



The Mail Car

Newsletter of the St Lawrence Division – NMRA

Issue no. 41 – November 2006

St. Lawrence Division web site: www3.sympatico.ca/gd.knowles/sld/sld_index.htm

From the Assistant Superintendent's Desk

By Paul Bullock

The last Saturday of September was a typical fall day with splashes of sunshine mixed with cloudy skies as we made our way to the first meeting of the season. Almost thirty members had time to renew acquaintances and catch up on summer activities before the meeting.

Grant Knowles reported on some contract work he performed for Jack Johnson assembling the Lakeside Jersey Diary. He assembled the building from a South River Model Works kit of a creamery found in Ellensburg, NY. Since the kit was build essentially as is, he focused on the work required to blend the diary into a realistic setting in a corner of Jack's layout. In the second presentation of the morning, Alex Binkley reported on his travels to the S-scale convention.

The display table was well occupied with various projects completed over the summer as reported later in the **Mail Car**. The meet wrapped up with door prizes and the morning session finished on schedule at 12:10 when many members went off to a local restaurant for lunch. The afternoon activities consisted of visits to two local layout: Brian Earl's N scale and Grant Knowles' HO_n3 Colorado & Southern layout.

A request for volunteers to operate the switching module at Railfair 29 on October 14th & 15th resulted in fifteen members of the SLD signing up. At Railfair 29 approximately 175 certificates were distributed to budding train operators. In addition, a special copy of our newsletter, the **Mail Car**, and NMRA application forms were distributed. A special thank you to Grant Knowles for storing, preparing, delivering and picking up the module. Thanks to all those who volunteered their time to man the module and greet the public: Paul Anderson, Gary Baillargeon, Jim Baxter, Jocelyn Bergeron, Alex Binkley, Paul Bullock, Pierre Burgoyne, Stanley Conley, Mike Hamer, Jeffrey Hill, Grant Knowles, Chris Lyon, Andreas Mank, Bill Meek & Michael Rozeboom. As always, I am sure that someone has been left off the list who deserves to be mentioned and I apologize in advance. If you are interested in operating on the SLD module in your home, I would like to direct your attention to the SLD module loaner program as explained later in the **Mail Car**.

The last weekend in October found a small group participating in the first workshop of the season. Several of the more experienced modellers were on hand to give out advise and everyone had a good time and made progress on their projects.



As usual, the younger crowd was quite attracted to the SLD switching module.

Photo: Grant Knowles



The first workshop of the season had everyone busy with projects.

Photo: Andreas Mank

St. Lawrence Division

Executive Officers

Superintendent: Peter Joyce
Phone (613) 841-1950
Email:
galeandpeter.joyce@sympatico.ca

Assistant Superintendent:
Paul Bullock
Phone (613) 345-5553
Email: pbullock@ripnet.com

Paymaster: Gary Baillargeon
Phone: (613) 774-2380
Email: Petworth.ems@cyberus.ca

Clerk: Tom Badenoch
Phone: (613) 225-6641
Email: tom.badenoch@sympatico.ca

Dispatcher: Andreas Mank
Phone: (613) 591-9088
Email: amank@magma.ca

Appointed Positions

Inspector: Grant Knowles
Phone (613) 825-5438
Email: gd.knowles@sympatico.ca

The Mail Car
Editor: Andreas Mank
Phone: (613) 591-9088
Email: amank@magma.ca

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Copy Deadlines
January Issue - December 15
March Issue - February 15
May Issue - April 15
September Issue - August 15
November Issue - October 15

Special thanks to Beate Herzig for proof-reading and general nit-picking

Continued from page 1

Looking forward to the future, we have our next meeting on Nov. 25th, to be held at Emmanuel United Church, 691 Smyth Road. At this time, we are working on finalizing the program, which will include clinics in the morning and layout tours in the afternoon. At the next meet, we will inaugurate a sales table, details can be found deeper in the **Mail Car**. As always we are looking for presentations and candidates for layout tours to fill out programs right through to May. If you have something to present or have someone we can approach, please contact a member of the executive and we will act on it.

For Sale Table

The SLD Executive thought they would trial a new concept with the membership. Recently a number of members identified they had some railroad goods to liquidate and wondered if they could bring them to sell at the SLD Meets as they might be of interest to the other members. Recognizing this is a service we could offer the membership, the Executive have chosen to set up a "For Sale" table that folks can display their goods on.

So if you have a few RR things to dispose of, please feel free to bring these out to the next meet. This will be a "self policing" forum though we should have a few rules in place:

1. The item must be railroad related.
2. The item must be in good condition.
3. The item must have a potential perceived value to someone.
4. The Seller is responsible to manage their own financials.
5. The seller is to "tag" each item with: item description, asking price and seller's name.

This table will be hosted for the balance of the year and depending on the response will be repeated in the next season. All comments should be directed towards Grant Knowles.

Corrections and Omissions

In the September **Mail Car**, Mike Hamer was not credited for providing the photos of the display table.

In the display report in the September **Mail Car**, a photo of the almost assembled Jersey Creamery, exhibited by Grant Knowles, was shown with text for a different building that Alex Binkley was working on. Unfortunately, I do not have any photos depicting Alex's building.

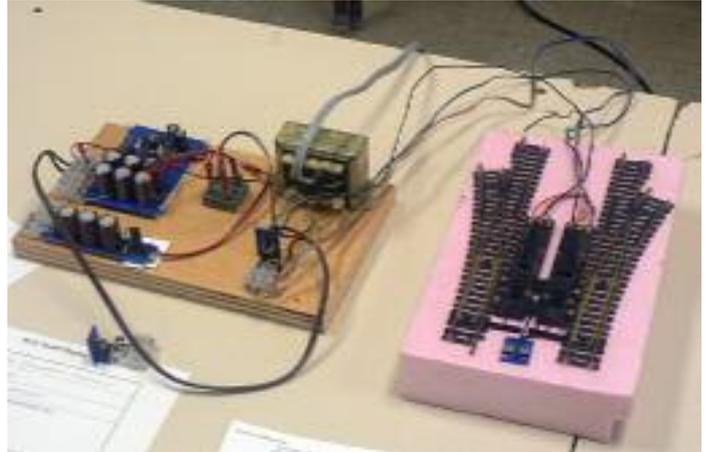
The editor apologizes for these omissions and mistakes.

Andreas Mank,
Editor the **Mail Car**

Display Report

Compiled by Andreas Mank

Paul Anderson brought a capacitor discharge unit. He built the unit using an article by Rob Paisley that is available on the web at home.cogeco.ca/~rpaisley4/CDPSU.html. I encouraged Paul to write an article on this unit for publication in a future edition of the Mail Car.



Brian Earl shared the latest additions to his O-scale and N-scale heritage fleet. On the O-scale side, he showed the latest offering by Mike's Trainhouse, a 40ft AAR boxcar, side by side with an older tinplate model. These new models are highly detailed and only the wheels and the couplers speak to its tinplate heritage. The N-scale boxcar lettered for the M&V is the latest offering in the NMRA heritage series.

Mike Hamer showed a diorama around a 3rd class CN station as used in western Canada and supporting documentation. The model was assembled from a resin kit and painted in the 1960's scheme. Before finding a home on Chris Lyon's new layout, the station will be "modernized" to reflect the passage of time to the present.



Alex Binkley sent a note on his contribution: The buildings were from a BTS kit called the Pulpwood Yard. Basically it is a laser cut kit of a small house/office with a scale to weigh trucks arriving with loads of logs. There is a shed to go with it plus an assortment of detail parts. Nice kit that went together quite well except for getting the roof to sit properly. I have a spot for it on my layout but the shed will have to live elsewhere. I painted the office with craft paints and the shed with an india ink stain to replicate aged unpainted wood.

The Display Report continues on page 4

Note on postal delivery of the **Mail Car**

The **Mail Car** will be delivered by Canada Post to any member that signs up for postal delivery and pays a \$5 subscription fee to cover the cost of printing and mailing. This will be the last issue delivered to anyone that was signed up for the 2005/2006 season. Starting with the January **Mail Car**, only those that have renewed their subscription for the 2006/2007 season will continue to receive the publication by mail.



Al Craig went to the extremes and brought a 1 Gauge Live Steam engine modeled after a Caledonia Southern prototype (top) and a sample of a scratchbuild 36' outside braced boxcar in N-scale. (bottom) While Athearn is offering a model of a 36' double sheeted boxcar, no outside braced car is currently available and Al decided to model it in styrene.



Bill Meredith showed a pre-production sample of a Grenville flatcar he is developing for the B&O Historical Society.



Grant Knowles presented a clinic on the assembly of a creamery from a craftsman kit that he undertook for Jack Johnson.



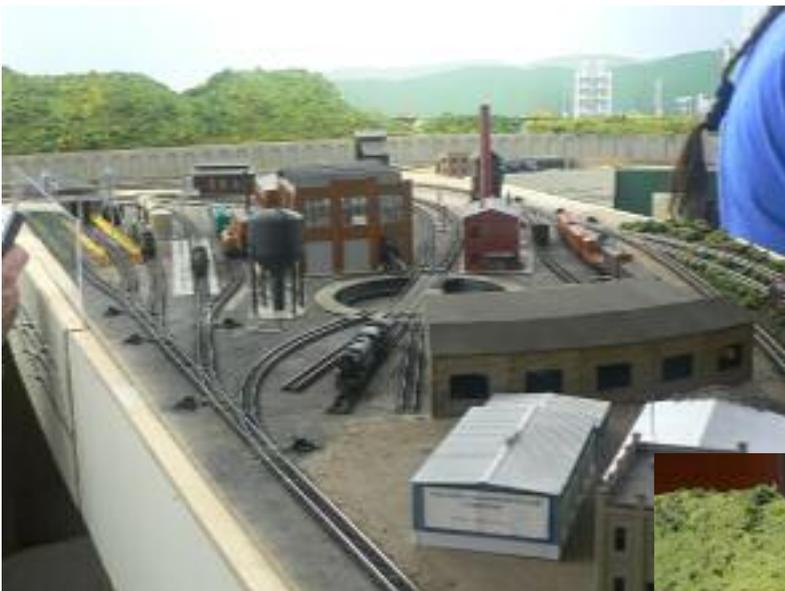
Stan Conley shared his summer reading list and Grant Knowles brought out the settlers shack the construction of which had been covered in the last **Mail Car**.

NMRA Dates

SLD Meetings		NFR Spring Convention	
November 25, 2006	Emmanuel United Church 691 Smyth Road, Ottawa		Flower City Flyer NEW DATE: April 27-29, 2007 RIT Inn & Conference Center 5257 West Henrietta Road Rochester, New York 14586
			SLD Workshops
January 27, 2007	Emmanuel United Church 691 Smyth Road, Ottawa		January 13, 2007
March 31, 2007	Emmanuel United Church 691 Smyth Road, Ottawa		February 24, 2007
May 26, 2007	TBA		April 21, 2007

Layout Tour Report

By Andreas Mank



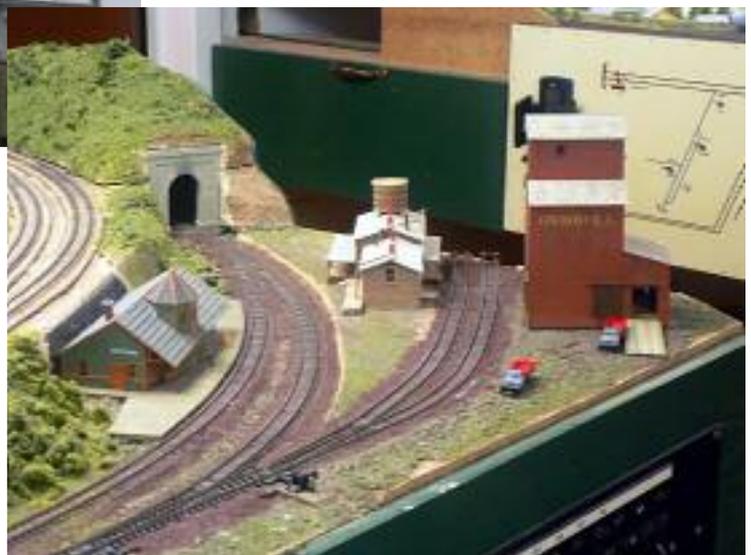
As part of the last meet, two layouts were open for visitors in the afternoon.

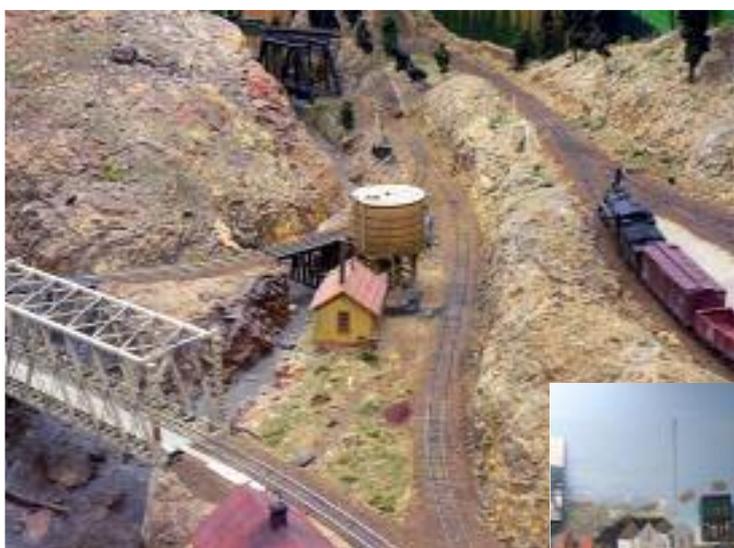
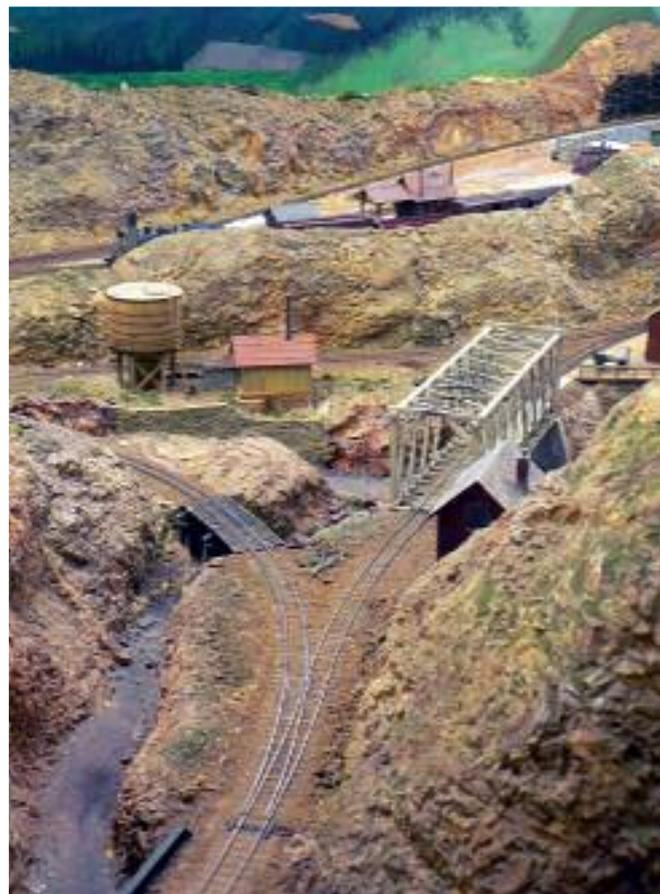
Brian Earl's N-scale empire started out as a trackplan for a room sized HO-scale layout. Brian used the plan without changing the overall dimensions but build it in N-scale. By only adjusting the track spacing on the double track mainline to N-scale standards, Brian achieved a generous scenery to track ratio.

The top photos show a major city on the layout, the yard has ample facilities for both passenger and freight service.

A major locomotive service and back shop facility is located adjacent to the yard.

The layout also has two branchlines with spacious depictions of more laid back smaller depots.





A railfan climbed the Rocky Mountains to observe the action on the narrow gauge Colorado & Southern in the valleys below. These scenes can be found on Grant Knowles HOn3 layout. On the right is the yet incomplete model of the town of Como including the famous roundhouse. His model has been shown at various meets over the past several years and now has found its place on the layout.

SLD Internet Survey Results

By Grant Knowles, SLD Web Master



Over past seasons, the SLD Executive has regularly solicited feedback from the membership on all aspects of the club from facilities, clinics, special events and even the type of coffee. Last month we circulated an "Internet Survey" in the effort to gain an understanding of how our membership uses the Internet and most importantly the SLD web site. We received 25 completed surveys which I believe represents just about everyone in attendance.

I won't bore you with a detailed review of the response to each question (you can contact me directly if you really need to know!) though I will provide a summary of the key items.

General observations;

- Some people didn't realize there was a second page to the survey.
- Everyone has access to email.
- Most consider themselves competent computer / Internet users.
- Majority access the Internet daily.
- Most popular usages in order of popularity: research, shopping, web surfing, news & emails. No one admits to play on line games.
- 50% of the respondents belong to RR newsgroups – many with acronyms that I have no clue what they are!
- The popular web sites visited (in decreasing order) are: SLD, manufactures, OVAR, Retail Stores, NMRA (national), and others.
- Popular SIGs included: OPS, NASG, CP, Digitrax, Yahoo NAR, Railpics.com, Blogspot.com, CN Lines, LD SIG, Railpicture.net
- Magazines read: MRC, RMC, CRC, MRR, MIBA, Interchange, eBay (?), Scale, S Gaugian, Trains.
- Topic most sought after on RR web sites (in decreasing popularity): Layout Pictures / stories, Up coming events, How To Articles, News, Links, Product Reviews, others.
- Most people visit the SLD web site once a month.
- The sections of the SLD web sight most viewed (in decreasing popularity): Meets, Clinics & articles, Links, local layouts.
- Most respondents use the SLD web site to find out about the next meet.
- Most respondents are satisfied with the SLD Web site design and Web photo quality.
- Respondents want the web site to provide (in decreasing popularity): meet notices / reviews, calendar of events, photos of club activities, past clinic material, how to articles, and others.
- Suggestions for other enhancements – add photos of the members of the executive (is this for drive by shootings?).

Over all I think we can draw the following conclusions:

- Everyone is Internet savvy and uses it on a regular basis.
- The SLD Web site should continue to focus on the club, particularly: meet material and club activities.
- Enhancements should include: calendar of events, clinics and how to material.

Thank you to those who took the time to complete the survey as it has confirmed that over all we are addressing the memberships needs and helped identify some areas for improvement.

SLD Module Loaner Program

By Grant Knowles

Don't forget the SLD Module Loaner program is active!

The club has very few assets (limits our liability you know!) the largest of which is the Module. This module was created for a number of purposes such as; advertising at train shows, platform for clinic, use by club members, etc. In case you haven't seen it, the module is a brilliantly designed, self contained switching layout app 6' 6" long by 2' wide. It is partially scened (work in progress) and fully functional (ask the kids at Railfair!) with all the electronics and controls included. As you saw at Railfair, takes literally minutes to set up and provides hours upon hours of fun. It even comes complete with a diesel locomotive and 8 or 9 pieces of rolling stock.

I have spent many fun filled hours moving cars around on the module which is based on the famous Time Saver design. As long as you are a club member in good standing (like who isn't?) you may borrow the module for as long as you like. Just give Grant Knowles a call and he'll personally deliver / pick up the module.

Wiring Reversing Loops with DCC

By Andreas Mank

Recently, Neil Lowes approached me about helping him with the wiring of some reversing loops on his re-worked layout. While he was able to solve most of the problems before I got there, his experiences prompted me to write this short article for the Mail Car. Neil's layout is wired for DCC and while he is using a Lenz DCC system, the following points are generally applicable.

Reverse loops come in three basic configurations: A true reverse loop, a wye configuration and the turntable. The electrical problems inherent in these three configurations are demonstrated in figure 1:

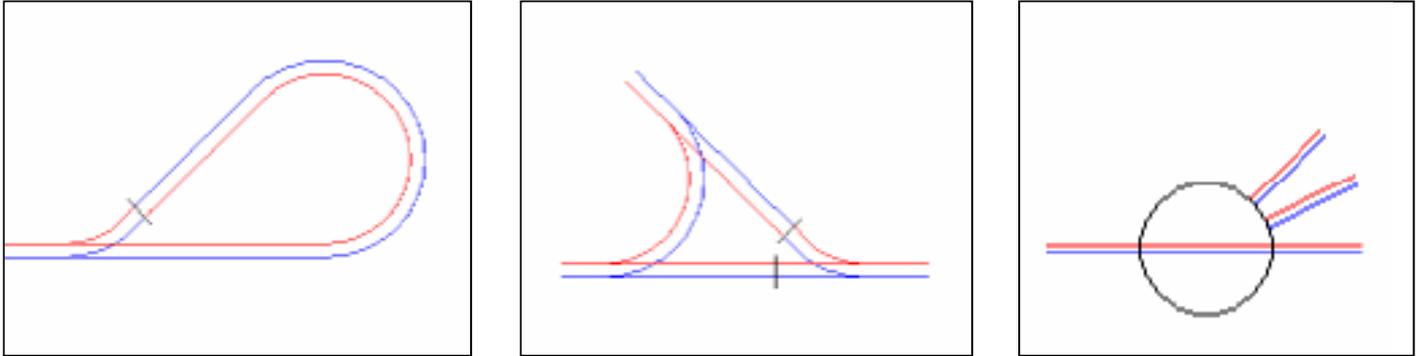


Figure 1: Reverse Loops usually come in one of three configurations. In the case of the turntable, the problem arises when the bridge is rotated by 180°

On a layout wired for conventional 2-rail operation, the reverse loop is mastered by having section of track separated from the remainder of the loop and by connecting it to either side through a DPDT switch. The operational sequence is:

1. Line the DPDT switch to the entry side of the reversing section.
2. Enter the reversing section and bring the train to a stop.
3. Change the polarity on the power pack.
4. Line the DPDT switch to the exit side of the reversing section.

Several variations of this scheme exist where it is possible to automate some of the functionality, through the use of diodes and/or contacts on one of the turnout motors.

There is no reason why this scheme will not work with DCC as well - with one caveat: When using metal wheel sets, it is necessary for the reversing section to be as long as the longest train. Here is the reason:

If the train is longer than the reversing section and uses metal wheels, the last cars on the train will enter the reversing section with the polarity of the section already switched for the exit track. Every metal wheel will bridge the gap between the opposing polarities in the rails and cause a short. Now, you can argue that the same is true on a conventional DC or AC powered two-rail layout and you are correct. The difference is that DCC power supplies are equipped with fast short circuit detection and will shut down, while conventional power packs do not react fast enough to notice the short.

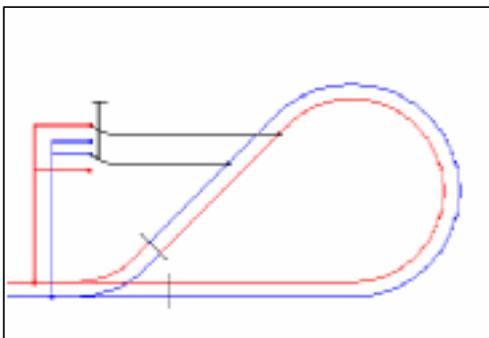


Figure 2: Reverse Loop operation with DPDT switch and DCC

Figure 2 shows the use of a DPDT switch for powering a reversing loop on a DCC layout. The operational sequence on a DCC powered layout is even easier, since the direction of travel is independent of the polarity of the rails:

1. Line the DPDT switch to the entry side of the reversing section.
2. Enter the reversing section.
3. Once the entire train is inside the reversing section, line the DPDT switch to the exit side of the reversing section. There is no need to stop.

So at this point, there is still the requirement for manual intervention, since the DPDT switch needs to be set for entry and exit. With DCC, there is the possibility of eliminating any intervention and masking the reversing section completely. Most manufacturers of DCC systems and some after market suppliers are offering reverse loop modules. These modules use the fast short circuit detection mentioned before to power a relay or a solid state switch to change the polarity of the reversing section every time a short is detected.

The following figures show the principle of how to connect a reversing module to your layout. Please read the instructions for your specific module before connecting it.

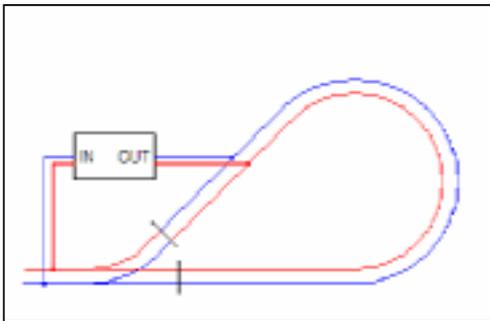
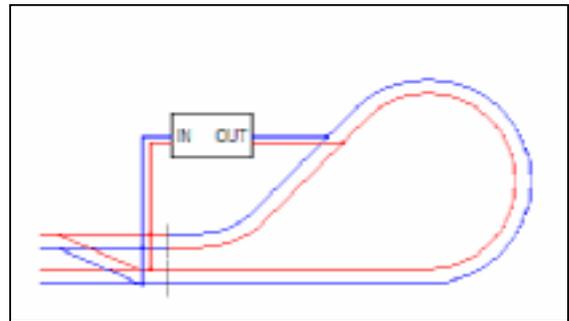


Figure 3: Reverse Loop configuration using a reversing module and DCC. Figure 3a (left) shows a true reverse loop, while 3b (right) shows the preferred wiring for a folded dogbone.



In figure 3a, a true reverse loop is shown. The output of the reversing module is connected to the reversing section, the input to either the track leading to the reversing section or to the power supply that powers that section. It is important to connect the input of the reversing module to the power supply that powers the track at the entrance/exit of the reversing section for proper functionality. As the train enters the reversing section and the polarity is incorrect, the module will see a short and switch the polarity of the reversing section almost instantly. As the train exits the reversing section, it will see the short and again switch the polarity of the reversing section.

If your reversing section is shorter than the longest train and you are using metal wheels, the module will change the polarity every time a wheel bridges the gap at the entry or exit point, thus causing the polarity to switch quickly back and forth. If your motive power is bridging the gap at the exit and a wheel is bridging the gap at the entry, the train will most likely stall due to the continuous short detected by the module and in the worst case damage the electronics.

In figure 3b, a layout in 'dogbone' configuration is shown. Particularly when there are crossovers between the two sides of the dogbone, it is preferable to wire the layout with the loop connecting the sides wired as a reverse loop. That way, any track connections between the sides will have the correct polarity. Again, the reversing section should be as long as the longest train. When you are using a staging yard in a loop connecting the two sides of the dogbone, it is important that the actual reversing section is either independent of the staging yard, or that there is some other means to prevent a train from exiting the reversing section at the same time as another train enters the section. If a train tries to enter at the same time as another exits, the reversing module will have the same problems mentioned previously in the case where the reversing section is shorter than the longest train.

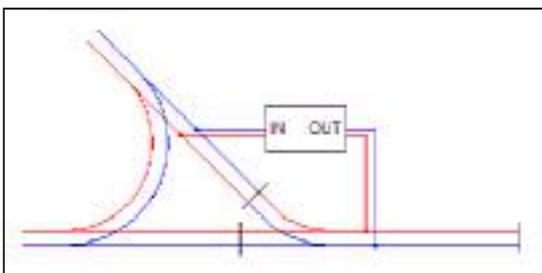


Figure 4: (left) Wiring for a Wye configuration.

Figure 5: (right) Wiring for a turntable using a reversing module.

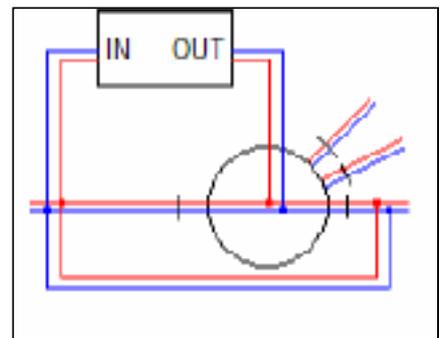


Figure 4 shows the wye configuration. In some, if not most cases, the intermediate sections in the wye will be shorter than the longest train. Therefore, it is preferable to wire the reverse section as one of the legs of the wye. If one of the legs of the wye is a dead end, it would be best to use that one as the reverse section, otherwise you need to carefully evaluate where to place the other end of the reversing section to prevent two trains from simultaneously entering the section.

Figure 5 shows a turntable wired with a reverse module. The module will automatically change the polarity of the bridge and the approach track after a 180° turn of the bridge. At the same time, all stall tracks can be constantly powered so that all those steam and diesel engines with sound decoders provide some background atmosphere in the service area.



Next Division Meet

St Lawrence Division – NMRA

When:

Saturday, November 25th, 2006

Where:

Emmanuel United Church

691 Smyth Road,

Ottawa

East of CHEO at Dauphin Road

Doors open at 9:00 am -- Admission \$5.00

What's on:

Morning:

Division Business

Clinic

- TBA

Display

- TBA

Door Prizes

- You never know what to expect!

Afternoon:

- Layout Tours

