

BANTRAK News

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The Engineer's Cab: Bob Bunge

During a typical year, Bantrak takes part in one show that is not local to our Baltimore area. This is the N scale Weekend show held in Altoona, PA. This year, we are also setting up a layout at the national convention of the N Scale Enthusiast organization to be held in Bethlehem, PA. This past weekend club members showed up at the storage location of our club trailer and raided it of everything we are going to need for the show, since it would be difficult to tow the trailer the distance to Bethlehem. Instead, attending members divvy up everything to bring in their own vehicles.

These non-local shows can be difficult for many to attend, since they require time off work as well as the cost of staying at hotels. I wasn't able to make the Altoona show due to work, time off, family impacts and cost for several years. For me, however, last year the stars aligned and I was able to make Altoona. I now understand why those who go, try to make it back. I had never seen so much N-scale stuff in one place!

The Enthusiasts hold their national convention in different cities each year. In my time in Bantrak, I think this is the first time the convention has been held this close to Baltimore. I'm really looking forward to it; knowing that some of the best modelers in the country will be attending as well as representatives from many manufacturers. As part of this, several members took club corners home after the last Great Scale show to clean and spruce them up so they will look their best at the National.

If you are interested in attending the September 13-15th show in Altoona and need some help, reach out to a club officer. Some regular attendees of the Altoona show reduce the cost by sharing a hotel room and it may be possible to ride with someone.

On the home front, there are several important things afoot. Eric is putting together a plan for the Bob Mohr modules. This will be sent around and likely be brought up to vote on at a future meeting. John Hale is looking at designing a roll-on cart that would hold these modules as well as other gear currently in the trailer such as the yard throats that are stored in the purple boxes that really need to be replaced. Part of this effort also includes exploring if we still need the stanchions and ropes. Personally, I feel we don't need the ropes at the Great Scale shows, but I'm on the fence about what to do at the Festival of Trains at the B&O Museum. If you have any thoughts about this, please let me know.

Bob

PS: We are always looking for content for the newsletter. If you have any ideas for an article, do not hesitate to write it up!

Bob Mohr Module Update: Eric Payne

A quick update on the Bob Mohr modules. We discussed them in some detail at the last Club meeting (May). Broad topics included module joiner tracks (Kato vs FreeMoN), track feeders and switches, as well as storage requirements (trailer). There was also a request to develop a budget and submit it to the Club. Finally, a general timeline has been sketched out as well. So, here are some of the details. The set will be 5 modules using traditional pole legs. The R/Y/B lines, as well as the yard tracks will all use the Kato UniTrak Expansion tracks (similar installation to the Bantrak yard). To use this set up, we will also need smaller pieces of UniTrak. Just visualize the Bantrak Yard, and you will get the general idea.

Speaking of “keeping it simple”, the discussion of “how to wire it up” has been ongoing, and we are leaning toward a “hang a wire harness on it and wire it up” approach. That is to say, we take a look underneath, give it a good look over and understanding, and see what is the easiest. Bob used a lot of terminal strips and was pretty disciplined on wire colors and methods, so picking up where he left off should be simple. The switches will need to be reviewed as well. If there are tortoises, we are going to try and keep them functional with push button activations (similar to other modules in Bantrak). We think there may be some cases where a switch needs to be replaced. Our budget actually calls for a worst case scenario where zero switches are usable and all are replaced (not our intent, but if we had to do this, the money is there, and it makes up nearly a third of the budget).

Also, when speaking about saving money, we will need to build a rolling storage rack for these modules and we do have a lot of the material(s) needed for that in the trailer. So in the budget, the rolling carts are a zero dollar line item (for now). The rolling carts (2) will be @28 inches wide and @ 72 inches tall and either 36

or 48 inches deep. To explain it more simply, 2 carts 6 foot high ... 1 for 4 foot modules, and 1 for 3 foot modules. We will incorporate the items in the purple boxes (in the trailer) into the storage allocation on the carts. We will also leave room in the trailer for current modules (Club and Martin). We’ve measured it a few times and discussed with the subject matter experts, and this is the best way to store the modules after they are refurbished.

Speaking of refurbishment, the budget includes Legs, Track, Electric and Scenery. One new module (#5) and Rolling Carts are currently zero dollar items. The Track takes up the largest portion of the budget. Legs and Electric are about the same, and Scenery is put in as a placeholder in case we don’t get Club donations.

We can discuss more at the next meeting if needed. Next work session will install all the 3D printed leg holders and will be at the end of June.

Eric



Updating the 7-11 Corner: Bob Bunge

At the spring Great Scale Show, John and I realized we had room in our cars to take a club corner home to clean it up and prep for the upcoming National Convention. I would be able to take the corner back during the trailer raid prior to the convention.

John picked out the corner that has a 7-11 store up on a hill. I'm not sure what prompted him, but once we had it set up in the basement, it looked like a fun little project. As expected, it was dirty and dinged up from many years in the trailer and many shows. But what really stood out to me was the store and an office building on the hill. The store, in particular, since it had inside details cried out for indoor lighting. In addition to the cleaning and painting, this would be a fun upgrade.



I first used a brush along with warm soapy water to brush off the buildings. Just the brush alone didn't really have any effect, but adding the water made a huge difference. I then did the same with the vehicles, followed by the road surface. The side of the hill, made from styrofoam had some dings where it had been smacked during loading/unloading. I gave these a dab of brown paint followed by a mix of brown, black with a bit of green to match the surrounding hillside.



The module has a road that comes down the side of the hill, crossing over the red/yellow/blue lines. This bridge could be pulled off the module. A query on the Bantrak Facebook page brought a number of responses, that it could be removed to aid in track cleaning, but also at least once the bridge had been lost, a replacement made and the original found again.

I experimented with using Velcro to secure it, but in the end, after replacing a missing vehicle on the bridge - you could see the glue marks where it had been - I decided to glue the bridge in place.

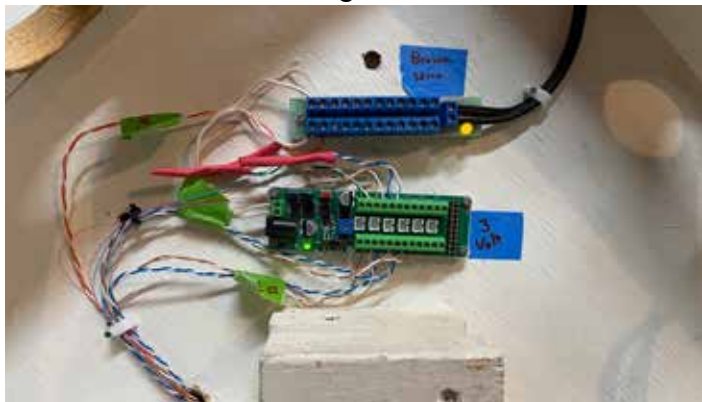
I fished two LEDs into both buildings and glued the wires in place in the back of the buildings. The 7-11 sign also asked to be lit, so using TinkerCAD, I created and 3D printed a box to go around the sign. I then put three small cool white LEDs in the box to backlight the sign. Once I had started this project, I kept looking at backlit outdoor store signs and realized they are rarely evenly lit which made my little upgrade a little easier. I also designed and printed a conduit for the back of the store to hide the wiring.

Updating the 7-11 Corner: Bob Bunge

In my junk bin, I had a package of automobiles with LEDs for head and tail lights. Sold in packs of 12, I had used one on a module and put the rest away. I glued one of these in the 7-11 parking lot.



Under the module, I tapped the brown line cable and ran a led to a small distribution board from Eve Model that I already had. I did pick up another Eve Model board that I've used on my own modules that makes installing LEDs much easier. The Brown line is 14 volt AC power. The cute automobile has resistors included, so it would wire directly into the brown line distro board. The LED board takes the 14 volts AC and converts it to either 5 or 3 volt DC, perfect for LEDs. All of the other lights were wired into this.



I'll be interested to see how the LED board stands up to the operating environment of the club module, the sometimes rough handling, the heat and cold of storage in the trailer, etc.

I used compressed air to brush off the trees and bushes. I understand David Betz did a refresh of the scenery work on this module in 2014. Overall he did a great job making scenery that has held up very well. Other work included repainting the black around the edges and refreshing the skyboard blue (the club has paint available for this purpose to make sure all modules match).

At the last show, Freddy had donated some scenery supplies to the club. Included was a box of plastic accessories that needed to be assembled. From this, I added a couple of benches, a table and chairs that were put on a patio on the office building and added several people to the scene.

In all, a fun little project. There are at least three other club corners that could use a refresh. If you don't have a module or want some experience, please reach out to a club officer about taking one of these home between shows.



BANTRAK 2024 Calendar

July 06, 2024

Newsletter content deadline

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

June 18-23, 2024

N Scale Convention

77 Wind Creek Bethlehem

Bethlehem, PA 18015

Coordinator: Paul Diley

July 21, 2024

Club Picnic

Coordinator: Al Del Gaudio

August 18, 2024

Club Meeting

Location: TBD

September 13-15, 2024

N Scale Weekend

Blair County Convention Center

Altoona PA.

Coordinator: Martin Myers

BANTRAK Membership: Eric Payne

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



Reading & Northern

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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