

The Engineer's Cab: Bob Bunge

The Bunge house suffered a small fire in November that unfortunately left us displaced in a couple of townhomes while we await for the damage to be repaired. Luckily the train stuff wasn't impacted, but my access to my work bench is a couple of hours a week at best and the 3D printers are pretty much off line. My adaptation has been to work at the townhouse on my computer on a number of Computer Aid Design (CAD) projects that will await the day the printers can be fired up. I've been printing for a number of years now, but designing your own objects adds a dimension to this aspect of the hobby that is quite liberating. I've recently finished a three bay offset hopper car and have the design for a B&O two bay hopper in the wings. A current project is an interurban, Columbus Delaware & Marion Parlor car #501.

CD&M 501 is a large steel car that was built in 1926. It operated from Marion, Ohio, south through Delaware and into Columbus, street-running directly to Downtown. It was fancy and I suspect, a quite pricey ride targeted towards business men who worked in town and lived along the route. At the time, the parallel road, State Route 23, was a two lane dirt road. It turns out that CD&M was about a hundred years ahead of its time. While CD&M ceased operation in 1933, today, Rt. 23 is a four lane divided highway and development north of Columbus is slowly approaching Delaware. I was able to ride in 501 a few times in my youth and even ride it on home rails that are now part of the Ohio Railway Museum. My 501 will have a Tomytec chassis.

For certain none of these projects will be ready for the May Great Scale Show where Bantrak will set up Ntrak and Ttrak layouts, co-coordinated by Paul and LeRoy. Expect to see a call for modules in the coming weeks.

Bob





February Great Scale Show: Eric Payne

The Great Scale Model RR Show in February involved T-Trak and FreeMoN for BANTRAK. FreeMoN is gaining momentum regionally and we took the opportunity to invite a friend from Delaware (Eric Spencer) who really added to the layout and his experience in FreeMoN really helped at setup, plus his modules really added something to the layout. We will see him in Altoona and he will hopefully join us next February as well.

Our layout was a dog bone (with a big sweeping curve in the middle) as well as an extended branch line with signaling. We were able to do some JMRI switch list Operations using the branch line and it gave people an option of either running Roundy Round on the main “two track” section or doing operations on the single line section. Those that switched it seemed to be having a good time, and we are making plans to do it again at future shows. We can always use more runners; Sunday turnout was good, but it was still a little sparse on Saturday. The layout is pretty big and can accommodate multiple runners.

Signaling is still a work in progress; and we are in the process of adding more modules with detection as well as signal bridge modules.

The yard was placed on a stub instead of on the mainline. Hindsight tells us the placement wasn’t ideal because it extended “out and away” from the layout and “into the path of the general public”. It would have been better if the yard extended “into the pit” instead of out into the aisle. With the yard where it was, to get from the pit to the yard to set up, you either had to walk all the way around the spiral, or duck under modules while avoiding the various non-secured cabling. Plus, having the yard on the outside was a security concern; leaving trains set up out there exposed to potential damage or theft.

We had a large sweeping curve in the middle of the dog bone design and in the future, we need to remember to use those sets “separately” and to be sure their conversions modules from 3 to 2 tracks are used. In theory, putting them together gave us a long 3-track section; but to be honest, in practice, due to tolerance issues they resulted in a long single-track bottleneck. If we’d separated them, (using their purpose-built conversion modules), we would have had two double-track sections each with a passing siding. In the future... it will really be nice to have those in the design build.

As coordinator, I made a general list of observations for the module owners. We need to make sure all the modules have a “full FreeMoN harness set”. Everyone needs purple line and loco net harnesses. Before we set up in October, we can hang them while we are setting up (we can set up a worktable, do the work, and not have to ever worry about it again). There’s no need to dwell on any minor issues with modules. The list is known, and we can adapt and overcome this fall.

One more “achievement” was on Sunday; Martin and John measured each module and we are in process of entering the data into a layout design software program so we can have precision layout design capability. This will make set up faster as we can design the layout before setting up.

Overall, I consider the show a success; it’s amazing how far our FreeMoN layout has come in the last two years!

Eric

February Great Scale Show:



T-Mo?: Ed Kapuscinski

I have always loved the scenic possibilities of single track modules. It's why I was a big fan of our older oNeTRAK setup and am very excited that BANTRAK has embraced FreeMoN. I only have one issue now: I've been into T-TRAK in a big way for years now.

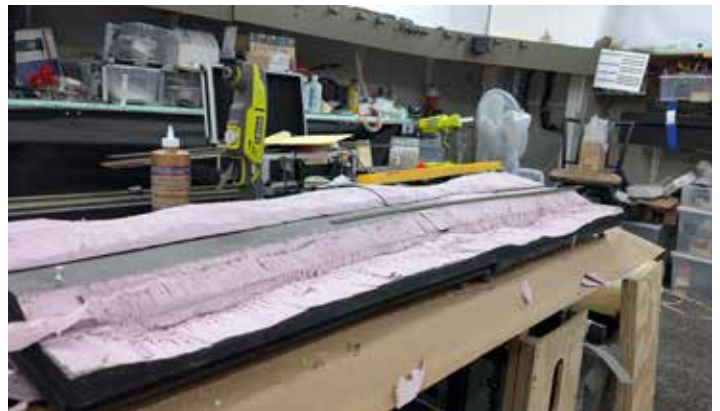
But this has given me some inspiration: why not build some FreeMo style T-TRAK modules? I love the portability and "user friendliness" of T-TRAK, but had always been stuck on the rigid Kato Unitrack geometry, and without the magical Unijoiner, T-TRAK would simply not work. Can you imagine trying to clamp up modules with 1" of clearance? Yikes. However, in my search for how to use a more realistic looking track for my modules I developed a way to connect non Kato track using Kato Unijoiners. I call it "Hacked Unitrack" and details are available on my website: <https://conrail1285.com/hacked-unitrack/>.

My Hacked Unitrack has opened up more flexibility in track geometry, including the biggest stumbling block I had when creating single track T-TRAK modules: how to tie them into regular T-TRAK layouts. I created a set of junction modules that have the same footprint and functionality as standard T-TRAK corners, allowing them to easily slot into a layout and allowing me to build a single track line off of it. By roughly following Kato's geometry (for things like corners, etc...), I can also easily get back into the main layout.



I had a few modules demonstrating this all at the February Timonium show and am feverishly building some stuff that will be actually scened, including some very minimal "bridge" modules using scrap 2x3s from my former layout. I'd love to see some other people take advantage of this system I've created since, after all, the fun of modular model railroading is the shared experience. If you're interested, please drop me a line at Ed@Kapuscinski.net or just use the BANTRAK email list if you think others would be interested in the conversation.

Ed



FreeMoN: MSS Signaling, Adding Detection to your Module : Eric Payne

Part of my attraction to FreeMoN is the challenge of implementing new (to me) parts of the hobby into a modular format. Having an operating (modular) signal system is something that I've seen other folks do as I visit different regional train shows. The one that seems to be being used lately is MSS. If you're not familiar with MSS, a simple google search will get you on your way.

Lately, when I have been observing FreeMoN being set up at Altoona and Springfield there is a "signaled" district where all the participating modules have detection. I see MSS being used more and more, and therefore, was compelled to buy a DCC block detector and install it on one of my modules and test it out with John Hale's signal bridges.

I chose the Iowa Scaled Engineering, ATOM DCC Block Detector. It is available online and retails for \$19. In addition, I purchased two (2), 3 Ft. Ethernet Cables (CAT5E) off Amazon for \$5 each. (Note: It must be the CAT5E cable... the CAT6 is a "no-go"). I also grabbed some RJ45 Coupler Ethernet Connectors, Female-to-Female (\$10 for a 10 pack). In all... I would say figure ~\$30 for the Board and the 2 Ethernet cables. I'm not counting the Female-to-Female connectors... as they are a bulk item.

I have provided links at the end of this article. I have 6 more modules to do, so if you'd like to participate in a work session and learn, email me.



I ordered the items and had every intention to install before the February show. Time caught up to me and I ended up tackling the project on Saturday AM before the show opened. My logic was, this is the only time we can test this before our next set-up in October, so let's get to it. Installation was simple and with the help of a few folks, we pulled my old Bantrak One Trak Maze module out of the layout and set it on the operating table (Paul's Horseshoe Curve boxes) and we started gathering the necessary tools. With soldering iron and wires in hand... John and I sat down and stared at the module sitting on its side and started in.

1. We located where we wanted to mount the board... I chose "center" of module because I had a terminal strip there in case it was needed.

- a. Note: We could have mounted the board using a 3/4 inch #4 screw, but we choose to hot glue it in place after the install.

2. We stripped the brown line (both sides) and ran two wires to the board, so it had power.

3. We identified the Rail A feed off the Bus that was going into Rail A. We would need to know where that was.

- a. Our goal was to go FROM the Rail A Bus line, THROUGH the "gravestone" on board, and then CONTINUE ON to Rail A.

FreeMoN: MSS Signaling, Adding Detection to your Module: Eric Payne

The wire stripping and soldering was the lonest part... we were done in about 10 minutes. and I hung the two ethernet cords off to the left and to the right of the module and put on the Female-to-female connectors at the ends so the module could be placed back in the layout.

We put the module back in place, hooked it up, and they system didn't burp (this is a good thing) and ran flawlessly out of the box. We didn't have any trouble with it all day Saturday or Sunday.

John even had a nice little "MSS Enabled" sticker he put on the module, to easily identify it. And for kicks, he took a picture and sent it to a small "MSS Discord Group" with the message "the next module up" kind of like a graduation ceremonial picture.

Links:

Cables: <https://amzn.to/4isbiss>

RJ45 connectors: <https://amzn.to/4ivuzcr>

ATOM DCC Block Detector: [CKT-BD1: ATOM DCC Block Detector](#)



In summary, the install was easy and it allows the module to be MSS compliant and to be used in various shows with or without signaling. My goal is to do all my modules like that and have a scenario where signals can be "a normal thing" (even if only in a small district) when we set up FreeMoN in Bantrak.

Eric

Details: Bob Bunge

One of my favorite things about modeling N-scale are the details that you can make that almost nobody ever notices. On one of my modules, there is a raccoon raiding a trash can. A cop waking up a drunk on a park bench, and a young man changing a tire on a car for an older woman.

Curious, at Altoona and at the B&O museum, I spent some time walking around looking very closely. Here are a few that I noticed.





BANTRAK 2025 Calendar

May 06, 2025

Newsletter content deadline

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

March 16, 2025

Club Meeting

Location: Paul & Vicky Diley's house

April 19, 2025

Club Meeting

Location: TBD

May 3rd & 4th, 2025

Great Scale Show

Timonium Fairgrounds

Setup is Friday May 2nd

Coordinator: Paul Diley

BANTRAK Membership: Eric Payne

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 [Eric Payne](#) 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.



Baltimore Area Ntrak Inc.

Dues Invoice

Invoice Date:
13 February 2025

Remit to:

Due Date:
01 May 2025

Mr. Timothy Nixon
719 Mount Alban Drive
Annapolis, MD 21409

Annual Club Dues
(Including National Ntrak Newsletter)

\$45.00

Make checks payable to Baltimore Area Ntrak

Member Name: _____

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

For Treasurer's Use

Date Submitted: _____ Check #: _____

Member's Receipt

Name: _____ Date: _____ Amount: _____

Train Spotting: Ed Kapuscinski



Sunbury, PA

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
Editor: David Betz