



# BANTRAK Newsletter

Volume 22  
Issue 10

October, 2009

## The Engineer's Cab

Alan DelGaudio



Hello all! We're poised for the final 3 months of 2009, with the most model railroading fun of the year!

The Scale Show at Timonium is Oct 9-11 and is a great tune up for modules before the big event. We will have our October meeting on Sunday at about 2 pm at this show. Tim and Bob Mohr are working up a few track plans. It looks like we'll try a 1-Trak red line bypass of the yard. We'll need to remember the rules of the road circulated this past Spring with the March agenda. They're reprinted in this issue (See page 2.). Set up starts about noon on Friday the 9th.

By the way, we may have a few modules volunteered by folks who cannot be in attendance, so we may need some drivers to bring and return them. Let Tim know if you can help. Along with that, should we have any running issues, let's be kind to some that contributed them to the show even though they have commitments elsewhere. There will be enough people available to deal with whatever concerns that may arise.

For the next weekend, we have the Festival of Steam. We'll have a 14 x 24 foot track plan. Bob Winterbottom and I are the coordinators, and we may draft a third. Here, I think we'll use 12 feet of yard. The goal is to have a steam-friendly layout. We encourage you to bring steam but to be clear, the weekend is NOT confined to steam only. For set up, it looks like we'll need to unload between 8 and 10 am on Friday the 16th. We can come back and set up later in the day, but will need to be done by late afternoon: they close at 4. I'll have firm details by the Scale Show.

For November, we are hoping to have 2 work sessions at Skip Hayes'. We are aiming for Saturday the 21st and Sunday the 22nd. Should Skip's presence be required elsewhere, we'll have a back-up plan. Let's make notes at the Scale Show of club modules needing work. I've noted several items needing to be addressed in previous

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### ***Next meeting...***

October 11, 2009  
2:00 pm

Scale Show

### ***On the web...***

News, information, and  
forums are all at:

<http://www.bantrak.net/>

# Operating Procedures for BANTRAK Shows

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A- All trains on the BANTRAK layout are operated with the permission of a dispatcher. While occasionally the layout may operate with a Central Dispatcher responsible for all lines, the normal operation is with individual dispatchers for each line.

B- The first person that signs up on a line (Red, Yellow, Blue, and OneTrak) for each time slot is the main runner and hence dispatcher for that line during that timeslot. Their train(s) are the *priority trains* on that line and have right-of-way over all other trains on that line.

C- The main runner/line dispatcher has the call for DC or DCC on their line (note that OneTrak will always be DCC).

D- We encourage multiple runners on lines when and where possible. Those wishing to be secondary runners on a line should request permission from the dispatcher to operate a train on that line before placing a train on the layout. Additional runners may **only** operate on a line with the express permission of the dispatcher for that line. Trains operated by additional runners on a line will be considered *scheduled trains* and must yield to *priority trains*.

E- Any train doing "operations", such as switching or shifting lines is considered to be an *extra train*. *Extra trains* may **only** operate on a line with permission of the dispatcher for that line and must yield to both *priority trains* and *scheduled trains*. OneTrak trains sharing the yard with the Red line and trains crossing lines in the yard or across several modules are considered *extra trains*. All RR protocols and rules say *extra trains* yield to *priority trains* and must clear their movements with the dispatchers for any lines they are operating on or crossing.

For those operating OneTrak, when you want to move to/from the yard to the 1T switching district, you need to request permission from the red line dispatcher **each time** you wish to do so and tell them how big the train is, expected speed and where you are going or what you are doing. The dispatcher should advise the *extra train* runner as to what other traffic is on the line and when he/she can enter the red line.

E- The *extra train* runner is responsible for opening and closing all turn-outs and report when they have cleared the line(s) under the dispatchers control.

F- The line dispatcher is responsible for ensuring any other runners on that line are aware of an *extra train* in transit; for example, between the yard and a switching district.

H- Courtesy and prudence are paramount. All runners should be aware of this new *extra train* in transit and check ahead for turn-out routing and be prepared to reduce speed.

## Last Hour of Show

Given that taking our layout down is very involved and for several people, once it's all packed up, only half their job is done. So, the following protocols should be observed.

1- Unless otherwise noted by the head coordinator, expect the last hour to be for DC operations only. This is to allow us to take DCC equipment down early.

2- With 15 minutes to go, we should be down to 1 reasonable length train per runner per line. Reasonable is something you can easily pack up in 5 minutes or less and easily fits on one track in the yard.

3- Please have all trains in the yard by the last minute.

# Module Certification

**Tim Nixon**



At a recent meeting, while we were discussing getting modules ready for the upcoming October Scale Show at Timonium and the Festival of Trains at the B&O Museum in December, the subject of module certification came up. BANTRAK hasn't had an official module certification program in the last few years, and some newer members were wondering what was required to certify a module. I knew I still had my module certification form from the 2004 Capital Limited Convention in Chantilly, which was probably the last time the club formally certified modules, and I agreed to dig it out and write share it.

To be eligible to be included in "The World's Largest Layout" at the Chantilly Convention, all modules were required to undergo certification by a qualified inspector; Skip Hayes fulfilled that role for BANTRAK. The form for Chantilly was divided into two parts: the top of the form (Part 1) contained basic information on the module and owner, and the bottom of the form (Part 2) was the inspection checklist. I'll skip over the top of the form and concentrate on the bottom, which covers the certification criteria. The inspection portion is divided into five sections; (1) Tracks, (2) Inspection Trains, (3) Wiring, (4) Frame, and (5) Other. I'll go through all five sections, although I'm going to go through them in the order you would building the module, and not in the order listed on the form.

## Frame

There are four items in the Frame section of the checklist. The four questions (all with yes/no check boxes) are:

1. Is the benchwork solid?

2. Is the frame square?
3. Are the edges of the plywood flush with the frame?
4. Are the clamping areas clear?

A good module starts with a good frame, which is what the inspector is looking for in this section. Having solid benchwork and a square frame is key to a trouble-free module; some of you may have noticed during set-up that certain modules are routinely used on either side of the lift bridge and the reason is that the lift bridge, with it's tight tolerances, needs modules with square edges and sturdy frames with clear clamping areas to work well, so the coordinators use modules we know will provide these attributes. Those of you who purchase module frames from Skip don't need to worry too much about meeting the requirements of this section, because he checks all these when he builds them; those of you building your own frames need to check these items before you go any further.

## Tracks

There are seven items in the Track section of the checklist, all with yes/no check boxes:

1. Are the ends firmly fastened down where the connecting tracks attach? (Note: While not stated, it should also be checked that tracks meet the set-back requirement; 2.5" for Ntrak, 1.5" for oNeTrak.)
2. Are the tracks straight, horizontal and perpendicular to the module ends?
3. Are the tracks spaced on centers according to the standards for this type of module?
4. Ruling grade does not exceed

*(continued on next page)*

- established limit for this type of module?
5. Curves and turnouts are no sharper than applicable minimum radius?
  6. Are Code 80 rail (Ntrak) or Code 55 rail (oNeTrak), with tight metal joiners or soldered rail throughout?
  7. Have no permanent magnet uncouplers in or under the ties?

The track standards for spacing, grades and radii can be found in the applicable standard for the module type (Ntrak Module Manual, Ntrak How-to Booklet, or BANTRAK oNeTrak standards) and will not be repeated here. Items 2 and 3 are probably the most important items in this section, and the builder should take care to ensure these items meet the standards when laying track. For those of you who have a re-railing ramp made by Deluxe, you can use it to quickly check track spacing. It has notches in one edge that match the standard Ntrak rail spacing.

## Wiring

The wiring section of the form was written prior to the adoption of the alternate PowerPole Recommended Practice (RP), and so is for Cinch-Jones plugs and 18-gauge wiring. Since BANTRAK has fully adopted the RP, I have modified all the items below to conform to the club standard. The ten items in the Wiring section of the checklist, all with yes/no check boxes, are:

1. PowerPole connectors are properly color-coded on both ends of the module?
2. Plugs on the right have the colored housing on top, with the hood up, attached to the front rail?
3. Plugs on the left have the colored housing on the bottom, with the hood up, attached to the front rail?
4. All mainline feed wires (R-Y-B) are 12-gauge or heavier?
5. Each mainline rail is electrically isolated from all other rails?

## Upcoming Events

**October 17** The CONRAIL Express excursion – rare mileage and exciting sights along the Norfolk Southern’s Port Road Line. Departs from Philadelphia’s 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station. For more information, see [TheCRHS.org](http://TheCRHS.org).

**October 2-4** Disney’s A Christmas Carol Train Tour comes to Baltimore. It’s free and fun for the whole family! At the B&O Railroad Museum. For more information, see [www.christmascaroltraintour.com](http://www.christmascaroltraintour.com).

6. Power to yards/sidings can be disconnected from mainline tracks?
7. Drop in track voltage is no more than 0.15 from one end of module to other?
8. Plugs are reversed on inside corner used as an outside corner?
9. Junction plugs are properly reversed where required?
10. Both White and Brown wires 12-gauge or heavier and are in working order?

Not mentioned above is the standard for power drops from the track to the bus wires; such drops are required approximately every 2’, 1’ from the end of each module, and at 2’ intervals on modules longer than 4’.

## Inspection Trains

After the inspector does a physical inspection of the module (frame, track and electrical sections above), the module is put in a layout and inspection trains are run to check for operational issues. There are five items in the Inspection Train section of the checklist, all with yes/no check boxes:

1. No derailments caused by rough tracks or ballast in the flangeways?

*(continued on next page)*

2. Turnouts stay in set position and don't pick flanges?
3. Clearance car passes through tunnels, under overhead bridges, etc.? (Note: while it's not mentioned on the form, the inspector will probably also use an NMRA clearance gauge to check clearances prior to running the trains.)
4. Train maintains same speed (no voltage drop indicated) on all tracks?
5. Flawless runs through all mainline tracks, including S-curves and cross-overs?

The form specifies the use of two different inspection trains. The first train should consist of two long 6-axle locomotives pulling a consist including several of each of the following car types: loaded doublestacks, hi-cube boxcars, long (85'+) passenger cars (note: I would also add autoracks). The cars should all have body-mounted couplers and a mixture of low profile and MT "Pizza Cutter" wheels. This train should be run through all community tracks of the test module in both directions from connecting modules. The second train should be a shorter train pulled by a single 4-axle locomotive without a flywheel;

this train is used to look for electrical dead spots.

**Other**

There are four items in the Other section of the checklist:

1. Two (2) good C-clamps provided?
2. 120-volt wiring meets code requirement? (Note: you should only have 120-volt wiring on your module if you need it to operate accessories like lights or auxiliary power-packs; the power strips previously required in the module standard have been deleted.)
3. Skirt provided with module?
4. Skirt provided by club?

This section is kind of a catch-all, and contains the non-module specific items.

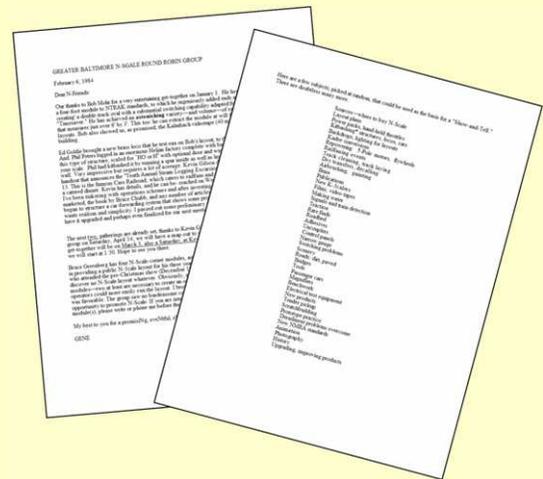
**Final Words**

Whether BANTRAK decides to again implement a formal module certification program or not, hopefully those of you building modules will find this information useful in constructing your own modules, and run some of these test yourself to check that your module is in compliance prior to bringing it to its first show.

**25 Years Ago...**

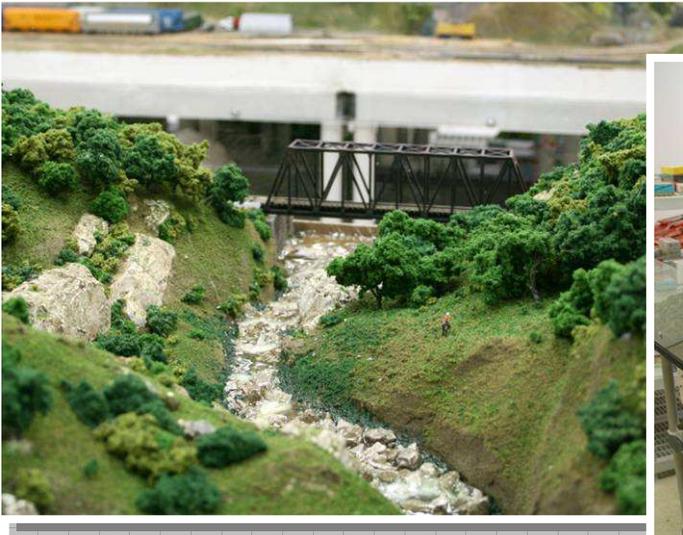
... BANTRAK wasn't BANTRAK. It was "The Greater Baltimore N-Scale Round Robin Group", and the newsletter was typewritten with no pictures. The February, 1984 Newsletter included updates on club events, member layouts, and even new models acquired by club members! It also included a list of ideas for show-and-tell – all of which are also great ideas for newsletter articles!

Thanks to Jack Walsh for sending the old newsletter!



# MB Klein Layout

Photos by John Darlington



## Site of the Month: Model Railroad Hobbyist

Matthew Davis

It's not often you can get something for nothing, but here's an exception: *Model Railroad Hobbyist* is a free model railroading magazine! The catch is that it's only available on-line; but if you can read the *BANTRAK Newsletter*, you can read *Model Railroad Hobbyist*!



**The Engineer's Cab (continued)**

newsletters and the recent September meeting agenda.

I'm hoping to send a separate message with details about a Thanksgiving weekend event.

Then there's the Festival of Trains. Check for information elsewhere in this issue.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to Howard Zane's last week and it is truly inspiring. There was also the opportunity to compare notes with the Four Counties HO club. They use 4x2 modules but 3/4" plywood and have a specified the theme: (near) Hagerstown, 1955.

Please keep Martin informed when you can help with the raffle layout. Much progress needs to occur in the next 2 months. We may work on it at Timonium, but that's Martin's call and if the space permits.

See you next week!

*Alan*

**B&O Festival of Trains**  
**BANTRAK Schedule**

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Setup  
Wednesday, December 16 8am-6pm  
Thursday, December 17 10am-4pm  
Friday, December 18 10am-4pm

Run  
December 19 to January 3  
Monday-Saturday 10am-4pm  
Sunday 11am-4pm

Teardown  
Sunday, January 3 4pm-8pm

**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 rail-roading in particular. Activities include participation in local, regional and national shows, meets and conventions. BANTRAK membership includes membership in the national NTRAK organization.**

**President**  
Alan DelGaudio .....(410) 480-9155

**Treasurer**  
Tim Nixon .....(410) 757-5045

**Membership**  
Al Palewicz .....(410) 426-0339




**BANTRAK Calendar**

**10/10-11** — Scale Show, Timonium Fair Grounds (setup 10/9)

**10/11** — BANTRAK meeting at Scale Show, 2pm

**10/16-18** — Steam Weekend, B&O Railroad Museum

**11/21-22** — Work sessions at Skip Hayes' (tentative)

**12/19-1/3**— Festival of Trains, B&O Museum (setup 12/16-18)

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 [matthew@houseofflameandglass.com](mailto:matthew@houseofflameandglass.com).*

Editor: Matthew Davis

