



BANTRAK Newsletter

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The Engineer's Cab: Tim Nixon

Hopefully everyone enjoyed their turkey and football over Thanksgiving, and got rested up for round two of BANTRAK's show season. We're fast approaching the B&O's Festival of Trains (or is it the Magical Holiday Express this year), closely followed by the February edition of the Great Scale Model Train Show.

Before I discuss those upcoming events, I want to do a brief recap of our Quail Run layout and the November meeting. To give back something to Quail Run for allowing us to hold several of our club meetings at their facility, we agreed to set up a small layout in one of their event rooms for the residents and their families. Paul and Vicky Diley coordinated this event, and we set up an 18' x 14' layout starting at 8 AM on Saturday morning. Eight members provided modules and helped set up the layout in a little over 2 hours. We ran trains from 10-3 on Saturday and Sunday; we had 5 runners on Saturday and 4 on Sunday. Following the monthly club meeting (more on that in a minute), we tore down the layout and headed home. I don't have a final count on the number of guests we had, but I do know all the members and staff that stopped by enjoyed the layout! Thanks to all who participated.

A couple quick items from the November meeting... First, Alan del Gaudio presented two options for the FY17 budget, P1 and P2. P1 kept spending similar to the FY16 budget, but added the recommended \$500 annual allocation to the trailer replacement reserve; based on presumed income this budget showed a \$317 deficit for the year. P2 assumed the same income and included the trailer reserve contribution, but made some strategic cuts to spending to balance the budget. After some discussion, those present voted to approve budget P2. From a membership perspective, the most significant change is a reduction in the meeting reimbursement rate from FY16' \$40 to \$25, which means refreshments at meetings will probably be limited to sodas this year. We'll reassess the budget after the B&O Show. The other item of significance is that we're still looking for a 2nd VP to replace Bob Mohr; if you'd be willing to serve or would like to recommend someone, let Martin, Alan or I know.

Next up for BANTRAK is the B&O Magical Holiday Express. Alan del Gaudio is coordinating this year, and has already sent out several messages, including layout plans done by Mark Bandy. This is BANTRAK's major event for the year, so please let Alan know when you are available to help out. Set-up will be Wednesday December 14th from 8-4, and we will again have our normal pizza luncheon for those helping set-up (to keep them from disappearing for 3 hour lunches). We are scheduled to operate the layout from Saturday December 17th through Monday January 2nd, excluding Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. We plan on tearing down on January 2nd, starting no later than 3 PM (and sooner if crowds are light).

The February Scale Show will be February 4th and 5th, with set-up on February 3rd. Paul Diley will be coordinating this show. Look for more info in January. The April Show will be April 8-9; Lauren has agreed to coordinate this show assisted by Eric.

I think that does it for this month, see you at the B&O!

Tim Nixon

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Next Meeting..

December 14th



T-Trak Update / Editorial: Chris Hyland

November was a busy month for us. We did something every weekend. And they were usually big shows. Even after Thanksgiving Jeff did his annual event at Bowie. So if you didn't get a chance to run your train that is your fault, as there were a lot of available run times.

Now before I get back to the good parts of this holiday message, I thought that I would give an update on changes that are occurring out in the world of trains. A lot of events have been free flowing. Gaithersburg station doesn't really care when you show up as long as we are running. But other shows are starting to. The Artifacts show asks me how many folks from Bantrak and who is showing up the week before the event. The entrance gives you the chance to get into the other barns for free. Otherwise you have to pay. Another N-Trak club didn't get their act together and only got ONE BADGE. That meant they were stuck to their layout. The Golden Spike shows says it keeps an eye on who comes in. With railroad china coffee cups going for more than an N scale locomotive, I don't blame them.

Lions club is another group that asked me for names in advance. This was to cover how much for the free hot dogs they were shelling out and also to keep track of who is there. The Garden show I believe asked who was in and not, and Greenberg has also been sniffing around for who is showing up. So the days of "your shirt is your pass" may be waning. As it is it makes it even more important to sound off when someone asks if you are going to be there. You can always back out, but getting a badge to some events might cost a kidney or something more if trends keep going the way they seem to be. Also the common courtesy of letting the layout coordinator plan for you being there is helpful. It facilitates them designing the layout. If four

guys say they are coming and 12 show up, it makes it a mess. So if asked to rsvp, please RSVP! Otherwise you might be like those guys and get to see the show from the parking lot. Tailgating can be fun, but I prefer seeing the game.

As I said before, December is going to be just as busy, but also full of holiday cheer. T-Trak will be at Sykesville, Chantilly, Timonium, and probably lending a helping hand at B&O. But remember, even though the eggnog might really taste like sour milk, your train address has crashed and your loco is heading for the back of a slow NW 300 car coal drag at Warp factor 9.5 and fake snow from a display has spiked all the switches open, just look into the happy faces of all the cute little Kidzilla's and the joy this brings them. Know that they are thinking, "I bet after the train crashes, the green TP&W box car with the rocket on the side will still taste like a candy cane". This is what the holidays are all about. And you are the keystone of these giddy memories.

Happy Holidays everybody. Here's to next year and may you get all sorts of goodies under the tree.

Stay safe and as the Beatles said:
Happy Krimble!!!!

Chris



Gaithersburg Artifacts Show: Chris Hyland

On Saturday Nov. 5th in the afternoon, elements of Bantrak T-Trak arrived to set up the layout at the Golden Spike Railway Artifacts show. We set up a three-table loop using the Hyland Clan's modules. We chose to go this route in order to get us up and running the next day.



Sunday morning (Nov. 6th), we showed up at around 8.30ish (due to the change of the clocks back to standard time). We had a good crowd of people. The Hylands, Leon, the Pecks, Jack Walsh and David Betz showed up. We ran trains all day and had some interesting consists show up. Jack ran his Southern Crescent, which was pulled by an Arnold Pacific. David brought a modern BNSF locomotive as well as a classic B&O E8. The Pecks ran Conrail and Ed Hyland tried out his train of Pet Coke hoppers that Deluxe had made several years back and finally got them boxed up to ride the rails.



Over in the other barn, it was like Christmas in Nov. Books, lanterns, posters, and shovels. There were all sorts of goodies. We noticed that as collections come up, the cheaper books get. Although some of the rare ones also go up, but you only live once right. And who knew that I needed a book on London Transports work equipment or the narrow gauge railways of France. If you are ever interested in research material, this is your show.



So all had a good time and we ran until 5 PM. At that point we packed up and said farewell to Gaithersburg and another successful show was in the books. We are looking forward to next year's show, so mark your calendar.

Chris



Lions Club Show: Chris Hyland

BANTRAK T-Trak assembled the night of Nov. 11 to put together a layout at the Rockville Lions Club holiday charity train show. We have been doing this show as BANTRAK for the last 6 or so years every Nov. It is a fun show in which most of the clubs in the Washington Metro area get together to run trains for the public before the Christmas Train rush. Clubs that show up for this event are usually our pals at Capital Trackers (O scale), Capital Zbind (Z), The Potomac Module Crew (HO), JRM (N scale Japanese), The Garden Railway Society of DC (LGB and stuff), NVNTRAK, and the Lego society of D.C., and of course ourselves.



It is a great show to sit back and run trains for two days at a quiet event in a nice office room with comfy chairs. We had a bunch of members show up for this one. Cliff Enz, the Pecks, the Hylands, Mat Chibbaro, Leon, and Matt G-L. If you can think of it we ran it, California Zephyr, The Wabash Bluebird, Conrail exec train, PWV, Amtrak, Santa Fe freights, and even the GWR coaches I bought off Al Del G a few weeks before. So it was great just running trains on good trackage for two days.

Additionally, we got a chance to reflect on the year with the other clubs; how their events worked out, checking out trains and modules or catching up on news. We got a chance to go to Hard times for our club gathering and get some decent chili and because

of the amount of us, we got to sit in the Gene Autry booth. Though I do like the picture of Roy Rogers eating a bowl of Wheaties in the other booth, but hey that is just me.



We ran both Saturday and Sunday with no problems. We finished up at 5 on Sunday and were gone by 5.30. If you are looking for a chance to just run trains, with a low kidzilla threat rating, then mark your calendars for next year. And bring lots of choo choos.

-Chris

X-Tronic Soldering Iron: Bruce Tharp

Having just thrown out 3 soldering irons I thought I might review the one I kept and why.

I tossed a small battery powered unit, a 25-watt Radio Shack and a 35-watt Weller. All no longer worked. The little battery powered one never really worked well. The others were pretty good tools that I wore out.

I've had my workstation for about three years now. It's handled circuit boards for computers, televisions, and even some general electrical work. These days it gets a lot of use building N scale track and installing decoders. Only this month did I discover a significant down side of the unit.

The unit is a multifunction station, designed mainly for circuit board repairs. It's designed to get into small places hot and get out quickly. It includes a hot air station and a soldering station; ideal for some of the small solder work done on N scale equipment.

The hot air station is ideal for undoing mistakes or removing parts surrounded by plastic. Designed to remove surface mounted circuits on a circuit board it's a very simple tool. A hot air gun, but with various sized nozzles and an adjustable temperature. Just set the temperature high enough to melt the solder used and blow it across the board. I use it when removing wires that might be close to plastic parts where I know the soldering iron will immediately melt the surrounding plastic.

I have created solder joints with it but the iron is much better suited for soldering. If you have a multi-pronged chip needing soldered it's the tool to use! There is a safety circuit in the blower that will not allow you to turn off the blower until a certain temperature is reached (50 degrees C). This protects the heating element from early burnout. It does come with a spare heating element should it fail.

The soldering gun station, the most used part, is more than adequate. It only takes seconds for the iron to heat to the desired temperature. When done it quickly cools down. Heat adjustment is done with a simple rotating knob. I adjust the temperature constantly when working. When a joint is ready to be soldered I'll raise the temp. When done I turn it down, allowing it to idle at about 195 degrees C. In just a few seconds I can have it back to as high as 480 degrees C. I feel it's better for the tip to have it idle at a cooler temperature for the long between joint periods. The iron is wonderfully light, great for long projects.



The unit is able to make the temperature changes quickly because the heating element is not a metal core as you find in most other irons. The heating element is a ceramic rod inclusive of a heating element, temperature sensor and ground surrounded by a metal tube, which attaches to a changeable tip. The changeable tip fits over the ceramic core.

You may remember in a previous article I mentioned you shouldn't try and catch the iron if you drop it. Well, you re-



X-tronic Soldering Iron: Bruce Tharp

ally shouldn't, but it is a ceramic rod. If it hits the ground hard it will shatter. I drop things a lot these days because I work on things really late at night sometimes. It is 2 AM and I'm sitting here writing an article!

Breaking the ceramic rod shouldn't be such a problem since the unit comes with both a spare Blower heater element and a spare Iron-heating element. The Blower heater element is a plug and play. Unplug one - plug in another.



The significant downside of the machine is the Iron-heating element is a solder in unit. Think about that

for a moment; if you break the one ceramic element you have to solder in the new one. With what? So I ordered a spare iron to fix the first iron. It arrived quickly. It was a simple task to solder in the spare heating element, 5 wires and only two require positive/negative placement. The replacement iron also came with a spare heating element, again a solder in one. So now I have a replacement iron and heating element for future mistakes/failures.



I've had my machine for about three years. It gets a lot of use. This iron failure was my first problem with it. I noticed that with an upgrade on the newer machines they now have a Centigrade/Fahrenheit toggle switch whereas mine only reads in Centigrade. If all you do for soldering is solder in rail joiners it would be hard to justify this machine.

This is not a machine to stick in your toolbox either. However, if you solder in tight spaces, or need to reach into places surrounded by plastics, and solder a lot, take a look at this unit. I've enjoyed it.

Bruce

My unit (updated with C/F toggle):
<http://xtronicusa.com/#!/X-TRONIC-4000-SE-RIES-MODEL-4040-XTS-Hot-Air-Rework-Station/p/9238594/category=2138400>

The Company: <http://xtronicusa.com>

Train Spotting: Ed Kapuscinski



Monongahela Heritage Unit

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 [Alan Del Gaudio](#) for more information regarding your membership status and roster questions or contact [Al Palewicz](#) with general questions.

Member Benefits:

- Sharing of your knowledge (railroading & 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.

BANTRAK 2016 CALENDAR

Date	Event	Location	Contact	Type
Dec. 10-11th	Greenberg Show	Chantilly VA	Chris Hyland	T-Trak
Dec 14th	B&O Setup / Meeting	B&O Roundhouse	Alan Del Gaudio	N-Trak
Dec. 17-Jan 2nd	B&O Show	B&O Roundhouse	Alan Del Gaudio	N-trak
Dec. 17th	S&P Tower	Sykesville MD	Chris Hyland	T-Trak
Feb 4&5th	Great Scale Show	Timonium MD	Paul Diley	Show
April 8&9th	Great Scale Show	Timonium MD	Lauren Baker	Show
June 21st-25th	National N Scale Convention	Pittsburgh PA	TBD	TBD
August 18-20th	N-Scale Weekend	Altoona PA	TBD	Show

BANTRAK CALL BOARD

CLUB WORK SESSION 2016-2017

Contact Tim Nixon, Eric Payne or Paul Diley for work session information.



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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