

The Engineer's Cab: Bob Bunge

Merry Christmas to all Bantrakers! Last night I pulled out the Lionel Christmas train. This year it is just a simple oval (compared to years past when it wandered around the 2nd floor of the house and into John's bedroom). My normal workhorse for this train, a postwar 622 bell ringing switcher needs service - it only wants to run in one direction and the E-unit is sticking. The green Hillview rounded end observation car from 1947 shorted out upon being put on the track. It looks like the original Lionel yellow wire for the lights has finally cracked in one too many places. Both will get serviced and repaired later today. That will be a HUGE difference from the N scale modeling I've been doing! Most of these trains were my father's. Grandpa was a shoe salesman at a Department store in Columbus. Each year after Christmas was over, he would buy some of the trains used on the Lionel display layout. As I learned when I repaired many of them years ago, they are well worn and were run in one direction for many hundreds of hours - hence the switcher favoring running in a single direction. Dad ran the heck out of them, as did my brother and I (long before we got into (N-scale) and John and his sister Maggie.

N scale wise, with the coming of cold weather and not being able to work on the outside of the house, I've been enjoying some modeling. This has ranged from working on the club's Ellicott City corner, repairing module legs and one of the club's leg carrying torpedoes, improving my CAD skills, to hacking a B&O front end onto a Mikado steamer. A coming chore will be to install the Christmas decorations on our city module in preparation for the big show at the B&O museum. If you haven't seen coordinator Freddy's emails, set up is December 27th. Be at the main gate at 8am. The club meeting will be around noon with the club providing pizza and drinks. Tear down of the layout will be the afternoon of January 4th. If you are a new member, this is an amazing venue and a chance to run on a layout that has been set up for a while and had the bugs worked out. Come to set up to sign up for a run slot.

I now turn over the President's gavel to the very capable hands of John Hale. I'm sure he has some great plans and ideas for his tenure as President for the next two years. Take it away John!

Merry Christmas,

Bob Bunge



Throttle Transport Bag: David Betz

Many of us who run DCC have the new Digitrax DT602D throttle. The throttle cost ~\$200 and has two large knobs. The size and shape make it challenging to store and transport. I not only bring my 602D to train shows, I also transport it to run trains at friends' homes. In addition to the 602D I also carry batteries, a rerailer, Lo-conet cable, an uncoupling tool, and a few other odds and ends as needed.



For years I have used a neoprene bag that was a buddy's medical supply bag. This bag is large and the items inside shift around and can be difficult to dig through. At the last train show the zipper on my transport bag broke. It was time to find a new bag and hopefully a better solution.



I searched Google and YouTube and even used AI to see what was out there. I found some really great bags and pouches. What I wanted was a bag that would securely hold all my gear and fit inside my locomotive transport box for train shows. That final piece became the biggest part of the challenge. I found numerous bags that would securely hold my gear, but wouldn't fit in my locomotive box. Finally I found the solution on Amazon.



The Tomtoc Electronics organizer with its external dimensions: 9.25" x 2.56" x 4.72", and a capacity of 1L. It seemed to be a perfect fit. Here is a photo of the outside of the bag and a photo on the next page with all of my gear and a few new items. So far I am very happy with the bag.



Throttle Transport Bag: David Betz



If you are interested here is a link to the bag:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09781ZY7X?ref=ppx_yo2ov_dt_b_fed_asin_title&th=1

T-Trak GSMTS Show report: Alan DelGaudio

Any endeavor needs a number of helping hands, so I'd like to thank all the T-Trak module participants; LeRoy, David Betz, Tim Laswell, Tim Nixon, Martin, Jeff, and John Hasson, as well those who came over from FreemoN to help with setting the tables, leveling and connecting the modules electrically.

We had the tables covered and blocked most of the modules in place by 12:30 when yours truly realized the DC/DCC power system was not packed. So, a trip to my home braving I-95 construction, which was resembling an I-95 trip through Fredericksburg VA at any hour of the day, was in order sooner rather than later. I returned with the power before 2 PM and was thrilled to see the layout set up and ready for juice.

We were running trains by 2:30, doing a tweak here or there. The layout used 7 tables and was comprised of LeRoy's 12 foot, 6-track yard and 2 feet of modules and the 2 large diameter 180s for about 2 feet.

Friday after 2:30 mostly consisted of testing locomotives and running a few short trains since testing with engines alone can fool you as to how well the layout is leveled and connected. All was fine with DCC and DC although there was an intermittent problem with Red Line Wireless DC.

On both Saturday and Sunday, we had trains running on both tracks 80+% of the time from 8:30 until Close. These included the California Zephyr, Chessie Steam Special, Nozomi 00, NS Coal, various CSX and Conrail trains, maintenance trains, and others.

The modeling looks good on many T-Trak modules and all are encouraged to consider building one or enhancing what they have [except David Bez, because I can't think of anything to improve them further.] Of note was that Jeff Kehrner has removable buildings on his modules. So his peace town street of Saturday gave way to the attack of Godzilla on Sunday. He told me Raymond Burr was there defending the town, but

I missed him.

To those who have been ambivalent about T-Trak, the up-front cost of a 2-foot module and Kato Unitrack is really not so much and we really could have gone another 6-feet or 6- more 2-foot modules (1-foot modules work too), if we stay in a simple long oval, but we are not constrained to that. Not to be underestimated, one can run DC and still keep up with your train, which can be difficult on the larger N-Trak layout.

Alan



Roland Park Place Show Report: Aurthur Boyd

Just like Santa's helpers, at 8:00 am 16 model railroader elves were busy setting up a train layout by the Christmas Tree in the meeting hall of Roland Park Place. Actually it filled pretty much the entire hall. And what a layout! About 70 sections of model railroad (I've lost count). Doors opened at 11:00 am, and trains ran (well, after fixing some electrical glitches) until 5:00 pm. It was all packed and out the door by 6:00 pm

A separate smaller layout enabled visitors - young folks especially, to run a train by themselves. Periodically throughout the day we projected on the large theater screen a video from last year, showing the railside view of the trains running and the amazing scenery and buildings. The modeling was impressive, and seeing the little kids running around the huge H-shaped layout, grabbing their parents to "come look" and then coming back later in the day to do it again - it was a joy! The parents and grandparents really liked it themselves, and asked lots of questions about model railroading, how we made the models, etc. They thanked us for bringing this show.

I shared those thanks with the RPP staff who helped us. There had been an important Board meeting in that room Friday evening, and then another event Saturday evening, both of which took many staff hours before and after. I saw many tired staff who had put in extra effort - and still made sure we had what we needed for the train show. In response to a note of appreciation I sent to the department heads who arranged the help, we (the model train folks) received this reply from the CEO of Roland Park Place:

"Thank you so much for taking the time to share this wonderful feedback. Dana and I will gladly pass your message along to our Facilities Services team — it will mean a great deal to them. They worked very hard throughout a busy weekend of events and knowing that their support helped make the train show such a success is truly appreciated. We're delighted to hear how much joy the display brought to the children,

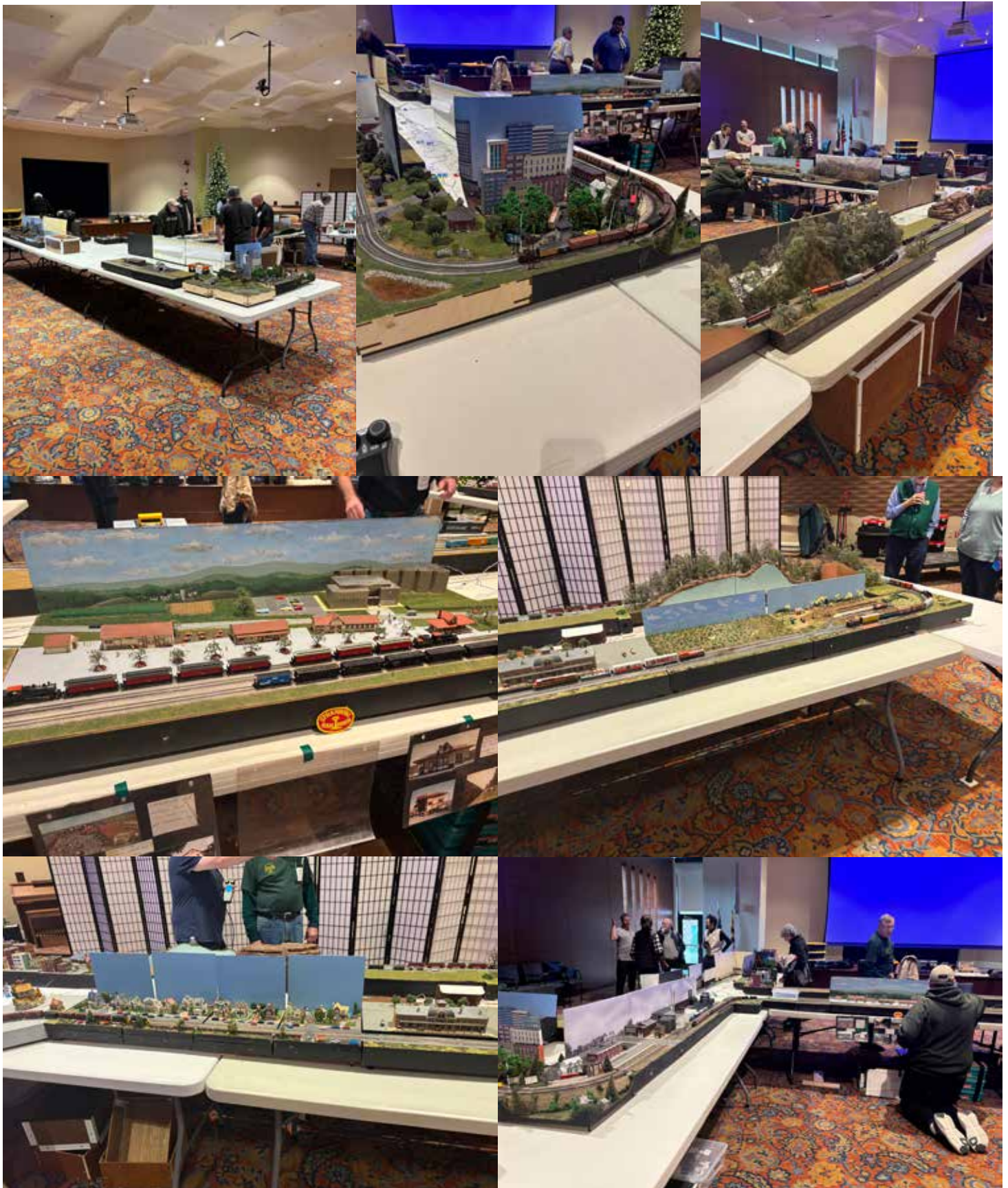
families, and hobbyists. The way you described the children's enthusiasm as they moved around the layout really shows how special the day was.

Thank you again for bringing this experience to our community and for recognizing the team's efforts — and thank you, Dana, for coordinating with the team to ensure everything ran smoothly."

Aurthur



Roland Park Place:



Bantrak Collector Release: Freddy Mitchell



EMD GP-30, Photo Credit: Scale Trains; <https://www.scaletrains.com/rivet-counter-ho-scale-emd-gp30m-chessie-system-b-o.html>

BANTRAK held its first meeting on January 29, 1983. Throughout our club's long and distinguished history, we have produced several special commemorative club cars to mark major milestones. Most recently, in 2023, our 40th Anniversary car was a 3D-printed kit designed by our very own President, Bob Bunge.

One notable item, however, has never been produced: a BANTRAK locomotive capable of pulling our Baltimore Belt Line (BBL) rolling stock. In preparation for our 45th Anniversary, I introduced the idea of creating a custom club locomotive during several club meetings.

Historically, BANTRAK has partnered with manufacturers such as Micro-Trains and Fox Valley Models for our anniversary cars. Due to current market conditions, Micro-Trains has been absorbed by the Atlas line and Fox Valley Models was acquired by Scale Trains several years ago. Over the past year, I have spoken with multiple manufacturers regarding the feasibility of a custom locomotive run. Based on those discussions, Scale Trains emerged as the most promising partner to bring this project to life.

In June 2024, Scale Trains announced their first four-axle N scale diesel locomotive: the EMD GP30. The company has also indicated that an EMD GP40 is in development. Both locomotives would be excellent candidates for a Baltimore Belt Line custom release.

Shortly after the GP30 announcement, I

contacted Scale Trains to explore what would be required to produce a BBL locomotive. While nothing has been formally agreed upon, the following preliminary details were provided to help the club prepare should sufficient interest exist:

1. Production Quantity

Scale Trains can support a BBL custom run. If we "tack on" to an existing Scale Trains production run, the minimum order quantity would be 48 locomotives. A fully independent run would require a minimum of 300 units. Based on past anniversary releases, tacking onto a manufacturer's run and producing approximately 48–60 locomotives is the most realistic option.

2. Road Numbers & Collectability

With a 48-unit run, Scale Trains can offer two road numbers. I propose using 1983 and 2028 to represent our founding year and 45th Anniversary. This would result in 24 locomotives of each number. Additionally, the club could include serialized collector cards (e.g., "This locomotive is No. 03 of 24") to enhance collectability.

3. Lead Time

Estimated production lead time is approximately 6 months to 1 year from order placement.

4. Paint Scheme Options

Scale Trains plans to release new GP30 (and likely GP40) paint schemes annually or biennially. The most suitable options for BANTRAK would be either:

- *Reading green/yellow, or

- *Chessie System B&O (which would match our Fox Valley cabooses)

Neither scheme has yet been announced in N scale, but the Scale Trains' project management team has suggested the Chessie B&O scheme is the more likely future release.

5. DCC/Sound vs. DC

The club will need to decide between DCC/

Bantrak Collector Release: Freddy Mitchell

sound-equipped or DC locomotives. Key considerations include:

- * DCC is the most common standard on club layouts; DC will not work for Freemo operations.
- * While DC units have a lower upfront cost, factory-installed DCC/sound locomotives are more cost-effective than upgrading later—and eliminate installation challenges.

6.Looking Ahead

A successful 45th Anniversary locomotive could pave the way for a truly significant project for BANTRAK's 50th Anniversary.

These points were presented during our October meeting at the Timonium Great Scale Train Show, where approximately 20 members were in attendance. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with interest expressed in

both the GP30 and GP40 options.

Scale Trains has consistently delivered high-quality N scale models, and a future Baltimore Belt Line locomotive would be a standout addition to our rosters. For now, we will continue to monitor upcoming paint scheme announcements and be ready to move forward when the right opportunity arises.

Freddy Mitchell





BANTRAK 2025 / 2026 Calendar

February 06, 2026

Newsletter content deadline

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

December 27, 2025 - January 04, 2026

B&O Festival of Trains

901 W Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21223

Coordinator: Freddy Mitchell

January 31, 2026 February 01, 2026

Great Scale Show

Timonium Fair Grounds

Coordinator: Eric Payne

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: Ed Kapucinski



Northern Central #17 in the snow Dec. 14, 2025

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