

June 2008

Issue 6

Volume 21

# BANTRAK

# Newsletter



## *N-Scale – Realism in Miniature*



### *The Engineer's Cab*

by Mark Bandy, President

**All Aboard for  
the Louisville  
N-Scale/  
Collectors  
Convention**

June 25-29

#### **Table of Contents**

The Brunswick Show	1
Track Warrants	2
B&O/Thomas Show	3
Editorial	5
Meeting Map	**

### The Brunswick Show

For the second year the Brunswick Railroad Museum put on a model train show to draw revenue and boost membership. Despite the weather that was uncooperative at times and the show attendance was low, the views to the tracks were spectacular from our location. Unfortunately, I can't say that the museum marked this show as a success. Last year's show was better planned and marketed.



Friday set-up was interesting, the museum originally planned on placing us in a venue 3/4's of a mile down the road from the main town. It was a park building near residential row homes and the view to the tracks was 500 feet across the road and through the trees. It was hard to find and I couldn't believe that the museum would put us this far away from the main town. No more than about 5 minutes after realizing this, did Tom from the museum come by to tell us the venue has been changed, and to follow him to a closer building. The new venue building was

roughly 150 feet down from the museum. By 2:00 we started unloading the trailer, and throughout the afternoon members showed up with their modules at the new venue location.

Once inside the new venue, we had to improvise a new plan for the layout. Ralph Grutzmacher, our show coordinator had a general idea of the size of the space based on previous emails from the museum coordinators. The windows in the room faced out on to a parking lot and the station and tracks. Originally the plan was 36 x 12', and the room (allowing for the columns) was 40 x 16'. We had room for one isle, so we put the yard against a solid wall and placed the member modules toward the spectators. By 4:00 the layout was leveled,



*(Continued on page 3)*



## RIP TRACK

### TRACK WARRANTS

By Phil Peters

**D**uring a recent operating session on the Tiber Creek RR we had three operators besides my self. Generally the session went well with through trains moving in conjunction with local switching and local freight turns. While the layout is too small for a dispatcher position at the moment, we did encounter some bottlenecks that slowed movement.

I wasn't too dismayed by this; I expect some problems to crop up as we implement a real operating scheme. As more people operate on the layout, the bugs and shortcomings are bound to turn up. The key is, of course, to find solutions which will correct the problem and enhance enjoyment without being excessively cumbersome.

**NORMALLY A TRACK WARRANT OR AUTHORITY TO OPERATE ON A PARTICULAR SECTION OF TRACK IS GIVEN A TRAIN CREW BY THE DISPATCHER**

We noticed that the bottlenecks occurred on the sections of track where there was only single track with no other way to access the main line or on the single track section of the main line. With engineers operating without the instructions from a dispatcher who knew whether a track section was in use or about to be used by an approaching train, things had to slow down until priority was given.

During the post-operating session discussion, Arthur Boyd mentioned that he had operated on layouts where track occupation authority was given by track warrant and that some system of warrants might help move traffic smoother. An engineer holding a warrant to specific section or sections of track would know that he could safely work along that stretch of track without interference or risk of accident with

another train.

Normally a track warrant or authority to operate on a particular section of track is given a train crew by the dispatcher, i.e., "Train 319 is authorized to run from Station A to Town X. At Town X train 319 will take the siding and await further instructions." It is pretty clear that Train 319 can move unimpeded as far as Town X where it will take the siding and hold until told to move. At Town X Train 319 will radio the dispatcher that he has arrived and is holding the siding, leaving the main line open for traffic.

Acting on Arthur's suggestion, I identified five sections of track where a train needed authority to proceed. I gave each section a name (everything on a railroad is named), and made up a track warrant for that section.

These are different colored popsicle sticks labeled with the name of the section. They are affixed to the fascia board at a convenient place with pieces of Velcro™. Before entering the named section an engineer must physically take the popsicle stick allowing him to use that section of track. If the track is already being used the stick will not be on the fascia and the train must hold its position until the stick is replaced by the person holding it. No stick, no go. Simple and, hopefully, bulletproof.

There is precedent for this type of movement. Especially on branch line operations an engine crew would have to pick up a wooden baton from the stationmaster before proceeding up an unsignaled track to a mine, etc. This protected the movement from any interference by another peddler freight or other local that might need to use any part of that track.

**I IDENTIFIED FIVE SECTIONS OF TRACK WHERE A TRAIN NEEDED AUTHORITY TO PROCEED. I GAVE EACH SECTION A NAME (EVERYTHING ON A RAILROAD IS NAMED), AND MADE UP A TRACK WARRANT FOR THAT SECTION.**

### NOTICE!

A number of BANTRAK Members, including yours truly, will be participating in the N-Scale Convention in Louisville, KY during the last week of June. As a consequence, the publication of the July edition of the BANTRAK Newsletter will be delayed until after the Fourth of July weekend. Look for your copy to arrive by July 9th

Editor

### Our Next Meeting

Our next BANTRAK Club meeting will be held on Sunday, June 8th at Arthur Boyd's home in Baltimore City from 2PM to 5PM

Map Attached

(Continued from page 1)

clapped and track joiners were under way. By 5:30 we had DCC cabling and booster boxes employed. Test running the track was the last thing and we were out by 6:15. Running trains on Saturday and Sunday went without a hitch for most of us. From time to time the real trains would announce their presence by blowing their horns throughout the town, and we would look out the venue windows to spot the freight train traffic.

There were some bargains at the vender's tables up at the museum for those of us who shopped.

I would like thank the members who took time to help set-up, spot, run, and tear down the layout. It was a far trip from Baltimore, but I thought it would be neat to combine seeing real trains and other club layouts at a historic train town location such as Brunswick.

In the future, Tom and Dave from the museum are trying out a new plan; to have regional clubs come in for a weekend to draw people to the museum as a single club event. So, this may be our last time at Brunswick as a model train show.



## The B&O Railroad Museum Thomas the Train Weekend

By Al DelGaudio

**T**he Baltimore Area N-Trak club was asked to take part in the B&O Railroad Museum Thomas the Train weekend. We were part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 weekends [May 2-4] in what was a wonderful, successful event for the B&O.

For the past 4 years BANTRAK has participated in the B&O Museums' Festival of Trains. The management has been sufficiently impressed with the level of our club's display and working relationship that they asked us to provide a "small" layout for the Thomas the Train Weekend. I confess, at first I thought they wanted us to make a small display like a 4 x 8 but it became clear something a little larger was desired. We responded with a nice size 12 x 26 layout which fit perfectly in the allotted space. And speaking of perfect, the weather was super, maybe a little breezy but the ever-present rain clouds we've had since late April were nowhere in sight for our 3-day weekend.



Given the heavy schedule of events over a 7 week stretch; the April Timonium Show, B&O and Brunswick weekends, the club response has been terrific. For the Thomas event we had a 12 foot yard which made use of Martinstowne module set and the chemical corner to allow access to all the yard tracks. Additional modules were Alan Del Gaudio's expanded Liberty city, Skip's Fire in the Sky and Harbor, Tim Nixon's Brockmaier's Farm and Bates Motel.

A special thank you goes out from this author to those who ran trains. The shifts were long, too long but they filled the 8-5:30 show hours. The show we put on was excellent with 2 trains on every track and numerous "Thomas trains" running. The crowd was truly appreciative as was the B&O management. Keeping the trains to 40 cars gave us great reliability and provided a realistic train-to-track ratio. We also had enough club members so that we were comfortably engaging the audience of all ages in plenty of discussions about

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)



trains, real and model trains. While some mini-people were too enthusiastic with the concept of “reach out and touch a train”, no serious damage occurred and unexpected derailments they caused were handled with good-natured aplomb by club members and surprised parents.

So again, participants, give yourselves a nice pat on the back!

Some trivia from the show:

The 1:1 scale Thomas is one of 2 touring the US. Due to the tight schedule, the steam Thomas was unable to be utilized for the 2 week run at the B&O.

The Sir Toppam Hatt costume cost more than a “loaded” Accord or minivan.

The B&O museum train with Thomas in the tail car position was powered by the museum’s SD-35 which was a stand-in for their SW. That’s a lot of motive power!



SPIKES AND SLEEPERS

EDITORIAL

Model Railroading and \$4 a Gallon Gasoline!



Those of you that have not been on some other planet during the last 12 months will hardly be surprised with the news of the steady increase in the cost of gasoline. Some of the gas stations around my neighborhood have already reached that magical plateau of \$4 a gallon. With no immediate end in sight, it would appear that everyone is in for a very expensive summer! Added to this burden is the fact that a goodly number of our membership are retired and on reduced or fixed income.

I believe that we have already begun to see the effects of this financial crunch based on the attendance at the B&O/Thomas Show and the Brunswick Show just concluded. Undoubtedly it will also have its effect on future shows, Club meetings and other commitments. Had I not already committed myself in February to the Louisville Convention this month. I would not be attending. People are forced to make choices in times like these and I am certainly no different, which brings me to the central point of this editorial. I think it is about time that we began to think collectively about managing our future Club obligations. Being one of the fortunate ones (5 minutes from the Timonium Fairgrounds) it is not so much of a burden to me to commit to all of the Scale Shows there, but I would think long and hard before I did the same for shows in DC, Virginia and Pennsylvania. I am sure that there are many members that have had to make similar calculations when determining what to attend and what to skip.

With this background, I am suggesting to our Club's President and Vice President that they come up with some ideas that could address these issues, such as the reduction of Club meetings to bimonthly or quarterly, car pooling, weekend "gusting" (having someone as a guest at your home for a show weekend instead of having them drive two and three times a weekend to the same event), etc.

The purpose of this editorial was simply to put the matter before the Club for discussion. My ideas above are offered simply as a means to that discussion.

We have a great organization with over 40 members. I would not want to see what we have built together damaged by circumstances that are extraneous to model railroading and beyond our control.

John



BANTRAK Organization

Mark Bandy	President	(410) 750-2262
Tim Nixon	Treasurer	(410) 757-5045
Al Palewicz	Membership	(410) 426-0339

We are on the Web! Try "BANTRAK.NET"

The BANTRAK Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-Trak Club.

The reproduction of the BANTRAK Club Logo without the express permission of the Baltimore Area N-Trak Club is prohibited

BANTRAK Newsletter

Editor – John Darlington

Copy Editor – Elaine Darlington

COMING EVENTS

1. BANTRAK Meeting @ Arthur Boyd's on **Sunday June 8th 2PM to 5PM**
2. Louisville N-Scale/Collectors Convention **Louisville, KY June 25 thru 29**
3. BANTRAK Meeting **Sunday, July 20TH Site TBA**