

BANTRAK News

A Monthly Newsletter for BANTRAK Members • Volume 36 • Issue 12 • December 2023



The Engineer's Cab: Chris Quinlan

BANTRAK Family! I can't believe this will be my last newsletter cover letter as President. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to serve with each of you in this capacity. It's been a wild ride, for sure. I'm incredibly thankful to Bob, John, and Tim as leadership team members. They have helped me more times than I can count when my busy schedule prevented me from being around, which seemed to be more often than not, unfortunately. I know as the reins are handed over to Bob, we are in really good hands. He is an honorable man and will lead us to great things! And I must thank Dave for being diligent with our monthly newsletter. He continually generates a great product and keeps us all in the know. And he always gave me gentle reminders when I was falling behind on my due dates to submit letters like this one. Keep up the good work, Dave!

As we approach the Christmas holiday, it's a great time to reflect on the year we just had. We put on a lot of great shows over the year with one more fantastic event to go. We learned a lot about what works and doesn't work with our three layouts and have started to pave a successful way ahead for when we do our shows. Everyone has pulled their weight and then some. We are a great organization with amazing talent and generosity, and I'm proud to be part of what we have.

I hope to see most of you at the B&O show set-up/pizza lunch/short meeting on December 20th. Stay safe and warm until then. Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year to everyone!

Chris



Show Runners: Bob Bunge

Bantrak exists to allow us to enjoy our hobby. To enjoy any of the many aspects of model railroading from building layouts, running trains, sharing our trains, kitbashing, digital technology, scenic, casually running trains, train operations, and much more.

Along with this comes the duty of promoting the hobby and making sure it is passed onto future generations, even as 1 to 1 railroading and model railroading evolve over time. This is important enough that promoting the hobby of model railroading is written into the documentation to allow us to be a non-profit 501(3)(c) organization.

We promote the hobby by setting up our layouts and shows and other events and interact with the public. The most basic way to do this is to run trains for the public to see and enjoy. Through this, we can interpret the rich history of railroading as well as the many aspects of model railroading.

Over the past year, we have experimented with setting up three different types of layouts at the Great Scale show. The traditional N-trak, T-trak and the recent FreemoN layout. All are amazing and fun. Each offers shared and unique aspects to help us promote the hobby.

For the past several Great Scale shows a trend has been observed that there is a lack of runners-members to run trains on the layouts. This has resulted in times where only one or two trains are running. It has also resulted in members staying past their run slot times in order to keep trains in motion and missing out on the other aspects of the train show.

Bantrak currently has 37 paid members. It has become clear we don't have the membership base to support three different layouts. At the recent November meeting, one option that was proposed is that we only support two layouts at each of the Great Scale shows, rotating between N-trak and FreemoN always supporting the easy to set up and child-friendly T-trak.

For example, we would set up FreemoN in February, N-trak in April, FreemoN in Oct., and so forth. Other events, such as B&O Festival of Trains and Altoona N scale weekend would remain N-trak.

As mentioned in the minutes of the November meeting, all in attendance were willing to give this approach a try in 2024. The club officers would like to continue this discussion and reach a decision at the December meeting, which will be held during the set up at the B&O museum on December 20th.

A longer term fix for this issue is to grow the base membership of the club. There are a number of ideas floating around about how to do this that we can take up in the future and start to put in place in 2024. Ideas include club volunteers to actively engage prospective members at shows, volunteers to mentor new members, to running T-trak construction clinics for youth at shows.

In the meantime, please come out to set up at B&O on the 20th, help out, enjoy friendship, pizza, and sign up for a run slot or two during the eight day period the layout is set up. There really is no better venue in the world to run model trains than one of the best railroad museums in the country.

Bob



RPP Show: Arthur Boyd

“Trains! What fun!” That was one of the many messages from residents at the Roland Park Place retirement community (RPP). And fun it was.

For the second year, Bantrak and HARM (Harford Area Railroad Modelers) combined to make a huge T-Trak show. It was 80 linear feet of layout, comprising 20 one-footers, 38 two-footers, eight corners, and even a four-footer to create a giant U shape. While equal in number of modules, it appeared smaller than last year’s Z shape - but even so the visitors thought it was better than last year.

There had been an on-line news article earlier in the week about our show, but did not give the date and time. A COVID outbreak led RPP to be cautious about inviting too many people other than friends and relatives of RPP residents and staff. But people found us nevertheless. One person even came down from Pennsylvania, having taken a chance that this was the day of the show. “It looked like it was worth the trip,” he said.

Train crew comments were that this show, like last year, was much more enjoyable than the ones at larger train shows, because the visitors were much more interested in the trains and appreciative of the model-making skills. (Perhaps at the large train shows, visitors’ eyes are glazed over by the mass of trains by the time they see our set-up.)

Set up went well...until it didn’t. Things started out at 8:00 am and the layout was ready to run by about 10:30 for “doors open” at 11:00 - quite a feat. But power on - nothing ran. A short, a very elusive one, just would not go away. “All hands” were called to the rescue, but maybe fewer hands would have meant less confusion and a faster fix. But the flipped wire in one of the wiring connections was finally found and corrected before noon, as kids and elders crowded around to watch the clown show.

The visitors didn’t mind in the least - all fun.

Visitors came in floods, then a lull, then another flood, and so forth. Which gave the crew time to catch their breaths, set up different trains to run, or eat a (RPP provided) donut or sandwich. Eight folks from the two clubs were busy (led by Lauren Baker), but satisfied, as the show ended at 5:00 pm and we were all packed up and on the way shortly after 6:00 pm.

And something that must be a first: With an ambulance waiting outside, the EMT crew rolled in a gurney carrying a resident, who wanted to see the trains before going to the hospital.



Now, that’s one for the record books!
Arthur



RPP Highlights:



RPP Highlights:



BANTRAK 2023 / 2024 Calendar

January 06, 2024

Newsletter content deadline

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

December 20-31st, 2023

B&O Roundhouse

Setup and meeting on the 20th

Coordinator: Al Del Gaudio

February 3rd & 4th 2024

Setup on the 2nd

Great Scale Show

MD State Fair Grounds

Coordinator: Paul Diley

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: Ryan Jones



Cary, N.C.

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
Editor: David Betz

