



## The Engineer's Cab: Bob Bunge

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We hear about how the hobby is dying. Not too difficult to imagine when you hear about MB Kleins, Hattons, and see increasing numbers of gray beards. Yet if you watch carefully, not so fast. One clue was a message from the Great Scale Show owners that they were looking for space because they had more vendors. Another was 9am Saturday morning, as John and I entered the south gate of the fairgrounds. We had just driven behind the grandstand when John asked "is that the line?" It was south of the Expo building, almost to the Grandstand!

How lucky we were as Bantrak members to slip in a back door and avoid that line, get to explore the show and then run trains. A glance around found many great deals. We then settled in and set up to run a couple of trains. Twenty-year-old John has latched onto FreemoN, building two modules that have now been in several shows including a massive layout at N scale weekend in Altoona last year. Now he put about a dozen cars in the yard of an industry and used two BNFS units to build the train and then deposited some of the cars at various other industries around the club layout, including two visiting modules, as organized by Eric.

Meanwhile at the other end of our space, Lauren had wrangled up enough T-trak modules to require 12 tables, a club record. Visiting module owner Scott has brought a jaw dropping module of a steel mill that had the most amazing computer controlled day/night lighting effects that showed off T-trak's attributes in grand style. Later, watching and listening to a set of Dave's Chessie Geeps with steel coil cars working, the mill was a real treat.

Opposite from T-Trak, Paul had set up his Horseshoe curve modules with the idea to have a weekend long work session to lay new track in preparation for taking the curve to the National Convention in Bethlehem, PA. this June. As someone later said to me, even though they are Paul's modules, many of us now have skin in their game. Saturday, I soldered the butt ends of the entire center track. The real cool part was how the public and other modelers got to see modeling in action and ask questions. As usual, Paul was an ambassador for the hobby, answering questions from show goers. As this was happening, Dave and John H. did a great job of handing out club flyers and chatting with prospective club members.

I don't think the hobby is dying at all. It is changing in all sorts of ways; from a new generation, highly detailed models, to new standards and new technologies (like Scott's lighting).

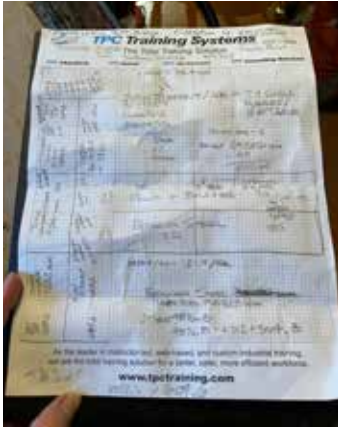
A final note. After serving many years, Al Palewicz is stepping down from the role of membership coordinator to be replaced by Eric Payne. Al was critical to my early years in the club and I would like to thank him for his service to the club. Thank you, Eric, for stepping up.

Next meeting will be at Chris Quinlan's house, 500 East Maple Road, Linthicum Heights, MD 21090, Sunday, March 17th at 2pm. Hope to see you there.

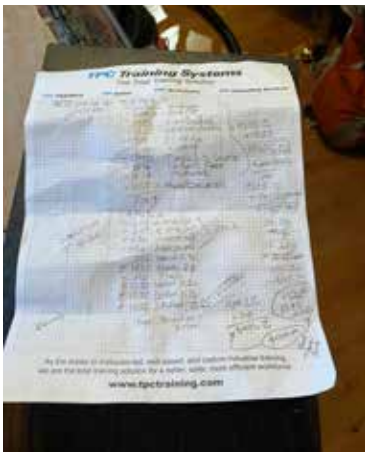
Bob

## February Show T-Trak: Lauren Baker

Eric asked that I talk about the prep for a T-Trak setup. The first thing is to understand the number and size of modules that are being committed. Some of those details come in pretty close to a show. I started with a basic idea trying to utilize Martin's junctions on one side of the layout to build out an industrial district.



As you can see there is a lot of math involved to be sure we can make it come together at the end. It's also best to work in mm as it is more accurate. The junction modules, even though they look like the size of doubles, are not. That added a lot of complexity to the calculation.



Even with all those numbers we had to add a couple of pieces of track here and there to make up deficits. I didn't have a lot of info on the spectacular Bethlehem Steel scene. (I hope

everyone got to see that and perhaps run on it). Luckily we had a couple of miscellaneous track boxes to allow us to make adjustments and get the entire layout connected.

We had to pull a couple of modules at the end that just wouldn't power up after being in storage for so long. Having to relocate modules once the basic layout has been leveled and adjusted is always problematic as you get minor problems at the joint connections between modules. I always cringe when something needs to be moved for whatever reason. It's difficult to adjust the leveling legs once everything is connected. Not great access. However we were able to work out the kinks by the next morning and a few over the day.

We learned it's not a good idea to put any kind of turnout or crossover just after a curve. There were other issues such as a broken expansion track that wasn't immediately evident. Overall I think the layout ran very well and we had a lot of runners and a lot of public interest.



We ended up with 12 tables, 2 new endcaps with large super elevated curves that worked well and trains (Cont. page 3)

## February Show T-Trak: Lauren Baker

looked very good traversing, 2 junctions which gave us 3 loops and a more interesting, longer, red line run. 34 doubles, including Bethlehem Steel, a build a yard with 3 more doubles and to single crossovers at the end. One more single and a bridge.

We had requests to allow WiThrottle and Loconet connections at other locations on the layout. These can be discussed at a future club meeting. We also want to clean up the look of the power by getting everything in a box.

I know a number of members purchased new module kits. Let's keep this going! Some modules need some repairs. Please make sure your module wiring is labeled red and yellow or front and back. Please make sure your leveling feet are intact and adjust easily; soap or wax on the threads can help with this.

Many thanks to LeRoy and Ed for assistance in planning, adjustments on the fly and thinking through the electrical issues with the junctions and third loop. Extra thanks to Ed and Scott for making the fabulous Bethlehem Steel scene come to fruition. Better modeling through peer pressure!

I think that the layout showed many of the things that T-Trak can be with attention to detail and imagination or sticking to prototyping. Let's not forget the kids we want to develop in the hobby as well. The sky is the limit, let's keep it going.



## February Show Free-MoN: Eric Payne

I'm currently writing this show wrap-up on February 10th. One week after the show. I had planned to write it earlier in the week, but I was called out of town on business, and when I spoke to our esteemed Newsletter Editor, I found out he too was travelling (so I had a few days). My plan was to finish work on Friday and dive into the basement and write the review and pitter patter on the modules and layout. How could I have known I would come down with COVID-19 and my weekend plans were now in jeopardy. I called Chris Q. and cancelled Saturday night plans. I texted Lauren and Dave and let them know my situation, and I pinged John H. and advised him as well. Soon thereafter an email went out and Tim reported in as well that his flu-like symptoms were indeed COVID-19. I thought I got it from traveling... but the more and more I chatted with fellow Bantrak members... the more it seemed like the show was the culprit. Oh yeah... The Show! Let's get back to that.

So, here we go... it's October... we're wrap-up the show... and they call for a coordinator. I volunteer for FreeMoN figuring someone else would co-coordinate. Lauren steps up (we always seem to choose each other as coordinators) for T-Trak and we're off to the races. Tim's wrap-up of October points out we have manpower issues setting up and running trains. Club Leadership proposes a schedule calendar for 2024 that is adopted in December... and boom... here we are in January a month before the show. We're doing FreeMoN and T-Trak only... no trailer... with a vision and a dream.

January has us scurrying and finishing up some sweet T-Trak large radius curves as well as some concept modules for signals on FreeMoN. As we jump over hurdles of finding the right wires and trying to verify everything is working... I get asked repeatedly for a track plan. I threw one together conceptually... and figure "hey, let's put the FREE in FreeMoN and see where it takes us". Meanwhile, Lauren is gathering the troops for T-Trak and calls for 10-12 tables which means we are gonna have a huge layout (at least, huge for us). So... fast forward to Set-up.

Friday arrives and Tim reports in that the Escape is jam packed. I got a rental mini-cargo van

that smelled like Bob Marley's armpit and I had it jam packed with Jeff's help Friday AM. John has the Super Maverick filled to the brim with barely enough room for a toolbox while Martin's van is full of his stuff and some club stuff, while Paul was bringing the Curve for a work session. So, as you can imagine, load in was chaotic.

Speaking of load in. We are seeing a trend of limited access inside the hall starting around noon. The takeaway is, if you want to drive in, you might want to shoot for 11a or even earlier. Typical Bantrak start time is noon, and we as a Club aren't going to solve the "congestion in the aisle" dilemma (although we can provide feedback to Scott who owns/runs the show). As I said, show up early if you need to pull in. OK. Back to set-up.

So, we pull in, unload, and start in on the layouts. Lauren is handling T-Trak, FreeMoN is setting up itself to a degree, and the Club members selling stuff are settling in. This is when the first dilemma strikes. Long story short. Lauren needed 10-12 tables and I skewed to 10 and she skewed to 12. No worries there... I had 8 for her... and I clicked heels together and got her 10. She was thankful and reminded me she needed two more. OK... I grabbed Bob and we went to talk to the show. We found Scott and advised him T-Trak was growing and FreeMoN was sprawling and sales tables were increasing and in general, we needed 2 more tables but could really use 4. He was gracious, changed our show allocation from 16 to 18 on the master layout for future use, and sent a runner to give us 4 more tables. Crisis averted (for now). OK... so... we're setting up... and T-Trak has the tables needed. Sales people are happy and accommodating... and FreeMoN is about to start clamping. FreeMoN gets clamping and we clamped and built as we went. We assigned Bob as Gandy Dancer and he fixed loose rails along the way. We figured out where to put the transitions and the signal blocks... we figured out which modules needed jumped (purple wire), we figured out how to split feeds... and in general it was chaotic but fun. We were clamped by 3p and we would've been running by 4:46 but something tripped us up... I forget what at this moment... but we had it resolved by 5:15p. T-Trak was set up ... and waiting for 1 late arrival



## February Show Free-MoN: Eric Payne

stuck in traffic... and then eventually T-Trak was ready around 6:30ish. Nothing earth shattering... it was an easy set up. Smiles all around with laughing and brainstorming. This brings us to Saturday.

And boy oh boy did we run trains on Saturday. Matt R. ran the Burlington Nebraska Zephyr and the GN Empire Builder. Bob ran the dinosaur train with PRR steam and mixed freight, John Bu. Ran a modern BNSF while Tim ran some light CSM power and a Tropicana Juice train. John Ha. Ran a NH mixed freight and Ed K. Sr (aka "the OG Ed") ran the PRR Camara car rig. Your humble author also represented High Speed Service with a NKP/NH mixed freight. And if that was not enough, Jeff was running a WM military train as well as some MOW equipment, Lauren ran some mixed freight and LeRoy ran some Chessie power and some nicely weather rolling stock. Thomas ran some BNSF and NS mixed freight and those short little trains of 8-10 cars sure worked great for him! Scott ran the LV mixed consist to perfection and really set off his steel mill scene while Alan also ran some mixed freight and kept the theme of the day going.

Oh yeah, did I mention Lauren had COVID? So, remember way back when, and I volunteered to coordinate a show 5 years ago and had to back out because of a knee injury? Yeah... Lauren stepped up and handled that show like a champ. So... Sunday AM I get a text. Lauren has COVID. OK. I tell LeRoy and ask him to pick up in her place, which he does like a champion (big thanks to LeRoy) and T-Trak doesn't miss a beat. We tell everyone to watch themselves and stay diligent in case they feel sick. No one reports anything... and Sunday we run trains. LeRoy runs the WP Zephyr and Amtrak while Alan runs Amtrak as well... and all things seemed perfect when those big trains passed on those large radius curves. Thomas continued to run his mixed freight as did Scott. In addition, Dave ran some CSX mixed freight on FreeMoN while Tim pulled out the pointless arrow (Amtrak) and tested John's reversing loop module (Spoiler Alert, if tracks are touching, the reverser doesn't reverse). Matt brought out the NYC 20th Century as well the Burlington Nebraska Zephyr (again) and the California Zephyr (WP version). Alan also brought out a nice manifest of NYC rolling stock

(Flexi) and Freddy finished up strong with some NYC Mohawk action. In fact, there was some pretty serious steam out there on FreeMoN, and Bob punctuated it with the BLI smoking UP Big Boy. I tell you what... to have signals and smoke on FreeMoN was pretty cool.

Break down came at 3:30 and boy did it go FAST. I mean... break down always goes fast, but it just "felt" faster. Maybe it was the lack of trailer move, maybe it was the lack of "club modules". I'm not sure, all I can tell you is that we all helped each other and it was over before you knew it.

It was a fun show, we got lots of good compliments, and even had a surprise dropped on us. Let me set the scene. I'm sitting at the sales table with my wife and up walks Scott the show owner/manager. I thank him once again for assisting us with tables and he obliges "no problem". I tell him how we're growing and I show him all the new modules (large radius curves on T-Trak / undecorated FreeMoN stuff) and tell him basically we're doing the best we can and enjoy being there. So this is where the surprise happens. Out of the blue, he asks "do you need more space?" and I say "well, Scott, if you give it to us we will use it" and he says "I'll talk to my partner and see what I can do", so I thank him, and he says "what do you figure, another 10 or 20 feet this way" (pointing toward the HO layout next door where Paul was set up)? And I reply "well, you can see we are already filling it, so you might as well give it to us". So in summary, we got 2 more tables and potentially 20 more feet. All in all, a good show.

So every good show summary has a list of Lessons Learned and Things To Do. Here's what I have observed.

1. T-Trak needs tables (Note: This is a statement of fact and not an opinion), and T-Trak should get the tables they need from the show allocations to the Club OR we need to buy our own Club tables). HOW we solve this is something for the Leadership to summarize and present. I am fully in support of giving T-Trak as many tables as required and we should keep modeling and promoting the hobby as a focus.

2. Related to #1, everyone knows Bantrak gets tables gratis from the show (in fact I negotiated us 2 more moving forward). Everyone also knows each



## February Show Free-MoN: Eric Payne

show is different and unique and there may be times when tables are needed for different things. Club Layout (NTrak/T-Trak/FreeMoN), Clinics, Member Sales Tables, Club Promotions, etc. Everyone should realize there is not a “one size fits all” solution for the “table allocation” issue. It needs to be handled by each show coordinator and supported by the Club Leadership and Members alike. It’s not an easy job trying to balance everything and keep everyone happy. It’s my observation that we will run out of tables and every show is going to be unique. All I would urge is patience and remember we’re all here to have fun.

3. Scott (Show Owner) asked us not to bring “our own tables” for sales. This makes problems for him when other vendors complain. To be honest, I fully understand that perspective. (Note: He didn’t say anything about bringing our own tables for T-Trak, so that should be ok).

4. The number of Club Members who are selling personal items is increasing. (Note: This is a statement of fact and not an opinion). I spoke to Scott and asked him if I personally bought a table as a “vendor” could he place it at our Bantrak area and he said yes. Plus, he would give me a discount.

### *To Do List:*

- Signals: Add some MSS Crossover detectors to some modules and carry out a test in Altoona.
- Signals: create a few more signal modules (MSS Cascade modules)
- EP WYE Redline feeders (check)
- JH Command Station in a Box – Install pigtail for programming track
- JH Command Station in a Box – Audible short indicator
- PD Bridge – reinforce with side panels
- JK – reinforce leg pockets
- Modules with switches – verify frogs are juiced
- MM – Add gap masters to norther loop
- UR93/94 – double check signal strength
- LocoNet – be sure to run entire FreeMoN layout for working panels
- We ran some purple lines on a few modules and sent the wire home with the module owners (Jeff Kerher, Jon Bungee, John Berger)

That’s about it. I’m sorry to “write like I talk”... but it

was kind of a stream of conscious debrief. I’m super happy and super enthused about the new modules, the awesome growth of T-Trak, the FreeMoN evolution and in general happy to be in the hobby with friends.

Take Care, Be Safe, and Check yourself for COVID

EP



## February Show Highlights:



# BANTRAK 2024 Calendar

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## March 06, 2024

Newsletter content deadline

***We need content, please submit your articles by the deadline.***

## March 17, 2024

Club Meeting 2:PM

Chris Quinlan's house, 500 East Maple Road,  
Linthicum Heights, MD 21090,

## April 26-28 2024

Setup on the 26th

Great Scale Show

MD State Fair Grounds

Coordinator:Paul Diley

## May 19, 2024

Club Meeting 2:PM

Location: Eric Payne's house,

619 Elizabeth Rd

Glen Burnie, MD 21061

## June 18-23 2024

N Scale Convention

77 Wind Creek Bethlehem

Bethlehem,PA 18015

Coordinator:Paul Diley

# BANTRAK Membership: Eric Payne

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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 [Tim Nixon](#) for more information regarding your membership status and roster questions or contact [Eric Payne](#) 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: Bob Bunge



Baltimore, MD.

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](mailto:newsletter@bantrak.net)  
Editor: David Betz

