

BANTRAK News

A Monthly Newsletter for BANTRAK Members • Volume 33 • Issue 1 • January 2020



The Engineer's Cab: LeRoy Brandimore

Here we are the start of a new year. Happy New Year everyone. It is also the changing of the guard. Martin Myers is stepping down as President and I'm stepping up from 1st Vice President to President.

I first became aware of NTrak when I saw a magazine article about NTrak back in 1978. Back then I never thought that I would be in a position such as this. The article covered the standards for building an NTrak module. Not much has changed since then. The biggest changes have been with electrical setup, one being changing electrical Buses to power poles for bus connecting between modules. Heck DCC may not have been thought of back then. The standards have served NTrak well over the years. The past few years we have worked to make things easier while keeping within these standards. Remember, the object is to have fun. That's where standards can be helpful.

The Layout at the B&O Roundhouse was a success. A few issues were corrected or worked around. On some modules they were pointed out to the module owners. The Raffle didn't take in as much as in the past or as much as we had hoped. Maybe this was a result of how the holiday days lined up.

Our next show layout at The Great Scale Train Show at Timonium is coming up quick, the first weekend in February, Super Bowl Weekend. Bob Bunge is coordinator for this layout, and you should be hearing from him soon for a call for modules.

See you all at the next meeting at Jack Walsh's house on Jan 19th.

Happy Modeling,

LeRoy Brandimore



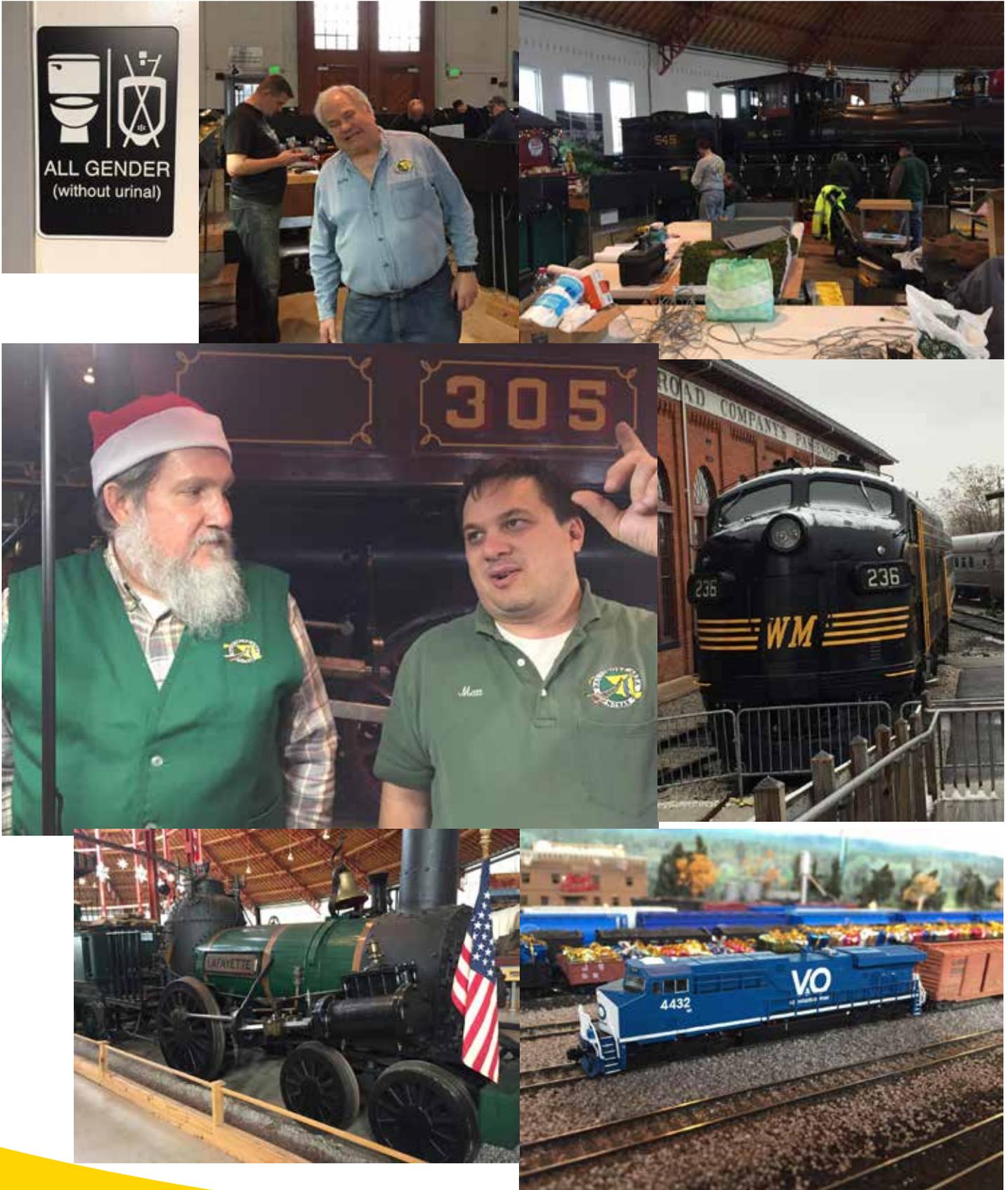
The B&O in 2019:



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T-Trak Update & Editorial: Chris Hyland

Wow, the Christmas season was heavy duty. Saw numerous layouts. Set up numerous layouts. Lost two weeks for being ill. Saw lots of model railroading. Would like to thank the York Connector Railway, Four Counties Model Railway Society and the National Capital Trackers for there fine layouts and hospitality.



So now we are in January. A new year and a new beginning. This is sort of a down time, show wise for us. Not that things are not busy. This weekend, I and my Dad just completed 4 new corners, which should debut at the Winter Scale show. And we are just starting on stuff.

In the news, TTrak still seems to be everywhere. The (semi) National Newsletter was filled full of TTrak modules on display, including a few from which I plan on swiping several ideas myself. I may not be a Picasso, but I can do paint by numbers.

N scale (the other one) magazine did a lot on



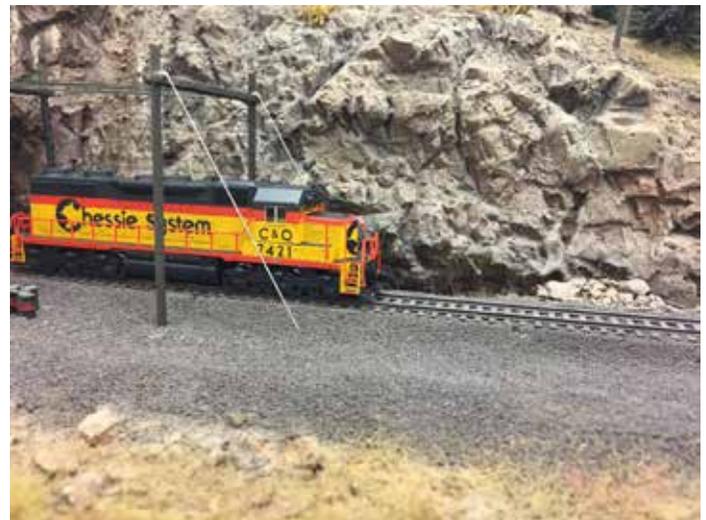
TTrak. They had an article on "Building a TTrak Module During a Weekend". Yes, it is a Woodland Scenic plaster and styrofoam (yuck) errr, craftsman,

yeees, that's what it is, a Kraftsman kit in a weekend. So what's your excuse? I mean if someone can whip up a module like a vat of heavy cream, come on. CMR is waiting by the computer for your order. And you too can possibly get your module in a cool magazine or even a semi-national organization newsletter. At least it will spice up the layout.

So what is the division going to be up to? Good question. Our hope is to get some new pilots to our little squadron of TTRAK guys. Also we are going to look around for some new places to operate. It has always been part of our groups goal to be a bit like Star Trek. Seek out new N Scaler's and new venues. To boldly go where no N Scale group has gone before. If you are looking for a little adventure, there is always room around the layout.

So we will see you at the Timonium show in Feb.

-Chris



A Mogul Story: Bob Bunge

During the October 2018 show, we purchased a B&O MRC/Model Power Mogul steam locomotive at Klein's using funds John had saved up. I used a credit card to make the purchase. The little locomotive had pretty good reviews on Spookshow, featuring an all metal boiler and sound. At the show, it ran fine. It did have an interesting "feature" where no matter what number was input into the club's Broadway programming track, reading the track back always returned the number of 2307. At home, it also ran fine on analog DC. By the B&O event it proved to have problems with stalling on turnouts, but this was resolved by cleaning the tender wheel pickups. In time, I learned the pickups needed to be cleaned for every hour or so of run time. In the meantime, it was fun to have sound and it is a good puller on our loop, which has grades, with that heavy metal boiler. From what I understand, in the partnership between the companies, MRC provided the decoder and Model Power the locomotive.

Fast forward to the summer of 2019. Our modules were set up in our basement. One night as we worked on them, John set up the Mogul on the loop with a short train and it just ran. As usual, it was powered by an old MRC power pack. After about 20 minutes of running, we realized it had stopped. John commented when he first picked it up, the tender was warm. It appeared dead, even using a different power pack. A review of the instructions suggested resetting a CV if the locomotive was dead. Our problem was we didn't have any DCC at our house.

I contacted MRC as listed in the documentation with the locomotive and started a somewhat lengthy email thread that was lengthened even more since it would take them 2-3 days for MRC to respond. Another reason for the length was that MRC repeatedly pointed out they no longer had a relationship with Model Power. I wasn't sure what that meant, and even pointed out a webpage on their website about the locomotive. In the end, they asked that we try to reset the CV.



The next BanTrak meeting was the picnic, so I asked host Alan Del Gaudio in advance if we could try to reset the CV using his DCC set up. We did so, with no luck. Martin came down into the basement and tried as well with no luck. In the end, Martin gave me that dreaded "nice paperweight" look of sorrow.

Upon hearing the news, MRC responded with the standard "no relationship" message, but also stated they could replace the locomotive if we could provide a receipt. Well, I don't keep good paperwork and sure enough there was no sign of a receipt to be found. In fact, we weren't even sure we could pin down during which show we had run over to Klein's to pick it up. It was starting to look like we now had a nice display item... as I couldn't find anyone with a replacement (sound) decoder in stock that would fit in that small tender unless I decided to put a non-sound decoder in it. About a month later, when browsing Klein's website, I stumbled across an email address to request a proof of purchase. I sent off an email with what little information I had. The response was they would try but couldn't promise. A few days later, I was thrilled to get a positive response. Upon my thanks, the Klein's representative said the thanks wasn't to him, but to their database wizard who came up with a database query that uncovered the purchase.

Armed with the proof of purchase, I fired off an email to MRC and included my phone number. To my amazement, I received a voice call about 30 minutes later. The representative said they would replace the

Mogul Story: Bob Bunge

locomotive since they no longer had the decoder in stock (I had said I could replace the decoder myself if that was an option). He then said the decoder was likely fried by our transformer and said they would send a new transformer along with the locomotive in order to not to have a repeat performance. Well, that was unexpected!

What they sent was their Tech 6 Sound Controller 2.0 along with the locomotive. This is an interesting hybrid mix between a DC power pack and DCC. I found the instructions to be a bit light weight, but workable. Once wired up, a button controls if you are running analog or DCC. The instructions state if a DCC locomotive does not respond, to follow a keystroke procedure to “reset” it. I had to do this with four out of the five DCC locomotives I tried. Once reset, you had access to all sound controls as you might expect. The impact? It reset the decoder, specifically the engine number, to the default 03. Later, at B&O, I learned that two of the locomotives would not respond on the club’s Digitrax system, even using 03, and had to be reprogrammed using the club’s Broadway device. I need to add there are

there is power to the track and your sound locomotive will sit there and endlessly steam or diesel away. With a list of \$140 Tech 6 is only about \$20-30 more than MRC’s high end analog packs, but double their entry level power pack and I suppose is a good option for someone with a sound locomotive who doesn’t want to invest in both the cost of full DCC and the complexity.

I have to praise MRC for supporting my problem with the locomotive and throwing in a device that would not only help me avoid the same problem in the future, but allow me to take advantage of the sound system in the locomotive.

Bob



advanced options on the Tech 6, including how to set other CV's. I did not venture down this path because, as expected, Santa brought a Digitrax Zephyr. Another observation regarding the Tech 6 is the lack of a track power off switch. If the unit is plugged in,

BANTRAK 2020 Calendar

January 19, 2020

Club Meeting
Jack Walsh's House
5534 Phelps Luck Dr
Columbia MD 21045-2554

February 1-2, 2020

Great Scale Show
Timoium Fairgrounds
Contact: Bob Bunge

February 16, 2020

Club Meeting
Leo Palewicz's home
Contact: LeRoy for more information

May 2-3, 2020

Great Scale Show
Timoium Fairgrounds
Contact: TBD

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 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.

Train Spotting: Eric Payne



The Chippewa Creek in Cleveland:
Part of the original postwar 24-car Creek series from Pullman-Standard, the Chippewa Creek is the only surviving car of its design, which features staggered windows and a unique “upstairs/downstairs” configuration. With 12 duplex single rooms and four double bedrooms, the Chippewa Creek can sleep 20 people in luxury and comfort. Once highly sought by business travelers, the spacious duplex rooms are still

the largest sleeping rooms on any rail car operating in North America. William Howes, the respected railroad executive and author, has said the duplex single rooms were the largest private single-person accommodation available on any railroad. He further commented that whenever possible, he would reserve and travel between home and college in one of the duplex rooms of a Creek car.

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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