



**Volume 22
Issue 12**

December, 2009

BANTRAK Newsletter

The Engineer's Cab

Alan Del Gaudio



Hello BANTRAK.

Are you ready for the main event? Months turn into weeks turn into days!

The club had two good work sessions in November. Many thanks to Skip and Lorraine for allowing us to use their fine abode! About a dozen of us showed up and performed many important, small jobs. We refurbished the yard legs, repaired yard tracks, and repainted the bases, stanchions and skyboards. The trailer was repacked and the raffle layout was flocked.

For a couple of years, we have had 10 unpainted stanchions, courtesy of Ralph. The bases are now painted in our club colors and will help ease the stress in establishing the rope perimeter around the super-sized layout.

Thanks to Al Potter and Mark Bandy for their assistance in retrieving and setting up the Ellicott City layout. Matthew Davis came over the work up the track plan, which we will use for an article.

We've had four work sessions for the raffle layout. Martin was able to incorporate Atlas True-Track® (with some modifications to a code 80 crossing). I think two more sessions will just about do it. Bob Mohr kindly made space available for the first two sessions and the Clydes have provided space in their garage for us to work on it. Thank you! Also, thanks to Atlas and M.B. Klein for helping us with this project.

For the B&O, Dave and Eric are working to debut a new track plan with inclusion of as many modules as possible and easy access. Set up starts at 8 AM on Wednesday, December 16. I believe the museum will provide storage if you need to transport your modules on the prior Sunday (December 13). Contact Eric Payne if you need to take advantage of this option. Meanwhile, get those modules spruced up!

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Next meeting...

**January 3, 2010
2:30 pm**

B&O Railroad Museum

On the web...

**News, information, and
forums are all at:**

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

“Decoderizing” an Atlas SD-35

Steve VanMetre



This story outlines a decoder installation in an Atlas SD-35 using a Train Control Systems AMD4 drop-in decoder. I rate this as an easy install. Before starting this install, clean the locomotive wheels and your track so these items do not cause false indications later.



The Atlas SD-35

The fuel tank should pull off gently. Then, using tooth picks on each side between the frame and the shell, you can pull the shell off easily as one unit.



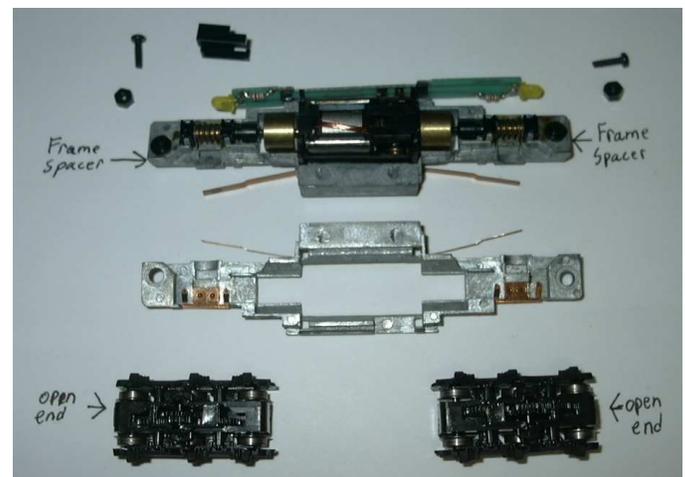
The fuel tank and shell are easily removed.

You will see that the two frame halves are marked L for left and R for right. This will aid in reassembly later. Remove the two screws holding the frame halves together. Then, using a tooth pick, gently release the motor mount clips through the frame and separate the frame halves. Carefully remove all the components and take note of how they are arranged.

Using a pair of pliers, carefully squeeze the board contact points so the decoder has a snug fit. Not doing this will result in poor contact to the decoder and it will not work. Now replace

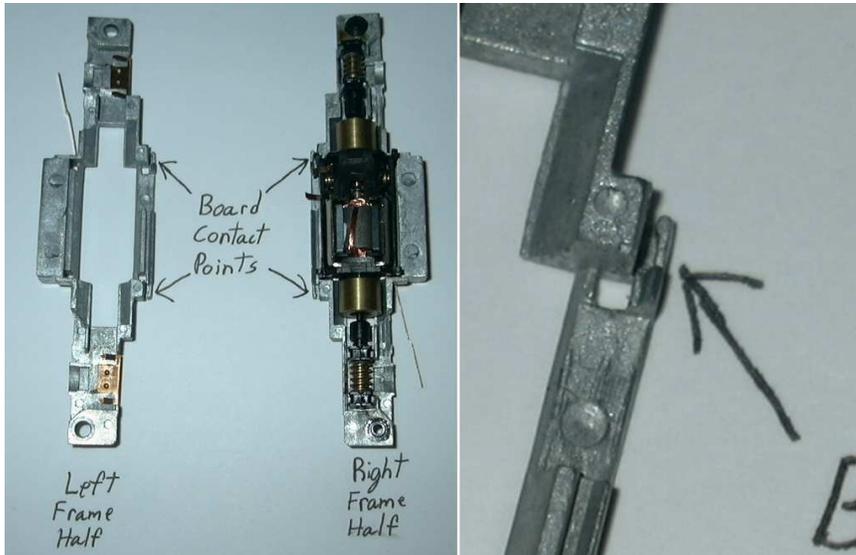
all the components (including the decoder) into the right frame half, making sure the decoder is facing right side up as shown in the wiring diagram in the TCS decoder manual. Make sure the motor contacts are under the decoder during assembly. This could result in a short and damage the decoder if they are not under the decoder. Also make sure the frame spacers are in place, these also insulate the screws from shorting out to the frame. Replace the screws and gently snug them.

Set the locomotive on the programming track and check for an address, the address should come up as 03. If you find that your system will not read the address at this point, the decoder is not making contact with the



The disassembled locomotive

frame. If your system indicates address 03, take the locomotive off of the programming track. Before setting the locomotive on the main track, dial up address 03 and make sure the throttle setting is at 0. Now, set the locomotive on the main track but do not turn up the throttle.



Be sure to squeeze the board contact points for a snug fit.

Making sure the throttle is at 0 will prevent damage to the decoder if there is a short. *If your system indicates a short, remove the locomotive from the track and repair the short before going any further!* If your system does not indicate a short and the headlight comes on, you should be ready to turn the throttle up and the locomotive should move. Enjoy.

I am very impressed with Train Control Systems decoders and their technical support. Their products are nicely made and reliable. Their technical support is the best I have dealt with. If you do a decoder install using TCS decoders and they do not have already have it outlined on their website, you can submit instructions and photos to get a free decoder of your choice if they feature it on their website.

Raffle Layout Update

Martin Myers, Alan Del Gaudio

Despite a lot of club activity on other projects this summer, the raffle layout is moving along. Given a good deal of interest in the club trying Atlas True-Track® and a lot of help from MB Klein, the track plan was completed in September. Scenery plans emerged in late October and the layout is 2-3 sessions away from being presented. Right now we have several buildings farmed out to our modelers extraordinaire. Once they are brought forth, the scenery can be completed.

The scene is made up of a folded figure-8 with an industrial part of town at one end. Main Street rises from this warehouse district through a small town to a residential community at the top of the hill. We've incorporated familiar things like a church, petrol station and basketball playground. Please join our final work sessions to help with completing the layout.

Site of the Month: The B&O Modeler

Matthew Davis

It's the time of year when we display our layout at the B&O Railroad Museum, and thoughts turn to Baltimore's own railroad. Luckily for all us local modelers, the railroad's historical society has an on-line magazine devoted to modeling the B&O! Download PDF files of recent issues at <http://borhs.org/ModelerMag/>.



Gene's Inspiration?

Jack Walsh



Recently, I was given a stack of old Model Railroader magazines from the 80's. As I was reading through them I came upon this editorial written by Russ Larson in the March 1982 issue that may possibly be the inspiration that lead Gene Villaret and Ken Mayer to send out their first letter asking if people were interested in forming a round robin group in the greater Baltimore area. Gene had received from Jim Fitzgerald of NTARK a list of all the NTRAK members within the Baltimore area by zip codes. This was the starting point for the group. What I found very interesting in this

article is that the key word is *share*. Gene was instrumental in getting the members of the group to share their knowledge and experience. Show & Tell occupied almost all of the three hour meetings with various "how-to" and "this is what I've done lately" presentations. As BANTRAK adds new members, we all need to remember those early days of the group when we shared and learned from each other both at the meetings and in between them when several members met to help out another member.

(Column reprinted with permission.)

At the throttle

ROUND ROBIN CLUBS

TRADITIONAL model railroad clubs have many things associated with them: a constitution, officers, dues, business meetings, elections, rules, regulations, club shirts and jackets, a clubhouse or room, and of course a club layout. Many model railroaders enjoy everything associated with clubs, especially helping to build a huge model railroad, something you could never do alone. But for every supporter of clubs and club membership you can find two or three who don't want anything to do with them. They don't want the hassle of meetings, electing officers, deciding on a track plan by committee, paying dues, observing a set of rules, etc. They have enough of this at work and with their other civic, fraternal, and church activities. When it comes to their hobby they want to enjoy it their way without having to get someone else's approval or a consensus.

If you feel that way about clubs, but not the company of other model railroaders, you should consider joining

or starting a round robin-type model railroad club. A round robin club has no officers, no dues, no clubhouse, and none of the other formal, structured things normally associated with a club. It's normally a small group, typically five or six, who have agreed upon a meeting night and take turns serving as hosts. Some groups regularly help one another with layout construction and have regular operating sessions. Others simply shoot the breeze and share ideas and experiences. *Share* is the key word here and it fits Webster's second definition of "round robin:" *Round robin (2): A talk or meeting in which several participants share.*



Some of the best layouts I've had the pleasure of visiting have been built by members of round robin clubs. These layouts reflect the talents of five or six people rather than just one. How many model railroaders have you met who are adept at all facets of the hobby? Sure, there are a few, but not that many. More typically a model railroader can build fantastic-looking scenery, but his trackwork is so bad the trains seldom make it around the layout without derailments, or vice versa. But if you get a half dozen other modelers together in a round robin club, you'll probably have a member who can lay track

with the best of them, another who has the patience to tinker with the balkiest locomotive until it performs flawlessly, maybe a backdrop painter, and if you're real lucky, someone who just *loves* to build benchwork.

In addition to the camaraderie and the sharing of knowledge and talents, participation in a round robin group will help speed along the construction of your layout. The regular meetings will rekindle your enthusiasm, and knowing that the group is coming to your home on such and such date is a great incentive to get *something* done.

Layouts built by round robin clubs do tend to look alike. This is not too surprising as the same methods generally are used for all the layouts. This is about the only disadvantage of the round robin approach to layout construction that comes to mind. However, if you realize that possible pitfall at the outset, you can maintain

control of what's done by the club members on your layout. Don't be satisfied until it's the way *you* want it.

How do you join or start a round robin? I'd start by asking at your local hobby shop about existing round robin groups. If your hobbyshop proprietor doesn't know of any existing groups, ask him if he'll help you start one. You can also send a notice to our Club News column for publication under the "New Clubs" heading. These listings are published free of charge as a service to our readers.

In the fall of 1980 I had the pleasure of visiting with the members of a well-known round robin club, the Hartford Workshop. This group epitomizes the round robin club at its best. There is a spirit of fellowship here. They help one another over the rough places, but each member maintains control of his railroad. This talented group has been together for 20 years. The first of two visits, through the pages of MR, to The Hartford Workshop layouts begins on the next page.

I hope that some of you will want to emulate the Hartford Workshop by sharing the fun in fellowship with others. Consider joining, or starting, a model railroad round robin.

Russ Larson
MARCH 1982

B&O Festival of Trains Update

Eric Payne



Baltimore Area NTRAK is confirmed for run dates between December 19-January 3. They **will not** have the G-scale model this year so we will be able to set up in bays 9 & 10 and use both wedges.

Load in: We are scheduled for **Wednesday 12/16-Friday 12/18** between 8 and 4 PM. We can load directly into the roundhouse through bay 11 prior to the museum opening at 10. While the museum is open to the public no vehicles can be brought into the public areas behind the roundhouse. Any other load in after 10 (normal opening time) will have to go through bay 15 and there should be some carts to use. We will have access to the roundhouse through the Schroeder Street entrance. We have all used the Schroeder Street entrance before, but if you need directions I can provide them. During load in we can park in the back behind the multi-purpose room and when we have people operating the layout we can all park in the front lot. We are being provided 2 20-amp circuits and 6 8' tables. Load-in is to be completed by 4 and we need to be out from behind the multi-purpose room in case there is a need to get catered event trucks to get ready to access the roundhouse for an event (I am not sure there is an event but there may be and if we are required to work it we will move cars around to the front lot for parking).

A special drop off time is scheduled for Sunday, December 12th at 3:30pm at the Museum. You must RSVP to Eric to take advantage of this drop off. No RSVP = no drop off!

Relating to admissions for group members: club members will be admitted free and the club will be provided with an additional 25 passes that we will distribute (e-mail Eric with requests).

Concerning catered events: BANTRAK may be asked to provide night-time run sessions for catered events. None are scheduled at this time. Parameters for operation would vary based on the event's needs and the museum would provide this information.

Arrival for operations: Museum hours of operation are 10-4 on Monday through Saturday, and 11-4 on Sunday. We can arrive as early as 9 am during the weekdays.

Hours of operation (Saturday and Sunday): if at all possible they would like to be able to have the layout operating by **9:00-9:15 on Saturday and Sunday** since they have breakfast with Santa both days. The museum would love to allow us in for this for free but they can't and the breakfast is sold out.

Breakfast Buffet with Santa
Saturday, December 19, 2009
Sunday, December 20, 2009
8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

The museum will let us know if there are any press as well as far in advance as they know, they sometimes ask for an early arrival (I mean 6 am or so, this can be painful).

Closing: the museum closes at 4pm. On days there is not a catered event we will shut down at 3:55pm, to be prepared to leave around 4 or shortly after. The museum has directed their floor managers to check with the groups prior to turning off the power to the roundhouse.

Load out: is scheduled to take place on January 3rd beginning after 3 (Museum closes at 4 that Sunday).



The Engineer's Cab (continued)

There was a change in plans in that the Orchard Beach event was canceled. Our liaison was seriously hurt fighting a fire. We pray for his swift and complete recovery as well as all those who work in the police and fire professions where a drastic change in life is an instant away.

While we do not have a meeting scheduled in December, it would be worthwhile to plan a brief 2:30 meeting on Sunday, January 3 at the B&O, since most of us need to be there for tear-down at 4 PM. It will cover a review and discussion of the calendar for 2010. After B&O, we have Great Scale Model Train Shows on February 5-7 and April 9-11. There are 2 more possible events, one in January and one in April (the week after the Scale Show), that we could participate in. We also need volunteers for hosting meetings.

I should see many of you at the Festival of Trains, but if not, have a happy and safe holiday season. Merry Christmas!

Alan

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.

President

Alan Del Gaudio (410) 480-9155

Treasurer

Tim Nixon (410) 757-5045

Membership

Al Palewicz (410) 426-0339



B&O Festival of Trains BANTRAK Schedule

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 Calendar

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

1/3— Club meeting at B&O before teardown

2/5-2/7— Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium

4/9-4/11— Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium

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.

Editor: Matthew Davis

