

BANTRAK News

A Monthly Newsletter for BANTRAK Members • Volume 35 • Issue 12 • December 2022



The Engineer's Cab: Chris Quinlan

Happy holidays BANTRAK Family!

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving and that you and your families are ramping up for a wonderful holiday season! I have heard great reports about our T-Trak show at Arthur's apartment complex. It was low-key, fun, and well-received by the community. Maybe more shows like this will be in our future! Thanks to all who attended, and Ed for the countless feet of modules he brought. An extra special thanks to Arthur for hosting and he and Lauren for coordinating our efforts.

We have the B&O show right on the horizon. It will be great to resume this holiday tradition with some added decorations. There have been lots of communications bouncing back and forth about this show. Please do what you can to assist with set-up, tear-down, and operating the layout. But, most importantly, enjoy running trains and spending time with your BANTRAK teammates! Alan, thanks for being our Captain for this adventure. I know LeRoy has been a big help too. Both of your efforts are greatly appreciated.

David Betz, thank you so much for 12 awesome issues of our newsletter for 2022. Thanks for your patience and flexibility with me as I continually turn these in late (despite all the reminders on my phone and calendar). You always build a beautiful product. Team, I would encourage you to provide content to this monthly publication. David needs our help!

One final note; Our December meeting/pizza party will be held during setup at the B&O Museum on the 21st.

Thanks again, to everyone, for all you do! I can't wait to see y'all soon!

Chris



Free-moN: John Hale

Hello fellow Bantrakers!

The devil is in the details. I think I, like several other members of the Bantrak Free-moN Group, took a small break after the October show and just worked on detail items.

There are a couple of build projects underway. John Bunge is working on a new pair of modules (more to come in the next few months), along with several other modules in the planning phase.

After the October show, we came up with a punch list of items that needed to be addressed by the Free-moN group. They ranged from solving some electrical issues to making sure modules are labeled correctly.

It is interesting, in the club we have a lot of members who like to run passenger trains. Yet we have very few modules that focus on the passenger side of the industry. This may be something we should look at in the club in the coming years. I mean what's wrong with having a passenger terminal on your module?

My focus has been on the details. From weathering structures, to making and planting trees and bushes. I decided to go with super trees on one of my modules. There has been a lot of discussion about that choice. The big question is: "Will super trees hold up to the jostling and wear and tear we place on modules over the long haul?" I guess the only answer is "Time will tell" as I have planted them on my modules. If you are curious about how they are made, I will do a write up next month on the process.

Regardless of your desire the Free-moN layout should be able to accommodate. Want to run a

train roundy round? The double track mainline and balloon loop ends will facilitate that. Want to perform some switching? The branch lines and industries will provide that. Want to do some ad-hoc operations. The entire Free-moN layout can support that also.

John Hale and Eric Payne are your primary points of contact for how Bantrak is implementing the Free-moN standard to both meet our modeling needs and still conform to national standards to improve interoperability with other Free-moN clubs. If you are interested in participating, contact one of us and we will get you everything you need to be successful.



FA Locomotives: Bob Bunge

About a year ago, I scored powered A and dummy B Life-Like Alco FA units in B&O paint off the N-scale for sale email list. Twenty-five years ago, I had acquired a pair of these in PRR colors. They pulled like crazy and just ran and ran... and both my kids loved them on a small layout and soon both were pretty beat up.



A few weeks ago, I finally got the bug to work on them. I powered the B unit with the mechanism from one of the old PRR units. This required filing one of the lead weights to make it fit, cutting the rapido couplers off the trucks and installing the Micro Trains couplers from the dummy frame.



Next, I chopped off about 1/4 -inch of the rear weight of both locomotives and used the space to install Digitrax DZ-126 decoders. I have found

these to be inexpensive, easy to find, reliable, yet configurable decoders. I used the existing light bulb for the A unit as I like the warm color and I don't have to deal with a resistor.

Test runs were excellent. I didn't need to speed match them, and yeah, they pulled as I remembered. John and I had some fun one evening and found they won every tug-of-war combination we could set up. They also ran with a nice deep "growl" that is the next best thing to actual sound.

There were several photos of these units on the Internet that were easy to find. Usually, it seemed they were fairly dirty, often covered with a light coating from the white sand put on tracks to provide traction. I found one photo on an old B&O color calendar that showed an A-B-A unit on a coal drag that was the same number as the A unit (837) and decided to use it as an example.



After pulling out the window in the A unit, I gave both a shot of Tamiya gloss clear with the airbrush, then a very fine coat of Tamiya flat clear, keeping the airbrush several inches away so the paint is mostly dry by time it contacts the surface. I have found this makes for a pleasing - at least to me - satin look that isn't too glossy, but not completely flat and removes what I call the unpainted "plastic look."

Next, I hit the air inlets and other grating areas with Tamiya black line panel using a small brush. I have found this stuff to be really good for weathering. This was followed by Tamiya White Line Panel along the trucks, lower body, and the ends of the locomotives. The results looked ok. The bigger problem were the roofs... in the photos, they were dark, gritty with some

FA Locomotives: Bob Bunge

white dust. So, I airbrushed them with Tamiya NATO black and applied a liberal dose of Tamiya Brown Line Panel, wiping off the majority of the brown, leaving brown just around the edges of the various projections on the roofs. Finally, I used the Black Line panel in the exhaust and other openings to provide a darker, shinier black for those areas.

The photo had a sun glint off the windshield wipers, and sure enough the A unit window had clear wipers molded into the plastic. I carefully painted these with silver paint applied with a toothpick.

I decided the white line panel on the sides of the units looked too brushed on (it was), so I attempted to use the airbrush to give the sides of the units a light coating in watered down craft store acrylic paint. This worked pretty well.

The last task was the A unit number boards. The photos showed B&O used both the number boards and had the unit number painted on the front, under the headlight. While the model had the number boards molded in, they were unpainted. For this, I borrowed an idea from Ethan; I printed the number

boards on a printer on glossy paper, cut them out and used a knife to first split the paper and then scraped the back until only the top, very thin layer was left. This was glued on and coated with flat clear to match the rest of the front of the unit. I created artwork with the online vectr.com website.

Shortly after I purchased the units, I ran the A unit on our green line loop at a Great Scale Show. The unit ran for both days without having to be touched, even though the track on the green loop isn't the best and there are many sharp curves and turnouts. In their new configuration, I'm hoping these will be dependable units to run at a show, knowing they are sturdy and will pull almost any train I build.



RPP Show: Arthur Boyd

Record Setting Joint Show: T-Trak from Bantrak and HARM



This may have been the largest T-Trak show ever hosted by Bantrak. But it didn't start out that way! It was a real nail-biter: would this show come off? A one-day-only show at a retirement community, drawing on two clubs and a family of T-trak enthusiasts – together for the first time. Neither the experienced coordinator (Lauren Baker) nor the rookie (Arthur Boyd) knew how many modules would

show up, of what sizes and designs, and how many pairs of hands would help set up.

But on December 4 at 8:30 am, modules started showing up, together with 14 volunteers. Scott Wooddell of Harford Associates for Railroad Modeling (HARM) imaginatively kept moving the 17 tables around in interesting shapes to accommodate the growing number of modules. The final shape looked like a backwards question mark. The Kapuscinski clan (two of whom are conveniently named Ed) kept pulling more modules out of their two vehicles. By 10:30 am trains were running on about 80 linear feet of double-track layout.

The other unknown was: would there be any visitors to enjoy our creations? This was the retirement community Roland Park Place (RPP), about 300 residents in a facility with independent living apartments, plus assisted living, memory care, and health care (nursing home).

We needn't have worried. There was a steady stream of visitors, with some crowded times. Possibly total around 100, with several who came back later for a second look. There were residents, grandchildren, staff assisting residents (and enjoying the trains). Among them were a few using walkers, and others in wheelchairs. Frequent comments, like "I never dreamed of such a thing" and "The volunteers were so gracious and answered my questions" and "Will you be back?" One kid spent an hour looking over and



RPP Show: Arthur Boyd

over (while parents sat in the nearby chairs). Several grown-ups looked for, and found, the bear.



The scenes presented were varied, from the expected (a long section of “Christmas village” – a hit with visitors), to whimsical (a quarry for dinosaur bones), to historic (replicas of real locations as “they used to be”), to impressive scenery faithfully modeled.

There were 51 modules, including 10 corners, plus one-, two-, and four-foot modules. A few extra modules of different types were not connected, to show how T-Trak works in sections. On the layout were several “blank” modules connected together (flat-top, no scenery or track). From a bin full of Kato Unitrack, we put together a yard which enabled setting up and changing trains without conflicting with the mainlines. For much of the time, we had 6 trains running at once, 3 on red and 3 on yellow.

Behind the scenes were the RPP staff, who made sure we had everything we needed. Tables and chairs were set up overnight before our arrival (which they did after a long day of other major activities set-ups and tear-downs). Roller carts were made available for move-in and move-out. Their activities staff put in extra hours creating show publicity, then even more extra hours in arranging and delivering morning coffee & donuts and noon lunch. (We made “quick work” of the food, also!)

We had perhaps the largest show we have ever done. Our setting up took two hours, and tear down took one hour, with 14 volunteers. At tear down, we volunteers could not have been more happy; all agreed this was the best show we ever had due to great arrangements, facilities, and interested viewers.

From the runners we had favorable comments that it was fun and relaxed. What could be better than that? A resident summed it up in a “thank you” note she sent: “It was truly fantastic.”



BANTRAK 2022- 2023 Calendar

January 06, 2023

Newsletter content deadline

We need content please submit your articles by the deadline.

December 21-31, 2022

B&O (FOT)

B&O Car Shops.

Setup and monthly meeting will be on the 21st

Cordinator: Alan Del Gaudio

January 15, 2023

Club Meeting

Location: TBD

2-5PM

February 4-5, 2023

Great Scale Show

Cordinator:Chris Quinlan

Timonium Fair Grounds

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 [Tim Nixon](#) 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: John Hasson



Seen in Medina Ohio

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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