

Northern Virginia N-Trak

Club News

We held a business meeting on June 3 at Obie's Trains. The members approved a purchase of four MRC Cab 55 throttles. We now have those in our possession and have used them at our June setup. We are also ordering three five-channel radio headsets for use at meets and setups. This will eliminate a lot of the chatter inside the layout during shows. It should also allow us to run trains with a minimum crew of two.

Tom Reid, who is heading overseas to a new job, turned over his position as Setup Coordinator to Matt Schaeffer, who was elected unanimously. Charles Greenacre was elected as Backup Coordinator. Matt has already jumped in and is setting up a signup grid for the monthly setups so that we will know who is planning to attend and how many modules to expect. Matt is also working on our Fall shows (three of them) and will be providing information and asking for assistance in the near future.

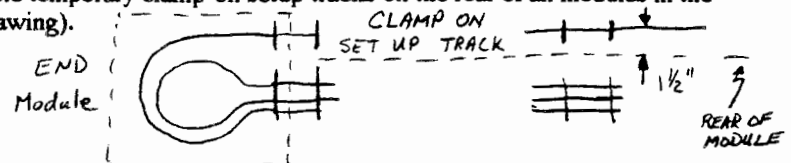
In other business, the Club members took another look at dues and our fee structure. It was decided that we eliminate the \$5 setup fee we had been charging each month and settle on two classes of Club dues: Associate and Full member. An Associate member will receive the Club newsletter and other notices, but will not be able to setup modules or run trains. A Full member has all rights of membership and will be able to setup any number of modules and run trains at all meets. Associate dues are \$10 annually while Full member dues are \$60 per year payable in two installments -- one in January and the other in July. We will be mailing the July assessments in this month's newsletter for current members. Non-members on our mailing list will be dropped at the end of December unless they join as Associate members. Of course, we will continue to exchange newsletters with other Clubs at no charge!

The dues issue has caused a lot of concern and discussion. We realize that not everyone looks forward to paying dues twice a year. However, we are now a viable Club with over 25 paid members, and we know we need a certain amount of equipment and materials to sustain our activities. We will be reassessing the dues structure annually to be sure that we keep the fees as low as possible. To help right now, we have established that all Full memberships are Family memberships covering the immediate family (spouse and children).

Members' Forum

Matt Schaeffer has offered some suggestions on maximizing train traffic during our setups, particularly when we have two end loops rather than a full circle. First of all, double up traffic by adding simple temporary clamp-on setup tracks on the rear of all modules in the layout. The end units would have two loops rather than one (see drawing).

Traffic can also be doubled again by using slowing blocks and running more than one train on a single line. Matt has offered to wire up a couple of his Cab 55's for our use. Finally, anyone who adds their own private loop (a la Tom Reid), will enhance activity.



Matt offers the following for those constructing new modules. Use dried out lumber or pick out the lightest wood in the store. Sap content and the weight of the wood varies. Use a maximum of 3/8" plywood and only where there is trackage. Plywood may not be needed under scenery. Support the surface with 1" x 2" cross members on 18" to 24" centers (2 per 6' module). The 1 x 2 also allows 2" more vertical space for depressions in scenery. Eliminate the homosote layer and use 1/4' cork on the roadbed to save weight and height. If Hydrocal is used, keep it to 1/8" thickness on wire screen on wood ribs. Screen can be flexed repeatedly until the contours & views are what you want -- before the hardshell is added! Several clubs use 1.5 x 1.5 sockets with thumb screws or just shims to hold the legs in place ... the fatest/lightest way to go. On corner modules you may be able to get by with only 3 stable legs. [Ed. note: I have found that a simple recessed folding leg set works well and saves set up time]

For Sale

Leonard White has a batch of aluminum N-Trak gages for \$8.00 each. These are the gages discussed in the N-Trak literature which are useful for trimming your rails to the proper length for joining modules. They actually came in handy at our June setup! Call Leonard White (370-9682) if you are interested. Leonard can also get #80 drill bits in quantity for a good price.

Other N-Trak News

For those of you who are not aware, there is a national N-Trak organization. A bi-monthly newsletter is published with lots of info on N-Scale activities. There are also N-Trak resource booklets covering everything from module construction to throttles. You can join by sending \$5.00 to: N-Trak Publishing, 2424 Alturas Rd., Atascadero, CA 93422, (805)466-1758. Jim FitzGerald runs the organization and handles the newsletter.

Railfan News

Norfolk Southern has many steam excursions this year headed by the N&W 611 or the Sou 4501. Coming up on October 10th is a trip from Roanoke, VA to Walton VA and on October 11th another trip from Roanoke to Bluefield, WV. If you are interested, contact the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society, P.O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA 24032, (703)389-3935.

Meeting Reminders

Our July setup is moved up a week to the 12th of July at the Reston Governmental Center on Bowman Towne Drive.

The August setup is on the 16th.

Planned shows:	Oct 16-18	MidEast Regional Fairfax Convention
	Nov 14-15	Rockville Lions Club, Rockville Senior Center
	Dec 13-14	Look into a layout in a mall

Last year at the Rockville Lions Club, 360 people attended at \$3 a head. They need an accurate estimate of space needed prior to the meet. Last year they expected 8 N-Trak modules and got 16! They are also inviting the Garden RR group. Should be widely advertised. [Ed. note: Please pass your comments about the planned shows to Matt Schaeffer at 703-978-2946. Should we try to limit our modules to those with scenery and the necessary bridge modules?]