



News from Houston N'Crowd



March/April 2020

THE ORDERBOARD



Image courtesy Alstom SA

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Change of plans

***Belle* in flight at Sugar Land**

Steam returning to KCS?

CV29 made easy

Texas Central bullet train formations

New Acela photo gallery



Image courtesy Texas Central

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

Change of plans - please make note!

Due to the developing coronavirus situation, we need to rethink some of our upcoming and proposed activities. I already have indications from some members that they will not be participating in N'Crowd activities until the virus situation is more settled.

The March 18 membership meeting will take place as scheduled at Papa Ben's Train Place. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. as usual. We'll determine what to do about the April meeting as the date approaches.

The BC&G running session will take place on Sunday, March 22, from noon to 5 p.m. as scheduled. As with the April membership meeting, we'll decide what to do about the April post-meeting BC&G Sunday running session closer to the date.

We will not have an operating session on April 5. However, we will plan to hold the June 7 operating session, subject to the virus situation at the first of the month. The session may return to the BC&G for the first time in a number of years.

We had begun planning for informal visits to members' home layouts over the course of the year. **Planning for these visits will be on hold until further notice.**

We'll still be looking into other possible activities for later in the year, including the visits to members' home layouts and group trips to the Galveston Railroad Museum and the Texas City Model Train Festival. The Texas City event may offer an opportunity for the T-TRAK division to set up a layout. And as always, we welcome your suggestions for possible N'Crowd activities.

Finally: 2020 dues are due now! If you do not renew by March 31, your membership will be suspended. Go to www.houstonNcrowd.org to download a membership renewal form or to renew with PayPal. (You do not need a PayPal account.)

In the meantime, be healthy, be safe and happy railroading!

Tom

Houston N'Crowd 2020 Officers and Volunteers

President Tom Marsh
Vice President John Sweigart
Secretary Bill Busch
Treasurer Eddie Aycock
Board Member (2020) Samuel Townsell II

Board Member (2021) Randy Ollet
Board Member (2022) Allan Melton
Immediate Past President Samuel Townsell II
Layout Master Randy Ollett
Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:

March 18 / April 15 / May 20 / June 17 / July 15
Meetings start at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. and are open to all.

N'Crowd Test & Tune Sessions: First Wednesday of odd-numbered months. 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Papa Ben's.

N'Crowd Operating Sessions: First Sunday of even-numbered months. Watch your email for information.

Belle in flight at Sugar Land!

N’Crowd board member Allan Melton was in the right place at the right time after our Feb. 19 membership meeting, and he caught Kansas City Southern’s business train hustling westbound

through Sugar Land at speed. Even in the dark the train’s gleaming *Southern Belle*-inspired paint scheme exudes class. This is a perfect example of why you should always have a camera with you!



Steam returning to KCS?

This rendering of a new rail-served office/warehouse complex in El Campo on the Kansas City Southern caught your editor’s eye. As the inset shows, the artist thinks a steam locomotive could be switching the new facility. Modern steam on the KCS!



CV29 made easy by Scott Kurzawski, All Points North Model Railroad Club

Editor's note: This explanation of how to deal with CV29 when setting up mobile DCC decoders is just one resource available on the website of Conroe-based All Points North Model Railroad Club. I found this extremely helpful in understanding CV29. Go to <http://apnmrr.club/techfiles.htm> for more useful articles on a variety of model railroading topics.

Before going into the actual programming of CV29, let's go over the structure of CV29, since it has an entirely different meaning than all the other CVs we've encountered thus far. First, let's clarify that CV29 is the same for all decoder manufacturers. It is part of the NMRA DCC decoder specification. Every CV is made up of a group of 8 bits. Think of a bit as a single-pole single-throw toggle switch, which has only two states. These states are either ON or OFF. In the case of all the previous CVs, we didn't really care about the individual bits since we are just programming up a single numeric value, such as a loco's address. However, in the case of CV29, each bit has a unique meaning.

Here is a list of the bit meanings:

Bit 0	ON	[1] = Direction of operation is reversed	Bit 4	ON	[1] = Alternate Speed Curve Active
	OFF	[0] = Direction of operation is normal		OFF	[0] = Use table defined by CV2, 5 and 6*
Bit 1	ON	[1] = 28 Speed Step Mode (should always be enabled)	Bit 5	ON	[1] = Use long address in CV17/18
				OFF	[0] = Use short address defined in CV1
Bit 2	ON	[1] = Analog mode operation enabled	Note that Bits 3, 6 and 7 are ignored by the DCC system firmware.		
	OFF	[0] = Analog mode disabled			

Transferring the state of all of the individual bits as a single numeric value is where the confusing part comes into play. What is required is a little binary mathematics to calculate the final numeric value, but even that is easy once you know how to do it.

First, start by reading a bit string from **right to left**. As you move to each successive bit to the left, you will notice that the bit value doubles from the previous bit value. Here's a table that defines each bit value:

Bit:	<u>Bit 7</u>	<u>Bit 6</u>	<u>Bit 5</u>	<u>Bit 4</u>	<u>Bit 3</u>	<u>Bit 2</u>	<u>Bit 1</u>	<u>Bit 0</u>
Value:	128	64	32	16	8	4	2	1

To figure out the numeric equivalent for bits that are ON, just total the respective values for the bits that are enabled [ON].

For example, if you wish to enable bits 1, 2 and 5, e.g. enable 28 speed step mode, analog operation and use long address, then to get the equivalent decimal value you would add $0 + 0 + 32 + 0 + 0 + 4 + 2 + 0 = 38$. As you can see when the bits are OFF, just place a zero in the formula for that bit.

In this example, CV29 would have a value of 38 programmed into it.

**Editor's note: CV2 controls the initial voltage sent to start the locomotive motor; CV5 sets the maximum voltage sent to the motor; CV6 sets the midpoint voltage sent to the motor.*

Some Useful Online DCC Resources

DCC Wiki: https://dccwiki.com/Main_Page

Digitrax CV Calculators: <https://www.digitrax.com/support/cv/calculators/>

Streamlined Backshop Tutorials, Tips & Tricks: <http://sbs4dcc.com/tutorialstipstricks.html>

Tony's Train Exchange DCC Glossary: <https://tonystrains.com/news/dccprimer-intro-dcc-glossary/>

Texas Central offers early look at bullet train formations

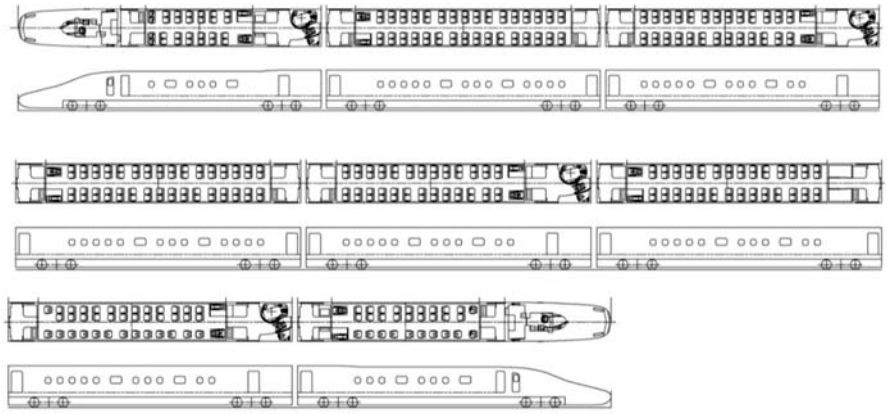
Texas Central, the company developing the high-speed railway between Houston and Dallas, has released a new illustration of the proposed trains' interior layout.

The trains, based on Central Japan Railway's Shinkansen N700S design, will feature two classes of seating, one with a 2+1 seating arrangement and the other in a 2+2 configuration. According to Texas Central, all seats will be "optimized to offer the best recline without disturbing the passenger in the rear."

According to the company, construction will begin once Texas Central receives the necessary approvals from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), expected in 2020. The high speed line is projected to cost \$20 billion and take five-to-six years to build.

On March 10, 2020, the FRA published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) that would establish safety standards for the Texas Central high speed rail system. The FRA will hold three public hearings on the proposed safety requirements: The first take place March 31 in Dallas, the second on April 1 in Navasota and the third in Houston on April. The comment period for the proposed rule closes on May 11.

Right, artist rendering of a section of the proposed high speed rail line planned by Texas Central. Looks similar to Kato's N-scale viaduct and catenary! Image courtesy Texas Central



Above, layout of the proposed Texas Central high speed trains. Below, interior of a Central Japan Railway Shinkansen N700S high speed train.. Images courtesy Texas Central



New Acela photo gallery

Images courtesy Amtrak

Amtrak's first new Acela trainset has moved from builder Alstom's Hornell, New York, facility to the Federal Railroad Administration's Transport Technology Center high-speed test track in Pueblo, Colo. The 13.5 mile long test track can be used to test trains at speeds up to 165 mph.

According to Amtrak, the train will undergo nine months of testing covering railway dynamics, tilting, traction, slip/slide and wayside protection, brakes, train control management and pantograph systems. After testing, the trainset will return to Hornell for installation of its interiors.

The new trains are expected to enter service on the Northeast Corridor in 2021. Will the Kato model be far behind?



Above and below, new Acela equipment under construction by Alstom in Hornell, New York.





Above, on its way to the high-speed test track in Pueblo, Colo., in February, Amtrak's first new Acela trainset crosses the Genesee River Gorge in New York. Below, the trainset at Pueblo. Bottom, interior mockups.



LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Calendar note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many events are being cancelled. We have made note in this month's Time Table when we have been able to confirm a cancellation, however, it is possible more of the events listed may not take place. Contact the event organizer to confirm.

Thanks: Thanks to Allan Melton for sharing his photos of the KCS business train with us. I'll repeat:

This is a good reminder to always carry a camera with you, and record the scene even if conditions are not great for photography. That grab shot in the dark may be just the inspiration someone needs to move ahead with a model railroad project!

Next Orderboard deadline: Deadline for the May/June 2020 issue of *The Orderboard* is Friday, May 8. I look forward to seeing something from YOU.

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2020 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

March 4

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m.

March 18

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

March 21

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park: CANCELLED

March 22

BC&G Sunday running session, noon - 5 p.m.

March 21-22

Cotton Belt Train Show, Tyler: CANCELLED

March 27-29

OKC Model Railroad Expo, Oklahoma State Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City

March 28

Rosenberg Railfest, Rosenberg Railroad Museum: POSTPONED TO MAY 16

April 4

Flatonia Rail Fan Pavilion Party, Flatonia Rail Park

April 5

N'Crowd Operating Session: CANCELLED

April 15

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

April 18

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park: Introduction to JMRI PanelPro

April 18-19

New Braunfels 32nd Annual Train Show Jamboree, New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center

April 19

BC&G Sunday running session, noon - 5 p.m.

May 2-3

Texas State Railroad/Trains Magazine Photo Freight Charter

May 6

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m.

May 16

Rosenberg Railfest, Rosenberg Railroad Museum

May 20

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

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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

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