



BANTRAK Newsletter

Volume 24

Issue 4

April 2011

The Engineer's Cab

Martin Myers



The April Scale show is upon us. Alan and Bob have planned some extra fun into this show. We will be joining with Northern Virginia NTRAK's layout to have a combined Red line about double our normal run. Power and control of the red line will be DCC only for this show. Each club retains exclusive control of its yellow and blue lines. Our exclusive loops will have the option of DC or DCC as always. Set up begins on Friday at noon. Please try to attend. There's always something to do at set up and tear down. Besides the normal crowd on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, there is usually an opportunity to get some extra run time in on Sunday morning. Let Alan and Bob know if you are available.

The April show normally marks the end of model train season each year. This holds true again this year. The proposed show in Oakland has been pushed back to September 24 and 25. John Darlington and Al Potter traveled to Oakland a few weeks ago to meet with the principals for this new venue. There is a lot of enthusiasm behind this show.

Milder weather diverts us to outside activities and into summer vacation. (It did stop snowing) This year we have the National N Scale Convention in nearby Hershey, PA. This is a chance to combine some model trains, full size trains, and vacation fun into one package. The club will be setting up and manning a layout for the convention. There is room for additional modules. With Capital PenNscalers, we will be sharing door and crowd control duties for the public show. Tim needs volunteers to help with this. Let me know if you have a module to include in this layout. Show it off to N Scalers from around the world. Alan has just a couple of slots open for clinics. John is chairing the model contest, which offers another chance to show off your modeling skills to the world. More information on Page 5

See you next weekend,

Martin

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Next meeting...

Sunday, April 17th, 2011
2pm - 5pm
Host: Al Del Gaudio

On the web...

News, information, & forums are all at
<http://bantrak.net/>

Great Scale Model Train Show Preview (April 2011)

Al Del Gaudio (Coordinator)



We have a preliminary layout. As always, we try to fine-tune the layout for scenic flow, mechanical support and compatibility. We have no alternative blue lines this show.

The show set up is Friday, April 8 noon-ish and runs Saturday 9-5, Sunday 10-4. Tear down is about 4 PM.

We'll try to have trains running 20 minutes before the show opens. This year we have made plans to run a combined Red Line with Northern Virginia N-Trak.

We're using one of our junctions on our side of the spine. Bob Mohr and I checked out what we call the East Junction. The wiring just needs us to pay attention when connecting power poles.

The plan for the layout is an "L" at 41 x 42 feet. The length is 42 feet. The 2 footer extension off the Junction makes it 44 and one of Martin's 2-footers [with legs] makes it 46. The other side of the layout has 4 foot clearance to the rope barrier [50 feet].

The side with Bob's city has 4 feet clearance on one side and 5 feet on the other to the 50 foot boundary lines.

There is enough space for vending tables in the L cutout.

Here are the modules:

Club: 24 foot yard, 2 x 3 foot throats, 4 x 3 outside corners, 1 inside [reversible] corner, 1x 2, duck and lift bridges

Bob M: City 15 feet, + 2 x 1

Alan D: 2 x 4 and Junction module+Extensions

Martin: 2 x 4 and 2 x 2

D & D Clyde: 3x 4 [Markenburg, Trolley, Equestrian Ctr [maybe an alternative] 1 x 2 [River] and inside corner topper [or I can do it]

Steve Van Metre: 2 x 4 circus, 2 x 4 mountain

Paul Diley: 3 x 4 N&W yard

Skip Hayes: 1 x 4

Tim Nixon: 1x 4

Al Potter: 1 x 4

Bob Winterbottom: 1 x 4



There may be some fine-tuning. If so, an updated plan will be sent out.

Now one more thing. If you plan to sell stuff, we need to know how much table space. We have 8 foot long, 30 inch deep tables. Please let us know, for example, I need 2 linear feet of table.

A task list and other information will be sent closer to show dates. Please, if you plan on enjoying a chance to run, please plan to contribute to the set-up, tear down and/or maintenance of the layout!

Alan

Alternative Throttles for DCC WiThrottle for Droids, iPhones & other Apple mobile devices

Ed Kapuscinski



I recently, finally, dove into DCC at home by buying a Digitrax Zephyr Xtra and a Digitrax PR3. I've had a number of decoded locomotives for the significant amount of time I spend "visiting" or on NTRAK layouts, so I was familiar with the basic concepts, but had never got it running at home. Here's what I did, because I didn't find any nice, concise, step by step, walkthroughs, and I figured people my appreciate one.

Here's what I started with to make it all happen

- Mac Laptop (mine's a Macbook Pro Running OS 10.6.4) or desktop.
- [Digitrax Zephyr Xtra \(Aka: DCS51\)](#). This is the command station that provides the "Loconet".
- [Digitrax PR3](#) and included USB cable. This is what interfaces between your computer and "Loconet".
- [Loconet Cable](#). This is, essentially, a network cable for Loconet devices. Don't be fooled, it's just a six wire (**not four wire, this is important**) phone cable. I got mine at a local electronics shop, but they can be had in many places, including [Amazon.com](#).
- [JMRI](#). This is the application that talks to Loconet on your computer. It's written in Java, which means that while ugly, it will work on many different platforms, including Windows Machines and Macs. It's Free and Open Source, but you'll definitely want to [kick them a few bucks](#) to support the project (and its past legal issues with a jackass patent troll). Don't be a stereotypical cheap model railroader here, these guys deserve a little money for all the work they've put. You'll want to download the latest Production version.

Step 1: Open everything up and plug it in.

This is an easy one, open everything up, the Zephyr, the PR3, and the Mac.

- First setup your Zephyr. I'd suggest everything's working fine there before moving on to the next step. Use it as it's suggested, run some stuff, etc...
- Then, using the Loconet cable, connect the PR3 (either Loconet port is fine) and the Zephyr (again, either port is fine). You should now see the status lights on the PR3 blink intermittently. Please note, you do NOT need to use a power source for the PR3, for our uses it's self powered.
- Now, using the USB cable, plug the PR3 into the Mac



Step 2: Set up JMRI

There are a number of ways to do this once you've got JMRI setup, but the I usually do it by opening DecoderPro. DecoderPro is the application that lets you program decoders. Once the small screen is open (that says "DecoderPro" and has the two programming mode buttons), click the "Edit" menu, then select "Preferences".

Now, configure JMRI to talk to Loconet. Create a new connection if one doesn't exist. Use the following settings:

- System manufacturer: Digitrax
- System connection: LocoNet PR3
 - Settings:
- Serial port: "/dev/cu.usbmodem1d11" or something similar. You want the one with the "cu" in it.
- Command station type: "DCS51 (Zephyr Xtra)" This is important, choosing the wrong one will make things *look* right, but won't be.
- Connection Name: "LocoNet"

Hit save, and it will ask you if you want to shut down JMRI to restart it. You do. Once it's closed, relaunch JMRI, and you *should* be connected and ready to go. If you're not, check [this thread on the JMRI user group](#), because there is, for a short while, [a patch that needs to be applied when using the DCS51](#).

Step 3: Test JMRI

Now that everything is setup, give it a test. From the same "DecoderPro" window as above, select "LocoNet", then "Monitor LocoNet". This is an extremely helpful window that lets you watch the traffic on Loconet (it is a network, after all), and is a great troubleshooting thing to see what's going on. When you click "start logging", you will then be able to see all the commands being sent back and forth. It's actually pretty fascinating to watch, but you're here to run trains, so let's go do that.

From the DecoderPro main window, select "Tools", "Throttles" then "New Throttle". This will open up a throttle window. Select a locomotive, or enter the address of one and hit "Set". You should now be able to control your locomotive from the on screen controls.

Alternative Throttles for DCC (*continued*)

Ed Kapuscinski



Step 4: WiThrottle for Droids, iPhones and other Apple mobile devices.

- Ok, so being able to run a train from your computer is nice, but you can't carry a laptop around the layout room. You CAN use a mobile device to do it though. Once you have JMRI working, it's incredibly easy.
- Get the "Engine Driver" app from your App Store. The Droid version was free, but I've heard there's a paid version. Either way, it's going to save you a bunch of money.
- From the main JMRI window, select "Tools", "Throttles", "Start WiThrottle". Now, fire up your app. As long as you're on the same wireless network as your computer, you should see it advertised. Select it. Now select a locomotive, or enter a decoder address, and you're ready to go.

Additional Reading

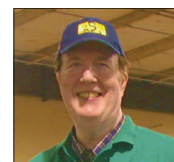
- The [JMRI Yahoo! Group](#) is incredibly active and helpful. If you have questions, ask there!

Ed

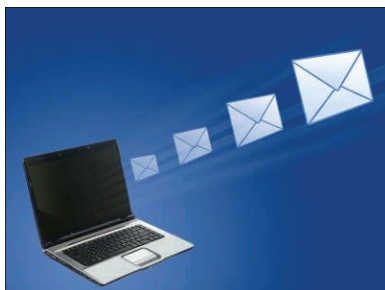


New & Notable: *Membership*

Al Palewicz, Membership



A quick question for the Membership. Currently, N-TRAK is providing their newsletters in electronic (\$5 per year) or hard copy (\$14 per year) versions. The Club should standardize on one version or the other. If your preference is **NOT** electronic, please contact Al Palewicz (info on Roster) or Tim Nixon (treasurer@bantrak.net).



New & Notable: National N Scale Convention 2011

For more information contact trainbyskip@yahoo.com



Hershey, Pennsylvania, June 22-26 2011

Presented by **Baltimore Area N-Trak "BANTRAK"**, **Capital PenNScalers** and the **N Scale Enthusiast (NSE)**

With a central location in Pennsylvania, the convention hotel is close to one of the greatest selections of railroads and railroad history in all of America.

BANTRAK Members are eligible for a small discount (a Club benefit for assisting with the convention). [Register for the Convention](#) and make plans to attend this summer !!!

New & Notable: 2011 N Scale Weekend (7th Annual)

For more information contact nscaleweekend@yahoo.com

N-Scale Model Trains & Supplies

**TEXNRAILS, HB PETERSON, WINGARD'S TRAINS, MIKE BENCS, THE N-CELLAR,
BOSTON & ALBANY HOBBIES, N&O TRAINS, DETRICH ENTERPRISE,
KENRAY MODELS, ABH MODEL TRAINS FRED-EOT, DELUXE INNOVATIONS**

15+ Large Operating N-Scale Train Layouts

**BALTIMORE AREA N-TRAK, NORTHERN VIRGINIA NTRAK, TWIN TIERS N-TRAK,
JERSEY CENTRAL N-TRACK
CAPITOL PENNSCALERS N-TRAK, CENTRAL OHIO N-TRAK. STEEL CITY N-SCALE,
ROCK SPRING STATION,
THREE RIVERS ASSOCIATES N-TRAK, KEYSTONE N-TRAK, NEW JERSEY SOUTHERN N-TRAK,
CANTINGTON N-TRAK
GENESEE & ONTARIO MODEL N-GINEERS, PITTSBURGH LITE TRAK,
& BEDFORD MODEL RAILROADERS**





Email the [webmaster](#) today !!!

during the past 4-6 weeks, new updates have been made to the website. I'd like to pass along a brief note of each.

1. 03/01/2011 - The March Newsletter is now available.

DCC Corner: (Exploring Digital Command Control)



Email the [editor](#) and suggest a DCC topic !!!

[Speed Matching Digitrax and MRC Sound Decoders](#)

Getting a group of locomotives to operate at the same speed can be a challenge. Experience has proven that it is best to work with the slowest locomotive and bring the other locomotives into agreement with that engine. Since the others appear to be in general agreement, it would be the speedy sound equipped locomotive that needs attention. In particular, the starting voltage setting (CV02) and then the midrange setting (CV06) would need adjustment. You may also need to adjust the locomotive's acceleration rate (CV03).

Because the MRC sound equipped locomotives have certain issues, you will probably need to program the locomotive in OPS Mode.



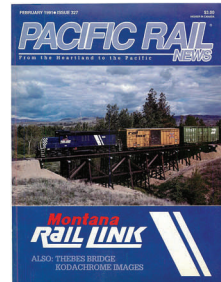
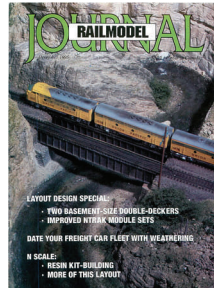
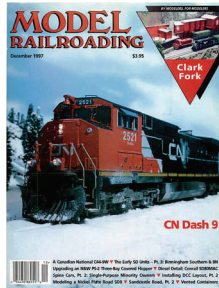
Website of the Month: **TrainLife**

Email the editor and recommend a site !!!

[TrainLife, LLC](#) of Orem, Utah, has acquired the rights to put back issues of Model Railroading, RailModel Journal and Pacific Rail News online.

They have been adding a year of each magazine each week, so it will take a while for them to get all of them online. So far, almost all of the 1988-1992, 1995-1997, 2001 and 2003-2006 issues of Model Railroading are online, as are the 1989-1993 and 1995-2008 issues of RailModel Journal.

TrainLife offers this valuable service for FREE!



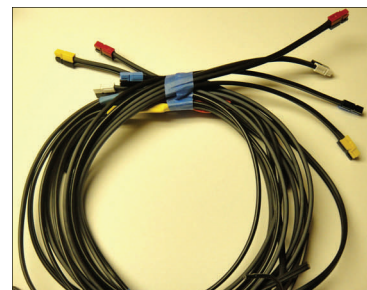
BANTRAK: Company Store

For more information contact treasurer@bantrak.net

Baltimore Area N-Trak presents a special run of a 40' standard box car with a single Youngstown door. Road #466008 has the B&O logo, and road #52008 has the BANTRAK logo. We are pleased to commemorate our 25 years in modular N-scale railroading by offering this commemorative two-pack.



Building a module or rescuing an old one? Get your wire harness. It doesn't get easier than this. Color coded / pre-installed power poles included.





"The 1st Club Meeting"

Jack Walsh

The 1st meeting was held in the meeting room @ the B&O Museum. Print this page out and be sure to ask Bob or Jack or Jerry or Phil who are in the pictures.





BANTRAK Call Board

(Activities & Events of BANTRAK Club Members)

Email the editor with your info !!!

Work Session
April 16th, (2pm)
Info Contact
Eric Payne

NMRA Chesapeake Div. Mtg.

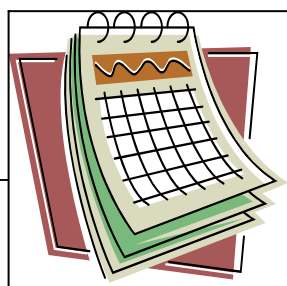
May 22nd, 2pm

Info Contact

Arthur Boyd

CRHS Rail-B-Q
May 7th, All Day
Info Contact
Ed Kapuscinski

Viva Vienna
May 28th, 1-5PM
Info Contact
Eric Payne



BANTRAK Calendar



4/9~4/10/2011.....Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium, MD.

6/21~6/26/2011.....N-Scale Convention, Harrisburg/Hershey, PA.

8/26~8/28/2011.....Bedford N-Scale Weekend, Everett, PA.

9/24~9/25/2011.....Train Festival, Oakland, MD.

10/28~10/30/2011.....Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium, MD.

.....(TBD)Turf Valley Model Train Show, Ellicott City, MD.

.....(TBD)B&O Museum Festival of Trains, Baltimore, MD.

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.



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 newsletter@bantrak.net.

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