

# BANTRAKNews

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## The Engineer's Cab: LeRoy Brandimore

I thought that I would just remind everyone of the current schedule for the coming year. In May there is the Great Scale Model Train Show May 8th & 9th. Then in August there is the N-Scale Weekend August 6th & 7th in State College, PA. In October there is the NMRA Mid-Eastern Region (MER) Convention running the 21st thru the 24th. We could be participate in this. Also, there should be another GSMTS in October. I haven't seen any dates for this yet. Then to end the year there is the B&O Museum's Festival of Trains in December. We are to open other events if the opportunities present themselves and we think we can make it.

Some have been working on projects these past months and they have looked good. I'm looking forward to seeing more of everybody's work.

Happy Modeling,

LeRoy Brandimore





# Baltimore Area

## Dues Invoice

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Invoice Date:  
February 1, 2021  
Due Date:  
April 6, 2021

Remit to:  
Mr. Tim Nixon  
719 Mount Alban Drive  
Annapolis, MD, 21409  
Or pay at possible prior meetings

Annual Club Dues  
(Including National N-Trak Membership)

→ **\$45.00**

Member Name:  
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E-mail & Phone:

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N-Trak Member Number:

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Tim Nixon



## Quarantine Time = Modeling Time! : Ethan Bernstein

### Capital Sub Layout Update #1: Benchwork, Track & Wiring

Work on the CSX Capital Subdivision has begun! This month, as the title suggests, I will cover the layout benchwork, track, and wiring, as well as provide a brief overview of operations on my layout. For those of you who may have missed my last column, I am starting a new N-scale layout based on the CSX Capital Subdivision (Baltimore-Washington D.C.). I have made several major changes to the track plan and layout configuration since December, so try to follow along as I explain my layout decision-making and construction process.



Once the designated layout square footage has been determined, the first major consideration for me when designing a layout is deciding what I want to get out of my model railroad, asking questions such as: What scenery do I want to model? What new modeling techniques do I want to try? Do I want to simulate realistic operations, and if so, of what railroad and time frame? The answers to these questions should be images from memory, not words, as what we picture in our minds as “realistic” or “prototypical” is what we will most enjoy modeling. For me, memories of long, modern CSX consists roaring through lots of greenery and suburban areas were the images that immediately crossed my mind, and, therefore, what I have decided to model. I then turned to the internet to research the rail line which I so fondly remember in my mind, now associating those images in my head with names and locations, hence my choice of the CSX Capital Subdivision,

the local rail line my father and I frequent. I decided that the primary purpose of this layout is to provide a realistic railfanning experience, a recreation of my favorite pastime, while also providing enough size to simulate some aspects of modern freight operations.

In my original layout plans, I had decided to focus on the span of the Capital Sub from St. Denis, MD to Jessup, MD. A pleasantly unexpected expansion to the layout benchwork has instead shifted my focus further north on the line to the Baltimore Terminal Sub and the Old B&O mainline (which connects the Capital Sub to the East-West line at Point of Rocks, MD) in addition to the Capital Sub itself. The line now roughly spans from West Baltimore to Sykesville, with St. Denis in between.

**Benchwork:** The layout construction is about as simple as can be, but also exceptionally versatile. The layout is a walkaround configuration (access to all sides except along the narrowest section) comprised of four “modules” arranged in a rough “U” shape: a 4’x8’ staging yard (yet to be named), a 2’x4’ corner section, a 2’x8’ straight section (industrial area), and a 4’x4’ loop/turnaround section (Old B&O Main). Each “module” consists of two layers of pink, 1.5” thick extruded foam insulation board, for a total thickness of 3”. I decided to use two layers of 1.5” board opposed to a single layer of 3” board as it is much easier to carve scenery (such as highway underpasses and rivers) by just cutting out the top layer of foam board, as compared to having to carve into a single, very thick board, ensuring there is no accidental “splicing” of a module. The foam board came in 4’x8’ sheets, which I cut (except for the two sheets comprising the yard) using a pocket knife. I would advise against gluing the two layers of board together until the desired scenery contours have been cut, as otherwise the purpose of using two individual layers of foam board as compared to one is defeated. Each module rests on tables with adjustable-height feet, making layout leveling very easy. I spaced the tables to match the modules ahead of time based on my sketches, requiring only minor adjustments once the foam board was cut. The foam board modules are not glued to the tables, but merely rest on top. To prevent the modules from moving due to an accidental bump, angle braces or clamps can be mounted to the bottom of the foam board. In addition to exceptional versatility, the other

## Quarantine Time = Modeling Time! : Ethan Bernstein

advantage to using foam board as the layout base is that it is very lightweight, making future transportation of the layout easier.



**Track:** With the benchwork in place, I began the tedious process of tracklaying and the associated wiring. The entire layout uses Kato Unitrack, which looks great, is easy to use, requires very simple, solderless wiring, and is very versatile and reliable. Since I already had a very large stockpile of Unitrack and ordered lots more ahead of time, track laying was fast and easy. The only complications I faced were in the yard design. Originally, I had intended the yard to be all through-tracks, which once I began laying track, would only be viable if the yard was curved. After careful consideration and trial and error, I decided my space would be best used in creating several stub-ended yards. There are three yards on the layout: a three track autorack facility (with a capacity of five autoracks per track), a three track intermodal yard (with a capacity of 13 well cars per track), and an 11 track general classification yard, including maintenance and servicing tracks (with a capacity between 10-16 modern box cars per track).



The mainline is essentially one giant continuous loop that is squished together to simulate double track. One turnaround that creates the continuous loop runs through the yard, and the second loop forms the Old B&O main, with a siding that runs the entire length of the loop. The siding has a capacity of about 35 cars plus locomotives to accommodate full length trains, which I will elaborate upon later. In addition to the auto and intermodal facilities, the other main customer on the line is the Guinness Brewery, which is located along the prototype Capital Sub just down the line from the St. Denis Marc Station. On my layout, the Guinness Brewery has three spur tracks: two for tank cars (about 3 tanks per track) and one for box cars (about 3 box cars in length) for finished products. The prototype brewery is actually quite a large facility, covering nearly 62 acres, receiving dozens of tanker cars by rail, presumably containing ingredients for the brewing process, and exporting finished goods by truck. The facility will be selectively compressed and modified on my layout, but I hope to capture its overall "flavor" (pun intended). I wanted the track density, with the exception of the yard, to be relatively low, as the focus on this layout is creating highly detailed scenes with lots of depth for trains to run through, or, in other words, as Alan DelGaudio wonderfully phrased, "The model train layout is a stage for running trains," a view with which I wholeheartedly agree and wish to emulate.



## Quarantine Time = Modeling Time! : Ethan Bernstein



**Wiring:** The layout is all DCC, running off of an NCE Power Cab. Wiring is about as simple and straightforward as possible: Kato track feeders are connected to terminal strips which are connected to the main bus, of which there are actually two (due to the long dimensions of the layout and central location of the command station). I will most likely upgrade my NCE system to a wireless Digitrax system (once funds permit...) both for an increased power output for running several large consists at once and for the ability to walk around the layout, as well as for easier (and cheaper) future expansion.

**Operations:** As I mentioned previously, the purpose of this layout is to railfan large, modern consists through suburban and rural East Coast scenery. My freight train lengths range from about 20 to 35 cars, depending on the type of consist, and are typically hauled by two engines, with intermodal trains using a unique DPU arrangement with one engine leading and another just short of halfway in the consist as seen on the prototype Capital Sub. My consists are for the most part set in the timeframe of 1990-present (with the exception of the occasional fun-run 1950s-era B&O freight or Southern Pacific Daylight). The majority of my modern motive power is CSX, however I also run some leased power (primarily Canadian Pacific), and Norfolk Southern has trackage rights over the line on some high-priority trains (NS actually has a yard, Bayview Yard, in Baltimore directly next to CSX's Bayview

Yard, so NS power on the Baltimore Terminal Sub is not unheard of). I hope to also acquire some late-era Conrail consists to haul intermodal trains.

I utilize a 30% rule for selective compression, meaning that, for major distances, the spacing on my layout is 30% that of the prototype. For example, if the distance between two towns in actuality is 10 miles, on my layout it is a scale three miles. This rule applies to milepost spacing, town and industry size and spacing, and train lengths (whereas a prototype consist may be 100 cars, I run 30). I implement this rule to help with consistency across the layout and to create the sense of much greater distance and an overall larger rail network. This rule also allows for more operational opportunities involving mileposts and signaling blocks. The rule, however, does not apply to things such as lane width on highways, or spacing between scenic details such as telephone lines or street lights, as those spacings are scaled according to prototypical dimensions to enhance realism in each individual scene.

I am very pleased to report that trains are running very smoothly, and scenery work has already commenced, so stay tuned for next month where I will begin a several part series of how I am creating a scene!

Happy modeling,

Ethan Bernstein

### Trackside Photo:

A northbound CSX manifest, led by a pair of GEs, waits at St. Denis on the Capital Subdivision for a signal to proceed onto the Baltimore Terminal Subdivision.



## American Freedom Train : Freddy Mitchell

### ***Amtrak Special Part 1: The Locomotive***



***GS-4 4449 in American Freedom Train colors is the star of the Amtrak Special (Diesel not shown)***

For those members and visitors who attended the B&O's Festival of Trains event in December and January, you might have noticed an interesting train running around the layout. A steam engine pulling an Amtrak train? Is that even prototypical? The answer is: Yes! It was called the American Freedom Train Amtrak Special. The train took approximately five years to put together and it all began with a Kato GS-4 in a very unpopular color scheme.



Image from Katousa.com

As a young boy growing up in Northern Virginia, I had no interest in modeling the Southern Pacific. But every Sunday my father, brother, and I would drive to Potomac, Maryland, to run trains, work on trolley modules, or build Pine wood derby cars at the home of a friend of my father's. His friend was retired Navy Captain Pliny Holt, who was a master model railroader (Number 178 of 671). He built an N-Scale Southern Pacific Empire in his basement that included an exact replica of the long-demolished Southern Pacific Mole pier at Oakland, CA. He was also a master model ship builder and while Captain Holt would work on building his wooden ship models, I would clean the track, run the railroad, and make sure everything was operating properly; he called me his "Chief Engineer." That was quite the honor to bestow on a 9-year-old but that's another story for a later article...

After spending many years running Captain Holt's cab-forwards, MTs, and Daylights my interest in the Western railroad began to grow; soon I was hooked. Fast forward to 2015, I decided to find myself an N-Scale Daylight. The Kato sets were released in 2008 and 2011, so the opportunity of finding a new one was slim to none. But I found that Canadian Dealer PWRS had one set left and I grabbed it. The only drawback to the set was the GS-4 that came with it was in the American Freedom Train (AFT) color scheme. I picked up a locomotive in the Daylight scheme soon after and I never ran the AFT GS-4.

From what I have gathered from various sources, Lowell Smith of Rail Smith Models approached Kato, after its initial release of the GS-4, to paint some up in the AFT scheme to compliment his upcoming signature series release of the cars. His release of cars was based on the 1975/76 prototype train. The cars he created have outstanding detail. While I never had much interest in the AFT train, after looking around on the internet I stumbled across a photo that showed GS-4 4449 in AFT colors pulling a long train of Amtrak coaches. In the photo, GS-4449 was assisted by a SDP40F. The train was thereafter known as The American Freedom Train Amtrak Special (or excursion) train. The Amtrak History website reports that in 1977, the special train traveled 3,655 miles, stopped in 61 cities, and carried approximately 9,700



## American Freedom Train : Freddy Mitchell

passengers who often boarded for short segments.

After completing more research, I decided I would take my first GS-4 out of my display case and attempt recreating the historic train in N-Scale to run at shows. Upgrades to the locomotive included adding a drop in decoder and will soon include applying Amtrak decals to the tender per the prototype.

Sadly, the AFT color scheme Kato GS-4s are now a rare item. When they were initially released, many N scalers would purchase the locomotive only to repaint it black or in the Daylight scheme. Because of modelers repainting the locomotives, the AFT version of the GS-4449 is extremely scarce. But for now, at least one is still intact in my collection and will continue to make appearances at train shows where BANTRAK participates.



Southern Pacific #4449 is pulled down San Francisco's 3rd and King Streets by an Espee switcher on November 19, 1975. Drew Jacksich photo.



Image from Wikipedia: Drew Jacksich



Southern Pacific #4449 leads part of the American Freedom Train over Donner Pass at Yuba Gap, California heading eastbound on June 23, 1975. Drew Jacksich photo.

# BANTRAK 2021 Calendar

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## February 21, 2021

Club Meeting  
Location: Zoom

## March 6, 2021

Newsletter content deadline

***We need content please submit your articles by the deadline.***

## March 21, 2021

Club Meeting  
Location: Zoom

## April 19, 2021

Club Meeting  
Location: Zoom

## October 21, 2021 - October 24, 2021

2021 NMRA MidEast Region Convention  
Location: Mount Clare Junction  
See Alan Del Gaudio for details

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## BANTRAK Membership: Al Palewicz

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BANTRAK does a significant amount of charitable activity, although we rarely think of it that way because we get pleasure out of it. When you think about it, that is as it should be with all giving from the heart.

What is our charitable activity? Our major participation is in the B&O Museum's (which is a charitable organization) Annual Festival of Trains. Our display has been a major draw for people to come to the Museum for many years, both recent and in the past. There are plenty more examples, this is just one.

Please contact Treasurer [Tim Nixon](#) for more information regarding your membership status and roster questions or contact [Al Palewicz](#) with general questions.

### Member Benefits:

- Sharing of your knowledge (railroading and modeling) with others of similar interests
- Access to railroading and modeling knowledge of other members
- National exposure and recognition of your endeavors in modeling
- Hands on activities: Club modules - track, wiring and scenery. Raffle layout - track and scenery Members' layouts
- Recognition as being part of a Nationally known club.



## Train Spotting: Ed Kapuscinski



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 Baltimore Area N-TRAK (BANTRAK), Inc. This is **your** newsletter! Please send articles, photos, and suggestions to [newsletter@bantrak.net](mailto:newsletter@bantrak.net)  
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