



News from Houston N'Crowd



July/August 2014

THE ORDERBOARD



Why are these N'Crowders smiling? *Page 2*



"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Vincent Walker, President

Mid-year notes, and a bedtime story

I would like to thank the members who came out to the crawfish boil at Zube Park. We had great weather, great food thanks to Eric Baughman, and (miniature) trains to look at and ride.

With another couple of months having come and gone, we are at the midway point of the year, and with that said let's keep in mind that we need to plan the upkeep and maintenance of the layout room and the layout. I know Samuel, Al and Joe have already committed to some areas, but we need your help in others. At our upcoming meetings, we will go over these items and ask for volunteers.

We started a "keep it clean" campaign in the layout room, but we seem to be going back to the old ways, so please remember when you leave the layout room it is up to you, not others, to put stuff away and clean up after yourself.

Our last operating session was fun for all who came out. Attendees were Charlie Aselin, Richard Bartlett, Gorden Bliss, Ray Byer, Al Hague, Daniel Shaw and Thattaya and Vincent Walker. Eddie Aycok worked as trainmaster.

It was a great running session, which all started with me grabbing the wrong train to Bennett, and it was downhill from there! It was like, who's on second, what's on first. Richard gave Thattaya engine driving lessons, and with the fast switching at Austin by Charlie, we had no holdups at all!?? If you could have seen the look on Eddie's face at how smooth everything was running, you would have laughed out loud.

Hats off to Daniel Shaw for coming in and working Bennett; I believe it was his first time. A well-oiled machine there, I tell you. It was all great fun!

Let's take advantage of Allyn's generosity in giving us the layout space. Come out, run trains and support your hobby! We are not looking for professional ops folks, just folks who want to come out to learn, laugh and have a good time. So I will see you at the next ops session, right? It's set for Wednesday, August 6, at 7 p.m. If you are hungry, be at Papa Ben's about 6 p.m. and join us for dinner.

Happy railroading!

A short bedtime story from the president

The Yazoo Railroad way back when

There was a small railroad in the Cajun swamp land it was, way back in the day, when they called it the Yazoo Railroad near Baton Rouge or so. It was so small it only had an engineer called Budro and a fireman called Tibido.

One wet and rainy day in the swamp, the old gatorhead - not hoghead - engineer was at the throttle (and you thought gatorhead only came from Florida). Budro could barely see the rails in front of the engine, and did not know that one of the swamp bridges had washed out until the train got close. So Budro throws the brake on and applies sand. But Tibido yells out, "Don't look like we're stoppin'!"

Budro then jams the Johnson Bar in reverse, bails off the brakes and opens the throttle.

With the drive wheels spinning in reverse and the sand still pouring out on the rails, the train slows down a little but not much, and the washed-out bridge is fast approaching. Budro yells out to Tibido, "What are we gone do?"

So Tibido had a thought, "The Missus fix me some crawdads for lunch and what if...?" So Tibido takes that lunch bucket of crawdads from the cab onto the pilot of the engine. Hanging on with one hand, Tibido starts laying down those crawdads on the rail.

Let me tell you that little old steam engine did a jerk and a lurch, and all kinds of stuff! When the smoke and dust cleared, the steamer was on top of a pile of train cars just short of the washed-out bridge, with the tender curled beneath the engine.

That old engine looked just like a crawdad with its tail under its self! Aieeee!



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
July 16 / August 19 / September 16

BC&G Operating Sessions:
Wednesday, August 6 / Wednesday, October 1

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Our monthly membership meetings start at 7 p.m. The BC&G Wednesday operating sessions start at 7 p.m. Come earlier to join us for dinner.

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
May 21, 2014**

Prepared by James Senneff, Jr. - Secretary

Report: President Vincent Walker called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

Vice President's Report: Vice President Samuel Townsel reported that some demolition is underway at the UP (ex-MKT) Eureka yard. Samuel has a contact that works there and he may be able to give a tour of the facilities if members are interested. It was unanimously agreed to tour the facility. Samuel said that he would get with his contact and see if and when a tour could be set up.

The next meeting is June 18, 2014, at Papa Ben's at 7:00 p.m.

The door prize winners were: Gordon Bliss, tank car; Eddie Aycock, centerflow hopper; Al Hague, boxcar; Dejan Suskavcevic, ore car.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eddie reported that the club has in the bank \$11,032.92 cash and the CD of \$4,816.73.

Secretary's Report: Members in attendance, 17: Dejan Suskavcevic, Tom Wayburn, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Steve Lancaster, James Senneff, Jr., Ted Davis, Gordon Bliss, Al Hague, Ray Byer, Joe Kingsberry, Eddie Aycock, Samuel Townsel II, Robert Moore, Aaron Serwetman, Corbett Legg, Vincent A. Walker.

New Business: President Walker said that everyone that went to the crawfish boil at HALS/Zube Park had a good time. Eric did a great job with the crawfish.

Ted Davis noted that other organizations take donations at events and suggested we take the donation box when we have activities such as the crawfish boil to help with the cost of the event.

A discussion of the club name tags took place and it was noted that some new members do not have name tags yet. Eddie and Gordon discussed the logistics of getting the name tags done. Gordon will give Eddie the box with the name tag templates so that new name tags can be ordered.

Ted Davis asked what had happened to the Gary Brothers module with the skyscraper that was part of the old layout at Ben Pearlman's. Gordon has the huge skyscraper at his house; Gordon said there was not actually a full module.

Al Hague informed the club that seven auto racks are still available for sale at \$10.00, along with some centerbeam cars for \$5.00. A number of cars were sold.

Joe Kingsberry fixed one of the club's E-units, which needed diaphragms and couplers. Joe body-mounted the rear

coupler and fixed the headlight. During the discussion, it was suggested that a decoder be installed in the A unit.

Al Hague asked the status of the Con-Cor New York Central passenger set that was donated to the club. Joe said that he has not had a chance to look at it. Gordon asked if the PA engine has been tested; the answer was no, so the engine will be tested on analog prior to installation of a decoder.

Marty Naul agreed to do a DCC clinic in November.

Old Business: Samuel Townsell reported progress on the refinery project. It is about 50 percent complete. He has the track and switches needed, and it will probably be ready for the August operating session.

Tom Marsh said that the editor of *Cowcatcher Magazine* was impressed with the refinery in the club newsletter and would like Samuel's expanded story for the *Cowcatcher* when the refinery is done.

President Walker said that he heard from Al Hague and that the third time should be the charm. This is the third try on the trees. The trees are still too wide from the wall to the track and are interfering. He still needs to cut the trees.

Eddie Aycock asked Ray Byer how we are doing on the reversing section. The reversing section in the area of the refinery is now working. It took two weeks to figure out where all the drops were.

Richard Bartlett brought a show and tell, a photo of the prototype Texas South-Eastern GE 70 ton diesel and his Bachmann-based model of it. It was really cool.

Gordon said that 12 people were at the swap meet at his house, and a lot of trains ran; even some weird European trains had a chance to go across the Mississippi River on the layout. It was a good time. There was some light selling and trading at the swap meet.

Eddie Aycock reminded everyone that the next operating session will be the first Wednesday of June.

President Walker said that tonight's clinic will be on wiring, given by Ray Byer.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Samuel and seconded by Gordon. Meeting was adjourned at 7:41 pm.

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
June 18, 2014
Prepared by Eddie Aycock - Treasurer**

President's Report: President Vince Walker called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. The next meeting is July 16, 2014, at Papa Ben's.

The door prizes, which included a personal selection out of the unused car box, went to Tom Marsh for a caboose, Joe Kingsberry for a centerbeam, Rick Townsend for a centerbeam and Charlie Aselin for a coil car. A donated grand prize of a Pioneer Zephyr resin kit was won by Vincent C. Walker. Vince donated the kit to the N'Crowd in the hope that Joe Kingsberry may have some time in the future to paint it.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eddie Aycock reported that the club account has \$10,812.79 plus a CD still at \$4,816.73. There are presently thirty-five active members, which includes three new members from the previous year.

Acting Secretary's Report: We had 14 members attending this meeting: Robert Moore, Dejan Suskavcevic, Al Hague, Vincent Walker, Vincent C. Walker, Steve Lancaster, Ray Byer, Charlie Aselin, Rick Townsend, Eddie Aycock, Ted Davis, Joseph Kingsberry, Tom Wayburn and Tom Marsh.

Layout Master's Report: Discussion with members established that a turnout in Bennett needs repair. Several areas on the layout need to be leveled to prevent car roll. Layout Master Al Hague stated that there are quite a number of cars on the layout that do not have painted purple pins that show club ownership. Over the next few weeks members need to color code their cars on the layout that they have not donated to the club. It was recommended that the underframes of the cars should be marked instead of the truck pins

because truck pins can be lost. Al also mentioned that old club cars that have not been used for quite a while are for sale for \$5.00 each. The members present also agreed that old buildings that are not going to be used will be available for door prizes.

New Business: Tom Marsh mentioned that anyone with a stack of money should consider the upcoming trip from Kansas City to the West Coast on a private railroad car for the rock bottom price of \$1,500. Passage to Kansas City and the return passage back from Los Angeles are not included in the price. Tom Wayburn mentioned a swap meet scheduled for July 19 at the Northwest Crossing club's layout room at Northwest Mall.

Old Business: President Walker reminded the members that the club room needs to be clean at all times. After the big cleanup job recently things are starting to slide again. Members need to step up to the plate to man the club room on Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to meet our obligation to Papa Ben's. Tom Marsh, Tom Wayburn and Al Hague said they would be available this coming Saturday since Joe Kingsberry and Vince will not be available.

Motion to adjourn was put forth by the president and seconded by Charlie and Ray. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

LCL *Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor*

Guest Editorial: *The following editorial is by Joe Fugate, publisher of the online magazine Model Railroad Hobbyist (<http://mrhmag.com>). It originally appeared in the June issue of MRH and is reprinted here with permission.*

A more flexible layout era

With all the interest among many model railroaders today to model a prototype railroad, or at least to prototype a model railroad from a prototype that "could have been", a key step in the process becomes picking a general era, and setting a specific date.

Many modelers pick a year and then try to stick to that. Some pick a month, day, and year. Others prefer to be more general, and say: "I'm modeling the 1950s" or "I'm modeling the early Amtrak era."

If you take the more generalist route, like modeling the 1950s, then that means anything in the '50s should work, up to something built and deployed as late as Dec. 31, 1959. You may also have locomotives on your railroad that were retired Jan. 2, 1950, but since the locos were still in revenue service on Jan. 1, 1950, you call that "the 1950s" and declare you're good to go. If you're one of these era generalists, the era purists will tell you you're just kidding yourself. In reality, you're modeling 1959, you're just not doing a very good job of it!

Actually, there is a way to be a generalist and a purist as

well, getting the best of both worlds. That's what I do with my HO Siskiyou Line. How am I able to accomplish that? I like modeling the 1980s Southern Pacific in Oregon. I do it in a generalist way, but manage to keep it purist as well!

As I write this, it's May 2014, so I declare it's currently May 1984 on my layout, making it exactly 30 years in the past. In 2010, I declared it to be 1980 on my Siskiyou Line. As this decade unfolds, I will march through the years on my Siskiyou Line until we get to 2019 (1989). Once it's 2020, I will roll the date back 40 years, and the layout will be back to 1980 again.

On my Southern Oregon prototype, the decade began with a lot of UP pool power, so I can run mixed SP/UP power consists. By the mid-decade, the UP pool power was largely gone and the GP40R - TEBU's (tractive effort booster units - slugs with GP40R mothers, in other words) began running on the coast branch. By 1986, the first yellow, red, and black Kodachrome SPSF units began to appear in fresh paint, and by 1988, black and orange DRGW units began running across the entire SP system. Also in the late 1980s, some BN pool power started showing up on the SP in Oregon.

Continued on page 12

Multiple hobbies

by Hugh Boyd

I think most modelers are not restricted exclusively to the “World’s Greatest Hobby”. I think most are also into railfanning the real thing and its photography. Modelers also play golf, work out at the gym, follow the NFL, interact with their grandkids, whatever.

For my part, I’m into N-scale modeling, watching and photographing real trains, plus playing solitaire.

Solitaire? Yes. I have three computers and one is almost solely devoted to Solitaire. I’m up to around 10,000 games and I’ve won about 1,500. I got to thinking how I could run my trains and play solitaire at the same time. The photo shows my idea was feasible.

I went to Lowe’s and bought a full-size sheet of plywood and eventually used only 8.5 percent of the original. I cut it with my jigsaw fitted with a home-made radius bar. I fitted standard Kato N-scale Unitrack, with a wye, 315 mm curves and a couple of shortened straights.

Normally I work with Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF). That stuff is FLAT. This time I used one-half inch thick, six-layer plywood with a bowed center and

ends higher than the middle. I bolted the narrow end to my original layout and pulled the other end down with a bungee cord. Bungee cord? That’s not a normal model railroading item.

I spent about three months on this little project. A lot of my time went into figuring how to automate the points of the wye turnout. After several tries, I accomplished that with the use of a dual block occupancy detector, a pair of relays, a polarity reversal module and a lot of wire. The location of the sensors for the block detector limits me to trains no longer than 34 inches. But mine is a small layout anyway, so I can live with that length.

Now that I’m operating my loop, I’ve got to come up with a tennis related name, because the cut plywood looks exactly like a tennis racquet. Trespassing on my loop is of course strictly prohibited, but when I’m enjoying both hobbies my arm crosses over the right of way. Hope you won’t turn me in.

On completion of my three month assignment, I came to the conclusion that I could have made it in the real world as a carpenter, but as a cabinetmaker - no way.



‘Mr. Detail’ does it again!



Houston N’Crowd member Joe Kingsberry recently tackled an important “what if?” question: What if UP had not done what it did and SP was around to order new Electro-Motive Diesel SD70ACe locomotives?

The answer is illustrated by these photos of Joe’s nicely-detailed and finished Kato SD70ACe sporting the SP’s bloody nose paint scheme. No. 507 is seen working on the N’Crowd’s Bayou City & Gulf Railroad in late June.

Joe selected a road number in the 500 series as a logical continuation of SP locomotive numbering practices before the UP takeover.

Nice work, Joe!



Modern technology in Pennsy guise

by Tom Marsh

The Pennsylvania Railroad's classic tuscan and gold passenger paint has been seen recently on a car traveling through Houston on Amtrak's *Sunset Limited*, but it's not the traditional "private varnish" one might expect to see. Instead of "Pennsylvania", the name in gold on the letterboard is "Federal Railroad Administration", and in place of the car name appear the words "Office of Safety".



DOTX 221 on Amtrak's Sunset Limited about to depart Houston on May 27, 2014.

However, in contrast to many FRA cars that are decorated with a variety of somewhat garish red, white and blue paint schemes, DOTX 221, with its gleaming tuscan paint and accurate PRR-style striping, clearly pays homage to the glory days of the Pennsy, once the self-proclaimed "Standard Railroad of the World".

Originally built in 1954 by Pullman-Standard for Canadian National as a two-compartment, two-bedroom buffet lounge named Cape Brule, the car was also operated by VIA Rail Canada when that entity took over most of Canada's passenger trains in 1978. It went to a private owner before being acquired by the FRA for use by its Office of Research & Development.

The car is no mere reflection of the past glories of the Pennsy. DOTX 221 was modernized to serve as a test bed for the FRA's Autonomous Track Geometry Measurement System (ATGMS). "Autonomous" means just that: The car generally runs unmanned.

Development of the ATGMS concept was driven by the U.S. government agency's desire to improve track maintenance and safety practices through the use of multiple autonomous inspection systems to supplement data gathered by more traditional,

manned track inspection processes.

The ATGMS sensors, which are relatively small and lightweight, can be deployed on equipment that is in revenue service, including passenger and freight cars, and locomotives. The track geometry sensors hung under the car use standard cellular communication links to transmit data to a computer server and database. The system is designed to allow remote assessment of track geometry conditions, and it will generate alarms when specific conditions are detected.

The first pilot system was deployed by the FRA in early 2008 on Amtrak's Auto Train, and the technology has since been commercialized by Falls Church, Va.-based ENSCO, Inc. According to ENSCO, the ATGMS "measures and reports track geometry exceptions, including gauge, cross-level, alignment, surface and limiting speeds in curves from a revenue train."

One of the primary advantages of an autonomous system is that many routine inspections can be undertaken by equipment operating in revenue service, on a more frequent basis and without the need for specialized cars or disruptive inspection/maintenance windows on busy lines. More frequent inspections result in earlier defect detection, which in turn opens opportunities for preventative

maintenance before a track defect-related incident occurs.

Although the FRA's research arm continues to develop ATGMS technology, within the past year DOTX 221 was transferred from the Office of Research and Development to the FRA's Office of Safety Assurance. According to Michael Booth, a public affairs specialist with the FRA, DOTX 221 now works in the agency's Automated Track Inspection Program for railroad safety enforcement. The car is the current platform for the Office of Safety Assurance's unmanned operations, and the ATGMS technology installed on the car continues to collect data and transmit it through the cellular system to the FRA for evaluation.

Keep your eyes peeled for this interesting car: While it ended a three-month program in early June, it will be deployed again beginning in August for another three-month work cycle.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

The Federal Railroad Administration's mission is to enable the safe, reliable, and efficient movement of people and goods for a strong America, now and in the future.

Garden railroading in N-scale?

by Daniel Shaw



Daniel sets up his French-themed garden railway.

It is time that I write my first article for the N’Crowd. Before I start, a big thank you to everyone who contributes to running the club so welcomingly. Particular thanks to those who organized the operating session that Thattaya and I attended in June. I know such evenings take a lot of time for planning and preparation. We both had a lot of fun driving trains with a “real” task to achieve.

Now, I know many of you think that my idea of building N-gauge in the garden is “off the wall”, but I have done my homework and know that others do it. Last year, I built a foundation of bricks and had a test loop running. The track, following advice from an article in a *Railway Modeller* article (a UK magazine) was just free-laid Peco flex track, with soldered Minitrix set track for return loops. The idea is not to leave the track under the weather, rather to bring it indoors and only set it up on suitable days.

My selection of bridges includes a Hornby OO gauge suspension bridge that I’ve converted to have

suitable N-scale passageway. Size makes it my pride and joy. Of course, I had to put a train on it as soon as I had enough track laid, as you can see from the photo of me setting up the railway.

The lessons from the first running sessions were that it takes way too long to set up. “Leaves on the Line”, which is a famous English railway announcement to excuse train delays, was only once a problem during several hours of happy operation. Perhaps the gardener can be trained to prune the plants to minimize this risk and create the right look, too.

This year, the brick foundation is still in place. A couple of bricks have suffered subsidence during the winter, but overall the solution is solid. During the winter, I designed a solution for the track work. I bought Kato Unitrack, because I like the snap action. I don’t like the sharp radius curves, so I am still using Peco flex track, which I am laying on wood supports, gluing it and the ballast in place. Pieces of Unitrack at each end mean I can assemble my pieces quickly and reliably.

The discerning of you will notice that my trains are French outline. My collection is based on the 1980s around Nîmes, France. So this spring, I took Thattaya to see the line. Most of the route is winding through the Cevennes hills, with many tunnels and stone viaducts. Our trip gave Thattaya an idea of the effect I am trying to create.

One of the photos shows a class 67 loco at one of the few passing places on the line. The number 5 has

been added since the 1980s when it was just 67556.

Although there is now only one suspension rail bridge in France and that is narrow gauge, I am happy to include such a bridge in my route.

Nothing like a deadline to motivate, I have put my name down for the November open house event, so the trains should be running well before then. I hope to be showing off my N-scale garden railroad to many of you during the summer and autumn!



Above, the 1867 Viaduc de Chamborigaud is one of the many stone arch viaducts in the Cevennes hills area of France. Below, SNCF (French National Railway Co.) trains pass at Gare de La Bastide - Saint-Laurent-les-Bains.



Amtrak begins field testing of new Viewliner II equipment

The Amtrak program to modernize its long distance train equipment has advanced to a key milestone as the first of four new passenger car types is in field testing. Known as Viewliner II, the stainless steel cars are modeled after the single-level Viewliner I cars built for Amtrak in the mid-1990s.

"It is clear that Americans want a national system of intercity passenger rail and Amtrak is moving ahead to build new equipment to meet customer demand," said Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman.

The first car type to start field testing is a baggage car and will be used on all 15 long distance routes across the Amtrak national system. Amtrak No. 61000 features an updated design that provides for improved reliability and maintenance, and better baggage loading/unloading procedures. Also, the new built-in luggage racks can secure unboxed bicycles to support the growing demand by passengers to bring their bikes onboard an expanding number of routes.

No. 61000 left the builder for the first time on May 16 in a special train that consisted of Amtrak P42 No. 203, Amfleet Cafe No. 43358, No. 61000 and GP38H-3 No. 520.

The field testing program has several elements, including compatibility tests to ensure the baggage car couples cleanly with, and can operate through a curve without interference with, numerous types of Amtrak cars and locomotives. In addition, there are tests for speed, stability, braking, noise, interaction of the wheel sets with the rail as well as actual baggage handling.

Field testing will continue through October with the baggage car traveling on the Northeast Corridor and on routes to Chicago, New



The first Viewliner II car moved in May from the CAF USA shop in Elmira, N.Y., for testing. Note the "Amtrak America" branding. Photo by Andy Bohman.

Orleans and Miami. The new baggage cars are expected to enter revenue service by the end of 2014.

The baggage cars are part of a larger \$298 million order for 130 single-level, long-distance passenger cars that also includes diners, sleepers and baggage-dormitory cars. The cars are being built by CAF USA of Elmira, N.Y., an affiliate of Spain's Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles. The firm hired more than 400 employees to perform manufacturing and final assembly work, and parts were sourced from more than 120 suppliers in 25 states.

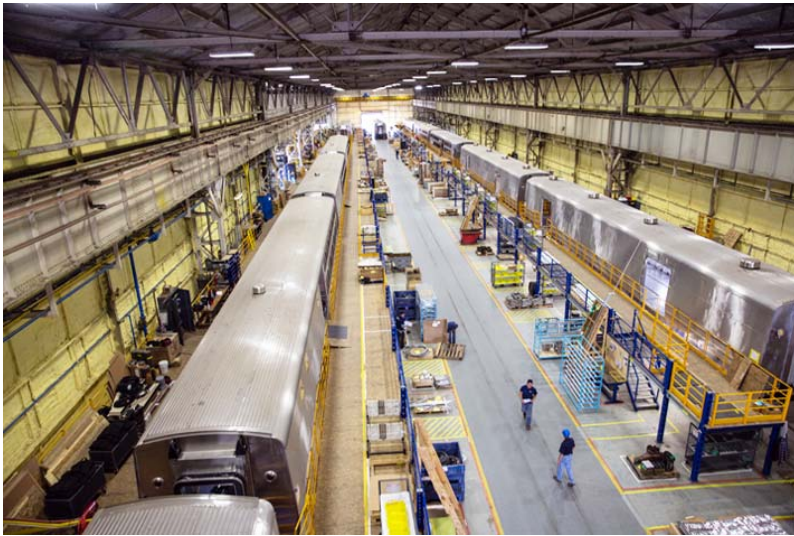
All of the new cars will be rated for speeds up to 125 mph. Some of the cars they will replace were built as long ago as the 1940s. The diner, sleeping and baggage-dormitory cars will be used on eastern long distance routes. Cars of each type are expected to begin field testing this summer.

Long distance trains form the backbone of the Amtrak national system, connect small towns to major cities, support local economic

development, deliver passengers to state-supported corridor trains and conduct interstate trade and commerce. Their principal mission is connectivity, and it is an increasingly important one to communities that have been losing their bus and air connections at a steady pace over the last decade.

Since 1998, Amtrak long-distance ridership has grown by roughly 20 percent, without the introduction of any new services, frequencies, or equipment. In FY 2013, long distance ridership reached its highest point in twenty years with 4.8 million passengers. In addition, long distance trains are, on average, as full on the peak leg of their trips as are the premium Acela Express services on the Northeast Corridor.

In FY 2013, a record 31.6 million passengers traveled on Amtrak on more than 300 daily trains - at speeds up to 150 mph (241 kph) - that connect 46 states, the District of Columbia and three Canadian Provinces.



Above, the Viewliner II construction line. The new cars are being finished in a version of Amtrak's "Phase III" paint scheme that apparently will include new "Amtrak America" branding. Below, a Viewliner II car shell at the CAF USA shop in Elmira, N.Y. Photos this page courtesy of Amtrak.



Amtrak's new Viewliners

Editors note: The following information is provided courtesy of Amtrak.

You love taking the train (we're looking at you, our 31.6 million riders!) and we love working to improve your travel experience. That's why we're bringing 130 new single-level long distance cars to the rails by 2014.

Manufactured by CAF USA in Elmira, N.Y., these new passenger cars have a little bit of everything and a whole lot of improvements. We could talk about how cool these new cars are forever, but to keep it short and sweet, here are the 5 facts you need to know about our new long distance cars.

1. How Many Cars?

The new cars include 25 sleeper cars, 25 dining cars, 25 baggage/dormitory cars and 55 baggage cars. Yes, that's a lot of new equipment, and we can't wait!

2. Can You Say Upgrade?

We know it's been awhile since we've added new equipment, that's why we're modernizing the look and feel of our interiors (All together now, "ooohh, aaahh").

3. Hot and Cold or Somewhere In Between

We ride our trains, too. So we know the temp can be, shall we say, fickle. That's why our new cars have more efficient air conditioning and heating systems to keep you cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Did we mention more outlets? Yup, that's right! Now you'll be able to plug in ALL of your electronic devices.

4. A Place to Hang Your... Bike

Our new baggage cars even have bike racks, which means no more bike boxes!

5. Speedier

With the new design features, the cars traveling on the Northeast Corridor will have the ability to travel at top speeds to 125 mph.

Continued from page 4

As the decade wears on, I can phase out and phase in the different mix of units according to the approximate date. This allows me to remain purist in approach, and still enjoy the variety of the entire decade of the 1980s. On my layout, I suggest certain dates by using other little details. For example, I have a couple billboards circa 1984 for the 1984 presidential election. I have some 1984 and 1988/89 automobiles, so I can put them on the layout when the proper time arrives.

At the front of the decade of the 1980s, we might get a very dirty Bicentennial caboose or loco on the layout, leftover from 1976. Circa 1984, maybe a caboose celebrating the 1984 Olympics in L.A. will appear. There are also differences in rolling stock through the decade, based on what is seen in the official equipment registers for the various years. For example, there were green Evergreen lumber cars still running circa 1980, but as we push on into the middle of the decade, those Evergreen cars disappeared.

So the next time you're grappling with trying to stick to a certain era, consider what I'm doing. I call it a "sliding era", where you change out some of your equipment for newer equipment over time. If you like a certain year really well, but you are also intrigued by equipment that showed up a few years earlier or later, why not do a sliding era?

At the end of the day, there are lots of ways to do your layout era. You can do it as a precise day, month, year, or generalize on just a decade. Or you can do a sliding era like I am. As far as I'm concerned, they're all valid if you're having fun!

Swap meet at NWX: Northwest Crossing Operating Model Railroad Club will hold a swap meet at their Northwest Mall storefront on Saturday, July 19, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bring your stuff to trade or sell; NWX can supply some tables, or you can bring your own.

Big Texas Train Show volunteers needed: N'Crowd will once again provide a test track (DC only) at the Big Texas Train Show, and we need some volunteers to man the tables on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 6-7. If you would like to volunteer, see Ted Davis at the July or August N'Crowd membership meeting, or send an email to tom@houstonNcrowd.org. Thanks!

Houston N'Crowd 2014 Officers and Volunteers

President Vincent Walker
 Vice President Samuel Townsel
 Secretary James Senneff, Jr.
 Treasurer Eddie Aycock
 Board Member (2014) Ray Byer
 Board Member (2015) Justin Coder
 Board Member (2016) Al Hague
 Layout Master Al Hague
 Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2014 TIME TABLE

July 13-19

NMRA National Convention, Cleveland, Ohio

July 16

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m.

July 19

NWX Model Railroad Swap Meet, Northwest Mall, Houston, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

August 6

Wednesday BC&G Operating Session, 7 p.m.

August 20

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m.

September 5-6

Big Texas Train Show, George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston

September 17

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m.

October 1

Wednesday BC&G Operating Session, 7 p.m.

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

Tom Marsh, Editor

Published fairly regularly for members and friends of

N'Crowd Model Railroad

Society, Inc., Houston, Texas.

Send newsletter contributions to:

tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

Please note: We reserve the right

to edit submissions for clarity

and length.

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

Copyright © 2014 N'Crowd

Model Railroad Society, Inc.