



THE DISPATCHER

The Journal of PhillyNMRA

June 2026





THE DISPATCHER

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



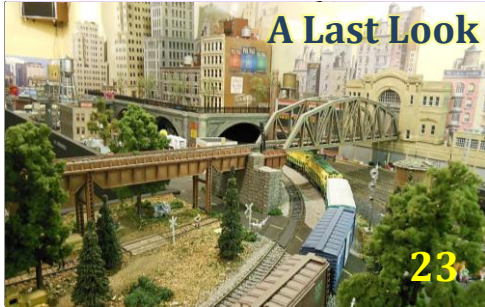
June 2026

PhillyNMRA.org

Volume 33, No. 4

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THE DISPATCHER

Submissions: *THE DISPATCHER* welcomes any model or prototype railroad-related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc. The editors reserve the right to, when necessary, paraphrase portions of the text in order to fit the space available.

Next Issue: August 2026. Due out approximately August 15. Deadline for submissions: August 1.

Online Subscription: Free. Make sure the clerk has your current email address and that you keep your info updated at nmra.org/members.

Print version: Print subscriptions are no longer available. A mailed summary of upcoming events is available on request.

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From the Super's Desk

Well, here we are pushing into June. Time keeps going faster and faster, or so it seems. It feels like it's been a very short while since our convention, but in reality, it's actually been eight months!

There are many conversations going on right now concerning change. The NMRA has begun their program, "Vision 2035," the primary goal of which is to double the membership. Each of us looks at this change from a different vantage point. This project is a very bold move and will require a lot of us. I have read NMRA President Gordy Robinson's remarks in the May 2026 *NMRA Magazine* where he writes about the criticism directed at the national and local level. While all healthy debate is good, open criticism can lead to a culture of negativity. When we all work together, good changes can occur. Sitting on the sidelines complaining is not conducive to growth. Change is always hard to accomplish. When we think everything is fine it becomes almost insurmountable. We need to stay positive in our thinking and plan for good things to happen.

Our April meet was held at the Peter Becker Community center, which turned out to be one of the finest venues we've been to. I would like to thank resident and club member Joe Morris, along with his group for hosting us. Barbara Keller, the facility coordinator was extremely accommodating and helpful. This facility provided great technology and a detailed layout downstairs. Everyone had a great time.

Our next meet is June 20, 2026 at the Alverthorpe Park Picnic Pavilion. It will include our annual business meeting, two excellent clinics, and our yearly barbecue. Please try to attend this meeting. It's always fun to meet, eat, and chat with fellow modelers.

Again, it is election time. Please take a few minutes to vote for your leaders. It is your right as a member to choose your leadership. Along with the division, there are openings for the regional offices. If you are interested, please contact me. I can put you in contact with the right people. The region would like a member of the Philadelphia division to represent us. Please consider being a part of this group.

I'm looking forward to seeing you on June 20th.

Joe



From the Editor's Desk

I'm going to depart from my usual introduction to the current issue to get up on my soap box and rant about something happening in the NMRA that is the topic of much discussion—that of the new NMRA logo.

I feel strongly about this because I am the one responsible for the three areas where the logo will appear—the website, the newsletter, and the division shirts. Personally, I have no problem with the NMRA choosing whatever it wants for itself, but they are imposing on the divisions to abandon their existing logos and conform to this new corporate branding. I think this is shortsighted in many ways.

The divisions logo represent a local identity—the history of the division itself as well as the railroads and industries native to its locale. Also the majority of modelers do not care about bringing the NMRA into the 21st century. They look to the past because that is largely what they model—both because

(Continued on page 21 – click here)

DIVISION OFFICIALS

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June Meet at Alverthorpe Park in Jenkintown

On Saturday, June 20, 2026, the Philadelphia Division returns to Alverthorpe Park to hold its annual business meeting and picnic/barbeque. The official address of the park is Jenkintown Road and Forrest Avenue, Jenkintown, PA 19046, however, the picnic entrance is on Fox Chase Road. Detailed maps and directions are on page 6. The gates open at 9:00am with the festivities to begin at 10.

First on the agenda is our annual business meeting. Board directors and committee chairmen will deliver their reports, followed by Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR discussing the past year's events, and then delving into what we have planned for the coming year. Concluding the business meeting will be the announcement of the results of the Board of Directors Election.

The clinic for this morning's program will be presented by Clerk Michael Junod on "**Illuminated PRR-Style Marker Lights.**" This will include a discussion of using surface-mount LEDs in modified Cal Scale PRR marker castings. Markers are mounted on 3 classes of HO PRR cabin cars N5, N5C, N8 with constant lighting for DCC operation.

While an avid HO modeler, Michael is perhaps known more for his involvement in trolleys. His O-scale Mayfair Electric has been open for visitation and features detailed trackwork and scenery as well as automatic operation, topics which he has covered in previous clinics at the division and regional levels.

All attendees are encouraged to bring a model or project. Toward the end of the meet, we hold a Show & Tell. It's an open-mike opportunity to share a recently completed project or a glimpse into an in-progress work.

In addition, the Achievement Program Committee is now judging models at the meets. If you wish to have a model judged, please inform either Earl Paine or Joe Walters ahead of time.

As usual we'll hold our 50/50 raffle, draw for door prizes, and offer coffee, donuts, and Philly soft pretzels. Following the morning program, we will indulge in hot dogs, hamburgers, and other picnic goodies. The afternoon features layout visitation. Please come and join us for fun and feast.

Don't Forget to Vote

All Philadelphia Division members have been sent the Board of Directors Election ballot, either via email as the Election Buddy program, or in printed form via regular mail. Included are the bios and statements of the candi-

dates. The printed ballot has also been posted on the division website, phillynmra.org, and can be printed out if desired. Please make sure to cast your ballot for those who represent you in the NMRA.



Photo Contest for New Division Sign

sign to advertise and promote the division, the NMRA, and the hobby of model railroading at meets and events. This will contain the NMRA's new logo. We would like to give all our members a chance to have one of their photos included. Our extinguished panel of judges will determine which would be the most appropriate to include in a collage for the sign.

So what if your photo isn't chosen? Well it turns out that everyone's a winner because whether it is or isn't chosen for the sign, it definitely will be published at some point in *The Dispatcher*. I would like to revive a section we used to feature called Around the Division—somewhat similar to Trackage Photos, but including not only layout photos, but any photos or information you'd like to contribute.

Please submit your photos to the editor, Howard Kaplan at hakaplan@rcn.com, and include a caption of any length with any degree of detail you'd like. The captions will not appear on the sign, but everyone's photos will appear in the ATD section in an upcoming issue and will include the caption.

Around the Division

As I mentioned, I would like to revive a section we used to feature called Around the Division to include division news, photos, and any information you'd like to contribute. I'd also like to expand this section to include links to:

- **Blogs**
- **Substacks**
- **Facebook Pages**
- **Websites**
- **Layout business cards**
- **Time tables/paperwork**
- **Op session news/requests for operators**
- **Round robin news/requests for new members**

and anything else that that pertains to division goings-on. I depend on the membership to provide me with division news so I can pass it on to everyone else through the newsletter.

Photos for *The Dispatcher* Cover

I personally think the historic dispatcher-related photos I've been using for *The Dispatcher* covers are fascinating, but I would like to feature photos of our own members' layout CTC panels or other control panels and boards. Please send photos and associated information or captions to Editor Howard Kaplan.

Colebrookdale Railroad Excursion

The Philadelphia Division is planning an excursion on the Colebrookdale Railroad to take place tentatively on August 8, 2026. Cost is expected to be \$35. More details to follow on the division website, phillynmra.org, and through email notifications.

In Memoriam: Ron Albert

Ron Albert, a long-time division member and model railroader passed away this past April. Ron was a skilled modeler who had created a mostly-steam, Reading/PRR-themed layout, which unlike most in the hobby, he declared as finished back in the early '90s. But in the 2000s he decided to re-work most of it into a larger and even more elaborate and detailed model railroad. An article about it appeared in a previous issue of *The Dispatcher*, and has been re-printed later in this issue along with photos of this impressive endeavor. This time it really was finished.

Ron was a member of the Philadelphia Brethren Church in and had arranged for the division to meet there a few times.

Perhaps an even more interesting aspect of his life was his occupation as a piano tuner. He had a boatload of fascinating recounts of experiences and people he had met through the years that could fill a book. Sadly that book will never be written.

Close friends Rob and Nancy Ischinger helped and nursed Ron in his later years right up until he passed. He also had pet cats and was a passionate supporter of animal shelters and facilities. He will be missed by all his friends, both human and feline.

Potomac Division AP Clinics

The Potomac Division is running a series of clinics on the NMRA AP program in an effort to provide information to our members and answer their questions. The clinics are either virtual or in person and we are opening them to any NMRA member. The virtual clinics are aired through Zoom and require registration to gain access to the actual clinic.

The information on the clinics can be found on our website: <https://potomac-nmra.org/pdnewsite/Clinics/2026%20Achievement%20Program%20Series%20Clinics/Potomac%20Division%20AP%20clinic%20schedule>

Planning Ahead – Division Meets & Other Upcoming Events

June 20, 2026 Philadelphia Division Meet/Picnic Alverthorpe Park Jenkintown Road & Forrest Avenue Jenkintown, PA 19046	July 18–19, 2026 Philadelphia Division Table Greenberg Train Show Greater Philadelphia Expo Center 100 Station Avenue, Oaks, PA 19456	July 28–August 2, 2026 NMRA Convention "Scenic City Express" Chattanooga Marriott Downtown Two Carter Street Chattanooga, TN 37402
August 1, 8, 15, 22, 2026 Model Railroading Days Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania 300 Gap Road Strasburg, PA 17579	August 8, 2026 Division Event Colebrookdale Railroad Excursion Boyertown, PA	September 2026 Philadelphia Division Meet TBA
October 15–18, 2026 MER Convention "Tracks to Tidewater" Holiday Inn Virginia Beach 5655 Greenwich Road Virginia Beach, VA 23462	November 2026 Philadelphia Division Meet Brandywine Town Center 4050 Brandywine Pkwy Wilmington, DE 19701	January 2027 New Jersey/Philadelphia Division Meet TBA

Check <http://www.phillynmra.org/regional-timetable> for links to these and other upcoming events.

Maps and Directions for the June Meet

Alverthorpe Park Picnic Shelter

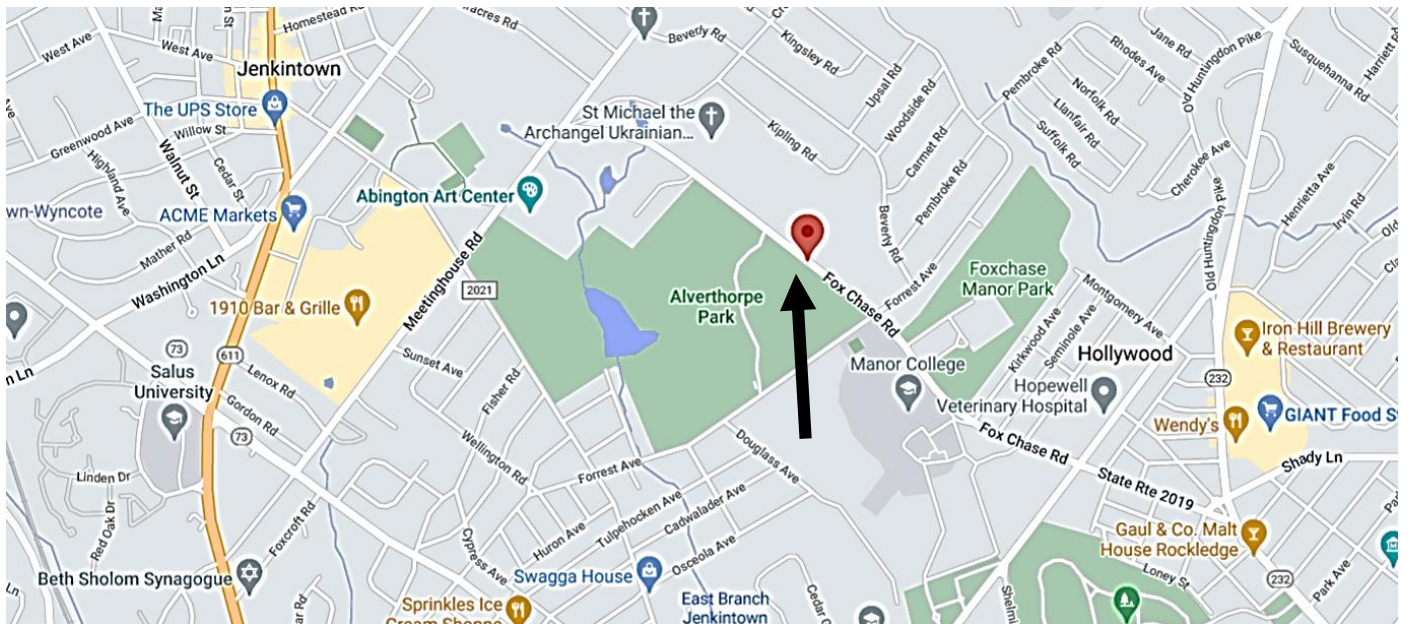
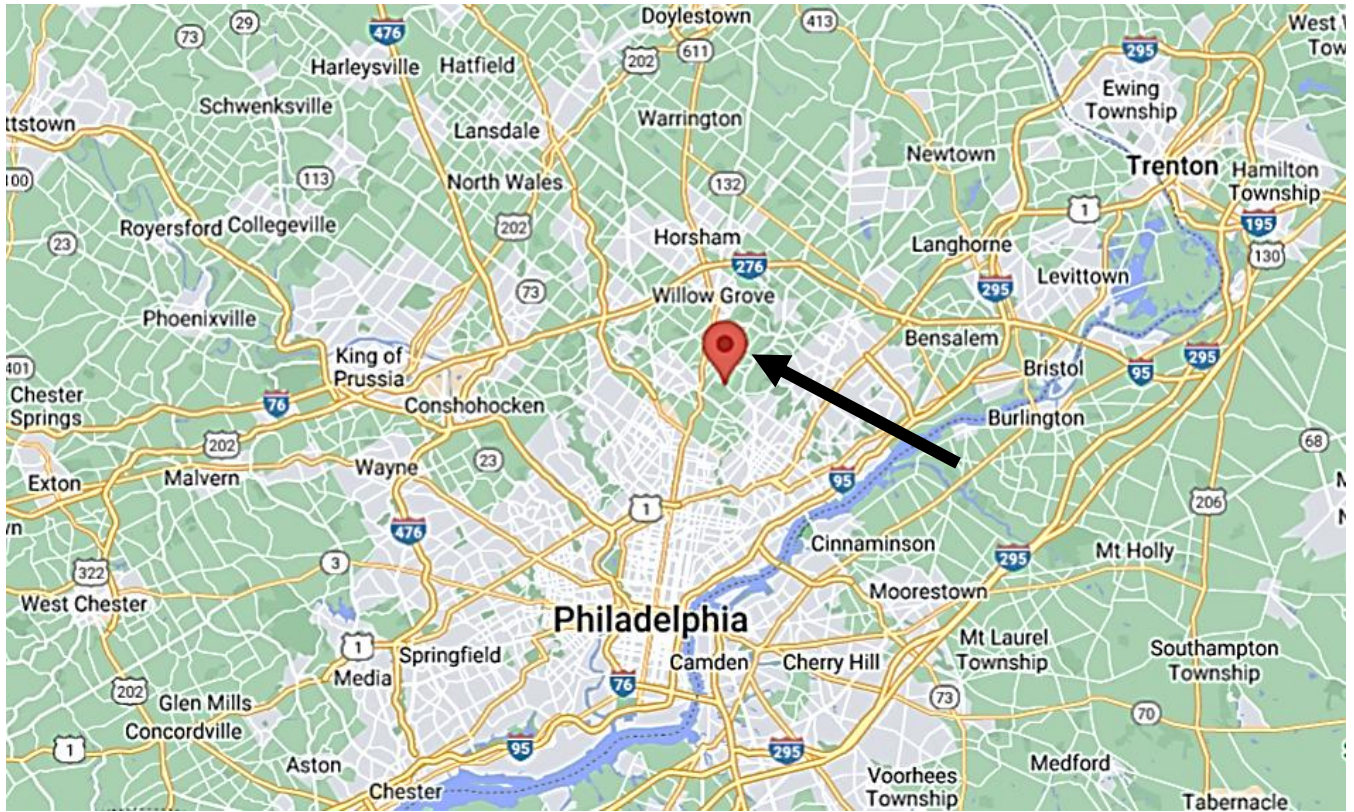
Located on Fox Chase Rd., across from World Mission Society Church of God whose address is 875 Fox Chase Rd., Jenkintown, PA 19046

Coordinates: 40°05'27.4"N 75°06'27.7"W

Gate opens at 9am. Program begins at 10am.



Directions: PA TPK (I-76) to Exit 343 – PA 611. Take PA-611 south into Jenkintown, left on Greenwood Ave., left on Meetinghouse Rd., right on Fox Chase Rd. Consult your online map or GPS for the best route. Use the provided coordinates or the church address for the most accurate location. You'll see a white sign with green lettering and PhillyNMRA signs at the entrance. Once inside, picnic area is to the left and visible at the end of the parking lot.





On Saturday, April 11th the Philadelphia Division met at the Peter Becker Community in Harleysville Pennsylvania. Thirty-two Philadelphia Division members were signed in along with a member of the Chesapeake Division and three guests. The Peter Becker Community provided a first-class meeting room with a generous array of snacks and refreshments. Community residents were invited to join the meeting.

The Philadelphia Division superintendent, Joe Walters, called the meet to order at 9:10am. In his opening remarks he expressed thanks for everyone attending. He also thanked the Peter Becker Community for their tremendous hospitality. Joe briefly spoke about the recent happenings at the regional and national level, particularly with the new logo and “branding.” He acknowledged the recent very successful Railroad Prototype Modelers (RPM) meet in Malvern.

Barbara Keller, the facility’s event coordinator spoke next and welcomed us to the Peter Becker Community. Given the demographics of our group, it is likely she saw many potential new residents in the audience. Barbara gave a brief description of the community and its amenities. They were very happy to host us, and very accommodating.

The first clinic was given by Kevin Feeney. Kevin discussed the wide array of die-cast vehicles available for use in HO scale. He talked about the origins and history of some of the major manufacturers. Kevin also discussed the vagaries of “scale” and how to deal with these variations. He has been collecting and using die-cast models from many different sources for a long time and had many interesting and funny anecdotes. Kevin also displayed several examples of the vehicles he discussed in his clinic.



Superintendent Joe Walters makes his opening remarks



The generous spread of refreshments provided by the Peter Becker Community

The second clinic was presented by Steve Wysowski. Steve talked about the Colebrookdale Railroad where he works as a volunteer. He described the long history of the “Secret Valley” and the iron forges that played an important role in our nation’s history. He discussed the development of the railroad branch in that area and its evolution into its current form as the Colebrookdale Railroad. Steve discussed some of the operational limitations due to the topography of the area. He also enumerated some of the equipment on the current roster. The Philadelphia Division is hoping to hold a social event on the Colebrookdale Railroad at some point over the summer.

After the second clinic, Steve Wysowski received two certificates of appreciation, one for presenting his clinic, and one for hosting a model railroad open house. Representatives from the Peter Becker Community Model Railroad Club received a certificate of appreciation for both hosting our division and being open for visitation following this morning meeting. Door prize winning tickets were drawn as was the winning 50/50 ticket.

A break was taken for coffee, muffins, doughnuts, fruit, and pretzels. After the break, some certificates were awarded. Charles Liggett received his AP certificate for Model Railroad Author. Kevin Feeney received a certificate of appreciation for presenting his die-cast vehicle clinic.

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WE WELCOME OUR NEW PHILLY DIVISION MEMBERS

- Brian Brooks, Havertown, PA
- John Kushnerick, Media, PA
- Robert Doebley, Horsham, PA
- Patrick Connelley, West Chester, PA
- Margaret Huntzinger, Harrington, DE
- Chris Cuppinger, Magnolia, DE
- Richard Heebner, Worcester, PA
- Crew Cash Widmann, Pottstown, PA
- John Brett, Southampton, PA

Members who brought items for the Show & Tell table discussed their projects. There were several tables of items for sale and business was brisk.

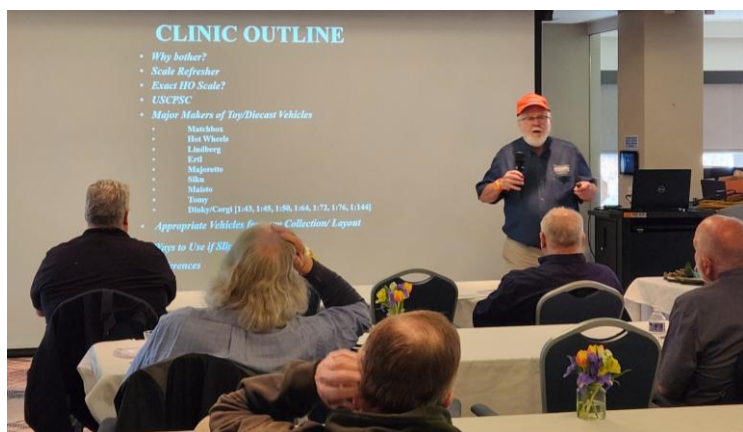
Superintendent Joe Walters thanked the participants for attending and adjourned the meet.

After the meeting, many members went downstairs to the Peter Becker Community Model Railroad Club Room. This club has a wonderfully finished HO scale layout. Steve Wysowski's layout was also open for visitors in the afternoon.

Respectfully submitted – Michael Junod, Clerk



An overview of the meeting room as Joe Walters addresses the group



Kevin Feeney presents his clinic on Die Cast Vehicles



Earl Paine presents Charles Liggett (L) with his AP Author

Door prize table

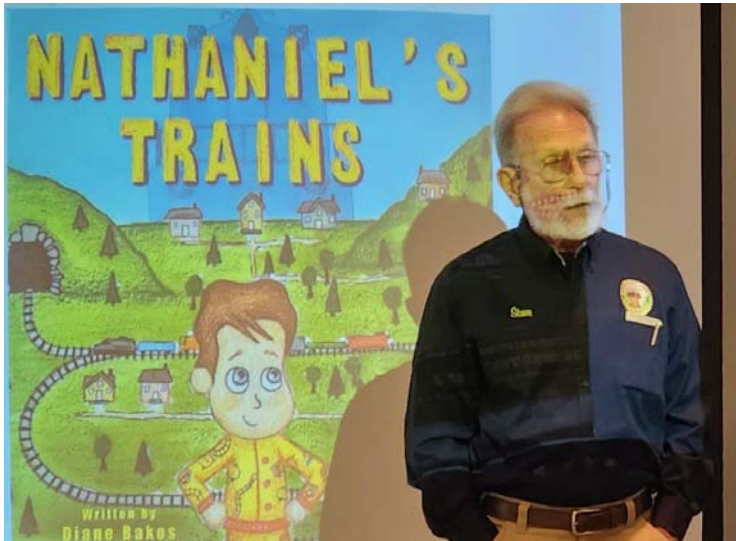




Some Show & Tell items



Some items for sale and just the right price!



Steve Wysowski begins his clinic on the Colebrookdale Railroad



Afterwards, Steve received his appreciation certificate

Rob Hinkle Photos



Kevin Feeney (L) receives his clinician certificate



Bill Fagan presents Peter Becker Community club members with their appreciation certificate for hosting the meet and having their layout open for visitation



Activity at the front table. Seated L to R: Clerk Michael Junod, Treasurer Jeff Witt, AP Coordinator Earl Paine

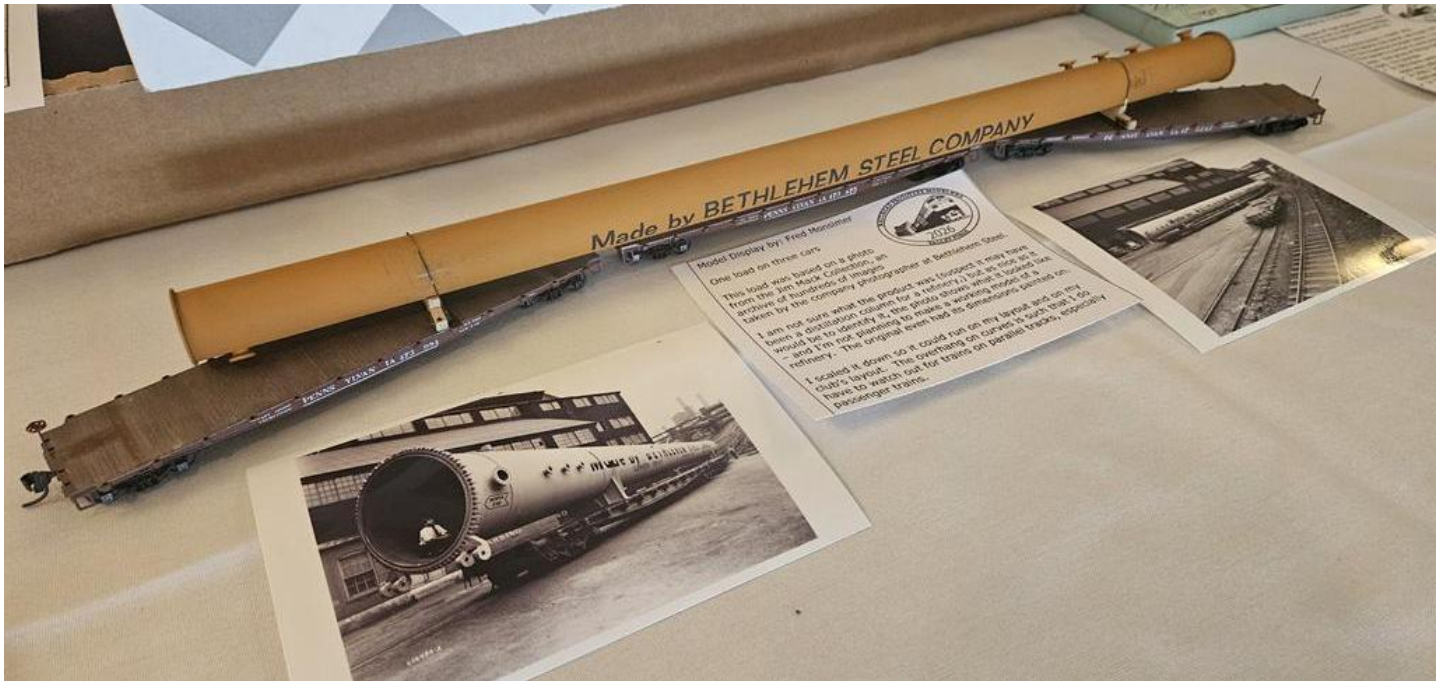


The Peter Becker Community prepared quite a spread for us

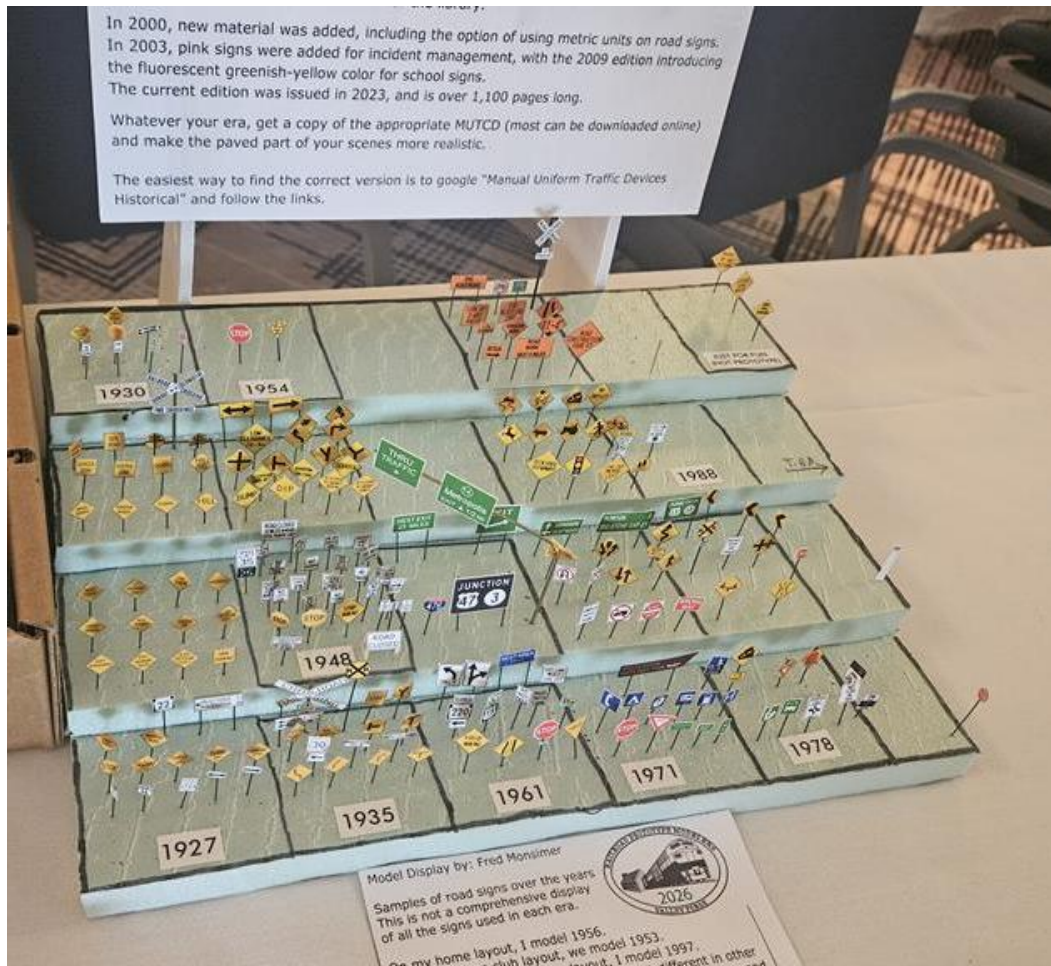


Mike Dettinger's N-scale Kato Mini-Diorama layout

Fred Monsimer's Projects



Load carried by three flat cars



Assortment of era-appropriate road signs

April Layout Tours

Peter Becker Community Railroad Club (HO)

Photos by Michael Junod



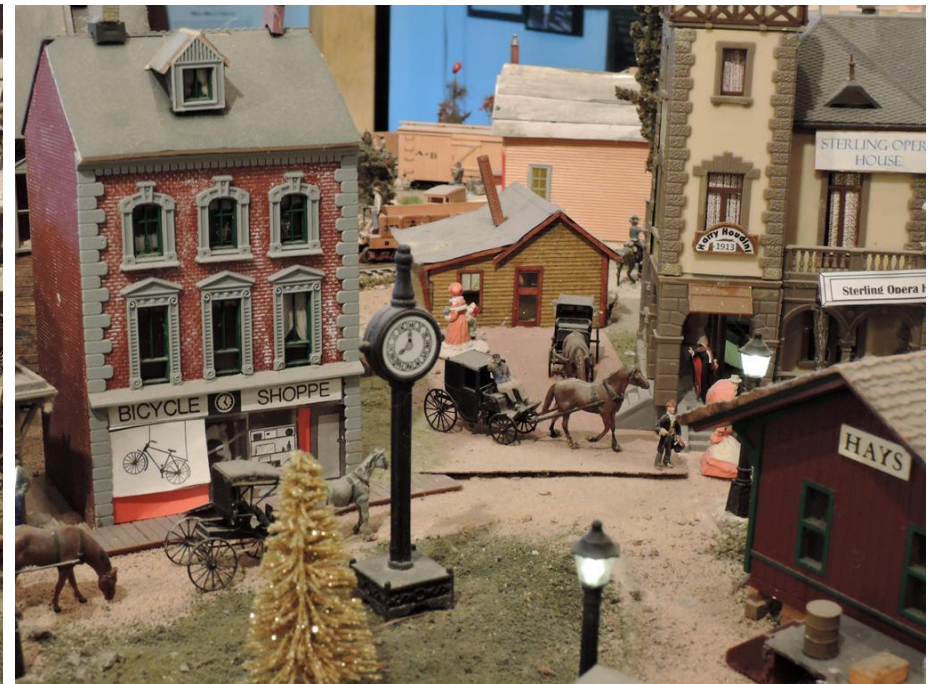


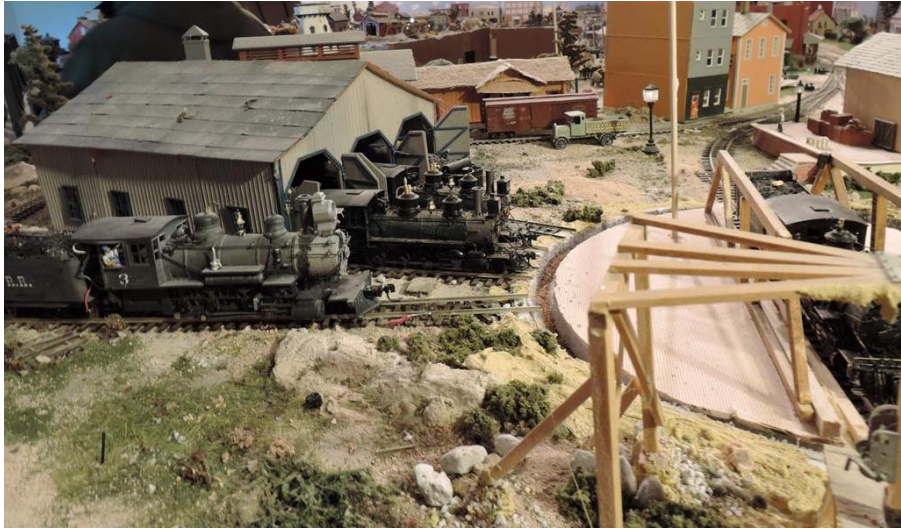














Around the Division

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and anything else that pertains to division goings-on. I depend on the membership to provide me with division news so I can pass it on to everyone else through the newsletter.

Links

Philadelphia Division Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=philadelphia%20division%203%2C%20mer%2C%20nmra>

Jeff Witt - Documents my Taggart Transcontinental layout, structure, and rolling stock. Construction starting in December 2012 to the present. It also contains a downloadable PDF operations guide:

<http://witt-family.com/LayoutConstruction.htm>

Alan Silverblatt - Train DB Plus model railroad database software: <https://silverblatt.net/train-db-plus>

Philly Train Trivia

by Adam Eyring

- 1) What car came from Blackpool, England for the 1976 Bicentennial?
- 2) What SEPTA route had its trolleys painted for the Bicentennial?

Answers on page 40.

Editor's Desk (continued from page 3)

that might be what they remember growing up—or because that was when railroads and railroading was most interesting.

Yes, model railroading is a dying hobby. Nothing can change that. Modelers are older because they hail from a time when the hobby was an active one. Modern corporate railroading lacks the charm and variety of the old days. Younger people are less interested in mechanical and hands-on hobbies. And model railroading is inherently expensive. Our division tried to connect with the scouting community to engage with youngsters, but the inability to become leaders and liasons due to safety and security concerns nixed that. The point of all this is that the idea that rebranding the NMRA will have any effect on any of this is patently absurd.

The divisions have always been where the action is—this is the draw to new members—the meets, the activities, the fellowship—and to this end, the NMRA's suggestions regarding these practical matters makes perfect sense.

But by forcing the abandonment of the local identity, the NMRA will be alienating and reducing morale among its existing members, thereby sabotaging its own efforts to grow the organization. This is not progress. Having looked at the existing websites and publications of the other divisions in the NMRA, it appears that the vast majority have not yet complied and/or have no intention of doing so. One would question whether many are even aware of the NMRA's plans.

After hearing complaints from the divisions and regions, the NMRA conceded to allow division logos, but again, as long as they conform with the mandated structure—that of reducing them to monochrome and forcing them to somehow fit within the NMRA logo. The result is an awkward, unreadable, and unrecognizable blob of color. Further, much of the symbolism and significance of the logos is in their original colors.

There is a compromise that would be beneficial to both the NMRA and the divisions. That plan would be to create a corporate logo based on the original intentions—that of the NMRA car, below which is simply the name of the division spelled out, and then optionally and depending on the use, the name of the region. And to use this *alongside* the division's original logo. The result is win-win. The NMRA can have the division branded with its new identity while simultaneously allowing the division to hold on to its heritage. The simplified, lettered logo is easier to put on a shirt and could even be offered in the different thread colors the NMRA has indicated in its guidelines. Members would have a choice of sticking with the old logo or opting for the new one, since both would be valid.

I would strongly urge our Philadelphia Division Board of Directors to consider this alternative. I believe this is where most divisions will end up, and the NMRA will come around to realizing that this is the most reasonable, practical, and equitable solution—a compromise that will satisfy all.

Howard

Division Organization

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (elected)

OFFICERS

Superintendent – Joe Walters, MMR (2026)
Assistant Superintendent – Rob Hinkle (2027)
Clerk – Michael Junod (2026)
Treasurer – Jeff Witt (2027)

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Mike Dettinger – Member Outreach (2026)
Steve Wysowski – Clinics (2027)
Alan Silverblatt – Venues (2027)



APPOINTED POSITIONS

AP Coordinator – Earl Paine
AP Committee Chair – Joe Walters, MMR
Newsletter Editor/Webmaster – Howard Kaplan

HELPER SERVICE

EVENTS

Clinics – Steve Wysowski
Layouts – Bill Fagan
Venues – Alan Silverblatt
Refreshments – Bill Fagan, Joe Walters, Kevin Feeney
Door Prizes – Steve Wysowski
Certificates/Awards/Printed Materials – Earl Paine, Howard Kaplan

MEMBERSHIP

Member Outreach – Mike Dettinger, Steve Koffel
Membership Records – Michael Junod

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM - Earl Paine, Joe Walters MMR, Bill Fagan, Chip Stevens, Steve Hamilton, Mark Wallace

OPS – Rob Hinkle

ITEM DONATIONS – Kevin Feeney

MEDIA

Social Media – Rob Hinkle
Webmaster – Howard Kaplan
Newsletter – Howard Kaplan, Earl Paine, Bill Fagan, Joe Walters MMR, Michael Junod
Layout Video – Bill Fagan
Photography – Rob Hinkle, Howard Kaplan, Bill Fagan

DIVISION APPAREL – Howard Kaplan

Hobby Shops

Be sure to patronize the following hobby shops that are now offering discounts on model railroading purchases to NMRA members:

Henning's Trains

128 South Line Steet
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-362-2442
henningstrains.com

10% in addition to already discounted prices

Ron Albert's Delaware & Bound Brook...a last look

Photos by Howard Kaplan

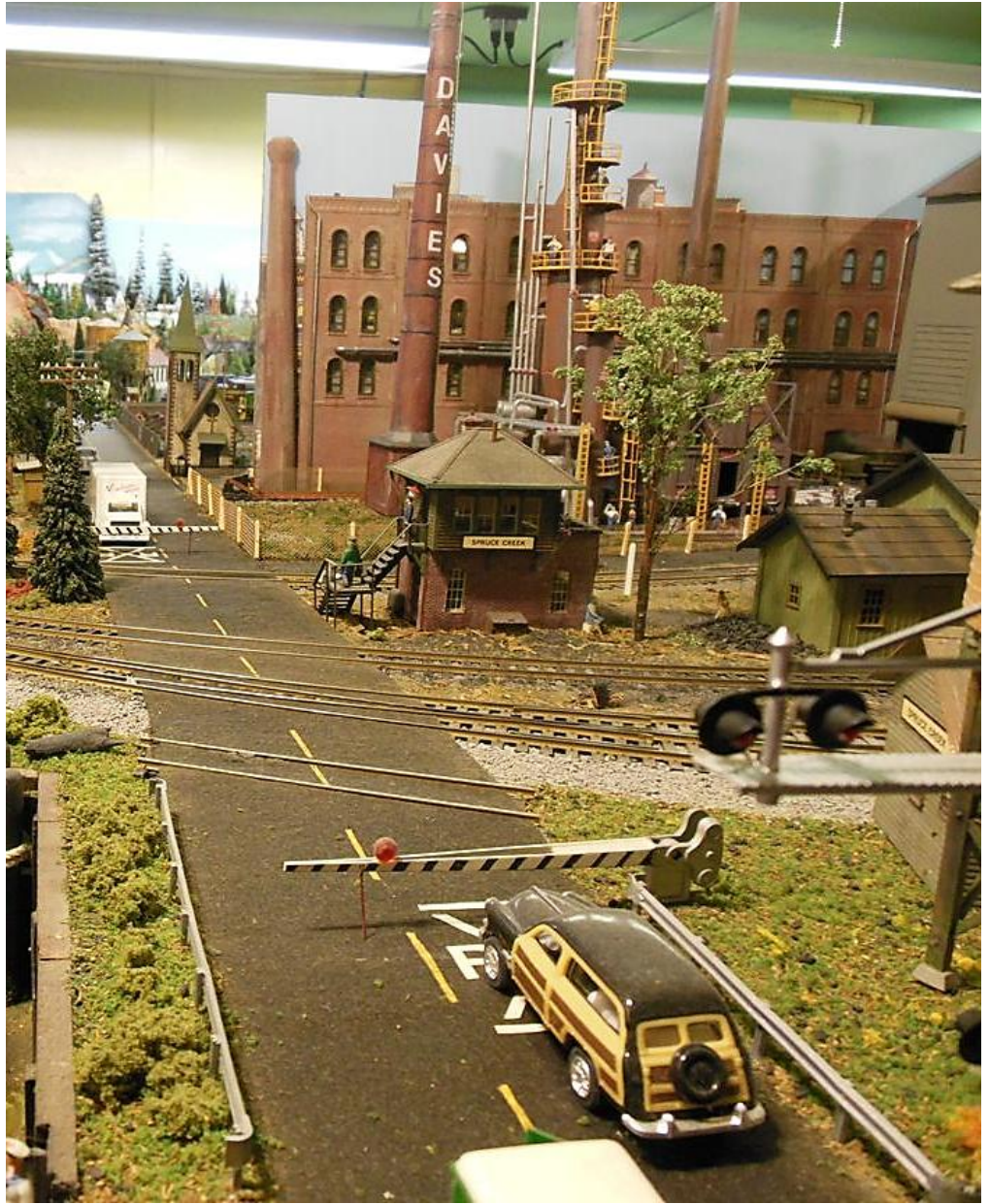
Ron Albert passed away this past April. Back in 2022, I visited him to chat and take new photos of his layout. I had seen the layout in the '90s when it was, in Ron's words, "finished." But as we all know in the model railroading world, no layout is ever finished. And true to form, once Ron gained some extra space, that modeling bug kicked in and he started expanding. The result is a beautifully crafted and detailed larger layout.

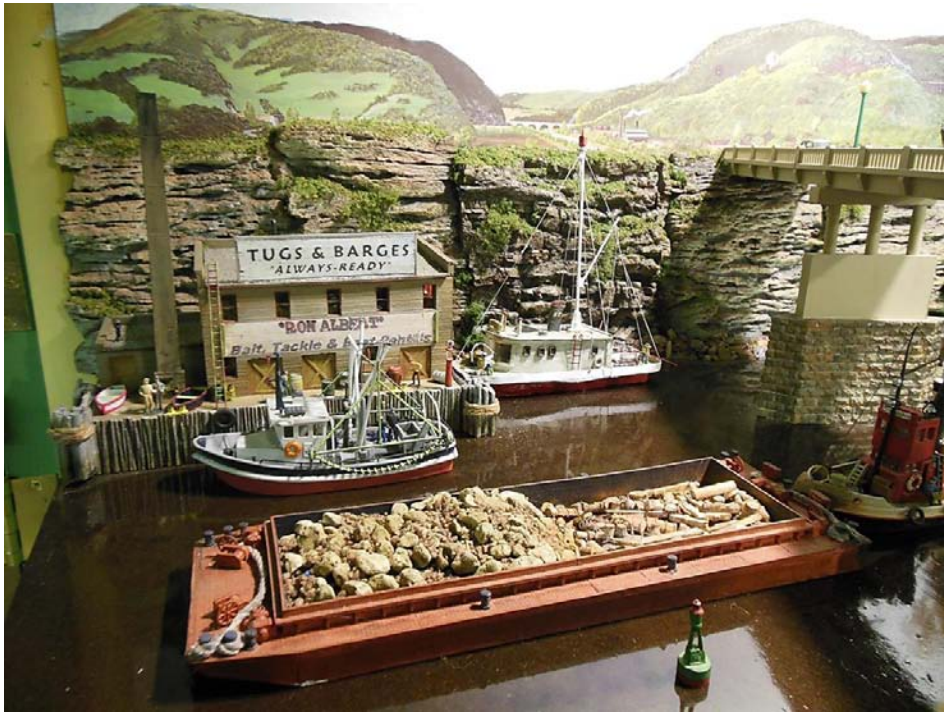
We'll list some basic specs and then add some final comments:

- **Theme:** Generic Reading and PRR
- **Size:** 16 x 25 feet
- **Track plan/control:** Separate loops, each controlled with a Variac (variable transformer).
- **Benchwork:** Open grid
- **Roadbed:** Cork and Homasote (which he'll never use again)
- **Track:** Mostly Atlas code 100 nickel silver flex, with some Peco and Model Power. Ron uses track nails with a jig to keep the nail from hitting the tie.
- **Turnouts:** Peco and Shinohara code 100. #6 and 8 straight and #8 curved. Electrically isolated.
- **Ballast:** Woodland Scenics. Ron recommends only gluing ballast to the outer sides of the track, unless you never intend to remove it.
- **Turnout control:** Choke cables
- **Scenery:** Sculptamold over cardboard webbing. Hydrocal for snow—it won't turn yellow.
- **Backdrop:** 1/8" Masonite x 1-foot lengths
- **Structures:** Fine scale wood kits, Walthers, Campbell, DPM. Turntable is Warner, Coal chute is scratch built.
- **Locos:** Reading locos are cast brass, MU cars are NJ International.
- **Layout lighting:** LED 60W soft white
- **Room lighting:** Fluorescent shop lights

Ron never drew up a track plan—the layout just kind of grew organically. If he had to do it over he would have included Horseshoe Curve. But that could never happen, because this time the railroad really was finished. 📌









Several years back, Division Videographer and Layout Chairman Bill Fagan took "cab ride" videos of Ron's layout. These can be viewed on Bill's Youtube channel and on the Philadelphia Division website, phillynmra.org



Bill Fagan: *The Video Vigilante*



Photos are snapshots from videos/slideshows by Bill Fagan

Below are examples of some impressive layouts that I've visited. I've videoed layouts in California, Idaho, Maryland, Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. 189 layouts with 816 videos and 2,880 followers on YouTube with 1.8 million views.

↓ [Mike McNamara's Northeast Kingdom RR](#)

The Northeast Kingdom railroad. HO Scale. Featuring the rail lines in and around St, Johnsbury, Vermont circa 1980. The railroad features the Maine Central, Boston & Maine, Canadian Pacific and Lamoille Valley, as well as a little bit of the Central Vermont, Grand Trunk, and North Stratford Railway. Video Here: https://youtu.be/o_ptQcqS10E?si=qWnPcKAvkBr82GGD



↓ [Dick Landt's Reading RR](#): North Pennsylvania Branch of the Reading Railroad Lansdale to Saucon Valley Yard. Track plan is a double track folded loop. 8' x 22'. Scratch-built structures include Telford freight house, Perkasio Electric building, storage barn, Shelly & Fenstermacher coal & lumber shed, Perkasio freight house, northbound waiting room and overhead crane, Rockhill water tank and Quakertown freight house. Track length is 94', roughly 1.5 scale miles. Video Here: https://youtu.be/dMj1Vxqe9HA?si=KciHxqt6HF_FvEn0



↓ **Steve Kibort's Southbay Western RR:** N-scale, representing the Denver & Rio Grand Western in the late 1950's. Appeared in the January 2016 issue of *Model Railroader*. An 8x8 multi-level layout connected by a helix. Fantastic scenery and structures. Hand-laid track, with operating signals. NCE DCC. Video here: https://youtu.be/IVwu5JbJMLE?si=I5HJiqBF_ipbkncq



You can see these videos and other layouts on the Philly Division website: phillynmra.org— just click on Cab Ride Layout Videos. If you want to see future videos send me your email address and I'll put you on the distribution list. Do you want your railroad or a friend's railroad videoed? Email me at wfagan@comcast.net. More to follow in the next issue of *The Dispatcher*.

Enjoy,

Bill

KADEE HO COUPLERS... A BRIEF PRIMER

by Bill Deeter

I was recently asked some questions via e-mail and thought it might be good to share them. This is based on my years in the hobby and should not be considered as the only way to get started. As they say your mileage may vary. For any hyperlinks that don't work, copy and paste the url into your browser.

One of the best places to start would be with the [NMRA \(National Model Railroad Association\) Standards and Recommend Practices](#). They are free online.

1) What are talgo trucks?

They are a specific type of truck (wheel assembly) where the [coupler is mounted directly onto the truck](#) itself, rather than to the body of the car. They were common in older, lower-cost, or toy-like model trains, in HO Scale (1:87). They have largely been replaced by [body-mounted couplers](#) for better performance and realism. Generally, talgo trucks will also have what is called a "horn hook" (X2F) coupler. Most all early rolling stock came with these couplers. They were considered the HO standard coupler.



Most modern hobbyists have used knuckle couplers for better reliability as most all modern manufacturers use a knuckle coupler of some type. Some manufactures still do include horn hook couplers if that is what you choose to use. The NMRA has never adapted a standard for the knuckle coupler per se; they primarily just define the correct mounting height and swing of a coupler. And yes, there are coupler conversion kits available to [convert your talgo trucks from horn hook to knuckle couplers](#).

2) What are "semi-scale wheels" and should I be using them? If so, when?

Semi-scale HO wheels (often called "Code 88" wheels) feature a narrower 0.088-inch tread width. They bridge the gap between standard "normal tread" (Code 110) model wheels and true-to-scale prototypes. They offer modelers enhanced realism without requiring flawlessly perfect trackwork.

I would not use them. In my opinion they are for someone building display models. Or someone having absolutely perfect track. The tread width is narrower (.088 scale and 110 regular) and I believe wheel contour is different also, truer to scale, but your trackwork needs to be perfect.

I prefer [Intermountain wheelsets](#) as they have a metal axle. There are metal wheelsets with plastic axles available from several sources as well. There are also different axle lengths available if needed. Here is a [trains.com](#) article on wheelsets. Here is a link from someone I use: <https://modelrrsupply.com/intermountain-40055-40-33-standard-wheelsets-40-axles/> You can get them in different quantities and prices, so price check them from your favorite supplier.

For extra smooth rolling trucks, when you add metal wheelsets you may want to use a truck reamer/tuner: <https://micromark.com/products/ho-on30-truck-tuner>.

3) 36" or 33" wheels? When is one better to use than the other?

In the earlier era, 33" were considered freight wheels and 36" passenger, however some newer freight cars use 36", as well. For reference, it refers to the [scale height of the prototype wheel](#).

If you are converting old Athearn "Blue Box" freight cars they will generally come with 33" freight wheels. There would be nothing wrong with putting a 36" wheel in an old Athearn, but it would most likely make the coupler too high.

4) Plastic or metal Kadee couplers? Any difference?

Generally metal, all [Kadee's](#) are metal except for some specialty ones that come with a plastic shank. In the modern world, there is little use for a plastic shank. It was used in the old days when you were mounting them in a metal framed loco with a metal pocket to prevent shorts between two locos.

Here is a link from someone I use: <https://modelrrsupply.com/kadee-148-ho-scale-whisker-metal-couplers-with-gearboxes-medium-9-32-centerset-shank/>

Couplers can be purchased with coupler boxes or without depending on your needs.

5) Why don't all the couplers line up on my equipment.

Most modern manufacturers' equipment complies with the [NMRA Height Standard](#). That was not the way it was when I started this hobby in the '60s. It is also not true of all current manufactures.

6) How do you know what height the couplers should be?

The NMRA has adopted [coupler height standards](#). So, you may want to obtain a coupler height gauge. <https://kadee.com/shop-by-category/tools-and-accessories/ho-scale-tools-and-accessories/206-ho-insulated-multi-purpose-coupler-height-gauge>

7) What is the difference between the Kadee #205 Coupler Gauge and the #206 Coupler Gauge?

<https://kadee.com/205-ho-metal-multi-purpose-coupler-height-gauge>
<https://kadee.com/shop-by-category/tools-and-accessories/ho-scale-tools-and-accessories/206-ho-insulated-multi-purpose-coupler-height-gauge>

The (206) is plastic or at least something nonconductive and the (205) is some type of metal. With the 206 you can check coupler height with the track power on—really nice with DCC. The 205 will short with track power on. The 206 was not around when I started but neither was DCC with its always-on track power.

The couplers have a trip pin that is used for magnetic uncoupling and they generally need adjusting. Using either the 205 or the 206 it will tell you what the trip pin clearance should be. So you may also want a pair of trip-pin pliers: <https://kadee.com/shop-by-category/tools-and-accessories/ho-scale-tools-and-accessories/237-coupler-trip-pin-pliers-for-hon3-ho-s-on3-o-scale-couplers>

You should also think about getting some Kadee #208 and 209 fiber washers. These are used to raise the car body for coupler alignment. For example, Athearn Blue Box kits almost always need at least one washer on one end: <https://kadee.com/shop-by-category/fasteners>.

Manufactures have improved in the last 10 or so years and include some type of knuckle coupler, and most are the correct height, but not all. Also, many use a plastic coupler with no metal return spring. However, on a smaller home layout they can be replaced if they fail, but they may never need replacing,

8) What are center-set, over-set, or under-set shank knuckle coupler? Is the center-set basic with the other two in case you have a lower- or higher-than-normal car, respectively?

Yes, the center-set is the common #5 and #148 coupler, with the others used to adjust for correct coupler height. There are also three shank lengths, as well, with the #5/148 being a medium length. There are also couplers with smaller knuckles that are sometimes referred to as “scale couplers.” In my opinion these are for display or perfect trackwork. Depending on era, they also have shelf couplers which are used on modern tanks cars. Sometimes, for example, you may want to close couple a pair of say F units so the diaphragms touch, so you might use a short-shank coupler.

9) So what is the difference between Kadee #5 Coupler and a #148?

A #5 Kadee is the [original style that uses a separate brass formed spring to center the coupler](#). The #148 is the newer version and has two little wire springs attached directly to the couple shank so there is no separate spring to mess with when installing them.

10) Should I weight my cars? If so how much?

Well, that can be a big can of worms as opinions run wild on this. To start with, the NMRA does have a Recommended Practice to answer this [RP20.1](#). Thankfully most modern rolling stock at least comes close to these weights. Back in the day, they always came with not near enough weight.

Now for the opinion part. I feel the NMRA PR20.1 is somewhere from a half-ounce to an ounce too light for most of my experience. Now to back up a bit, if (and this is a big if) if you have near perfect track that is in a climate controlled environment then the NMRA standard could work for you. For any imperfection in the trackwork, you may need just a bit more weight. It is best in my opinion to try to match the car weight across your fleet. What I mean is that a short car should weigh very close to a long car if they are to be used in the same train.

This is a hobby and there is not really a right or wrong way to do things, so if it works for you, then enjoy.



Special: America 250 – How the Railroads are Commemorating America in 2026

From CPKC

CPKC debuts 1776 locomotive to celebrate America’s 250th anniversary

March 3, 2026

<https://www.cpkcr.com/>

Kansas City, MO

Canadian Pacific Kansas City (TSX:CP) (NYSE:CP) (CPKC) today unveiled a commemorative locomotive livery honouring the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and celebrating the founding of the United States of America.

“This locomotive, built and painted in Fort Worth, Texas, honours the remarkable and proud history of America as we prepare to mark the nation’s 250th anniversary,” said Keith Creel, CPKC President and Chief Executive Officer. “As a U.S. Army veteran, I am proud to join my 6,000 fellow railroaders living and working across America in celebrating the contributions of all Americans throughout our history. Together, we join the nation in looking forward with vision and hope to the accomplishments of generations yet to come.”



KCS 1776, a new Tier 4 ET44AC locomotive from Wabtec’s Fort Worth manufacturing facility, is the first of five such locomotives that will bear the commemorative America 250 livery. It features Old Glory Red and Old Glory Blue colours as well as the logo of America250, the national nonpartisan organization established by Congress to lead the nation’s 250th anniversary celebrations. Other features include graphic representations of the Declaration of Independence opening phrase “In Congress” and the famous first words of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, as well as 13 stars encircling the date July 4, 1776.

“America’s 250th anniversary is a moment to reflect on the industries and individuals who have helped build and connect our nation,” said Jen Condon, Executive Vice President at [America 250](https://www.america250.org/) . “Freight rail has played a vital role in America’s growth and progress, and CPKC’s commemorative locomotive is a powerful tribute to that legacy as we approach this historic milestone.”

Freight railroads take pride in their role in facilitating the country’s progress through the centuries. CPKC operates in 19 U.S. states as one of the largest freight railroads in America with an extensive network spanning the central United States. It stretches from North Dakota through the Upper Midwest and south to the Gulf Coast in Louisiana and Texas, along with operations in the Northeast from New York to Maine. At 8,800 miles, the U.S. network represents nearly 40 percent of CPKC’s three-nation North American railroad.

About one third of CPKC’s employees live and work in the United States, serving thousands of businesses in the agriculture, automotive, steel, energy, chemical and consumer markets across America. CPKC’s roots stretch back to the founding age of American railroading with the Delaware & Hudson and the expansion age of American railroading in the late 19th century with Arthur E. Stilwell’s founding in 1887 of the Kansas City Suburban Belt Railway.

About CPKC

With its global headquarters in Calgary, Alta., Canada, CPKC is the first and only single-line transnational railway linking Canada, the United States and México, with unrivaled access to major ports from Vancouver to Atlantic Canada to the Gulf Coast to Lázaro Cárdenas, México. Stretching approximately 20,000 route miles and employing 20,000 railroaders, CPKC provides North American customers unparalleled rail service and network reach to key markets across the continent. CPKC is growing with its customers, offering a suite of freight transportation services, logistics solutions and supply chain expertise. Visit cpkcr.com to learn more about the rail advantages of CPKC.

From Union Pacific

Union Pacific Celebrates America's 250th Anniversary with New Locomotives No. 4547 and No. 1776

March 20, 2026

<https://investor.unionpacific.com/>

Omaha, NE

Union Pacific Railroad, founded by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, unveiled its plans today to celebrate the United States, its amazing history and the people behind its unparalleled success story with two new locomotives and the first Big Boy steam tour to the East Coast in honor of America's 250th anniversary.

Big Boy, the world's largest operating steam locomotive, will journey to Philadelphia for Fourth of July, with stops planned in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania.



Our nation's origin will be celebrated with a beautiful No. 1776 – America250 locomotive that will feature an American flag waving against the backdrop of a traditional, armor-yellow Union Pacific locomotive and the America250 logo. President Lincoln, our founder, is commemorated with the No. 1616 locomotive in a paint scheme characteristic of his era.



Our third and newest commemorative locomotive No. 4547 was built in partnership with Wabtec. It cel-

brates our current president, President Donald J. Trump and features large, flowing American flags on



This is the third in a series of presidential locomotives, which also includes the **No. 4141**, the locomotive that honors the late President George H.W. Bush, and that allowed our proud Union Pacific employees to transport the late president to his final resting place in College Station, Texas, where the locomotive is now on display at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.



“Union Pacific is honored to take part in the 250th anniversary of this great nation,” said Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena. “Each of these commemorative locomotives symbolizes important moments in the history of Union Pacific and the U.S. Our shared history shows the vital role railroads have played and will continue to play for generations to come.”

The Big Boy will leave Cheyenne, Wyoming, March 29 for the first leg of its historic tour, returning April 24, after making stops in California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming.

The Eastern leg begins May 25 and will include display days in Omaha, Nebraska; Chicago, Illinois; Buffalo, New York; and Scranton, Pennsylvania, before Big Boy’s arrival in Philadelphia for Independence Day. Additional display days are anticipated in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri, before the tour concludes July 29.

A detailed schedule for the East Coast leg, including whistlestop locations, will be released at a later date. Anyone interested in learning more is invited to join Union Pacific’s Steam Club at upsteam.com.

About Union Pacific

Union Pacific (NYSE: UNP) delivers the goods families and businesses use every day with safe, reliable and efficient service. Operating in 23 western states, the company connects its customers and communities to the global economy. Trains are the most environmentally responsible way to move freight, helping Union Pacific protect future generations. More information about Union Pacific is available at www.up.com.

From BNSF

BNSF honors America's 250th with three commemorative locomotives

May 14, 2026

<https://www.bnsf.com/>

Fort Worth, TX

BNSF Railway, the nation's leading freight transportation provider, today unveiled a series of specially painted locomotives to honor America's 250th birthday.

The three new locomotives, carrying numbers 250, 1776 and 2026, feature an exclusive livery ahead of the nation's Semiquincentennial birthday on July 4, 2026.

"Few institutions are woven into the fabric of America quite like the railroad, and BNSF is honored to celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary with these specially painted locomotives," said Katie Farmer, BNSF Railway president and CEO. "For nearly two centuries, railroaders have helped shape the American story, connecting communities, powering economic growth and strengthening the nation we call home. These locomotives pay tribute not only to our country's heritage, but also to the men and women of Team BNSF who carry that legacy forward today."



“America’s 250th anniversary is an opportunity to recognize the industries and workers who have helped connect and strengthen our nation for generations,” said Jen Condon, executive vice president at America250. “BNSF’s commemorative locomotives are a powerful tribute to the role railroads have played in America’s growth and to the people who continue that legacy every day as we approach the Semiquincentennial.”

About the design

Each locomotive, specially painted by Mid-America Car, Inc. in Kansas City, Missouri, proudly features our nation’s red, white and blue colors and the America250 logo. The locomotives feature a nod to the Preamble to the United States Constitution with the words, “We the People.” The trailing end of the locomotives includes the words “Freedom and Liberty” on either side, with the circle of stars on the tail, paying tribute to the Betsy Ross flag.

These three historic locomotives will travel BNSF’s 32,500-mile rail network for special events; while joining the rest of the BNSF fleet to deliver the nation’s freight for the customers and communities we serve across the supply chain.

BNSF in American History

BNSF and its predecessor lines have been an integral part of the nation’s growth and prosperity for many decades, helping open the West and move the goods and supplies Americans need every day. BNSF’s own history started in 1849 with the Aurora Branch Railroad in Illinois. Over the years, nearly 400 rail lines merged or were acquired to become what is today BNSF Railway. These lines included legendary predecessors like Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (CB&Q); Great Northern Railway (GN), Northern Pacific Railway (NP), Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway (SP&S), Fort Worth and Denver Railroad (FWD), and the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway (SLSF), commonly known as the Frisco. In 1995, Burlington Northern Railroad (BN) and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway (ATSF), also known as Santa Fe, joined to become Burlington Northern Santa Fe. BNSF is now America’s largest railroad, operating in 28 states and three Canadian provinces. It is also the world’s premier intermodal freight transportation provider.

And Then Norfolk Southern Comes Back With, “Hold My Beer!”

From Trains

Norfolk Southern unveils six America 250 locomotives

The locomotives will roam the system and participate in the Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 trip to Philadelphia

May 20, 2026

<https://www.trains.com/>

Waukesha,

WI

Atlanta, GA – Norfolk Southern today unveiled illustrations of its six America 250 locomotives that will tour the East Coast in a celebration that will include public and community events.

“These locomotives represent more than American symbols and milestones. They reflect the people and the work behind them,” NS Chief Operating Officer John Orr said. “Across our railroad, and especially with the skilled teams at Juniata, our railroaders will bring this series to life with craftsmanship, pride, and a deep sense of responsibility. This is a historic moment for our country, and we’re proud to recognize it through this commemorative series.”

The locomotives are being painted at the railroad’s Juniata Locomotive Shop in Altoona, Pa.

“We take pride in every engine that comes through here — that’s just how we do the job,” said Tim Lasure, a carman at Juniata Locomotive Shop. “These units are no different, but it does mean a little more. You’ve got a whole crew putting their hands on them, making sure it’s right, because it’s going to represent something bigger. These are about America’s 250, our railroad, and the work we do every day. When they roll out, we know we did it right, and we did it together.”

As part of the America 250 campaign, Norfolk Southern will host Union Pacific Railroad’s Big Boy No. 4014 on its network for the locomotive’s first tour in the Northeast. The train consist will include various NS America 250 locomotives, along with four historic business cars, including the *Marco Polo*, a restored

Pullman car once used by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The train will travel to the East Coast to offer Norfolk Southern employees, railfans, and local communities the chance to experience historic events throughout the summer.

“Railroads helped build this nation by connecting communities, powering industry, and creating opportunity across generations,” NS CEO Mark George said. “As America approaches its 250th anniversary, Norfolk Southern’s new locomotive series and the historic Big Boy journey across our network, honor that legacy while spotlighting the employees, infrastructure, and innovation that continue driving America forward today.”

NS said the America 250 locomotives draw inspiration from American symbols and the role railroads have played in connecting people, places, and commerce for nearly two centuries. The series includes tributes to the Liberty Bell, the Statue of Liberty, the American bald eagle, and Norfolk Southern’s Thoroughbred heritage.

“On this landmark tour, the cars will travel key freight corridors shaped by Norfolk Southern and its predecessor railroads, linking historic rail communities with the modern supply chains that power the U.S. economy today,” NS said. “Together, the locomotives reflect the pride, resilience, and railroad legacy woven throughout America’s history.”

As previously announced, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific will host public display events at multiple locations across the network during the tour:

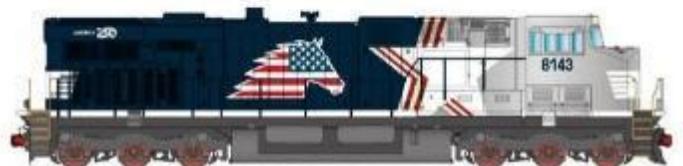
June 10 — Buffalo, N.Y.

June 15-16 — Scranton, Pa.

July 4-5 — Philadelphia

July 9-10 — Altoona, Pa.

July 14 — Fostoria, Ohio



Locomotive Renderings (provided by NS)

Norfolk Southern No. 1776 pays tribute to the Liberty Bell.

Norfolk Southern No. 2026, *The Lady Liberty*, is a salute to the Statue of Liberty

Norfolk Southern No. 250 features the bald eagle in flight.

Norfolk Southern No. 8118 is dubbed *The Stars & Stripes*.

Norfolk Southern No. 8096, *The Soaring*, features an eagle painted in stars and stripes.

Norfolk Southern No. 8143 is *The Patriot*.

Railroad News

From the *Dallas Express* @ Yahoo

Railroad Trestle Engulfed In Flames During Texas Panhandle Fire

May 15, 2026

<https://www.yahoo.com/news>

New York, NY

A wildfire burning in the Texas Panhandle destroyed a railroad trestle near Canyon early Friday morning as firefighters continued battling multiple fast-moving blazes fueled by dry conditions, strong winds, and lightning.



A still from a video showing the BNSF trestle outside of Canyon, TX ablaze. (Photo by Amarillo Fire Dept.)

Video released by the Amarillo Fire Department showed the trestle engulfed in flames in Randall County, with smoke pouring across the area. Additional footage shared from the scene captured heavy smoke obscuring the sun while emergency vehicles worked nearby amid intense wind conditions. The fire, known as the Hunggate Fire, has burned approximately 14,000 acres in Randall County and was reported to be between 30% and 40% contained, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.

Officials said the fire was likely sparked by lightning. BNSF Railway confirmed the blaze destroyed the trestle and disrupted service on its Plainview Subdivision. “A crew is onsite working with first responders to clear the area and our teams are mobilizing to rebuild the bridge,” BNSF spokesperson Kendall Sloan said, Fox 4 KDFW reported.

The Hunggate Fire is one of numerous wildfires burning across the Panhandle, stretching from the Texas-New Mexico border toward Childress. State officials said nearly 40,000 acres have burned across the region, with only a small number of fires fully contained.

Emergency officials issued several evacuation notices and traffic alerts as crews responded to rapidly changing fire conditions. Authorities announced the evacuation of River Falls Airport and warned drivers to avoid the Claude Highway, also known as FM 1151, because of severe traffic congestion. Randall County officials also closed U.S. 87 from just south of Canyon to Hunggate Road and urged motorists to stay out of the area.

In neighboring Castro County, emergency management officials issued a fire warning tied to a wildfire about nine miles northwest of Happy. “A fire warning has been issued for this area,” the alert stated. “There is a dangerous wildfire located 9 miles northwest of Happy. Avoid FM 168 north of county line. Detour FM 1075. Do not drive around barricades.”

Most evacuation orders issued during the fires have since been lifted, though officials said damage assessments remain ongoing and no total count of destroyed structures has been released, Fox 4 reported. The National Weather Service warned that elevated fire danger is expected to continue across the Panhandle through at least Monday, raising concerns that additional fires could spread quickly. The Texas A&M Forest Service Incident viewer showed 8 active fires in the Panhandle area on Friday afternoon, covering thousands of acres of land.

Update – From the *Dallas Express*

BNSF Restores Rail Service Near Amarillo After Bridge Destroyed By Fire

Tiffany Chartier - Senior Production Editor

May 22, 2026

<https://dallasexpress.com/>

Dallas, TX

BNSF Railway crews completed emergency bridge reconstruction and restored rail service on the Plainview Subdivision near Amarillo, Texas, less than one week after a wildfire destroyed the structure.

The first train **crossed** the new bridge early Friday morning.

The bridge was **destroyed** during the Hunggate Fire on May 15, which burned approximately 14,000 acres in Randall County and prompted evacuations and road closures in the area, as *The Dallas Express* reported at the time. BNSF rerouted traffic while engineering teams cleared the site and rebuilt the crossing.

The Hunggate Fire, likely sparked by lightning, consumed the bridge west of Canyon and disrupted operations on the busy freight line.

In a statement **posted** to X, BNSF Railway shared the following:

“This photo may not look like much, but it represents our unwavering commitment to safety and service for our customers. After a fire destroyed a bridge on BNSF’s Plainview Subdivision near Amarillo, Texas, last Thursday night, crews immediately began recovery efforts. Traffic over the bridge was rerouted in the meantime. In less than a week, engineering teams cleared the site, rebuilt the bridge and restored service safely. Early this morning, the first train crossed the new structure.”



The new bridge is up and we have seen a picture of the first train going across it today!! Great, and fast work, to EVERYONE involved including the truck drivers and 3rd party contractors!! (Photo by BNST)

BNSF officials confirmed that the subdivision was taken out of service immediately after the bridge was lost. Customers continued to receive service through alternative routing during the rebuild. No injuries were reported in connection with the bridge fire or reconstruction efforts. The Hunggate Fire was **reported** to be between 30% and 40% contained as of May 15, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.

BNSF has not released additional **details** on the exact cost of the rebuild or long-term structural changes to the new bridge, per Fox 4 KDFW. This incident marks the latest challenge for rail infrastructure in wildfire-prone areas of the Texas Panhandle.

From WAVY

Witness describes septic truck crashing into train in Chesapeake; driver seriously injured

Jimmy LaRoue, Cheyenne Pagan

May 19, 2026

<https://www.wavy.com/>

Portsmouth,

VA

Chesapeake, VA – A witness to a collision between a septic truck and a train on Yadkin Road in Chesapeake Thursday afternoon said he didn't see the truck until it began going over the tracks and being struck by the train.

A man remains hospitalized after the truck and train collided on Yadkin Road, Chesapeake police said. Chesapeake Police officers responded to the 2900 block of Yadkin Road for a reported collision involving a vehicle and a train. Police said there was a minor fuel-related hazmat situation identified at the scene. It said there was no immediate danger to the public.

Police initially reported the driver of the truck had life-threatening injuries. On Friday, they provided an update that he was now listed in stable condition.

Preliminary findings indicate the truck failed to stop at a posted stop sign prior to the collision, according to Chesapeake Police, who are investigating the crash.

A spokesperson for Norfolk Southern said the incident happened around 4:46 p.m. involving a vehicle and an eastbound train at the Yadkin Road crossing at milepost N9.9 in Chesapeake. No one on the train's crew was injured, according to Norfolk Southern.

Video shared with WAVY by viewer Azuriah O'Daniel shows the truck starting to drive across the track when the train collided with the rear of the truck, splitting the tank from the cab and sending both into a nearby ditch. Contents from the tank can be seen spilling onto the ground.



The aftermath of an NS train/septic truck collision in Chesapeake, VA. (Photo by WAVY)

“I didn't even see the truck at first, until, like, he was already going over the tracks, and then he came over the tracks, and the train was already like right here,” O'Daniel said.

He was out recording trains coming by Thursday afternoon, which is his favorite hobby. But he's never captured anything quite like this before.

“It busted the septic tank on it, the hoses fell off, like the hoses complete, like, flew off of it, like it was the impact was crazy,” O'Daniel said.

O'Daniel's video from the scene shows a septic truck in a ditch, with the cab split off from the rear of the truck next to the railroad crossing. First responders can be seen at the scene. O'Daniel said this is a private crossing and doesn't have the typical arms and lights that warn drivers a train is coming. But he thinks after this crash, those things might be a good idea. O'Daniel also noted that the train's horn was very loud before the collision. But because of the speed it was going, it would have been impossible for it to stop in enough time.

“I don't think a lot of people realize that they're not cars, they don't have rubber tires, it's steel rails with steel wheels,” O'Daniel said. “When you grind those two together, that's just instant sparks.”

O'Daniel added it's important that drivers remain vigilant before crossing any set of tracks. “When you go to a train crossing, please always stop and look and listen, always, because sometimes railroad crossings malfunction too. They won't go down sometimes,” O'Daniel said.

From *Cowboy State Daily*

Nebraska Man Fractures Spine After Falling Off Big Boy Locomotive At Whistle-Stop

A Nebraska man told *Cowboy State Daily* he suffered a spine fracture in a fall climbing into the cab of the Big Boy 4014 locomotive on Thursday. “A boyhood dream got dashed as I fell 8 feet off of Big Boy 4014 before I got the ride of a lifetime,” he said.

Kate Meadows

May 29, 2026

<https://www.wyomingcarboncounty.com/>

Somewhere in WY

A Nebraska man told *Cowboy State Daily* he suffered a spine fracture in a fall climbing into the cab of the Big Boy 4014 locomotive on Thursday. “A boyhood dream got dashed as I fell 8 feet off of Big Boy 4014 before I got the ride of a lifetime,” he said. (Gannon Adkisson via Facebook)

A Kearney, Nebraska, man who loves the giant **Big Boy 4014** suffered a small fracture to his spine when he fell off a ladder trying to climb into the cab of the locomotive during its historic whistle-stop tour on Thursday.



Trevor Allen Bentley told *Cowboy State Daily* that he was about to fulfill a longtime dream of riding inside the cab of the world’s largest operating locomotive. He was climbing on the outside of the **Cheyenne-based locomotive** and had one more step to go on the five-rung ladder to get into the cab when he fell backward about 8 feet, landing hard on the ground.

A 16-second video posted (see below) shows the heavysset man, wearing a bright yellow construction vest, jeans and tennis shoes, gripping the handles on either side of the ladder and struggling to get up to the last step.

After a few seconds, he slips and falls to the ground, landing on his back between the train tracks. Three others nearby, also in bright-colored vests, were at Bentley’s side immediately. Instinct seemed to kick in as they attempt to help him sit up.



Onlookers mill about as paramedics respond at the site where a man fell 8 feet from a Big Boy cab Thursday

Bentley said he was able to sit up and that he wanted to get up right away. “I felt fine,” he told Cowboy State Daily on Friday. “Obviously, I was sore. But I just wanted to get up.” He said he was more embarrassed than anything, “because the Big Boy attracts a show.” He guessed a few hundred people had turned out to see the Big Boy at the station. It also was raining, a factor Bentley said likely contributed to his slip.

Ride Of A Lifetime Dashed

Bentley, who works for the online news site CentralNebraskaToday.com, had planned to ride Big Boy 4014 on its approximate 40-mile leg between Kearney and Grand Island, Nebraska, documenting the trip on video for the outlet.



He said he had emailed Union Pacific to request the ride, which the railroad granted. In a social media post, he shared after the fall, he wrote, “A boyhood dream got dashed as I fell 8 feet off of Big Boy 4014 before I got the ride of a lifetime.” He later told Cowboy State Daily he has been a train enthusiast all his life. He had been in the Big Boy cab before, he said, “which is why I thought I could do it. I just couldn’t get that last step in,” he added.

30-Minute Delay

Big Boy was already running behind schedule when it pulled into the Kearney station, said Bentley. His fall caused an added 30-minute delay. North Platte resident James Burns said he frequently visits the tracks and had decided to follow Big Boy from North Platte to Kearney.

He was at the stop, taking pictures of Big Boy 4014 when Bentley fell, though he told Cowboy State Daily he did not see the fall. He also confirmed the incident caused an approximate 30-minute travel delay.

The fall sparked a lot of speculation on social media, with comments ranging from prayers that Bentley was OK to sharper criticisms of Bentley’s attempt to climb aboard. One such criticism was his wearing tennis shoes rather than work boots. Bentley was taken via ambulance to CHI Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney and said he was released later that day.

'No Fault of UP'

He was home resting when he spoke with Cowboy State Daily via phone Friday. “I’m just stiff more than anything,” he said, adding that he hopes to be back to work next week. “I am just extremely lucky.”

Bentley wanted to make it clear that his fall was no fault of Union Pacific or anyone but himself. He said what happened was a total accident and that’s why he signed a waiver with UP about riding in the locomotive.

“I do not fault them in any way, shape, or form,” he said. “I don’t want to put a blemish on their tour. It was no fault of Union Pacific. It was on my own accord.”

Union Pacific publicly responded to the incident in a 16-word statement: “We are glad the person is OK and appreciate the concern we’ve heard from rail fans.”

Contact Kate Meadows at kate@cowboystatedaily.com

From Rowland Ritte via am610@cox.net

The Wonderful Western Maryland Railway

Rowland sent this video link that shows a very unique lash-up of WM power:

https://youtube.com/watch?v=9RX74Jaj0t8&si=hl_Yjb_bb5QUP8yb (CTRL + Left click to view)

For a Laugh

from the Delmarva Timetable

Signs of the Times

A plumber’s wife came up with this and posted it outside her husband’s business this past January :

“My idea of a Super Bowl is a toilet that cleans itself.

Outside a Pre-school in Alabama:

“Whatever you do today, do it with the confidence of a 4-year-old in a Batman t-shirt.”

After being teased by her construction crew all week, a woman got back at her male co-workers:

“**CAUTION: Men at work.** Women work all the time; they don’t need to put up signs.”

Outside a Kroger store in Michigan:

“I’m getting stronger with age. I just turned 95 and I can now lift \$100 worth of groceries with 1 hand.”

On an overhead message board on I-5 near Los Angeles:

“Turn signals come FREE with vehicles. USE THEM”

My Aunt’s Neighbors and Their Disappearing Cat

My aunt’s neighbors, in New York City, had a beautiful cat named Felix. They would let him out during the day, but he would come in during the night.

One cool October evening, he just disappeared. They searched for days, but could not find him. The following Spring he showed up clean and healthy. They thought he just got out to sow his wild oats.

All was back to normal and everyone was happy until the following Autumn when Felix disappeared, showing back up the next Spring.

Perplexed about the rather strange nature of it all. They walked around the neighborhood asking if anyone knew about Felix and his disappearing act.

While talking to an older couple, who lived 5 houses down from them, the mystery was solved.

“A black cat?” asked the woman. “Oh, yes. My husband and I just hated to see him out in the cold, so we bought a cat carrier. We took him with us to Florida for the Winter.”

Actual State Laws Still on the Books

Indiana – It is illegal to dress a female doll in men’s clothing, and vise-versa

Maryland – It is illegal to have thistles growing in your yard.

Florida – Parking fees for your vehicles also apply to all elephants to a parking meter.

California – A woman could face up to 1 year in jail for driving while wearing a housecoat..

Minnesota – You cannot cross the state line while carrying a duck on your head.

Kentucky – By state law, you must bathe at least once a year.

North Carolina – It is illegal for cats and dogs to fight.

Colorado – Car dealerships are prohibited from showing cars on Sundays.

Wyoming – It is illegal to molest a cougar.

Upcoming Events

(Mid Atlantic Train Show List, Model Train Shows And Schedules 2.0 Facebook page and subscribers)

(Highlighted events signify club participation. Highlighted events signify tentative club participation and information.)

- Ongoing 2026 – Tour the Red Caboose.** PRR 477123, built in 1917, at the Lewes Junction Railroad & Bridge Association. 1st & 3rd Sundays. Hours: 10a-2p, weather permitting. The caboose is located between the Lewes Public Library and the Lewes History Museum, 111 Adams Ave., Lewes DE. For more information, please visit: www.lewesjunctionrr.org.
- Ongoing until October, 2026 – HO Scale Operating Session.** DelMarVa Model Railroad Club, 103 E. State St., Delmar, DE. Time: Noon-5p. Watch the “HO Layout News” section of the *DelMarVa Timetable* for exact dates. Anyone with an interest in railroad operations is invited to participate. Club membership is NOT a prerequisite For more info, contact: info@delmarvamodelrailroadclub.org.
- Ongoing 2026 – Delaware Train Gang.** Monthly meetings, 2nd Wednesday. Smyrna Diner, 99 S. Cory Ln., Smyrna, DE. Starting at 1:30p. For more info, contact email: samtrains@outlook.com, or call Sam Eaton 302-373-0534.
- June 11-13, 2026 - Harrisburg O Scale Narrow Gauge Show.** New Hope Church, 584 Colonial Park Dr., Harrisburg, PA. The largest O-scale Narrow Gauge Event in North America. Hours: Fri.: 11a-6p; Sat.: 9a-3p. For information and tables, please send email to: harrisburgON30@gmail.com .
- June 27, 2026 - Subway Day Train Rides.** Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, 282 Rush Scottsville Road, Rush, NY. Join us for a special event commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of Rochester Subway service and the 110th birthday of Rochester Subway Car 60. Enjoy special exhibits on the history of the Rochester Subway and tour our progress to restore the last surviving car from the Rochester Subway. Ride our vintage diesel trains and tour the largest railroad museum in New York State! For details: please visit: <https://rochestertrainrides.com/event/rochester-subway-day/> or contact Otto Vondrak via email at: info@rochestertrainrides.com , or call (585) 533- 1431.
- July 11-12, 18-19 & 25-26, 2026 – Christmas in July Open House.** Carbon Model Railroad Society, 539 Ore St., Bowmanston, PA. Hours: 1-4pm. Free admission. Two floors of model railroading. Trains and accessories for sale. For details, please visit: <https://cmrs.info/> or send email to Gary Mack at mack-gjtt@ptd.net .
- August 1, 2026 – Wyoming Peach Festival.** Railroad Ave., Wyoming, DE. 9a-3p (rain or shine.) Details to be forthcoming. For more info, visit: <https://wyoming.delaware.gov/peach-festival/>.
- August 7-9, 2026 – Eastern Shore Threshermen & Collectors Association, Inc. Annual Wheat Threshing Steam and Gas Engine Show.** 5806 Federalsburg Hwy., Federalsburg, MD. Hours: 10a-6p. Admission: FREE. For more info, visit website: <https://www.threshermen.org> , email: threshermen@gmail.com or call: 410-673-2414 or 410-754-8422.
- August 22, 2026 – Harrington Heritage Day.** The 49th Annual Harrington Heritage Day. 9a-3p. There will be food, craft vendors, demonstrations, and three museums filled with our local history for you to explore. For more info, visit: <https://heritagedayde.com/>
- August 29-30, 2026 – Riverhead Railroad Festival.** Railroad Museum of Long Island, 418 Griffing Ave., Riverhead, NY. Hours: 10a-4p both days. For details, please visit <https://www.rmli.org> .
- September 12, 2026 – Patcong Valley Railroad Club Open House.** 1308 US 40, Richland, NJ. Hours: 10a-3p. For more information, see our website: <https://www.petcongvalleyrailroad.com> .
- September 19, 2026 – Delmar Heritage Day.** Railroad Ave., Delmar, DE. **Rain date: September 26.** Hours: 10a-2p. There will be free carriage rides, a live band, a rock-climbing wall for the kids, craft and food vendors and more! For info, visit: <https://www.townofdelmar.us/heritage-day.htm>

- September 19, 2026 – TCA Keystone Division Meet.** Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Rd. Lancaster, PA. This is the intersection of US Route 30 and PA Route 72. Hours: 9a-1p with Keystone members admitted at 8am. For details, please contact Russ MacNair, Meet Registrar, email russmacnair@gmail.com or call 717-664-2335.
- September 19, 2026 – 6th Annual Hemlock Train Show.** Ag Expo Building at Hemlock Fairgrounds, 7370 Fair St., Hemlock, NY. Hours: 10a-4p on Sep-19 and 10a-3p on Sep-20. For tables, please contact: Tom Frey at 585-734-1662 or Bob Kleinman at 716-440-3156.
- October 3, 2026 – Hurlock Fall Festival.** Main St., Hurlock, MD. Hours: 10a-5p. The Fall Festival offers a full day of events – a kick-off parade down Main Street at 10 a.m., arts & craft show, flea market, food, family activities, music by Last Call Band with Buddy Bloom and Chain Break Band with Paul Baker, and train rides in two passenger cars. Advance Train Ride tickets (\$10 per person) can be purchased at the Town of Hurlock office at 311 Charles St. (8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday. **NOTE: Tickets not on sale as of press time.**). Limited tickets will be available the day of the event. The train departs from Hurlock Train Station for a round trip to Federalsburg at 11:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:30 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. For more information call the Town of Hurlock at 410-943-4181 or visit: <https://www.hurlock-md.gov> .
- October 10, 2026 – Patcong Valley Railroad Club Open House.** 1308 US 40, Richland, NJ. Hours: 10a-3p. For more information, see our website: <https://www.petcongvalleyrailroad.com> .
- October 15-18, 2026 – Tracks to Tidewater-NMRA Eastern Region Convention.** Holiday Inn-Virginia Beach, 5655 Greenwich Rd., Virginia Beach, VA. For more info, visit: <https://mer-nmra.com/savethedate/index.html> .
- October 20-24, 2026 - Fall Train Collectors Association (TCA) Eastern Division York Meet.** York Expo Center, 334 Carlisle Ave., York, PA. TCA membership required to attend. Future dates at <https://easterntca.com/read-more.htm> .
- November 14, 2026 – Central New York NRHS Great New York State Model Train Fair.** NY State Fairgrounds, 581 State Fair Blvd, Syracuse, NY. Hours: Sat.: 10a-5p; Sun.: 10-4p. For details: please visit <https://www.modeltrainfair.com> .
- November 21, 2026 – Hartly Train Show.** Hartly Volunteer Fire Co., 2898 Arthurville Rd., Hartly, DE. 9a-2p. Admission: \$5, kids 12 and under FREE. Over 150 tables of toys and trains. A model train will be on display in the engine bay. Food is available for purchase made by the Ladies Axillary. For more info, visit: <https://hartlyfire51.com/>
- November 28-29, 2026 – Thanksgiving Model Train and Vintage Train Show.** Roberts Wesleyan University, 2301 Westside Dr., Rochester NY. Open at 9:30 for TTCS
- November 28-29, December 5-6, 2026 – DelMarVa Model Railroad Club Open House.** 103 East State Street, Delmar, DE . Enjoy 8,000 square feet of trains operating on seven layouts displaying several scales. Layout in the Camelot Hall on the 2nd floor. Access is stairs only. Hours: Sat.: 11a-4p; on Sun.: Noon-4p. For details, please visit: www.delmarvarailroadclub.org . (December 6 is the 40th Anniversary of the club's first open house.)
- December 12, 2026 – TCA Keystone Division Meet.** Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Rd. Lancaster, PA. This is the intersection of US Route 30 and PA Route 72. Hours: 9a-1p with Keystone members admitted at 8am. For details, please contact Russ MacNair, Meet Registrar, email russmacnair@gmail.com or call 717-664-2335.
- January 2-3, 9-10, 2027 – DelMarVa Model Railroad Club Open House.** 103 East State Street, Delmar, DE. Enjoy 8,000 square feet of trains operating on seven layouts displaying several scales. Layout in the Camelot Hall on the 2nd floor. Access is stairs only Hours: Sat.: 11a-4p; on Sun.: Noon-4p. For details, please visit www.delmarvarailroadclub.org.



We'd like to make all NMRA members aware of a new, Limited Edition, HO scale freight car that Cincinnati Division 7, Mid-Central Region is now offering for sale/purchase. It is a N&W HC-46 ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper in a unique repaint scheme with patched-out data; available in 3 different road numbers.

The following link provides details about it as well as pricing, shipping and ordering information.

<https://cincy-div7.org/car-projects>

Philly Train Trivia Answers

by Adam Eyring

1) What car came from Blackpool, England for the 1976 Bicentennial?

Answer: Boat tram car 601 from Blackpool England ran for the 1976 Bicentennial. Since it had to be regauged, it didn't enter service until a few weeks after the Bicentennial.

2) What SEPTA route had its trolleys painted for the Bicentennial?

Answer: SEPTA Route 50 that passed by Independence Hall had its trolleys painted for the Bicentennial.



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 If you missed out on any of our previous events, all of the videos are saved on the NMRA YouTube channel:
<http://www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGModelRailroading>

Upcoming NMRA Conventions



[2026 Scenic City Express, Chattanooga, TN](#)

2026

[2026 NMRA National Convention – Chattanooga, TN](#)

Upcoming MER Conventions



Tracks to Tidewater

Oct 15–18, 2026 • Virginia Beach, VA

Division Apparel



Polo



Polo with pocket



Cap



Short Sleeve Button-Down



Long Sleeve Button-Down

Our new apparel source is Daylight Sales. Website: <https://www.daylightsales.net/> You can do a search for “PhillyNMRA” to find our items, or [click here](#) for the direct link. Email: daylightsales@gmail.com Phone: (888) 557-9899.

We continue to offer the Port Authority polo, with or without pocket, and the short- and long-sleeve button down shirts. As before, you can have your name added. A new offering is a matching cap. Unfortunately patches are no longer available as our emblem is now being directly embroidered onto the items.

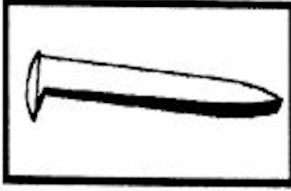
Manufacturer’s descriptions and specs:

POLO

POLO W/POCKET

LONG SLEEVE BUTTON DOWN

SHORT SLEEVE BUTTON DOWN



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD APPLICATION FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR

Member's Name: _____ NMRA#: _____ EXP: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Prov: _____ Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____

The Golden Spike Award will be awarded to any NMRA member who has completed the Qualifications Checklist, obtained the necessary signatures and who does not hold MMR status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratch building and super detailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist, obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.

QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

Display six units of rolling stock either scratch built, craftsman kits or super-detailed commercial kits.

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.

Construct five structures either scratch built, craftsman kits or super detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

Three types of track required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial track may be used.

All installed track must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).

Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Witness: _____ Print Name: _____ NMRA #: _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ Region: _____

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