were numerous clocks situated around the room.

If you were operating a scheduled train, you had to follow your time table and be where you should be on the layout at or near the scheduled time. Since you were scheduled, you had the right of way depending on the direction of travel (some went north and some went south). On Steve's layout, southbound trains have priority.

On the other hand, Phil and I kept getting "extra" trains which meant that we had the lowest track priority. We had to be off of the main when scheduled trains were coming through, jumping in and out of sidings, while progressing to our destination. While this is the hardest job in TT&TO operations, it's the most fun, too!

We operated from 10 am to 2:30 pm with a brief break for lunch. Heck, even engineers and conductors have to eat! At the end of the day, there were no train collisions or other accidents (we did have a derailment in one of the helices), so in that respect, the day was uneventful, I am sure to the great relief of Steve King. It was a great day and it was by far the most fun that I have had in model railroading.

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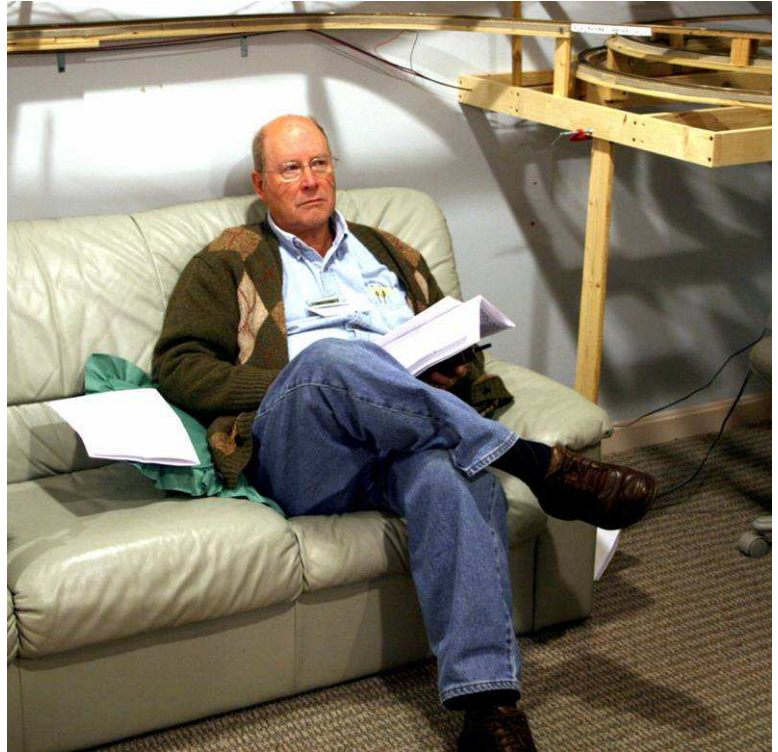
The dispatcher's office

After the excitement of Friday, we had a bit of a let down on Saturday. Phil and I were scheduled to be part of an all day excursion to East Broad Top in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, owing to the terrible weather that weekend (6" of snow in College Station), we decided not to go and spent the time attending modeling clinics all day. Some of the clinics were pretty good, too, especially ones on weathering and constructing layouts in small spaces. We skipped the banquet, opting to spend the evening in the hotel bar and the restaurant.

The convention ended with the usual MER Business Meeting. They had blocked off a two-hour segment, but the meeting only lasted 45 minutes (are you listening, BANTRAK?) and Phil and I headed back home before noon.

All in all, I really enjoyed this convention. It was relaxing as well as interesting and I

cannot wait to have another opportunity to operate under TT&TO rules.

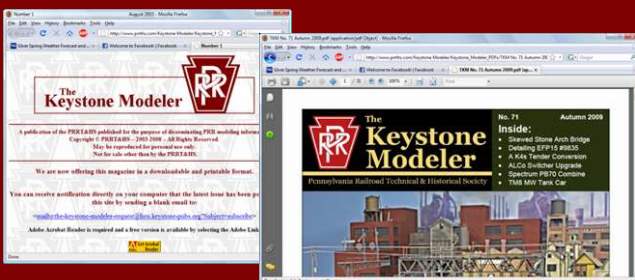


Phil takes a break in the crew lounge.

Site of the Month: The Keystone Modeler

Matthew Davis

There seem to be quite a few Pennsy fans in BANTRAK. I'm sure you all know about the PRR Historical Society, but did you know they have a modelers' magazine as well? You can download and print recent issues at their web site. Just visit <http://www.prrths.com/>, click on the "National Society" link at the top, then click on "The Keystone Modeler" under the "Publications" heading.



B&O Festival of Trains Update

Eric Payne

- Call for modules (new modules must be tested by the Orchard Beach show) went out on 11/4/09. Reply to Dave via email.
- Lights for module backdrops are useful because of poor lighting in roundhouse. If you need lights, please contact Eric.
- Run time scheduling will be discussed at the November meeting.

October Scale Show Report

Tim Nixon



Well, another October Scale Show has come and gone, and once again BANTRAK did its normal outstanding job. While the slow economy and the beautiful fall weather kept attendance below that of previous years, members still had a good time and kept multiple trains running all weekend on an impressive layout.

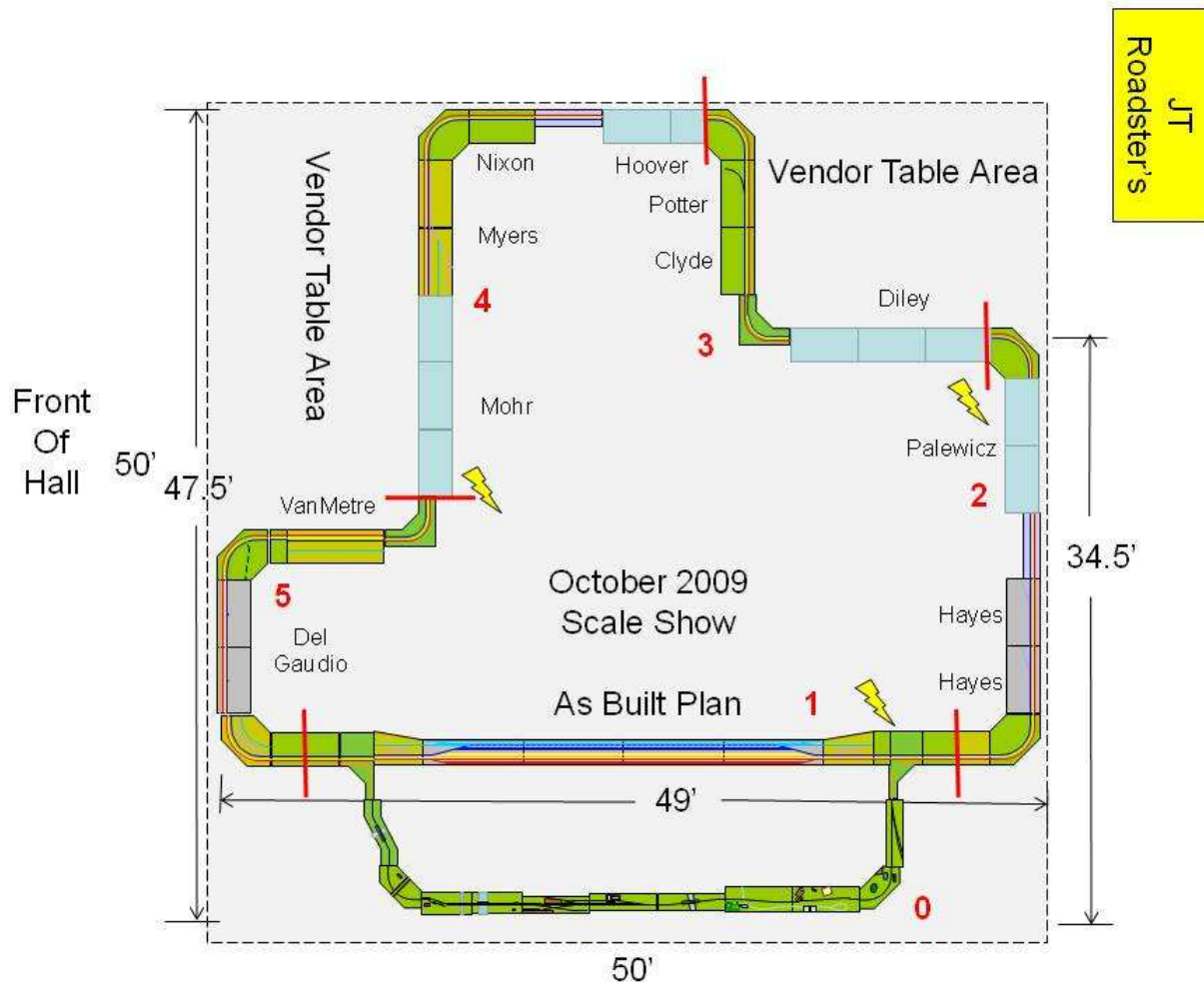
When I started the planning for the layout this time, I decided that I wanted to do something different with the layout design, and I did, just not in the way I originally envisioned it. My original thought was to do an N-TRAK-only layout, featuring as many new and upgraded modules as possible in a test run for the B&O Festival of Trains in December. I seriously considered using the junction modules and doing a double-loop layout, with each loop having independent yellow and blue, and sharing a common red line. That plan went out the window fairly early when several members and their modules turned out to be unavailable for one reason or another, and I discovered I didn't have enough modules to do such a configuration. Instead, after discussions with Alan DelGaudio and Eric Payne, we decided to incorporate the oNeTrak modules into the layout as a yard bypass to see if that was a feasible alternative for using oNeTrak at the B&O. In addition, I incorporated all six outside club corners and the two reversible corners to get away from the standard rectangular or L-shapes, and begged or borrowed enough modules to fill the space. And fill it we did; after adding Tom Hoover's two modules at the last minute (which I found out were coming the night before the show), the final layout was

49' by 47.5' and completely filled our assigned 50' by 50' space.

Set-up went very well; we had all modules on-site well before 2 PM and despite the large and unique shape of the layout we still had final clamp down complete around 3 PM. The two leveling crews did an exceptional job. Despite the complexity of the layout the two ends were off by only about 1.5" east-west and were perfect north-south when the two groups met, requiring a very minor adjustment. Only two real problems were encountered during set-up, one major and one minor. The major problem was we were missing four of the club pipe legs from the "torpedo": we needed 26 legs to do the 6 outside corners (18 legs) and the two yard throats (8 legs), and there were only 22 in the "torpedo". Luckily, Eric Payne volunteered to run home and get four legs from his Zoo modules, which were not being used; thanks Eric! The minor problem was that we had to swap out the Container Ship module and the lift bridge after clamp down for clearance reasons. Set-up was essentially complete around 7:15 PM, although there were a few minor details that needed completing on Saturday morning.

Operations over the two days ran very smoothly, with only usual minor issues. There were no real show-stoppers, and most of the problems were ironed out Saturday morning. Trains filled the rails for 2 days. I would have liked to recognize everyone who ran by name but unfortunately the sign-up sheet got thrown out before I could collect it and I don't have a complete list of runners. Red, Yellow and Blue lines were filled both days, but oNeTrak was

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not – based on the configuration and the modules available, the ability to have an independent operator on oNeTrak was limited, and instead it was pretty much used strictly as a red line bypass for those brave enough to use it.

Teardown went smoothly. DCC teardown started about 3:30, right after the club meeting, followed closely thereafter by the removal of skirting and stanchions. The last train stopped at 3:50, and we had the trailer packed and rolling by 5:10, with the last of us leaving the Cow Palace about 5:30. The only issue was that a miscommunication resulted in us almost leaving the Ellicott City Corner behind; thanks to Steve for giving it a ride to its proper home (and hopefully a good dusting on the way).

I heard numerous compliments over the weekend from the viewing public on our modules and layout, both N-TRAK and oNeTrak. The one I am most proud of is one gentleman who told me that while the other clubs have some great modules, we have the best layout because all our modules are high quality.

I'd like to thank all who participated for a successful show, including my co-coordinator Bob Mohr. In addition to those already mentioned, I want to especially single out Martin Myers for doing double duty: Martin not only transported all his own modules and the club DCC gear, but also made a second trip on Friday to help Al Palewicz and Paul Diley transport their gear when logistical issues arose. Again, thanks all and see you at B&O!

Railfest Steam Days

Alan DelGaudio



This was a great weekend show for us, but a lot of work. The weather was a disappointment (more for the B&O than for us), with overcast skies and seemingly constant light rain. The only nice thing about Saturday was that it only poured for a little while. Sunday afternoon was brighter, but it's too bad they didn't have the spectacular weather we had for the rest of the week.

Skip had the trailer on site at 8 and all modules (and then some) were unloaded and staged by 9.

First off, our intended track plan of 14 x 26 got expanded big-time. We ended up in a full stall, so we went to a 14 x 38 layout with the full yard. Yeoman's work was performed by the gang of five (Steve, Bob W., Al Potter, Paul Diley and yours truly), and Martin was able to help for a good part of the day. It took 7-1/2 hours, but we had a good-running layout. We identified a couple of snafus, but they were corrected by 10:30 Saturday.

As far as running, I don't remember which of the runners said it, but I'll restate it: Who



B&O Lafayette, c. 1840

says N-scale Steam doesn't work on N-TRAK layouts? Sure does!

With less than wonderful weather outside, the large layout brought a number of interested persons by and maybe a couple new potential members. Those running did really well keeping the trains running and doubled up as good ambassadors for model railroading and BANTRAK. That's not easy when you're trying to simultaneously answer two questions and see if your choo-choo has gotten itself into some trouble in the 56 milliseconds your attention was diverted. Steve and Paul ran the show well Sunday morning. Aside from the above-mentioned members, Frank joined us for running on Saturday, Dave and Eric helped run on Sunday, and Bob Mohr came Sunday afternoon to help pack up.

We had a lot of fine steam representing UP, GN, N&W, PRR, WM, NYC, C&O, SP, DGRW and NKP. Apologies if I missed someone.

A fine time was had by all. I hope we can reprise the show in Orchard Beach!



A B&O 0-4-0 heads up the passenger train.

The Engineer's Cab (continued)

on each are in this issue. We had a very successful track plan for the GSMTS and it went up well.

At the show, I had a chance to pick up another new N-scale large building by CMR. I hope to have it done in time for the FOT and present a review. Good to see N-scale going vertical.

Which brings me to the subject of articles; we need more articles with more variety. So if you have any reviews, ideas to share, send it in. Take a few digital photos of work in progress. This is as much a memo to the author as to the club ;-)

Last, thanks to Steve Van Metre for researching a new buy for club wear. There are some new members, some of us need to replace threadbare oldies but goodies, and some of us want to not look like "blue crayons in long-sleeved shirts" at the FOT (Eric's analogy). If you haven't already, get your orders in ASAP.

I'll be tidying up the Ellicott City B&O layout during the weeks of Nov 7 and 14, so if any of you, please join the fun. It's a great layout (I'm completely unbiased!). The museum is picking up new locomotives.

Please watch e-mail and the web site for more news as we close in on the holiday shows.

Alan

B&O Festival of Trains ~•~ BANTRAK Schedule

Setup

Wednesday, December 16 8am-6pm

Thursday, December 17 10am-4pm

Friday, December 18 10am-4pm

Run

December 19 to January 3

Monday-Saturday 10am-4pm

Sunday 11am-4pm

Teardown

Sunday, January 3 4pm-8pm

BANTRAK was founded in 1983 as the Greater Baltimore N-Scale Associates. Begun as a "round robin" group to share skills and experiences, we have expanded our focus to include participation in many diverse activities to promote model railroading in general and N-Scale model railroading in particular. Activities include participation in local, regional and national shows, meets and conventions. BANTRAK membership includes membership in the national NTRAK organization.

President

Alan DelGaudio (410) 480-9155

Treasurer

Tim Nixon (410) 757-5045

Membership

Al Palewicz (410) 426-0339



BANTRAK Calendar

11/21-22 — Work sessions at Skip Hayes'

11/22 — Meeting at Skip Hayes' (during work session)

11/27-29 — Orchard Beach Volunteer Fire Dept (setup 11/27)

12/19-1/3 — Festival of Trains, B&O Museum (setup 12/16-18)

The BANTRAK Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-TRAK organization.

This is your newsletter! Please send articles, photos, and suggestions to matthew@houseofflameandglass.com.

Editor: Matthew Davis

