BANTRAK News
A Monthly Newsletter for BANTRAK Members • Volume 34 • Issue 4 • April 2021

The Engineer's Cab: LeRoy Brandimore

Hello all.

Here we are in April, still waiting for the COVID restrictions to be lifted, and in the process of getting our COVID-19 vaccines. Some restrictions have been lifted. Thus, there is a "COVID Safe" Train Show this month, just vendors, no layouts. There is a Great Scale Model Train Show scheduled for May 8 and 9, but the Cow Palace at the Fairgrounds is currently being used as a mass vaccination site. I have my doubts about this show taking place.

For the club we are looking forward to developing a new yard. Some of the ideas were in last month's Newsletter. Also, after some T-Trak members left the club, David Clyde expressed concern about the future of T-Trak, and now there has been some movement. Several people expressed interest in doing T-Trak and Alan Del Gaudio arranged for a club group-buy of T-Trak module kits from CMR Products. He is going to pick up the buy at the Train Show this month. This should be a good start. It looks as if T-Trak will be part of our set-up, again, at the GSMT shows, located next to the N-Trak layout where members of the club won't have to go looking for it. Also, it would be nice to have some venues in between shows where T-Trak would be a good fit, so keep a lookout.

Maybe soon we will be able to hold meetings in person, not on Zoom. We will just need locations. It isn't easy now because of some of the COVID restrictions, like social distancing.

So, stay safe and see You All soon.

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LeRoy Brandimore

Baltimore Area

Dues Invoice

Payable to: Baltimore Area N-Trak

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:
Please Print _____

E-mail & Phone: _____

N-Trak Member Number: [ ]

Please print a copy of this invoice and submit with payment.

For Treasurer's Use

Date Submitted: _____ Check #: _____

Member's Receipt

Name: _____ Date: _____ Amount: _____

_____
Tim Nixon

Quarantine Time = Modeling Time! : Ethan Bernstein

Let's Make a Scene Part 2: Scratch Building Scenic Details

In Part 1, I went over how to make a scenic base from foam board, make a road underpass, use grass mats to create topography, ballast Unitrack, and make foam bridge abutments. This month, I will describe how I transformed the grass mats and ballasted track into a nearly completed, super-detailed 2'x4' scene. The topics in this installment include how to scratch build deciduous trees and make street side details.

With the basic grass mat scenery complete, it is now time to add more color and texture variation to the otherwise uniform mats. I used Walthers tear and plant grass mat material around the sides of the road and in the medians to simulate overgrown grass and provide more scenic variance to the plain turf. I also used the tear and plant material along with ground foam to hide the seams between the base layers of grass mats. I then sprinkled some ground foam, both fine green and dark green foliage material, around the edges of the ballast to help blend the edge of the ballast into the surrounding grass and represent weeds and bushes. I then placed some Walthers weed clumps in the ballast and ground foam.

At a local craft store, I found thin, yellow fibers about two inches in length, advertised as golden grass. This material is very suitable to represent weeds and overgrown grass. The fibers are packaged such that they are all vertically aligned in a tight wad. I pulled off a few fibers into a smaller wad, cutting them into much shorter lengths. As the fibers are cut, they remain grouped together vertically, forming small clumps that can be picked up and glued down without the need for a static grass applicator. I used these clumps to simulate weeds and overgrown grass, placing them prominently along the edges of the mainline where the grass and ballast meet, as well as between areas where the colors and heights of grass mats change to help blend colors and textures.

Another interesting material I found at the craft store, this time in the floral section, is colored moss. The moss comes in various colors, primarily different shades of green, which make it perfect for making bushes and trees. I took some clumps of the moss material and glued them on top of the grass mat, placing the greatest concentration around the sides of the main line and in the medians along the roads.

To make deciduous trees, I gathered some twigs from outside (afterall, what could be more accurate than the prototype itself, with no extra detailing necessary!), looking for branches with lots of small protrusions and prominent grain detail suitable to

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represent N-scale trees. I took my box full of twigs to the work bench, breaking the twigs into appropriate sizes for N-scale. I tore off moss material and secured it to the branches of the twigs with white glue. Once the moss was secured to the "armatures," I dipped the moss in a bowl of diluted white glue, and sprinkled various colors and textures of ground foam on top of the moss. Since I am modeling early fall, I used some more brightly colored moss to represent leaves changing. The final trees look incredibly realistic, as the moss and ground foam combination accurately simulate the density of branches and leaves found on deciduous trees, and the twigs display lots of texture that really makes the trees appear "alive." To simulate dead trees, I simply used twigs without any moss or ground foam. To make the scene even more realistic, I leaned some "dead" trees against another tree, a very common sight in Maryland. These trees are super cheap and fast to make, and are most easily completed in large batches, which are essential qualities for my layout and the area I am modeling. In addition to my scratch-built trees, I also added some Woodland Scenics pre-made trees, primarily evergreens, that I had saved from a previous layout, along with Woodland Scenics Forest Canopy Kit trees. The moss material also comes in a more stringy, brown-colored variety that I used to represent vines, weaving them into trees and on top of bushes. Once I was satisfied with the density, variation, and placement of trees, I finished the natural scenery by adding more bushes, vines, and weed clumps underneath the tree canopy, along with planting smaller ready-made trees in the road medians.

Now time for the man-made scenery. I first made concrete barriers on the exit ramp using wide twisty-tie which I cut into equal lengths and folded about the wire. These twisty ties have a wide paper shrouding instead of narrow plastic and are white in color, making them perfect in height concrete barriers when folded about the wire and very easy to paint/weather. Once I glued the folded segments to the center of the ramp (following an old, poorly drawn double-yellow centerline from my previous layout), I painted the barriers with grey water color paint to give them a worn concrete appearance.

Next, I painted the street lines using Woodland Scenics road striping pens (which are just Sharpie paint markers). The line length and spacing is directly scaled from real regulations, as is lane width. To make the stop lines at the intersection, I first made a box outline using the white road striping pen, then painted the space in between with white acrylic paint. To simulate tar, I used a fine-point black Sharpie marker, drawing random squiggly lines and painting over areas where I had spilled glue or gotten a bit too aggressive while painting. There were a few gaps between the road and surrounding scenery, which I either filled with dark grey ballast that matches the road color to simulate pot holes, or ground foam to blend in with the grass mat. I also touched up the road in a few areas using grey acrylic paint where the white foam of the poster board was showing through. I then used a black oil pastel to give the center of each lane a darker, less worn appearance as seen on real roads. I followed the pan pastel with some

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light dots of black water color paint for oil/gasoline leakage, making the blotches most prominent at the intersection where vehicles sit. The final step to complete the road surface is manhole covers. I Googled photos of manhole covers and pasted the best image into Word, resizing it into N-scale and printing lots of copies which I then cut out and glued in various locations along the road. Note: I painted and detailed the roads before planting trees.

Next, I tackled how to scratch build N-scale guardrails. Guardrails, though simple in construction and purpose, have a somewhat complex contour that is difficult to recreate in N-scale. Yet again, the underappreciated twisty-tie came to the rescue! I have been stockpiling twisty-ties since my early modeling days, and knew at some point they would be a very valuable resource! The twisty-ties I used to simulate guardrails have a green plastic sheath that gives them a uniform wavy appearance like the prototype. I folded the ends of the twisty-ties to represent the folded metal ends of the prototype. I cut short lengths of Evergreen styrene I-beam to form the metal supports for the guardrails, and secured them with plastic cement at even intervals along the back of the twisty-tie guardrail. Once the glue was dry, I painted the whole assembly with a silver enamel paint, perfectly replicating the polished metal finish. A few of the supports fell off due to too little glue, but that made the guardrails more realistic. I made only two guardrails for this scene, which I secured along the right side of the exit ramp, which is banked and has a steep drop-off from the road (the other lane has a high curb and is below the height of the hillside next to it so no guardrail is needed). Since the guardrail is made from twisty tie, bending it to follow the shape and contours of the curve and surrounding scenery was simple.

With the road surface complete, guardrails installed, and all trees planted, I progressed to street signs. I again Googled images of the types of street signs I needed, resizing them to N-scale in Word based on actual dimensions. I printed a page-full of signs and cut out the ones I needed. I then glued each to black cardstock paper, cutting them out again with the cardstock backing (this step is not necessary if the signs are printed on thicker paper). I painted the black cardstock with a silver Sharpie to make the signs appear to be metal (if the signs are printed on thicker paper, simply paint the back of the signs with the Sharpie). I glued the signs to pieces of metal wire I stripped and cut from a twisty-tie. I used a bead reamer to drill a small whole through the scenery for each sign. The area I am proto-freelancing with this scene is St. Denis, MD, with the road running under the bridge representing Route 1, and the exit ramp is for Interstate 895, as shown by the signs in the scene, which are all legible, even the “LANE ENDS MERGE LEFT” sign.

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After making dozens of street signs, I decided to work on what I had initially thought to be an easier scenic detail before tackling the traffic lights for the intersection. Telephone poles are an essential detail to nearly every model railroad (except Civil War modelers of course). I made the poles from small wood dowels I bought at the craft store, already cut to size. I stained the poles with tan followed by black watercolor paints. I glued a sewing pin painted with green and brown Sharpies to the top of the pole to represent the support for the wire. I used a silver sharpie to simulate the metal number plates common to many telephone poles. On two of the poles, I simulated wire running down the pole in a plastic encasement by cutting some heat shrink tubing in half lengthwise and securing it to the side of each pole. One pole received a pair of transformers as well, which I made from some leftover sprue from a model I cut, sanded, and scribed to look like a transformer (the sprue was already painted silver, so no extra paint was required). I spaced the poles close to a prototypical scale 120 feet, aligning them through the trees. I tied a very thin black string to the first pole, tying it to the next pole and cutting it, then repeating the process for the next pole. The stringing of the wire was a bit more tedious than I had originally thought, and the poles themselves were more thoroughly detailed than initially planned, as I even added extra wires to the pole with the transformers, but the final result is incredibly realistic.

The most difficult roadway detail to scratch build is traffic lights, especially in N-scale. I started by building the poles that support the traffic lights, as these are the most straightforward components. I made the poles from two different diameters of wood dowel, using the thicker diameter for the vertical support pole and the thinner diameter for the horizontal pole that will support the street lights. I cut the vertical pole to the proper scale height, sanded the top of the vertical dowel and ends of the horizontal dowels to make them round, then secured the dowels together using wood glue, mounting the horizontal dowel at a slight incline as seen on real traffic lights. Once the first support beam was secured, I added a second beam 90 degrees from the first, again securing it at a slight angle. I repeated this process to make a second pole assembly. I secured a small block of square wood dowel to the bottom of the vertical poles, and inserted metal mounting pins in the bottom of the blocks. I painted both assemblies with silver enamel paint. To make the traffic lights themselves, I again went to Google, finding a picture of a three-color, yellow traffic light, pasting it into word and resizing it to the correct scale size. The picture I found was actually three images, and in each, the traffic light was displaying a different aspect. I duplicated the image, added some more signs to the document that I wanted to secure to the street poles, and printed and cut out the lights and signs. I cut out and glued all of the lights and signs to black cardstock paper. I cut out the signs and painted the black cardstock with a silver Sharpie (again, this step is not necessary if the signs are printed on thicker paper. The streetlights, however, do require

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this step, and should not be printed on thicker paper). I cut out the street lights from the black cardstock and glued them to another sheet of cardstock. While all of the lights were on a flat backing, I attached light shrouds I made by cutting very short sections of heat shrink tubing. I then cut the last layer of cardstock so that it overhangs the sides of the lights to represent the black borders often seen on traffic lights to make the lights more noticeable to drivers. I positioned the lights carefully on the pole, lining up their locations close to the center of each lane as seen by an N-scale driver, angling the lights slightly downward. The aspects of the printed lights are quite noticeable, so it is important to be consistent in light aspects on a multi-lane road. All of the lights at the intersection are displaying the proper aspects so that no N-scale drivers are at risk of crashing into one another. Once I was satisfied with the locations of the traffic lights, I positioned several other street signs on the poles next to the traffic lights to let drivers know what road they are crossing and what lane to be in. I again used a bead reamer to make a small whole through the grass mat and foam for the mounting pin for the traffic lights. With a signal system in place, vehicles could now be positioned, and with the rumbling of modern CSX power leading a lengthy manifest freight, the scene comes to life.

The scene is now ripe for photographing passing trains, but there are still several more rounds of detailing before this scene can truly be “complete.” I have nearly finished the most major of these details, a strip mall to fill the empty parking lot, which I will go over next month in Part 3 of Let’s Make A Scene. In addition to this structure, other details yet to be added include track-side equipment boxes and antenna, fences, and, of course, pedestrians, all of which will be added once most of the layout at least has a base layer of scenery.

Happy modeling,

Ethan Bernstein

Club cars for sale : David Betz

Some of our newer members may not have known Bob Mohr, a long time member and friend to many of us. Bob passed away several years ago. Lauren Baker and I have been helping Bob's wife Denise sell his estate over the last few years. By now many of us may even have some of Bob's cars in our collection.

Recently Denise asked me to offer some of his club cars to members before she post them to the public. Lauren and I have priced these to sell based on their availability. Please note ***all prices are firm*** and Denise said she will mail them to you via first class USPS or you can arrange to meet. Average cost for first class small package is $5-7 USPS

If you see something you like please contact me or Denise at denmohr1@gmail.com .

Baltimore Belt Line Cylindrical Hooper, custom run sold as a set $100 (VERY RARE)

10 year car, (3 available) $12 each
30 Year car $15

20 Year car 1993 and 2003. $10 each

(note this car was a missprint and Bob changed the 1993 to 1983)

Club cars for sale : David Betz

Twin bay Hoppers are shrink-wrapped together and will be sold as a set for $30

Green and white box car set (2 available) $30 per set

Last, but not least the most coveted Club car of them all the 1998 green caboose. These were hand decorated by members of the club and a very limited set was produced. There is only one available $25

BANTRAK 2021 Calendar

April 19, 2021
Club Meeting
Location: Zoom

May 6, 2021
Newsletter content deadline
We need content please submit your articles by the deadline.

October 21, 2021 - October 24, 2021
2021 NMRA MidEast Region Convention
Location: Mount Clare Junction
See Alan Del Gaudio for details

BANTRAK Membership: Al Palewicz

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: David Betz

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
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