

THE CALL BOARD



A 100% **NTRAK** CLUB

Celebrating Our 13th Year!

October 2004

Volume XIII

Number 10

Back to Basics

By John Steitz, Superintendent

Every September, my life on campus reverts back to a pattern of welcoming new students, new faculty, and new colleagues as another academic year begins. We start with the basics and work our way up as the semester progresses.

In a funny parallel, the workings of NVNTRAK now revert to a more “normal” course, after a year or more of planning and preparation for a successful convention.

And as we start up the regular schedule again, and proceed from smaller shows, to a big weekend in November, to Mall shows in the Spring, it’s a good time to review some of the fundamentals which we’ve taken for granted over the past year or so. We have many new members caught up in the excitement of N scale model railroading and the convention, who perhaps never got the full indoctrination. And even we grizzled veterans need a refresher now and then. If you get the little things right, all our layouts are easier to build and to operate, and you can have more fun for the amount of effort you put into the hobby.

In that vein, here are a few customs/rules that we in NVNTRAK take for granted, but which won’t ever show up in the NTRAK How-to Manual:

1. We are a modular model railroad club. Most, if not all, of our members *should* build or adopt an NTRAK module to fully participate in our activities. We’re not sticklers with timetables and such, and to the best of my knowledge, we’ve never insisted that every member own a module. But our principal activity – N Scale layouts in public places – depends on individual modules. And the decisions we make as a club relate to that fact. So unless you own a module, and bring it out to shows, you don’t really get what we are about.
2. You really should bring out your module at least twice a year – Spring and Fall – to help us with the many layouts we do each year. The fun we have running trains requires participation from many, so that the burden of our many layouts, large and small, is spread out onto many shoulders. It’s not fair if a small number of members are the only ones contributing their modules to our layouts. We call our trailers “layouts-in-a-box,” but that’s not really true, except for our smallest layouts. The contents of the trailers are really “yeast” that we add to members’ modules to create a functioning layout. If you’re not bringing your module out to shows, you’re not really contributing to the central mission of our club.
3. When you bring out your module to a show, please bring your clamps, connecting track, and power strip, too. Club supplies (connecting track, rail joiners, clamps, power strips) are really intended to support club-owned modules, and to serve as emergency spares for members. They’re not a moveable warehouse of parts that you should be bringing yourself. The hardest thing to stock up on is connecting track, because you might have to build up a supply of twenty or thirty pieces of varying lengths. But if everyone supplied their own connecting track (as they should), maybe we’d all pay more attention to correctly-

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The View from the Gap

Cotton Bowen, President

The Convention is now history and we as club members are at a decision point. We had about 80% of the club turn out or show up for the convention. That is a notable achievement and show of support, but now what do we do? As members we can lay back and rest on the pleasant memories of a job well done, or, we can take our new knowledge, reinforced enthusiasm and do something with it. LIKE, RUN TRAINS. Now is the time to get back into the club activities. We have a busy October and November ahead of us. I won’t recount all of our forthcoming activities, but we need the membership to support the program. I hope that all of you will sign up and participate. We have some great activities on the schedule, and it would be a shame for you to miss these events.

Last month, I recognized members who made significant contributions to the Convention. This month one member is the focus of recognition. This is a member who has contributed to our overall activities, including the convention for a long time, but especially in the last year. **John Steitz** has served as the club Superintendent for almost a year and contributed to the club for years. During that time, he has produced a professional quality video tape of club operations; he has expanded the Superintendent

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R A I L E V E N T S T I M E T A B L E

Sunday, Oct. 2-3, Altoona Railfest, Altoona PA [Road Trip]; Station Mall, 9th Avenue and 17th Street, Altoona, PA 16602, (814) 946-3088; Show Coordinator: Jerry Edelblette [814-693-1673]; NVNTRAK Coordinator: Cotton Bowen (703) 450-5857; Trlr: NVX2; Set-up: Fri. 10/1 1500-2100 Hrs., Sat. 0700-0900 Hrs.; Clamp-down: Sat. 0800 Hrs.; Show Hours: Saturday - 0900-2100 Hrs.; Sunday - 0900 - 1600 Hrs.; Layout Type: Medium Oval in Mall storefront

Saturday, Oct. 2, 1000-1600 Hrs., Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad Open House Cancelled.

Sunday, Oct. 3, 1200-1700, October Back Shop; Fellowship Hall, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8403 Old Keene Mill Road Springfield, VA; Contact: John Steitz (703) 371-5171 steitzj@georgetown.edu ; Trlr: NVX1

Projects: oNeTRAK layout
Benchwork for New Modules
Electrical and track testing of new modules for Oct. and Nov. shows

Use parking lot behind church complex

Saturday, Oct. 9, 1000-1600: Fire Prevention Day; Fairfax (Franconia) Fire Station #5, 6300 Beulah Street [Beulah & Franconia Rd.], Alexandria VA 22310 [Near Franconia Rd. and Van Dorn Street, east of Springfield Mall] (703) 971-5858; Coordinator: Brian Brendel (703) 244-7594; Trlr: NVX2 (in place); Set-up: Sat. 0800-1000 Hrs.; Clamp-down: Sat. 0900 Hrs.; Show Hours: 1000 - 1700 Hrs. Layout Type: Small oval, OLI

Saturday/Sunday, Oct. 9-10: *Great Scale Model Train Show; [Shopping Trip];* The Cow Palace, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD No NVNTRAK layout.

Sunday, Oct. 17, 1300-1600 Hrs. Museum Layout; Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, P.O. Box 7, Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039 (703) 425-9225; Coordinator: John Steitz; Trlr: NVX2; Set-up: 1130 - 1300 Hrs.; Clamp-down: 1200 Hrs.; Unload in parking lot, then move vehicle across street to overflow lot.; Layout Type: Small Oval, OLI

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 1900 - 2100 Hrs. NVNTRAK Board of Directors Meeting; Mark and Carol Sisk's Home, 4020 Kloman St., Annandale, VA (703) 280-5290; Non-module event

Saturday, Nov. 6, 1000-1500 Hrs. Silver Spring Station Layout; Silver Spring Amtrak/MARC Station, Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD; Coordinator: Jeff Peck (410) 451-9639; Trlr: NVX2 [Trlr Hauler Still needed]; Set-up: 0800-1000 Hrs.; Clamp-down: 0900 Hrs.; Unload at Station Door, park on the South side of the Station; Layout Type: Small Oval

Sunday, Nov. 7, 1200-1700, November Back Shop; Fellowship Hall, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8403 Old Keene Mill Road Springfield, VA; Contact: John Steitz; Trlr: NVX1

Projects: oNeTRAK layout
Trackwork for New Modules
Electrical and track testing of new modules for Nov and Dec. shows

Use parking lot behind church complex

Friday/Saturday/Sunday, Nov. 12-13-14: South Mountain Express 2004 [NMRA Mid-East Region Fall Convention]; Clarion Hotel & Conference Center, Hagerstown, Maryland; Coordinator: John Drye (703) 922-8131; Trlr: None! [Both Trlrs needed at other shows]; Set-up: Fri. 0800-1200 Hrs.?.; Clamp-down: Fri. 1100 Hrs.? Show Hours: Fri. 1200 - 2200 Hrs.; Sat. 0800-2200 Hrs.; Sun. 0800-1200 Hrs.?.; Layout Type: Nn3 Layout; oNeTRAK Layout

Saturday/Sunday Nov. 13-14: Rockville Lion's Club Train Show; Rockville Senior Center, 1150 Carnation Drive, Rockville, MD, (240) 314-5019; Coordinator: Dave Greenacre (703-391-7447) and Edd Braithwood (703-860-2899); Trlr: NVX1; Set-up: Sat. 0700-1000 Hrs.; Clamp-down: Sat. 0900 Hrs.; Show Hours: Sat. 1000-1700 Hrs., Sun. 1000-1600 Hrs.; Unload and park in rear lot, or in overflow parking on grass.; Layout type: Medium Oval

Saturday, Nov. 13, 1000-1600 Hrs.: Damascus Railroad Day; Damascus Community Library, 9701 Main Street, Damascus, MD 20872, (301) 253-5100; Coordinator: Dave Freshwater (301) 717-6501; Trlr: NVX2; Set-up: 0800-1000 Hrs.; Clamp-down: 0900 Hrs.; Layout Type: Small oval, OLI

Tuesday, Nov. 16, 1900 - 2100 Hrs. NVNTRAK Board of Directors Meeting; Mark and Carol Sisk's Home, 4020 Kloman St., Annandale, VA (703) 280-5290; Non-module event

Saturday, Nov. 20. 0900-1300 Hrs. Layout to Benefit Fairfax Hospital. Centerville Multiplex, 6201 Multiplex Dr, Centerville, VA 20121. Coordinator: Brian Brendel (703) 244-7594. Trailer: NVX2. Set-up: Sat. 0700-0900 Hrs. Clamp-down: Sat. 0800 Hrs. Show Hours: 0900 - 1300 Hrs. Layout Type: Small oval. OLI.

Saturday/Sunday, Nov. 20-21: Greenberg Train Show; Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, VA; **Shopping Trip; Non-module event.** We're giving up our slot in this show to other modular clubs who were unable to participate in the train show during our Convention in August.

Sunday, Nov. 21, 1300-1600 Hrs. Museum Layout. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, P.O. Box 7, Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039 (703) 425-9225. Coordinator: John Steitz. Trailer: NVX2 [John Steitz, hauling]. Set-up: 1130 - 1300 Hrs. Clamp-down: 1200 Hrs. Unload in parking lot, then move vehicle across street to overflow lot. Layout Type: Small Oval. OLI.

Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 4-5, Holiday Model Train Show, Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, P.O. Box 7, Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039 (703) 425-9225. Show Hours: Sat. 1000-1700, Sun. 1200-1600. No NTRAK Layout - operate Caboose layout only. OLI. Contact: John Steitz. No Trailer. Park on street, or in overflow lot across street from station.

No Back Shop in the month of December

Sunday, Dec. 12. NVNTRAK Holiday Party. Non-module event. Details T.B.D.

View from the Top

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staff from a one person operation to a three person cell. He has been a moving force in building new module racks for the trailers, and he has reorganized the trailers. John's contributions have been so numerous that I cannot name them all. John, thanks for a job well done! If you have not received one already, there is a President's Conductors Pin for you.

It is almost time for a New Year to start. In some ways now that the Convention is over, the New Year is here. I hope I see all of you in the upcoming weeks and months. It is time to RuN TraiNs again!

View from Zoo Tower

John Steitz, Superintendent



Welcome back to the "routine" of smaller layouts and a more relaxed hobby experience. I hope you've had time to rest and recoup from our little layout at Chantilly in August. <g>

October starts our fall campaign in earnest. And November will be a very busy month, with no fewer than seven (7) events in the three weeks prior to Thanksgiving. Please consult the *Rail Events Timetable* for all the details. I'm in the process of lining up Greenberg and Mall shows for the first part of 2005, so these smaller layouts should serve as a warm-up for grander things to come.

There are a few events I'd like to highlight. On Saturday, October 9th, we're setting up a layout at the *Franconia Fire Station* for Fire Prevention Day. On Saturday, November 6, we have a layout again at *Silver Spring Station*. And on Saturday, November 20, we're doing a layout at a new venue – the *Centerville Multiplex*, to benefit the **Women's and Children's Division of Inova Fairfax Hospital** (our designated club charity). All these layouts, though small, are to benefit a good cause, and could use your support.

And please mark the weekend of November 11-12-13-14 on your calendar. We have no fewer than three (3) shows that weekend, at various times, and all will be in play on Saturday, the 13th. We need members and modules for all these, especially Hagerstown (**oNeTRAK** and **Nn3**). If you are available that weekend, please help out at one of those shows.

Because of the **oNeTRAK** layout at Hagerstown, we will set-up DCC-controlled **oNeTRAK** layouts at each of the next two *Backshops* – October 3 and November 7. If you have **oNeTRAK**, please bring it out to those *Backshops*. And if you have an interest in DCC, this will be your opportunity to learn a little bit more about it.

One point which I'd like to stress this fall - *please* sign up your modules for public shows ahead of time. Contact the Layout Coordinator in advance; tell him/her what modules you are bringing and any special concerns you may have. [If you can't reach the Coordinator, or are unsure whom to speak to, please contact me as Superintendent.] Please *do not* just show up at a layout (even Fairfax Station) with a module, unannounced. That causes headaches for the Coordinator, and we may not be able to accommodate last-minute entries. Let's pretend we're doing all our layouts at Howard Johnson's – "No Surprises." Thank you.

And those of you who don't have any show-ready modules can always assist at set-up or tear-down. Many hands make light the work. If you think you can help out, please contact the Set-up Coordinator to let him/her know you will be there and to straighten out any of the logistics.

For those of you inspired by the Convention to build modules, that is what the *Backshops* are for! Bring out that half-completed module this fall, and with a little bit of effort, it can be ready for the Mall shows and other shows next spring. I'm pleased to report that we will be repeating in 2005 the 5-month soup-to-nuts module building cycle we debuted this past year. Between now and February, the workshops of **Cotton Bowen** and **Marc Sisk** will be helping members turn out module frames. Each *Backshop* between February and May will then concentrate on a particular phase of module construction – track, wiring, scenery, etc.

At the same time you are building your own modules, we'll be building four new Mountain *POFFs* to live in **NVX-1**, the large trailer. Many thanks to **Paul Diley** for helping me build a new *POFF* rack, which has already been installed into **NVX-1**. The new club *POFFs* in that rack will give **NVX1** more of a "layout in a box" capability like its smaller sister, **NVX-2**. The four Mountain *POFFs* will join four Mountain Corners in that trailer. Those, plus the *Big Rock Mountain* and *Scrapwood Mountain* turn-back loops, owned by **Leo Bicknell** and **Leonard White**, respectively, will allow us to do more entire layouts, and more portions of layouts, with Mountain Line trackage in 2005.

If you need any assistance with planning your next module, please track me down at a *Backshop* or a layout. Building and fine-tuning a beautiful module is a great way to pass the colder days indoor, and to lift your spirits as the days get shorter. We have some great shows coming up next spring, so have at it, and enjoy!

I'll see you at an **NVTRAK** layout soon. *Semper Gumby!*

Call Boards on CD

By Glenn McLain

Thanks to everyone who helped me in compiling a CD with all of the old **NVTRAK Newsletters** and **Call Boards**.

Now that we have Volume 1, Number 1 to current (*September 2004*) on a CD, I would like to know who would like a copy of the CD. I've been given a copy to some already and need to know how many more I need to produce to ensure that all who would like a copy have one.

I had to read every one before I scanned it and found all sorts of interesting items and how to's over the years.

Please drop me a note at gmclain@avdp.org and I'll do my best to have them ready for *Fairfax Station* in October.

BOD Meeting—September 21, 2004

By Marc Sisk

The BOD meeting was convened at 8:00PM. All members were present with the exception of **Paul Diley**, **Steve Jackson** and **Matt Guey-Lee**. **John Drye** was also present representing the *Capitol Limited* Convention. **Matthew Prentice** and **Leonard White** were also in attendance.

Cotton Bowen mentioned that **Bill Baldwin** was in the hospital undergoing dialysis treatment and was doing better and making progress. His daughter sent an email stating he was doing better and appreciated the card, flowers and our thoughts and prayers. **John Drye** and **Mark Franke** visited him over the weekend and cheered him up. **John** thought he would be going home soon.

Steve Jackson was not present but provided input via email. He thanked **John Steitz** for making the recent club purchase of *DigiTrax* equipment easy for him. He also mentioned that he had received 15 CD's of pictures from the Japan contingent who came to our *Capitol Limited* convention. He will bring them to the *October Backshop*. **Cotton** mentioned that the club is in good financial condition.

Matthew Prentice mentioned that we need to send out another club roster to the membership since it had been some time since we had done that. He also suggested that the club email address(s) be put in each issue of the *Call Board*. It could be placed right under the BOD member's names and numbers that already appear in each issue.

John Steitz covered the upcoming fall schedule of events for the club. Next up on the schedule is the Burn Camp in Arlington on September 26th. We then have Altoona Rail Fest on the 2nd and 3rd, our Backshop also on October 3rd with a focus on **oNeTRAK** modules, a Fire Prevention Day setup and Fairfax Station. Events will be shown in the Rail Events Timetable with all the usual coordinating instructions. Please refer to them for details on these and other future events. An addition to the schedule was discussed. There is an opportunity for the club to set up a small layout in the lobby of the *Centerville* movie complex on November 20th. The *Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children* will be sponsoring a preview showing of *The Polar Express*. They would like us to join them in being a part of that event. The club would get publicity in the Hospital's advertising for the showing. **Brian Brendel** will follow up on the details and see if we need to provide insurance. He will report back to the BOD on his findings. **John** and **Paul Diley** recently built a POFF rack for **NVX-1** trailer so that it will have the capability of a "layout in a box" similar to **NVX-2**.

The club web site was discussed. It is important to keep our site up to date, especially since many new folks may be going to it for information after the convention. It was suggested that a group effort may be helpful to keeping it updated. For example, **John Steitz** could be responsible to keep the events portion of the site updated. **Brian Brendel** would update the membership area, etc. Since **Matt Guey-Lee** was absent, no firm decision was made. **Brian** provided **Matt** suggestions for interim updates via email.

John Drye provided a preliminary *Capitol Limited* report. He made some general recommendations for use of the funds generated from the event. We need to reimburse the club for the funding received as seed money plus a portion to set aside for future similar events. Other recommendations included donations to *OLI*, Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children, *Prince of Peace Church* and the *Fairfax Station Railroad Museum*. Potential upgrades to the trailers and some form of giving back to the club members are also options to be considered. **John** will prepare a formal recommendation fore the BOD to consider. Two items were recommended and approved. We will purchase a portable booth display unit for *OLI* presentations and a gas barbeque grill for Fairfax Station replacing their broken one. **John** mentioned that *Micro Trains* is going to produce more of the convention cars (new numbers) to fill orders. They are also producing a new run of cars with the *Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children* logo on them that will be available for purchase with all proceeds going to the hospital. Additional trailers from *S&R* models are also being produced.

New business – **John Steitz** asked the BOD to approve the construction of four new mountain *POFFs* to be built during the Jan-May 2005 timeframe. He provided some initial plans for them. This will be a group effort. The purpose/goal is to have a complete layout in the **NVX-1** trailer. The estimated cost for this is between \$400-\$600. The BOD approved this action. **John** also mentioned that organizers are seeking our participation in the NTRAK layouts at the 2005 and 2006 NMRA conventions. The 2005 convention is looking to have a quality versus quantity layout and is seeking high quality modules. **John** will canvas the club to see who is planning to attend this event in Ohio next year. For the 2006 convention, there is some concern over union rules allowing folks to transport and set up using power tools in the convention site. There is time to work those details out and is not a problem for the club to address.

The BOD meeting adjourned at 9:30PM.

Convention Update

The second run of **Micro-Trains** cars will be for the benefit of our designated charity, the *Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children*. The cars will be slightly redesigned, with the *Inova Fairfax* hospital logo appearing on the car, as well as on the package insert. Plans are for a limited run of 150 pairs, with the cars in the production queue for January 2005.

With the redesign come some changes. Single cars will not be available for order; only pairs. The price for a pair of cars has also increased, from \$45 to \$65. These cars will be handled separately, with all orders being processed by the *N Scale Collector Society*. Their shipping price will be \$7.50, and is a separate charge from the shipping fee we will charge on other convention extra fare items.

Ordering instructions for the 2nd run cars are not yet available. They have been removed from ordering from our web site. A future link will point people to the NSC website. All other Convention extra fare items remain available for order. Delivery on those items will be by Christmas.

Back to Basics

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- spaced rail cut-backs at the ends of our modules[!]
4. It's your responsibility to get your module onto its feet, and properly leveled (approx. 40" from floor to the top of the roadbed is the NVNTRAK standard), so that it's ready to be clamped into the layout. Ask for help if you need it, but it's your job to see that it gets done. If you do that as soon as you can, clamp-down takes less time for all involved. In addition to objective measurement from the floor, you need to take a level and make sure your module doesn't slant from one end to the other. The object is to provide a level track for the NTRAK mainlines. So if the floor is uneven (and many floors are), the need to level trumps the measurement from the floor. Raise one module, and/or lower another to get a section level, but don't wait for an overworked set-up coordinator to do it for you. You may not be able to control the rest of the layout, but you can make certain that the problem spot is not on your own module.
 5. After clamp down, everyone should be inserting connecting track. Plan on doing the connections on both sides of your module(s), and if you get lucky by being next to a quicker neighbor, take time to connect up track on a club-owned module down the line. A 1/8th inch rail gap in connecting track is too much. Period. Cut flex track to fit, if you must. Once you insert connecting track, check the level again. Save the ski jumps for Killington or Aspen, and get them out of our layouts. [See photo on the mailing wrapper of ski jumps being removed at Fairfax Station. – Ed.]
 6. When connecting track is in, connect your wiring underneath to your neighbor, put up a skirt on your module (on those layouts here we use skirts), and help out with ropes and stanchions. Always clean your track with a bright-boy eraser every time you set it up. If you have track that you don't want anyone else to touch, please let us know – but then, it had better be clean when trains roll through!
 7. We use different power supplies on our layouts at different times, and for different purposes. We almost always start with the Lindsay throttles to find and destroy shorts in the track and other irregularities. Thereafter, we switch to either Aristo or Digitrax train control for show operations. If you have a favorite power supply for running trains, please educate yourself on how it works, and learn how to set it up. Someday, your knowledge may fix a problem on a layout.
 8. On our layouts, those members bringing modules for the layout get first chance to sign up for running slots. After those, members who did not bring a module, but who assisted in setting up the layout get the next shot at run times. Thereafter, everyone else can sign up for whichever run times are left. It is very poor form to continuously show up to run trains on our layouts, with-

out having either contributed a module, or having assisted with set-up, tear-down, or both.

9. If you can't start bringing your own module to layouts for a while, please help us set-up, operate, and tear-down layouts, to get a feel for the process, and ideas for your own module. Consider adopting a club module and sprucing it up. During shows, we always need folks to stand outside the layout and answer questions from the public, and trailer haulers are appreciated as well. We need members to run the *Fairfax Station* caboose layout at the ten third-Sunday shows we do each year, as well during the weekend-long multi-scale train shows in May, September and December.
10. By convention, we wear our Blue **NVNTRAK** shirts on Saturdays, and our Gray **NVNTRAK** shirts on Sundays. Yellow shirts from either the 1996 or 2004 conventions are appropriate at any time. You don't **have** to wear any club-affiliated garb at all, but in that case, make sure you have your name tag or member ID card to get into train shows free as an exhibitor. If you get in free, **try** to help us with the layout, somehow, so you're not cheating the train show operator.

If you have any questions about these or other customs of the club, please contact me, or any set-up coordinator. If we all pitch in, layouts will be easier to build, and we'll have more fun running trains.

Semper Gumby!

Retirement Planning

On September 1, **USA Today** reported on the top 10 retirement communities, according to an annual statistical study. Florence, OR, was rated #1, with Medford-Ashland, OR, was rated as #7, up from 11 last year. There is no indication whether easy access to the **Micro-Trains** factory was considered in the ratings. However, Medford has probably moved up, since Melbourne, FL, was rated #4. The ratings were made before Hurricanes Francis and possibly Jeanne hit that area.

Right Side Of The Tracks

From the Washington Post Express paper, 9-14

Not many people get run over by a train and live to tell about it. Shawn Polley did – but won't remember much of his story. Police in Le Mars, Iowa, say Polley was drunk and passed out between the rails on a set of railroad tracks earlier [in September]. A train engineer didn't notice Polley until his train had passed over the sleeping man. Miraculously, Polley wasn't hurt. Police said that when the finally reached the scene, they had to wake him up.

Another reason for Rule 707: Those who are drunk and obviously insane will be kept away from the tracks. He was lucky there were no plows or anything hanging down from the train. This is not a way to impress *Operation Lifesaver* presenters.

Anderson Powerpole Connectors

by Doug Stuard

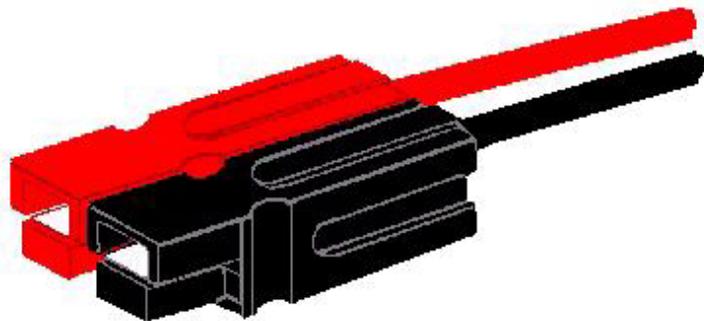
For the past 30 years, the published **NTRAK** standards have proven to be invaluable in ensuring the compatibility of modules assembled from far and wide to build layouts large and small, culminating in the MegaLayout at **Capitol Limited** in Chantilly in August.

For any standard to be effective however, it must accommodate innovation and change. The introduction of *DCC* and its growing adoption within the N Scale community (and by extension, **NTRAK**) has highlighted some shortcomings in the original **NTRAK** specifications that could not have been envisioned some 30 years ago when **NTRAK** was first established.

The issue of “*DCC* friendly” turnouts has received much attention over the past few years, and recommendations concerning turnout characteristics have been published in a number of venues, including Allan Gartner’s excellent “Wiring for *DCC*” pages and the **North Raleigh Model Railroad Club’s** *DCC* pages on the internet.

A second aspect of *DCC* operation, current carrying capability, has highlighted the limitations of the venerable Cinch-Jones (aka “*CJ*”) connector in carrying the higher currents typically encountered in *DCC* operation. That, along with reliability issues, increased cost and reduced availability, has prompted a look at alternatives to the *CJ* connector.

A connector that shows considerable promise is the 30 Amp *Powerpole* connector by **Anderson Power Products**. The *Powerpole* is a genderless connector that has been adopted nationwide by ham radio and public safety organizations for high current 12-volt power distribution and connection. It is lightweight and inexpensive, can be easily assembled into multi-conductor configurations, and can withstand repeated connect/disconnect cycles without performance degradation. These are exactly the characteristics that make it ideal for modular model railroad use.

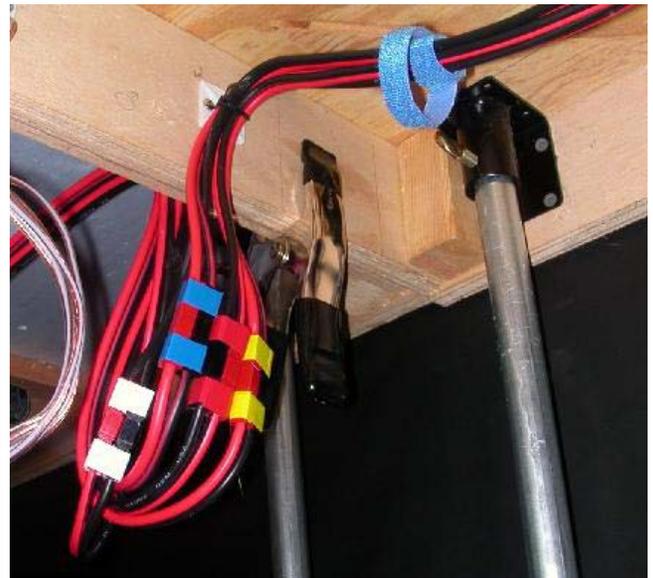


Anderson Powerpole Connector

In researching these connectors in some detail (I’m a picky EE), I have found *Powerpoles* to be technically superior (with roughly one-third the contact resistance of the *CJ*), while at the same time being flexible and quite easy to use. Properly configured, they also allow modules to be reversed without adapters or jumper cables, all the while keeping front rail/rear rail orientation and white line polarity straight.

I have developed a proposed specification (actually, a recom-

mendation) for the application of *Powerpole* connectors as an alternative to the *CJ* for **NTRAK** use that incorporates these features, and have replaced the *CJs* on my Col-fax modules with them (see below). Initial reaction from those that have reviewed the proposal (both in the national organization as well as some well known “gurus of *DCC*”) has been positive, and work is underway to present the *Powerpole* connector as a possible “alternate standard” for **NTRAK** use.



Powerpoles in Use (#12 Wire!)

For those that are interested, I am prepared to present a short clinic on these connectors and their application at the October 3rd *Backshop*, including examples of the connectors in use on a module under construction. I have also posted the proposal as well as part numbers and sources ([AltConnector0817.pdf](#) and [Powerpole Part Numbers.pdf](#), respectively) in the “files” sections of the **NVNTRAK** and **NTRAKDCCSIG** Yahoo groups. Copies of these will also be available at the backshop.

[Editor—Anderson Powerpole connectors have not been accepted as an NTRAK standard. There is no problem if the connectors are used on the interior of module sets. If they are used where a module will connect with an NTRAK standard module, the owner will need to provide a set of adapters that will allow the Powerpoles to connect to the standard Cinch-Jones plug.]

*While Cinch-Jones connectors are no longer carried by RadioShack, they are available from a variety of electronic component suppliers. NVNTRAK normally makes a bulk purchase and keeps *CJs* on hand for sale to members. (In general, they are sold for less than the item cost when RadioShack stocked *CJs*.) The club treasurer, Steve Jackson, maintains the club *CJ* stock.]*

**MODULE OF THE MONTH—
 POSSUM POINT/QUANTICO CREEK
 BY JOHN COOK
 [Originally published in February 1997.]**

My decision to model the **RF&P** crossing at Quantico Creek was a natural. I was looking for a real world triple track main to model and I love building bridges. I just seemed too good to be true. A modern concrete single track bridge was built over Quantico Creek along side the old steel double track causeway/bridge it was replacing. *AND* at the Possum Point power plant just to the north of Quantico Creek there was a mile long coal siding immediately adjacent to the double track main. To top it off, the power plant gate is only about 6 miles from my house and there are good pictures of the bridges “now” and “then” under construction in the **RF&P** reference book that I have. The hand of fate was heavy on my decision!

Building an **NTRAK** module based on a real location is very rewarding, but it can be frustrating, too. Virtually everything must be

scratchbuilt because no one makes the kits you need. For me, this was no big deal because I enjoy building from scratch and kit bashing. It just took time — lots of time. The biggest problem I had was when I realized that the real world is many, many times too big to fit on an eight foot module. Some of the “old time” **NVNTRAK**ers will remember when Possum Point was “under construction” with earth movers, graders, bulldozers, trucks, signs, piles of dirt and barricades. Selective compression had worked well on the Quantico Creek crossings, but I just got overwhelmed by the challenge of trying to fit a power plant that would be at least ten by forty feet in N Scale into the left half of a two by eight foot module. There just was not enough room for everything — or even one of each thing. My frustration peaked. I got “builder’s block” and couldn’t get restarted for nine months.

I tried to arrange a plant tour and a photo opportunity, but gave up. I had a few photos taken from the road. It wasn’t much to go on, but finally, I “just did it” — remembering the idea is to capture the effect, not to build a detailed architect’s model.

Then **NVNTRAK** set up at the RailFest in

Fredericksburg. (Now, that’s a whole other story!!!) Whatever else happened there came to matter less to me, because a man stopped by, looked at what I had, and said he though the overall impression of the plant was pretty good. Then he started telling me what was in the wrong place and what I was missing. I quickly discovered he was the brand new plant manager at Possum Point. Cleverly, I converted his interest into an invitation to tour the plant *AND* take Bernie along to take pictures. There is no substitute for good photos of the prototype and a walk around the facility to get a feel for the layout and structures. The rest, as they say, is history.

The reward finally comes when someone in Orlando (at the **NTRAK** East Convention in 1994) looked at the power plant and said: “Hey, we saw that on our way down on the *AutoTrain!*”. Or when a man in Springfield Mall says: “I used

to work there.” Or someone else points to the boats in the water and the foot of the bridge and says: “I’ve been fishing right there!” Life can be soooooo sweet.....



[Ed.—Since this article was published, Possum Point/Quantico Creek has drawn many new admirers—including the engineer for the switcher at the Plant. Of course, time changes and

the plant uses natural gas now instead of coal. The single track bridge is the only one in place today. But, the Commonwealth of Virginia, CSX and VRE continue to discuss eliminating the bottleneck of a single track bridge at this point. Maybe someday soon, there will be a new bridge to provide a three track prototype for an updated module set for another club member.]

[Ed.—What was the inspiration for your module? Write it up yourself, or tell it to your friendly editor, and your module can appear in this space.]

September Photo Album



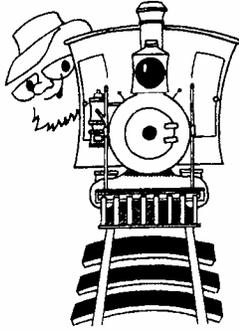
September set-up at Fairfax Station—the only club event before the publication deadline



Photo Credits

Doug Stuard—All on page 6
Bernie Kempinski—Module of the Month
James Altobello—All on this page and Mailing Wrapper





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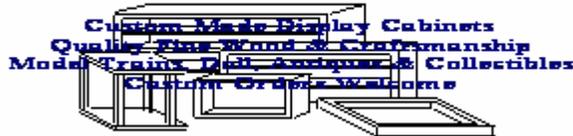
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Northern Virginia NTRAK, Inc.

P.O. Box 523051; Springfield, VA 22152

Member Helpline: (703) 391-2941 (Ext 3)

<http://www.nvntrak.org/>

Northern Virginia NTRAK 2004 Officers:

President: Cotton Bowen (703) 450-5857

<cwbowen@earthlink.net>

Secretary: Marc Sisk (703) 280-5290 <NPMRFAN@aol.com>

Treasurer: Steve Jackson (703) 323-5985

<sjackson@nvntrak.org>

Superintendent: John Steitz (703) 371-5171

<steitzj@georgetown.edu>

NVNTRAK E-mail Lists

NVNTRAK maintains a list server in conjunction with the club web site. A message addressed to <nvntrak@nvntrak.org> reaches all club members who are subscribed to the list. To subscribe, or if your e-mail has recently changed, contact the Webmaster, **Matt Guey-Lee**, at <matthew.gueylee@cox.net>.

NVNTRAK also has a Yahoo Group. One advantage of the Yahoo Group is that files can be uploaded and shared. To join the Yahoo Group, if you are not already a member, go to: <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NVNtrak/>>. There will be a button there that allows you to join.

These entrepreneurs are NVNTRAK members, who offer benefits to all NVNTRAK members. Be sure to show membership card and ask about benefits before your purchases are rung up.



Editor—David Freshwater

The *Call Board* is produced monthly by and for the membership of NVNTRAK and selected supporters.

A subscription for continental USA residents is available for a \$20/year donation. Payment should be made to the club treasurer, at the address in the box to the left.

Items for publication should be submitted in MS Word or text format; either are acceptable. Send submissions to the Editor:

david.freshwater@west-point.org

All submissions must contain clear text identification of the author to be accepted for publication. **Articles and other submissions for the November 2004 issue MUST be received by October 23, 2004.**

Northern Virginia NTRAK membership is \$45/year Dues are payable each January. **Northern Virginia NTRAK** membership includes NTRAK membership.

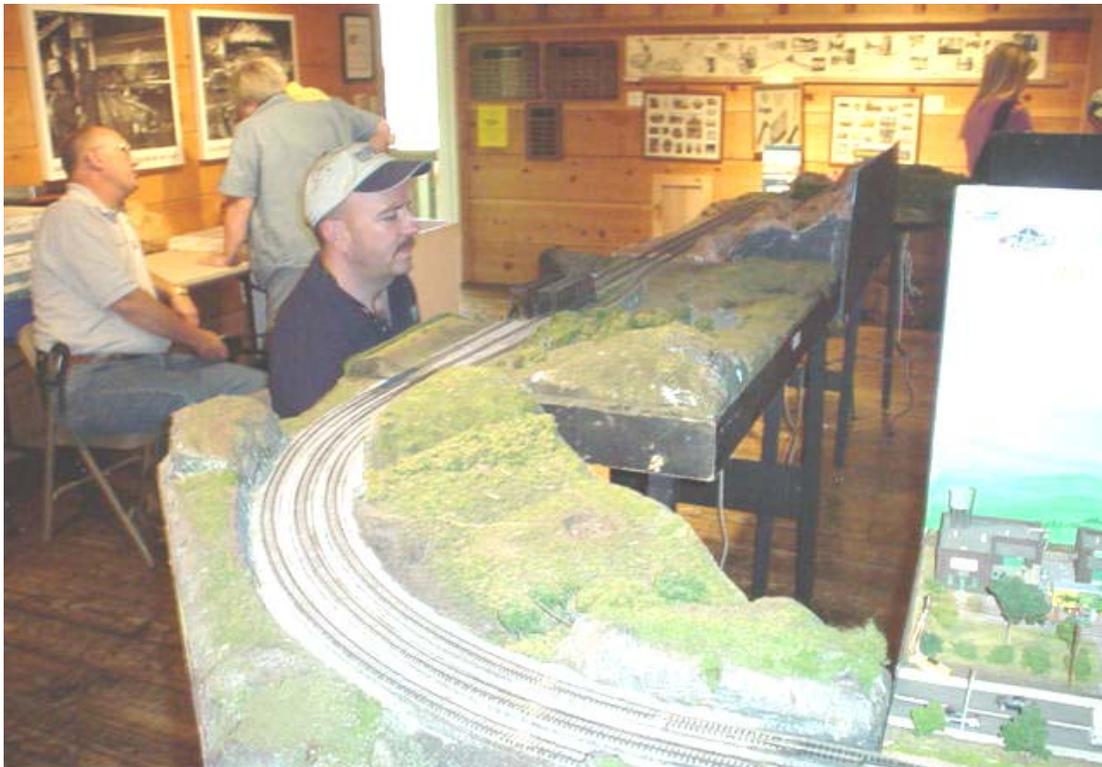
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