

The Philadelphia Division is pleased to announce that we will be holding our next meeting on June 14th at Saint Alban's Church in Newtown Square, PA. The doors will open at 9:30 AM with the meet beginning at approximately 10:00 AM. The church is located at the corner of Route 252 and Chapel Road. A map is included elsewhere in this issue of the Dispatcher for your convenience.

We have an interesting line up of clinics for your enjoyment, with the theme being operation. The first clinic will be presented by Jim Dalberg, and will be on Layout Design thoughts. Jim will discuss various aspects of the hobby that should be considered when planning a model railroad.

The second clinic will be a panel discussion on various operating systems used by some of the many layouts in this area that are designed and built to be operated. There are a number of very active operating groups within the Philadelphia Division, and we hope this discussion will give you the encouragement to try this

rapidly growing aspect of the hobby. Come with your questions, and if they aren't answered during the presentation, you will have an opportunity to ask them at the conclusion of the presentation.

As an added bonus, at the conclusion of the meet, there will be an operating session on the StARR Model Railroad Club, located in the basement of Saint Albans church. The club will have their entire modular layout in place and staged for an afternoon of operating. Stay as long as you like and get your feet wet in operations, or if you're an "old hand", log in a few more hours.

Our contest for this meet will be Cabooses, so grab your best one and bring it along for the popular vote contest. There will also be our regular fare of door prizes and a 50/50 raffle.

There will be a brief introduction by Division Superintendent Jim Dalberg to bring you up to date on what is going on in the division. The board met recently and has developed an exciting schedule

of activities for your enjoyment. We hope you will plan now to attend interesting and informative meet.

Independence Junction Update!

As this newsletter is going to press there is not much in the way of news to report. But by the time you read this, the committee will have met and many ideas will have been discussed and plans begun to make them happen. We need you to be involved! There are many jobs that need to be filled. Will you help to plan a prototype tour? How about working on layout tours? Want to work the auction? Any great ideas for clinics we can use? The list could go on and on, but you get the idea. Included in this issue of The Dispatcher is a volunteer survey form. Please fill this out as quickly as possible, and either bring it to the next meet or mail it to the editor at the address listed on page 2. Remember, this will only be a success if we all work together.

Bits & Pieces

In this month's column, I'm going to do things just a little differently. Instead of my usual ramblings I'm going to give you some tidbits of information about happenings within the Division and possibly things for you to do.

First, some good news: there is actually some progress on the railroad. After many months of working on the "honey do" list there is a little light at the end of the tunnel. There has been some actual model work done (a couple of Westerfield kits have been built, some coaches repainted, and track maintenance), and there have been a couple operating sessions. Also, the new cellar entrance has reduced the traffic through the living room, and the new crew lounge makes a nice place to sit while waiting for your next run (if only the crews would use it). No, that doesn't mean the work is all done, but I can play a little now and then.

We are happy to report a new hobby shop in the area. Les Kushner and some partners have opened Main Line Hobbies at 932 W. Lancaster Avenue in Bryn Mawr. They stock Digitrax, Peco turnouts, Atlas flex track, Kadee couplers and wheel sets, and Woodland Scenics, to name a few. Their phone number is: 610-527-1925, and they are on the internet at: www.mainlinehobbies.com. Stop in some time and check them out. As time passes they will be adding new items.

I have always preferred shopping at a local shop, where you can talk to the owner and if you have a problem he will stand behind his product. By the time you count up the cost of the gas and the entrance fee, if you don't spend a lot of money I don't think you save a lot at the shows. Granted, it is nice to see all those neat toys under one roof and find that hard to get item, but the deals just don't seem as good

as they used to be in the "good old days".

As this issue is being written, the board of the Division has approved investigating the possibility of our hosting a Prototype Modelers meet in March of next year. Yes, these are the rivet counter folks, but don't hold it against them. It is largely because of them and the influence they have on manufacturers that we have many of the exquisite models we have to drool over. They research carefully and pass the information along to manufacturers. While this meet is not for the Christmas tree crowd, there is sure to be something you can learn to improve your own modeling efforts. As details are worked out we will be sharing the information with you through these pages. While this is a Division function there will be no discounts available, but hope you will consider attending.

Are you planning on going to Toronto this summer? The word from my wife's relatives there is that SARS is not as major an issue there as the news networks seem to want to make it. We need to start really promoting Independence Junction. There will be a table set up there to advertise. And that means we need people to sit or stand there to pass out information. How about a couple dozen of you volunteer? If we all do a little we can accomplish a lot.

Happy Railroading!

The Philadelphia Dispatcher

Official publication of the
Philadelphia Division,
Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

Editor

Stephen F. Salotti
46 Meadow Road
Collegeville, Pa, 19426
(610) 489 1940

Submissions: The Philadelphia Dispatcher welcomes any model railroad- or railroad-related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc. Submissions are preferred typed, double-spaced. The editor reserves the right to, when necessary, paraphrase small portions of the text in order to fit the space available.

Next issue: Sept. 2003. Due out approx. Sept. 1. Deadline: August 15th.

Membership: \$7.00 per year. Address all membership applications, renewals; address changes, etc. to the Clerk. If the date in the upper-right corner of your mailing label is highlighted, your membership will expire soon. Please pay at the next meet or mail payment to the Clerk. Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Division, NMRA."

Division Personnel:

Superintendent

Jim Dalberg
529 Foxwood Lane
Paoli, PA 19301
(610) 648 0089

Assistant Superintendent

Tim Palmer
529 Kohn Street
Norristown, PA 19401
(610) 461 8644

Clerk

Stephen F. Salotti
46 Meadow Road
Collegeville, PA 19426
(610) 489-1940
jmsfca@aol.com

Treasurer

Dick Landt
561 Beck Road
Souderton, PA 18964

Achievement Program Coordinator

Dave Messer, M.M.R.
263 Mingo Road
Royersford, PA 19468-3112
(610) 948-2191

Module Team Foreman

Tom Cancelmo
238 Jackson Avenue
Lansdowne, PA 19050
(610) 259-7216

Mid-Eastern Region, N.M.R.A.

9 Roosevelt Ave
Wilmington DE 19804-3044
(302) 636 0888

merbusmanager@msn.com

Dues: \$8.00 per year

National Model Railroad Association

4121 Cromwell Road
Chattanooga, TN 37421-2119
(615) 892-2946

Dues: \$45.00 per year

**Independence Junction 2006
Volunteer Survey Form**

Independence Junction 2006 needs a large group of volunteers to perform a host of functions in preparation for, and during, the convention. Please indicate on the form below what you can bring to this effort. Thanks for your willingness to participate to make IJ2006 the best ever.

Administrative Functions

- Registration/Information _____
- Publications _____
- Door Prizes _____
- Publicity _____

Outside Activities

- Layout Tour Guides _____
- Prototype Tour Guides _____
- Railfan Tour Guides _____
- Tour Departure Mgr. _____

Inside Activities

- Clinics Staff _____
- Non-Rail Activities _____
- Auction Staff _____

To assist us in assigning volunteers, please indicate your previous convention (National, Division, Region) experience, as well as professional skills (computer literacy, word processing, administrative, etc).

Many thanks to division member and former superintendent John Nawn for sending me these interesting articles on prototype railroading. In his work as a transportation engineer he regularly receives them from various federal agencies.

Agreement Launches New Era of Amtrak Accountability

An Update from Amtrak President Gunn on Federal Funding

You will recall that under a new arrangement set up by Congress, we must seek quarterly grants from the US DOT for the funds that have been set aside for us by Congress. Today, after many weeks of discussion with the DOT, the agency approved our grant request and delivered the first installment of the money

A fourth-quarter funding request must still be made by us to DOT this year, so I want to tell you how important it is to continue to stay on

budget.

After six months, we are favorable to budget on expenses and unfavorable on revenue. I believe the revenue story is mostly written by the war and the economy, but rationalizations are a mugs game. There is no choice. We must make our budget, i.e., expense under runs must occur to offset the drop in revenue. If we are successful, we will rebuild our credibility and the public's confidence that we can capably manage and operate this business.

That we have come as far as we have this year will be helpful to my urging that we be fully funded next year as I testify before Congress tomorrow. However, our performance to budget this year will have an even bigger impact on our funding next year, as well as the DOT grant process under which we are currently working.

Agreement Launches New Era of Amtrak Accountability

WASHINGTON - In testimony before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury and Independent Agencies today, Deputy Secretary of Transportation Michael P. Jackson hailed the signing of an agreement between DOT and Amtrak as the first step toward a new era of accountability in the operation of a viable inter-city passenger rail service.

"I am pleased to report that yesterday the Department approved Amtrak's business plan for the remainder of FY 2003 and executed the Amtrak grant agreements contemplated by the FY 2003 Appropriations Act," said Jackson, who is Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta's delegate on the Amtrak board of directors. "In doing so, DOT unambiguously communicated to Amtrak and its Board the following requirements: this year there will be no federal loans or loan guarantees, no 'creative financing' by Amtrak, no gimmicks, no shutdown drama, no threat against commuter operations, and no kidding -- Amtrak will live within the budget that Congress appropriated."

The 2003 appropriations law gives the DOT specific oversight of each phase of Amtrak spending and the authority to withhold grant payments until Amtrak agrees to spending parameters approved by DOT. The Federal Railroad Administration will be the DOT agency overseeing Amtrak's financial performance.

"To that end, we will monitor Amtrak's condition monthly, and will be working with Amtrak to help it meet the targets laid out in its business plan. DOT will provide monthly reports to you on Amtrak's progress," Jackson said. "We expect to provide Amtrak's fourth quarter grant in early July, but if necessary at that point we can make partial Philadelphia Dispatcher

disbursements on a monthly basis to ensure fidelity to the bottom line of Amtrak's business plan. Let me be clear about DOT's role under the law. Amtrak itself retains its daily management responsibilities; DOT will provide oversight and enforce accountability."

Jackson praised the cooperation from Amtrak's senior management that led to the first-ever agreement.

"David Gunn has worked with the Amtrak Board of Directors to reduce operating expenses, de-layer management, improve customer service, address the numerous material weaknesses identified by Amtrak's auditors, instill financial discipline, and provide Congress and the Administration with more accurate and timely financial data."

DOT Secretary Mineta last year spelled out five principles that he argues must form the core of any successful reform of intercity passenger rail service. His principles would:

- Create a system driven by sound economics.
- Require that Amtrak transition to a pure operating company.
- Introduce carefully managed competition to provide higher quality rail services at reasonable prices.
- Establish a long-term partnership between the states and the federal government to support intercity passenger rail service.
- Create an effective public partnership, after a reasonable transition, to manage the capital assets of the Northeast Corridor.

Important Information about your Membership!

At the board's first planning meeting earlier this year, some important decisions were made that will affect your Division membership. These changes do not require any voting because they are within the authority of the Board as established by our bylaws. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any member of the board, and they will be glad to assist you.

Dues Increase: Due to the rising cost of postage and printing the board has voted to increase the dues for Division membership to \$7.00. This increase will become effective on June 30th. Any renewals received after that date must be at the new rate of \$7.00, so if you want to save that \$2.00, renew now!

Change to calendar year membership: In order to ease the book keeping on memberships and make it easier for members to renew, we will be switching our cycle to a calendar year. In the past memberships started in the month you joined. From now on the cycle will begin on January 1st. In order to make this transition simple, all current memberships are automatically extended to December of the year in which their membership now expires. In the last two issues of the Dispatcher for each calendar year we will include notices that all memberships are due for renewal. Any member

Say Cheese! By Pete Shatswell

Recently a review of the MER photography contests rules and program was determined to be needed. The MER board has asked Pete Shatswell of the James River Division, MER, NMRA to accept the position of MER Photography Contest Chairperson and he has accepted. Pete has experience in a wide range of photography fields, both in the field, in retailing, and in lab work. While out of commercial photography for many years now, he still has contact with the hobby by hosting a monthly digital photography SIG for the Fredericksburg Personal Computer Users Group.

There will be a complete review of the MER photography contest rules, including if and where changes are needed to bring the rules up to date if needed. Ideas for better displaying of the pictures, increase participation, etc., will be looked into also. While there will be a major initial drive to review the current program, a continuing process is also planned to try to keep the activities current.

failing to renew by the end of the year will be placed on an inactive list and will not receive any future issues of the Dispatcher. In the past we have carried old members for up to two years, but this is becoming cost prohibitive.

Among other issues discussed was the WEB site. We are pleased to announce that Val Pistilli has taken over as our site manager. GATSME has agreed to host the site for us, and Val will be handling postings. This gives us easier access to the site. It has been updated, and you can access it at: <http://www.phillynmra.org>. We will be posting the Dispatcher on the site as soon as each issue is completed.

There were many other issues addressed by the board, including trying to schedule meets further into the future. If you look in the schedule portion of this issue you will see that there is more information there about future meets than there has been in the past. We will continue to try to do this in the future.

If you have any other questions about the Division, please feel free to ask your board. We want to create an organization that is meeting your needs, and one we can all be proud to be a part of.

Input is needed as to any changes the members might like to see added, changed, modified, etc., to increase the participation and enjoyment of this fascinating area of the railroading hobbies. Pete will be reviewing rules and other ideas from within the region and all of its divisions as well as from other groups that sponsor photography contests. He is open to hear any suggestions or ideas so here's your chance to help expand the enjoyment of your possible rail photography activities.

Please send your suggestions or suggested rule changes and experiences plus or negative to Pete for his review and consideration via E-mail at: Pasowl@aol.com (please put MER in the subject line if you would) or via postal mail: Pete Shatswell, 12312 West Catharpin Road, Spotsylvania, VA 22553. Pete is also planning to be at the fall convention to take further ideas and discussions but please send your thoughts to him ASAP.

Press release from The Association of American Railroads

Data, experience prove new locomotive technology keeps workers, rail yards safer

WASHINGTON, January 14, 2003 - AAR President and CEO Edward R. Hamberger took issue with claims that Portable Locomotive Control Technology will lead to an increase in accidents, citing data that proves the new technology could sharply reduce the number of train accidents in rail yards. U.S. railroads are in the process of installing PLCT in rail yards, where more than half of all train accidents occur.

"There is absolutely no data or evidence to support those who say the new technology compromises safety," said Hamberger. "In fact, experience and logic tell us just the opposite."

PLCT has been widely used in Canada for more than 10 years and has proven to be far safer than conventional technology. It has been credited with sharply reducing the number of yard accidents on Canadian railroads, and recent statistics from both of Canada's major railroads show just how much PLCT improves yard safety.

Between 1998 and 2000, Canadian Pacific Railway reported that the accident rate at locations where PLCT was used was only one third of that at facilities where conventional technology was used. Canadian National Railway reported that accident rates attributed to human factors were reduced by at least one-third at locations where PLCT was used between 1997 and 2001.

One reason for this is that PLCT reduces the possibility of miscommunication. With conventional technology, train service employees in the yard direct locomotive operations either through hand signals or radio communications with the locomotive engineer. Under PLCT, remote control operators on the ground direct the locomotive's operation by sending digital signals directly to an onboard computer.

The Federal Railroad Administration studied the technology for nearly a decade, holding a series of public meetings to examine the safety of the new technology. The FRA, which has responsibility for rail safety, issued guidelines for PLCT in 2001. Before beginning PLCT operations, railroads file a certification training program with the FRA. Operating rules are also filed with the FRA.

Major U.S. railroads began using PLCT in some yards in 2002, after first reaching agreement with the United Transportation Union (UTU) over implementing the technology. That agreement provides for thorough training of UTU members who will operate PLCT.

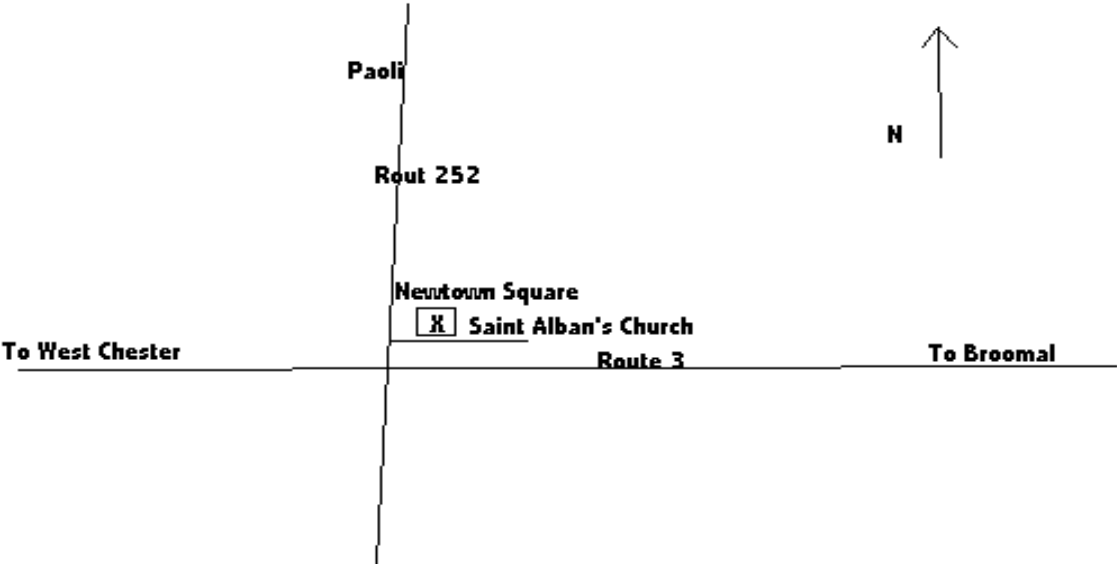
Late last week, an arbitrator upheld the agreement between the railroad industry and UTU.

The technology possesses a number of unique features that enhance safety. While the PLCT is in use, there is continuous digital communication between the remote control operator and the computer on the locomotive.

"PLCT offers railroads and their employees both improved safety and greater efficiency," said Hamberger.

Some food for thought. In the next issue we will present the case from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers

Map to Saint Alban's Church in Newtown Square



Saint Alban's is located on Chapel Road in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. Chapel Road is accessible from any direction except Route 252 south. When coming south on 252, continue to Route 3 east, turn left onto Route 3, and then left at the first traffic signal. Follow this to Saint Alban's Circle, go around the circle to Chapel Road and go west to the church.

Schedules

Philadelphia Division Meet, June 14th, Saint Alban's Church in Newtown Square, PA. Clinics:Layout design, operations panel. Operating session in the afternoon. All members are encouraged to attend this important event.

New Jersey Division Meet. June 7, 2003 (Rain date June 8th) Garden Layout tour, south New Jersey area. For more information contact the New Jersey Division at: Mike McNamara, P.O. Box 232, Haddon Heights, NJ 08035-0232

June 21-22, 2003

Timonium Train Show

Great Scale Model Train Show Tmonium MD.

www.gsms.com (410) 730 1036

September 27, 2003

Philadelphia Division Meet

Fairview Village Church of the Nazarene. Clinics: Layout Ergonomics, & more. Contest: open loads. Layout tours Friday night, operations sale Saturday. Details to follow.

October 10 - 13, 2003

MER Fall convention,

Potomoc Junction 2003

Reston VA (outside Washington DC) Clinics, contests, prototype tours, non-rail activities. See the MER Local for more detail

November 2003

Philadelphia Division Meet

Date TBD

Location TBD, Watch the next Dispatcher for more information.

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Do you need to renew? If the date on your mailing label is highlighted, please renew promptly. Thank you for renewing promptly.

Discounts for Division Members at Local Hobby Shops

Be sure to patronize the area's hobby shops that are now offering discounts on model railroading purchases to members of the Philadelphia Division.

Kenwood Model Hobbies	Herb's Hobbies and Crafts
Various train shows throughout the division	200 W. State St. in Doylestown
10% discount Call (610) 532 2253 for details	\$25 of free merchandise for every \$250 spent
Iron Horse Hobby Shop	Nicholas Smith Trains
60 S. 6th St. in Reading	2343 West Chester Pike (3) in Bromall
10% discount with \$10 min purchase	10% discount (excludes O & G items)
Nick Logothetis (Abracadata) 2 Buck Run Thornton, PA 19373 (610) 399 3469	Lin's Junction at Henning Scale Models 128 South Line St. Lansdale, PA 194446 5% in addition to already discounted prices
Mitchell's Family Store	Bussinger Trains
2119 Concord Pike (202) in Wilmington DE	Old Ambler Station, Ambler
10% discount on train department items	10-12% off retail