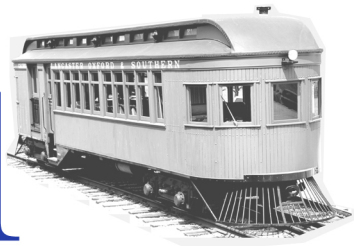


The Local



A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION OF THE NMRA

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Number 6

MER Survey Results

Kenneth Montero

The last issue of The Local was a special print issue that went to all members of the Mid-Eastern Region and to all non-members who were subscribers to The Local. This issue contained a survey customized for each recipient, along with a self-addressed envelope. MER members also received a ballot for the annual election of officers and voting on various by-law amendments. I tabulated the results of the survey from survey forms forwarded by the Ballot Committee.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Mid-Eastern Region, "Thank You" to all of you who responded to the survey. The data below comes from responses processed by September 27, 2016. Here are the results:

Response to survey

702 out of 1918 mailed (33.6%).

Records corrections/updates

127 out of 702 responses (18.09%) totaling 132 changes (some had more than one change):

108 were email address corrections or additions.

13 were postal address changes.

11 were name corrections or changes.

87 changes to subscriptions to The Local.

Subscription changes/additions/deletions

361 respondents out of 702 (51.42%) made 439 changes in their subscription to The Local (some respondents changed more than one type of subscription status)

341 listed no change:

Electronic version:

310 out of 361 (85.87%) added subscriptions to the electronic version.

4 dropped subscriptions to the electronic version.

Print version:

12 added subscriptions to the print version.

113 out of 361 (31.57%) dropped subscriptions to the print version.

These following numbers are included in the above totals for print and electronic version subscriptions:

8 dropped any/all subscriptions:

1 dropped both electronic and print versions.

3 dropped electronic version.

4 dropped print version.

191 out of 361 (52.9%) who previously had no subscription became subscribers:

179 became electronic version subscribers.

2 became print and electronic subscribers.

10 became print version subscribers.

87 also had records corrections/update changes.

Questions:

1. Does providing an envelope for returning the ballot encourage you to vote in MER elections?

Yes – 529 (78.60%), No – 144 (21.39%).

2. Would you vote by email (eliminating your postage costs) if it were available?

Yes – 550 (83.20%), No – 111 (16.79%).

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The Local

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From The Business Car

P. J. Mattson, MMR, MER President

As I write this, the elections and voting for the By-Law changes are being tabulated by the election committee. I want to thank everyone who responded to the survey and sent in your ballot. The survey has been proven to be helpful in several ways according to the Directors that are compiling the information.

Next is the Convention in Durham, NC. from October 20th to October 23rd. We should have a nice convention as I read the committee's reports. At the MER annual meeting on Sunday morning we will be welcoming a new Treasurer and a new Vice-President.

We have been served with complete expertise by our exiting Treasurer, Tom Buckingham. His term of office is up as defined by the By-Laws. I will be calling on him in the future to assist in the transition as the new Treasurer takes office. I know that both Tom and the new Treasurer have great work ethics and the turnover will go smoothly.

I will work with the new Vice-President and get him headed in the right direction with his responsibilities.

I hope everyone has a safe trip to and from the convention. I am looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Position Available Model Contest Chairperson

Position Summary: The Model Contest Chair is responsible for coordinating, administering, and supervising the Model Contest at Mid-Eastern Regional (MER) conventions utilizing guidelines and regulations set by the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) and the MER. He/she must be computer literate, a good organizer and manager, a good modeler in his own right, and thoroughly versed in the model contest judging procedures of the MER.

Principal Accountabilities Include: So, this position really consists of: (1) recruiting judges, if needed, (2) assisting in setting up the contest room at each MER sponsored convention, making sure that there is appropriate display space and category identifying signs in the contest room, coordinating with the General Contest Chair, (3) insuring that

each contestant fills out the necessary entry forms, and insuring that the entry form data is recorded in the Model Contest database, assists in contest paperwork, entering information into the computer database, (4) verifying data, tallying scores, printing, and distributing ribbons and certificates to be placed with the winning models, (5) assists the General Contest Chair in distributing awards at the Awards Ceremony, and (6) assists the General Contest Chair in resolving disputes, if any, in connection with the Model Contest.

If interested, contact:

Martin Brechbiel
director3@mer-nmra.com or martinwb@verizon.net
General Contest Chair
Director

Keeping in Touch...

Bob Price, Business Manager

The 2016 MER Election is behind us. Thank you to those who set it up, counted the ballots, the candidates for being willing to serve the MER, and all who took the time to vote. Of 1,830 ballots mailed out, 676 were returned.

The MER uses paper ballots for all of the elections and by-law changes. Prior to 2016's election, the ballots were a separate tri-fold mailing of the candidate statements, the ballot and a copy of the latest convention registration form. The 2016 election included the ballot and a return envelope within a mailing of a special issue of The Local to all eligible voting members.

Electronic online voting (eVoting) was tested ~4 years ago by MER Board members. The concept never progressed beyond high level discussions. Discussions since then have examined creating our own voting system using the MER website to host it, but this option was deemed a low priority task.

In 2016, we became aware that the SER was planning to use eVoting in conjunction with their paper ballot system. This re-started the discussion amongst those who handle the MER election process. In the SER election every eligible voting member would receive a paper ballot and those who had an email address would also be able to use the eVoting system. If a member chose both methods, the mailed-in ballot would be nullified. The SER election provided us with solid information on the eVoting experience.

The Business Manager contacted SER leadership for feedback on their experience. Rick Coble (SER Election Admin) and Alan Mole (SER President) were very honest, timely and helpful in sharing the experience of their election and answering our questions. The SER saw a 50% increase in returned ballots, but less than 20% of the membership voted. Increasing voter participation would be a primary reason the MER would pursue eVoting. However, 86% of the SER total ballots cast were by eVoting and the ballot committee only counted 30 ballots by hand. This would be a great time savings for the ballot committee. In parallel

with our own MER Election, a mock Election Buddy election was set up so that the current MER BOD and those running for office in the current election could experience using the web based system. The overall experience feedback from those that voted in the mock system was positive and eVoting was felt to be ready to move forward.

The projected eVoting cost for 1,830 members is \$174, roughly 10 cents per member. The cost per paper ballot is 48 cents for postage, materials and printer charges. We currently have email addresses for 1,500 of the MER's eligible 1,800 voting members.

Business Manager Price and Director Brechbiel believe the MER should approach their 2017 election in the same manner as the SER did in 2016. Each eligible voting member would receive a paper ballot – AND – those eligible voting members with a valid email address in the MER database would also be eligible to use eVoting. Any member that uses eVoting and also returns a paper ballot would result in voiding their paper ballot (only their eVote would be counted).

Furthermore, we believe that based upon the 2017 election results, the MER should pursue their 2018 election in a manner wherein each member actively chooses between a paper ballot and eVoting. Those that elect eVoting would receive a test email one week prior to supplying ballot information to the printer for the paper ballots. Those emails that are rejected, i.e. a bad email address, would then have their owner's names added to the paper ballot list.

A more detailed analysis and the proposal to implement eVoting will be presented at the MER BOD meeting in October. If approved, future articles will detail the process for the membership.

As always Keep in Touch with any questions or changes in your subscriptions or addresses. A current address on file saves the MER some money.

Caps for that Old Paint

Martin Brechbiel

How many times has this happened to you? You've reached that point in your project where you're ready to paint it. You reach for a bottle of paint and find that the cap is tight as can be and beyond your ability to open with your bare hands. The channel locks get picked up and that cap comes off (with luck not breaking the bottle or spilling paint everywhere!!!) and now you can get your painting going. Then when you are done, that nice metal cap doesn't seem to go back on so nice since it's not quite round anymore, but you get it screwed on and are pretty sure it's straight and even and sealed until

barely seal as well. There is a self-serving element to selling marginally sealing paints, glues, solvents, etc. – they go bad and you buy more, but I digress. I've never seen replacements made available either. What to do, what to do, and what to do, other than to buy more or watch your paint solidify, or in some colorful instances, end up wearing some or all of it?

I tried a host of caps for all sorts of vials that had on hand and none worked and then I stopped and looked at the cap that was on my bottle of Dr. Pepper. Nah..... Can't possibly work.....can it? Turns out it can and does



the next time you need it....when it's tighter than last time and you reach for those pliers again.

So, maybe this isn't you and you're using those plastic bottles of the various craft paints, but there are a lot of folks with substantial hordes of Floquil and Polly Scale that will probably last another decade or two. These paints suffer from this issue of binding caps, particularly so on the various types of "black", such as Steam Black, Oily Black, Grimy Black, etc. (Polly Scale seems prone to this behavior), but other colors can be just as annoying. And beyond the deformation of the caps with pliers compromising sealing, those seals in the caps, foil over cardstock, simply don't last, and I suspect just

work. Takes a bit of effort, but those threads will align and that compression seal molded into the cap will seal that glass bottle just fine. I've had them on bottles now for over 2 years and the paint has not failed.

A side benefit here is that these caps are easily replaced, and while they might get tight and you might still need that set of pliers to get the cap off, these caps are flexible and return to form, and if not, they are also totally disposable.

Bottle caps come in standard sizes - you just have to find the right one.

The Days They Changed the Gauge

Howard Oakes

In May, 1886, President Grover Cleveland was making final preparations for his wedding. Jefferson Davis, in a rare public appearance, was drawing large and enthusiastic crowds of admirers. Throughout the nation, final preparations were being made for the celebration of Memorial Day.

And in the South, plans were nearing completion for one of the most complex and dramatic two day periods in railroading history - changing the gauge of an estimated 11,500 miles of track.

It was a little over a half-century since the South Carolina Canal and Rail Road Company had inaugurated steam-powered freight and passenger travel on a regularly-scheduled basis. Horatio Allen, the railroad's chief engineer, had departed from the 4 foot, 8 1/2 inch gauge used in England by prescribing a 5 foot gauge, and in the years that followed, most of the South's railroads copied his example.

But in the North, the British example was dominant. It made little difference in the years preceding the War Between the States, since the two regions exchanged few goods requiring rail transportation. But, as the South began its recovery from the war, it became readily apparent that complete economic reconstruction would require easy commerce with the rest of the nation, an impossibility so long as differences in gauge existed.

At first, the problem of interchange had been temporarily relieved by laboriously loading freight from one car to another at interchange points between railroads of different gauges. But the growing trade between the South and the rest of the nation soon required faster and less costly methods. A crude form of containerization was devised, with the wheel trucks being changed at interchange points as necessary. Soon, as a contemporary writer pointed out, "not a prominent point could be found on the border without its 'hoist' and acres of extra trucks."

Variety in gauge size wasn't uniquely a difference between North and South. In 1871, no less than 23 different gauges existed in the United States, ranging in width from three to six feet. Within the South, the state of North Carolina prescribed by law a gauge of 4 feet 8-1/2 inches to encourage a traffic flow to its own ports, rather than those in Virginia or South Carolina, each of which were primarily served by rails spaced five feet

apart. Goods going between Virginia and South Carolina had to go through at least two interchanges on the way.

It was clearly a condition that could not continue. In 1884, the Illinois Central, which operated in both regions, found it necessary to begin changing the gauge of its lines in the South to conform with the northern practice. The need to compete soon forced the Mobile and Ohio to change, putting direct pressure upon the Louisville and Nashville and the Cincinnati Southern to match the improved service of their competitors.

In effect, the pressure of free competition was the catalyst, and the stage was set for changing the gauge of practically every road in the South, a change that, ultimately, would be accomplished in less than 36 hours.

February 2-3, 1886, marked the first step. As agreed the previous October at a meeting of the Southern Time Convention, operating officers of the South's railroads met at the Kimball House in Atlanta in a "Convention ... called for the purpose of fixing date and arranging details for change of gauge."

E. B. Thomas, General Manager of Southern's predecessor, the Richmond & Danville, served as Chairman of the committee charged with determining the date of the gauge change. On the Convention's first day he reported: "That Monday, May 31st, and Tuesday, June 1st be designated as the days for general change of gauge. ... Lateral lines may change exterior or subsequent to the dates named by arrangement with connections."

On the members of three Convention committees, Transportation, Roadway, and Machinery, fell the burden of planning for the tremendous task just four months away. All motive power and rolling stock would have to be removed from the affected tracks, wheel spacing would have to be adjusted to fit the new gauge, and logistics for feeding and equipping a virtual army of workers would have to be carried out with military precision.

But the most important decision of all involved the exact width of the new gauge. Although the nation largely had adopted the 4 foot, 8 1/2 inch width, the Pennsylvania Railroad, with which many of the South's roads required an interchange, used a 4 foot, 9 inch gauge. For this reason, and owing to minor engineering

difficulties encountered by the 4 foot, 8 1/2 inch width, the Convention had voted to adopt the Pennsylvania gauge as its standard.

One farsighted man rose on the Convention's second day to ask that the gauge decision be reconsidered. He was John C. Gault, general manager of the Cincinnati, New Orleans & Texas Pacific, and he made some persuasive arguments:

"I deem it of greatest consequence that the standard gauge of the country could be adopted by the Southern Roads. ...This is the first opportunity that the Southern roads have had to correct the unfortunate mistake made when the five foot gauge was adopted, and in correcting it we should take such action as will result in solving the question for all time. I insist upon saying to this Convention that the adoption of a 4 foot, 9 inch gauge is only a partial correction of the mistake. ..."

Nonetheless, the Convention chose to go ahead with a standard gauge of 4 feet, 9 inches.

With the Convention's end, four months of intense activity began. Differing in some specifics between the various roads, plans were worked out in minute detail for reducing the width between the rails, and between the wheels, by 3 inches.

Only one rail would be moved in on the day of the change, so inside spikes were hammered into place at the new gauge width well in advance of the change, leaving only the need for a few blows of the sledgehammer once the rail was placed. As May 31 drew near, some spikes were pulled from the rail that was to be moved in order to reduce as much as possible the time required to release the rail from its old position.

Rolling stock was also being prepared for rapid conversion. Contemporary accounts indicate that dish shaped wheels were provided on new locomotives so that on the day of the change, reversing the position of the wheel on the axle would make the locomotive conform to the new gauge. On some equipment, axles were machined to the new gauge and a special ring positioned inside the wheel to hold it to the 5-foot width until the day of the gauge change. Then the wheel was pulled, the ring removed, and the wheel replaced.

To shorten the axles of rolling stock and motive power that could not be prepared in advance, lathes and crews were stationed at various points throughout the South to accomplish the work concurrently with the change in track gauge.

A few days before May 31, all roads began clearing cars from their lines and reducing the gauge of all areas of track that could be freed of cars and engines.

Finally, in the early morning hours of May 31, the concentrated work began. Men worked in crews of various sizes charged with various goals, some given specific mileages to cover, others under instructions to

begin at a specified point and work in a specified direction until they met another crew working toward them.

Along thousands of miles of track, approximately half of which was operated by predecessors of today's Southern Railway System, spikes were pulled, rails moved in to the new gauge, and more spikes hammered into place. At shops and rendezvous points throughout the South, motive power and rolling stock were being altered to fit the new gauge. Wheels of cars were moved in, steam engine brakes and tires were altered, and the screeching of axles being narrowed on lathes joined the ringing of heavy hammers.

In less than three days, standard-gauge trains were serving the South. "The work was done economically," an article in the Journal of the Association of Engineering Societies pointed out, "and so quietly that the public hardly realized it was in progress. To the casual observer it was an every day transaction. It was, however, a work of great magnitude, requiring much thought and mechanical ability. That it was ably handled is evidenced by the uniform success attained, the prompt changing at the agreed time, and the trifling inconvenience to the public."

And the Richmond & Danville told its Annual Report readers: "By agreement and prearranged concert between the Southern Roads operating the 5 foot gauge of tracks, about June 1st last the gauge of all the 5 foot tracks of this Company's lines was changed to the standard adopted of 4 feet, 9 inch. This important work was effected under the direction of the General Manager with great promptness and entire exemption from accident or damage, and with hardly a perceivable interruption in the regular movement of traffic throughout the entire connection of this Company's Roads."

Horatio Allen had written in 1884 that his use of the 5 foot gauge for "the South Carolina Railroad determined the gauges of the Southern road, which continues of that gauge to this time; but it is to be anticipated that the commercial advantages of uniformity of gauge will eventually narrow the gauge down to the coal mine gauge of four feet eight and a half inches."

The final half-inch reduction, though, had to wait for the formation of the Southern Railway Company. Then, because of the closeness of the South's 4 foot, 9 inch gauge to the standard gauge, it was accomplished in the normal course of track maintenance and repair. It completed the job begun many years earlier.

But the real drama lasted only two days - two days in which the fields and villages of the South echoed the clanging of countless hammers driving thousands of spikes, the days they changed the gauge.

Clickety Clack Get on the Right Track

A Model Train Series by Don Jennings

A gentleman from the Durham County Library came to our February train meeting to ask the club members if they would volunteer to show young people various phases of railroading. When he was done talking, I went to him and volunteered to help. The cause was to do a presentation for grade school age children about railroading - model or prototype. The Durham children's librarian, Anna Cromwell, phoned me a few days later. Anna asked about how I would do the three one hour presentations on the three different Saturday dates that were on her schedule. I said "I would use a portable and operating HO switching layout with a locomotive and some rolling stock and many buildings, etc. as a prop". The children's program was titled "Clickety Clack - Get on the Right Track."

The following is from the library's web page and on their schedule board at the library.

"If you like model trains and enjoy learning about the ins and outs of the railway, come to the Durham Library's model train display. You are going to love this three-part series. Join Don Jennings as he shares his two foot by eight foot long model railway that is complete with tracks, model locomotives, train cars, model buildings and more. Introducing the children to various types of train cars and sharing his knowledge of railway safety.

Each monthly name tag will be presented in the form of a Train Conductor's cap. The little conductors (participants) will get to start the engines and send them down the tracks, so get on board and head to the Main Library for this fun-filled series."

The library has a good size reading room which is separate from the rest of the library so as not to disturb any people there. This room turned out to be the perfect room for this event. Wanting some handout material to help me with the presentation, I went to the OPERATION LIFESAVER OFFICE in Raleigh, NC and spoke with Margaret Cannell. She gave me many items of information and booklets for children and adults about Railroad Grade Crossing Safety.

Some of these are The Conductor Guidebooks filled with things to do, brochures about grade crossing information for the adults to read, activity booklets with crosswords puzzles and a page to draw sketches of trains, etc. These are just a few of the things I passed out to the

children and the adults. This is very important for children to learn about and for adult drivers to re-learn. I believe in the OPERATION LIFESAVER'S PROGRAM. It is amazing to find out all of the promotional items that OL has for free for people to learn and live by, which saves lives. I would like to thank the Operations Lifesaver Office for the handout material I was able to use. THANK YOU, Margaret.

On June 25th, the first of the three shows, I arrived ready to do my presentation thinking after I was done that would be the end of the program. Not so. Anna had purchased two large size train sets for the children to assemble. The children opened the boxes, put together the plastic track in a circle, place the battery operated locomotive and train cars on the track and had either GI Joe figures, dinosaurs, or animals in the train cars getting a "ride for free". Then 50-50 tickets were handed to all the children and as the numbers were called out the children could pick a prize from the table. All 30 of the children received a prize. THANK YOU ANNA.

The first of the three shows was June 25th and the second one was July 23rd and the third one was August 6th. The modular train layout was explained to the children as were the nine different train cars having to be delivered to the seven industries. I thanked Anna as I was about to leave and she stated that most businesses would welcome such presentations done for free. Just contact a business who would be willing to supply a room and chairs etc for young people to learn about railroad grade crossing safety and railroad safety in general. The same handouts as before were again passed out to the children and adults.

As I mentioned earlier, August 6th was the last scheduled date to do this for the children and the adults at The Durham County Library. This leaves the door open for more free exhibits to be shown at other places that would help promote railroading and model trains too. Just getting the word out to the public is the greatest way the NMRA can enlist the many people who like trains but do not know of any club or group in their area they can join. If you have been to any train shows, I am sure you have heard people say that when they were younger they had that Lionel set. Just maybe, they would like to continue their love for trains by joining our group. Become a friend and Sign Them Up.

Survey Results continued from Page 1

Suggestions/comments

100 out of 702 respondents (14.24%).

Analysis of Data

Response to survey

702 out of 1918 mailed (36.6%) as of September 27, 2016. This is an extremely high response rate to a survey. The inclusion of a self-addressed return envelope and the offer of a free electronic subscription to The Local through the survey are believed by the author to be major factors that drove this high response rate.

A side benefit of this response rate was an increased number of ballots cast. Nominations Ballot Committee chair Bob Minnis said that this number was much larger than in past years, and that he believed that the inclusion of the self-addressed return envelope played a large role in this response. (He also noted anecdotally that about half of the envelopes had the NMRA return address stickers.)

Please note that some respondents did not respond to all items on the survey, so not all groups will create a total of 702. This is especially true for records corrections/updates.

Records Corrections/Update

Email changes

By far, the biggest category in this group was in the email address group (108 out of 127). I did not try to code and tabulate which ones were error corrections vs. updates, but the latter appeared to be larger than the former. Also, a number of members for whom MER did not have email addresses provided email addresses. In addition, with Business Manager Bob Price's help, I was able to track down some missing email addresses, and get several email addresses corrected. It becomes more important than ever to have up-to-date email addresses as more and more communications are sent via email, such as notification of new issues of The Local (electronic version), any electronic voting programs, electronic surveys in the future, etc.

Postal address changes

Such changes are important for such mailings as the print version of The Local. Initial mailings of The Local get sent at a bulk rate, which is significantly cheaper than the rate paid to send a copy to a member who did not get his print version through the bulk mailing. Correct postal addresses help MER avoid this higher mailing cost for re-mailings.

Name correction/changes

Though few, they are important to members. Most involved typos. Some involved true name changes – marriage, divorce, etc.

Here is how you can help: Promptly notify the NMRA of any changes as they occur by going to this link to make changes: <http://nmra.org/members/update> or by mail at: P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy TN 37384-1328. NMRA then notifies MER of any changes. A reminder in the form of a recurring notice will be published in The Local. Readers will find it elsewhere in this issue and in future issues.

This will help MER in its efforts to have accurate data. When you help MER in this endeavor, you also help yourself.

Subscription changes/additions/deletions

By far, this group had the largest percentage of changes (361 out of 702, or 51.71% of respondents). The statistics that are most relevant are:

New subscribers 191

- 179 getting the electronic version.
- 2 getting the electronic and print versions.
- 10 getting the print version.

New electronic version subscribers 310

Members dropping the print subscription 113

Most members who dropped their print version subscription went to electronic version:

- 33 print and electronic versions to electronic version only.
- 75 print version to electronic version.
- 5 drop print version, going to no subscription.

Members going from electronic to print version 0

Members dropping their electronic subscription 4
(1 also dropping print version).

The current subscriptions totals provided by Bob Price, September 27, 2016

Electronic version	526
Print version	607
Both versions	120
None	777

This boils down to:

727 print copies

646 electronic copies

A large number of members (310 – 44.15% of respondents) added a subscription to the electronic version of The Local, while a smaller, yet significant, number of members (113 – 16.09% of respondents) dropped their print version. When comparing current subscriptions, MER is providing more print copies than electronic copies, but not by a wide margin.

MER added 191 new subscribers – 27.20% of the respondents. This is a significant increase in subscribers, and almost all of them (181) are electronic version subscribers.

The dropping of print subscriptions may be due to the desire to avoid an extra cost and/or not having to deal with a paper publication, but the reason was not asked on the survey and there were not enough comments given by members to help determine which, if either, was a significant factor. It should be noted that at least two MER Life Members who are entitled to a print version switched to an electronic version subscription, and some of those dropping their print subscriptions live outside of MER boundaries.

Two observations

From this survey, MER dropped print version subscriptions only if the second option on the survey was checked. If you sought to add a subscription to the electronic version and drop your subscription to the print version but only checked the first option, MER did not drop your print version subscription – MER just added a subscription to the electronic version. If you also want to drop your subscription to the print version now, please so notify the MER Business Manager Bob Price (contact information on page 2).

If you decided not to drop your print version (and pick up a subscription to the electronic version) at this time because MER does not give refunds for early subscription cancellations but wish to switch to the electronic version when your print version subscription expires, please so notify the MER Business Manager Bob Price (contact information on page 2) when the print version subscription expires.

Please note that there were a number of comments by members who have print subscriptions about their need or desire to be able to continue to receive a print version. For a number of these members, lack of a computer or computer access are the main reasons for wanting to retain a print version. Those comments have not been tabulated. Some were MER Life Members who have paid-up subscriptions, and reminded us of that fact. All were forwarded to MER BOD.

MER does have a substantial problem with NMRA National about how it handles new and renewing members in the Mid-Eastern Region. Currently, new and renewing members paying through the NMRA National website are offered only the print subscription to The Local at the costs stated on the website, with no mention of the option of the free electronic version of The Local. This may cause members to elect (and pay for) the print version for lack of knowledge of the existence of the free electronic version. The matter has been brought to the attention of the MER BOD.

NOTE: 341 (48.57%) of respondents had no change to their subscriptions. No attempt was made to tabulate how many were electronic version subscribers, print version subscribers, subscribers to both versions and those who had no subscription.

Questions asked at the end of the survey: MER asked, and the members spoke:

A. Inclusion of self-addressed envelope with ballot – Yes 78.80%, No 21.19%. Anecdotally, it would appear that the inclusion of such an envelope with this year's ballot helped create a larger vote than in previous years, thus further validating the positive response to this question.

B. Email/electronic voting – Yes 83.30%, No 16.69%. There were comments by even more members who had similar issues regarding computer access as were expressed as reasons why they opposed electronic voting even though the article in The Local stated “Electronic voting does not eliminate paper ballots for members who do not have email access or prefer have a paper ballot.” The Southeastern Region's electronic voting process, which MER is investigating, continues to provide paper ballots in a similar manner. Business Manager Bob Price addresses electronic voting in his column.

Suggestions/Comments:

They range from “Hi, Bob” to detailed discussion of various issues. I have scanned all 100 of them, and they are being sent unedited to BOD members for their consideration.

SCENES FOR YOUR LAYOUT

Kenneth Montero

Layout planning usually consists of a track plan and, maybe, some buildings or prominent natural landmarks such as mountains or lakes. What I am suggesting is that you take your layout design one level higher, and plan for specific scenes.

Go back to some of the earliest pioneers of model railroad layout design such as Frank Ellison (O Scale) and John Allen (HO scale), and you will find that they created a number of scenes linked by different, compatible scenic elements such as mountains, valleys, and entrances hidden among the buildings, or a scenery block is used to create a separation between scenes, such as a mountain or double-faced building. They recognized that model railroads are very much like theatrical productions, and the elements of theater set design can be very effective. This includes a series of scenes, like moving from one scene to another in a play, but rather than moving items on stage to create a new scene, the modeler visually moves to adjacent space to view a new scene.

Why scenes? Because the human eye can take in only so much visual information at one time, which is usually only a small portion of a layout. In addition, it allows the modeler to create interest in the layout by concentrating the modeling details in small areas at first, then adding details as desired, if desired, as time and resources permit – thereby creating other scenes.

For each scene, it helps to have a primary theme. By doing so, the model railroader starts narrowing his or her options so that good decisions can be made regarding the modeling to be done in a scene. While a modeler can always do what he or she likes, the selection of a theme helps the modeler create a more believable scene.

Can a scene also have secondary themes? Absolutely. Such secondary or “mini” themes can create more complex interest in a particular scene. For example, a skid row area may have such secondary themes as a dice game in an alley. Woodland Scenics makes HO scale mini-scenes. Look at what goes into several of them to learn the concept, even if you don’t buy one (though they are a good value because it is pretty complete in itself).

My neighbor has created such a complex theme on his railroad. The primary theme at one location is a coal mine area at the end of a long branch. The coal mine and the track that services it is the main theme. He has secondary themes in an adjacent engine service area and some miners’ company houses adjacent to the mining area. Each house is its own scene within the row of company houses, with different details such as outhouses, clothes lines, etc.

Once you have developed the primary theme for an area, to what level of planning of secondary themes (and subsidiary themes to the secondary themes) do you have to commit yourself? The answer: as much or as little as you desire. Some people don’t start construction until they have just about everything planned. Most of us do just the opposite, insert items on an ad hoc basis with little planning. I would suggest something in the middle; have a general idea what will be your secondary themes, then start executing them.

What types of things go into a scene? In addition to any major structures (including trackwork), consider the following:

-- Details on buildings - doors and windows (not all the same, variety is the spice of life), vents, stacks, ventilators, stairways, water tanks, meters, fire escapes, signs, trashcans, awnings, exterior lights, interior details and lights. The color of a building also can be a detail that helps set the scene, as well as weathering. The tops of buildings are areas that often get too little attention. How about a construction site?

-- Streets - types and condition of pavement (if any), manhole covers, curbing, gutters, traffic lights, utility poles and wiring, street lights. Don’t forget to include pavement cracks and patches.

-- Sidewalks - type and condition of pavement, manhole covers, street elevator covers, fire hydrants, telephone booths, fire call boxes, mail boxes, news vendor stand or newspaper boxes (depending upon your locale and era). Don’t forget to include pavement cracks and patches.

-- Vehicles - Not all cars and trucks will be new – most should go back in age from new to 10 years (more in depression and war years), some going back up to 20 years, especially for trucks and other commercial vehicles. They should be appropriate to your time era and the locale of the scene. A fleet of milk delivery trucks would look inappropriate next to a steel mill. Variety in color, make, model, age and condition of the vehicles makes for a more believable scene.

-- Figures (people) - a very observant Master Model Railroader repeatedly noted in his clinics that most model railroad scenes have no people, and many of the remaining scenes are grossly underpopulated. A group of figures engaged in a common activity create an area of interest, such as a work site or a crowd waiting for a bus. Especially in the smaller scales, paint color alone may be sufficient to differentiate what particular men or women models are doing. Don’t be hesitant to use body putty to add “pot bellies” to modify a figure. Hats can be made from small styrene parts. Don’t hesitate to modify

figures by cutting arms and legs at joints and re-arranging the position of these limbs to get the pose that you want.

Questions you might be asking:

1. How much detail? As much or as little as you want. It is, after all, your railroad. Also, many modelers “rough in” the basics, and then fill in detail as time and interest dictate. By no means does it have to be constructed all at the same time.

The further from the front of the layout, the less detail has a visual impact. Concentrate most of your detail on the front of the layout where it has the most visual impact, and provide less and less detail as you progress to the back of the layout (because your eyes won’t notice it as the scene goes towards the back of the layout).

A theatrical stage trick is to portray just the major items of detail, which will trick the eye into seeing detail or a level of detail that is not on the model, especially on items not at the front of the layout.

This is a variation of the Earl Smallshaw concept of “don’t model what you cannot see” (such as the back side of a building that the viewers cannot see).

2. I don’t have a layout. Does this apply to me?

Yes, indeed. I am doing it even though I don’t have a layout. Most of us either have a layout or plan to

build one. After you decide on your themes, you may want to start building structures or vehicles that would fit the themes of your “anticipated” layout. I am building or acquiring vehicles with this in mind.

Even if you ultimately don’t use the item, you have used the construction of it to sharpen your modeling skills. If you change your themes and the model is no longer appropriate for your layout, then bring it to a Meet and sell it. That is one purpose for having the White Elephant table sales.

3. What if I change my mind about what I want?

No matter what you do, you may get to the point that the scene doesn’t do what you want it to do. If that occurs, make changes – and take it all out if needed. Ideas, wants, desires, and available model change frequently, so don’t be afraid to change whatever you initially planned to do. David Barrow, of Cat Mountain and Santa Fe fame, told me when I visited his layout that it is important to go ahead and build something. If you wait until you get the plans finished, you never will get anything built because you never finish planning.

4. What if I don’t have time to build so much?

One big change in the hobby in recent years have been highly detailed models – not just of engines and rolling stock, but of vehicles and structures. I am acquiring some vehicles that fit in that category – so can you.

Looking Back 40 Years in The Local - Summer 1976

Chris Conaway

One of the perks of being the archivist for the MER is that at my fingertips I have all of the newsletters from the MER and the divisions to look at and enjoy. Since it has been 40 years since the Bicentennial, I looked back to see what was going on in the MER during the summer of 1976.

On the cover of The Local is a picture of the “old” GATSME layout and how work has progressed on their “new” club railroad located in Ft. Washington, Pennsylvania. As many of you know, they recently relocated the layout to a new site in Rockledge, Pennsylvania.

That year, MER president Tom Meredith spoke in his column about it not only being the 200th anniversary of our country but also the 30th anniversary of the region. That year, the NER convention was October 1975 in Wilmington, Delaware. His column went on to discuss how he attends the convention with friends and that they spend the weekend not only going to the convention but also visiting local hobby shops and prototype railroad sites that they could not access if it were not for attending the convention.

By far the most interesting article in the Local was about the tiny Chesapeake and Western Railroad by Cicel

Pugh. The article talked about the history of the Chesapeake and Western, the current operating practices and contained maps showing the track layout of the railroad in the towns that it served. From a modeler's standpoint, this would be an incredible prototype for one to model since it is small and it interchanges with both the Southern and the Norfolk and Western Railroad.

The next article of interest in the Local had to do with building “a good, simple, reliable throttle” by John Glaab. The SMT2 as he called it was designed to replace your old rheostat throttle. The article included drawings and instruction on how to build this DC throttle.

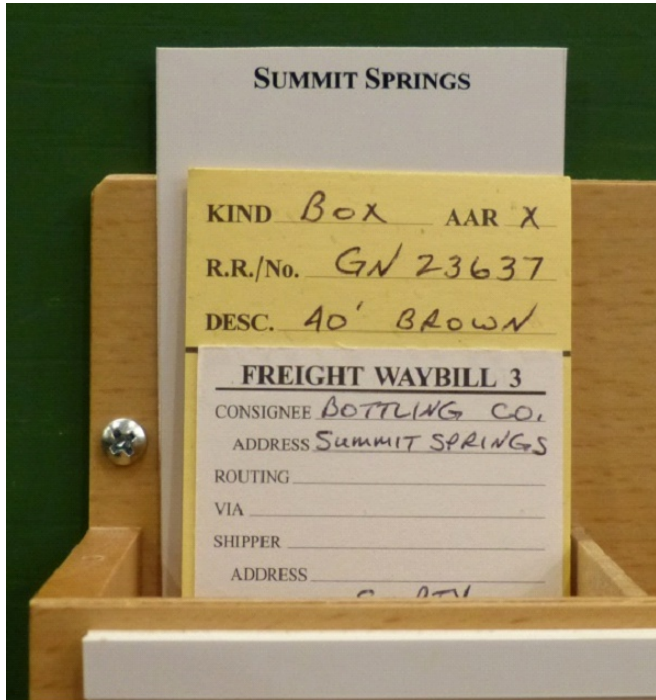
The final article in the Local of interest was about Southern Railways R-1 research car. This article discussed what the research cars does and how the Southern converted one of its office cars to this work. Of note, is that the office car requires a lot of work to duplicate the unique trucks that house all of the special sensors that are used to evaluate the track.

Well, that is the end of our look back in the 1976 May-June issue of The Local. If interested in a copy of any of these articles contact me, and I will send the article requested either via regular mail or e-mail.

Operations Tidbit: Strings Attached

Rod Vance

Usually we lean towards the “no strings attached” approach in life, but I solved an operational problem by ensuring that strings were attached. This resulted in a simple and essentially no-cost solution that enhanced operations on my layout.



The classification track destination card sits higher than car cards for visibility.

My layout operates using the traditional car-card and waybill system, and I have car-card boxes mounted on the fascia. The main yard on my layout includes a 4-track classification yard, which doesn't always provide enough tracks to classify cars by their destination. To provide the yardmaster the flexibility of assigning various destinations to the classification tracks as needed, I've prepared simple cards that are labeled with possible destinations. These destination label cards are about 1" taller than the car cards so that the label cards are visible when inserted in the car-card boxes. The yardmaster is free to assign a destination to any classification track by simply inserting the appropriate label

card in the corresponding car-card box.

This flexibility, however, introduced a slight problem. When the yardmaster pulled cars from a classification track and moved them to a departure track to build an outbound train, he would grab the corresponding car cards from the box and typically also grab the label card, or at least the label card would fall forward in the box and be unreadable. It became a minor irritant to select the car cards without also snagging or messing up the label card – but when things get busy in the yard, minor irritations tend to cause unnecessary frustrations. The solution: attached strings.

I took a length of ordinary white string, loosened one of the screws holding the car-card box to the fascia, and wrapped the string around the screw. The end of the string was held firmly in place once I retightened the screw. I then stretched the string across the length of the box and used the same process to wrap the string around the screw on the other end of the box, cutting off any excess string.

Now the yardmaster could insert the destination label cards behind the string, and put the car cards in front of the string. When it came time to grab a set of car cards, the string held the label card upright and out of the way of the yardmaster's grab. Voila! Happy yardmaster.

So if you have the need to insert any type of label card in a car-card box (e.g., assignment of tracks; status of inbound/outbound car floats), you might want to consider a “strings attached” approach.



A bit of string keeps the destination cards under control.



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Coming Events

First State Model Railroading Club

1282 McKee Road, Dover, DE
www.fsmrrc.org

Display Schedule:

October 22, 2016 from 9am to 2pm - Clayton Railroad Days, 212 Railroad Ave., Clayton, DE 19938. The First State Model Railroading Club will be displaying its Historic HO scale modular layout at the Clayton Fire House during Clayton's Railroad Days Festival.

November 12, 2016 from 9am to 3pm - Borough of Magnolia Community Center, 425 Brooke Ave, Magnolia, NJ 08049. The First State Model Railroading Club will be displaying our HO scale modular layout at the Magnolia Historical Society Train Show.

November 19, 2016 from 9am to 3pm - Hartly Model Train show, 2898 Arthursville Road, Hartly DE 19953. The First State Model Railroading Club will be displaying our HO scale modular model railroad layout at the Hartly Train Show.

Open House Schedule at 1282 McKee Road

December 3-4, 2016 from 9am to 4pm

January 7-8, 2017 from 9am to 4pm

January 14-15, 2017 from 9am to 4pm

Open House Season

It is time for the annual open house season in NJ, PA, DE, and MD. For readers living further south, you may not be aware of this event, but this is the 50th year for this event. During November modelers all over the area hold open house sessions open to the public. If you are interested in visiting one of these layouts, information for the DE and MD layouts is at

<http://www.modelrailroadopenhouse.com>

and for PA and NJ, it is at

www.themodelrailroadopenhouse.com

Railroad Modelers University

The Carolina Southern Division will host its 11th Annual Railroad Modeling University on January 21, 2017 at:

Christ the King Lutheran Church

13501 South Tryon Street

Charlotte, NC 28278.

Achievement Program

Charles Flichman, MMR

Since the last report in The Local, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded:

Division 2 - Potomac

William Lyders - Model Railroad Author

Ernest Little - Master Builder Scenery

Division 3 - Philadelphia

Ronald Albert - Golden Spike

Jonathan Black - Golden Spike

Nick Brownberger - Model Railroad Engineer
Civil

Nick Brownberger - Model Railroad Engineer
Electrical

Earl T. Hackett - Association Volunteer

Earl Paine - Golden Spike

Earl Paine - Master Builder Scenery

Earl Paine - Model Railroad Engineer Electrical

Charles Long - Golden Spike

Charles Long - Model Railroad Engineer Civil

Charles Long - Model Railroad Engineer
Electrical

Alden Smith - Master Builder Structures

Alden Smith - Master Builder Scenery

Norma Toll - Golden Spike

Albert Zollers - Golden Spike

Division 5 - James River

Rodney J. Vance - Chief Dispatcher

Rodney J. Vance - Model Railroad Author

Division 12 - Carolina Southern

Jack D. Monette - Master Builder Scenery

Division 13 - Carolina Piedmont

Dan Fisher - Golden Spike

James P. Murphy - Model Railroad Author

In a perfect world, this information will appear soon in the NMRA magazine. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in the NMRA magazine.

The Mid-Eastern Region, Inc., NMRA
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to insure continued timely delivery of The Local to you – and so we can contact you as necessary. (NMRA notifies the MER of such changes – saving you one more step).

The Local welcomes articles, photographs and model railroad related material as contributions to members' mutual enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. The Editor will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send originals without having back-up copies of both articles and photographs. Editors, by definition, reserve the right - and have the responsibility - to make corrections, deletions, and changes to accommodate space. Upon receiving any submission, the Editor will confirm receipt, and, at a later date, indicate the anticipated edition the submission will appear in The Local. If you do not receive a postcard or email within two weeks, please resend your submission or contact the editor by phone.

Publication Schedule	Deadline
Jan/Feb	Dec 1st of previous year
Mar/Apr	Feb 1st
May/June	Apr 1st
Jul/Aug	Jun 1st
Sept/Oct	Aug 1st
Nov/Dec	Oct 1st

If you are interested in advertising with the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association, please contact the editor. The current advertising rates (6 issues) for The Local are as follows, and must include camera ready are (jpeg, pdf, bmp, tiff formats):

Callboard ads (30 - 50 words, Div and Clubs Only)..Free	
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