

Minutes Layout Committee 2/12/22

People attending: Jim, Bruce, Wayne, Doug, Nick, Eric, Denise, Larry

Track issues:

- Fitchburg yard sections are non-functional - track needs to be soldered together – apparently never was.
- The Wahl oil treatment seemed to be working well during last Op session - a couple drops of put on the layout seemed to keep thing running.
 - Worked for Larry in Readsboro – see last month.
 - Nick and Wayne report no problems in train running in the last three weeks since the Ops and no cleaning.
 - We will continue with a couple drops of Wahl oil before Ops and see how things go.
- Currently track one from Zoar a good way up the helix is non-operable for a reason that's not yet understood. This started on the electrical changeover see below and today Jim has not figured out why this one section of track should not be working (this has since been fixed and ran fine during recent Ops.)
- Electrical issues as mentioned in the last layout committee meeting have been acted on:
 - The command station needed to be moved to be more central point in the layout. It has now been moved to be under Deerfield East and the booster that was in Deerfield East put back under Zoar.
 - A couple of problems were encountered one of which included some bad pins. That issue has been resolved so right now electrical status ok except the track outage in the helix.
- We had a more general discussion of the various electrical issues ranging from this immediate problem to longer-term problems such as balancing the command bus and including AC distribution throughout the layout so right now the key issues are as follows:
 - Immediate issues - find the problems with Track 1 leading up from Zoar and fix it (done) and solder together the track in Fitchburg to get continuity.
 - Intermediate term - rebalance the command bus line by installing wall warts in a couple locations to prevent the voltage drop issue from causing communication problems.
 - Right now it's possible that if too many controllers are close together the voltage drop could cause communication difficulties.
 - Operators need to be cautious not to leave their controller plugged in drawing current when they're not actually running a train.
 - Long term:
 - Evaluate idea of running a much heavier-gauge cable to provide 12 volts all around the layout.
 - Doug cautioned that means this needs to be well thought out and properly fused.
 - Also we need to evaluate other means to get 110 volt to interior sections of the layout.

Scenery:

- We reiterated that no permanent scenery will be built on the aisle side of the track until the scenery behind the track is finished.
- Doug expressed the idea that it is a process whereby individuals take responsibility for certain areas and organize to decide what will be there.
 - Larry added to the idea that some of the scenery elements were an integral part of the layout planning process and have limited ability to be moved.
 - For instance Cains and Pepsi at this point in time have been accommodated in the benchwork structure and can't be moved.
 - Other elements are much more flexible.
 - He also made the point that while individuals can be responsible for particular areas, we have to have an overall plan and we have to work to have a commonality of look - we cannot have significant changes between the nature of the scenery from sections to section.
- We discussed the process which is underway now between Willows and Ayer. This process includes indicating location of scenic elements with tape.
 - The next step will be to build mock-ups so that we can get a more three-dimensional understanding how things will look.
 - And then we have to assign managers to individual sections.
 - A major question that we have is that we need to determine what kind of trees we are going to use – we must do some experimentation with them and come to an agreement moving forward what style we will use throughout the layout so that we have a relatively common look to our trees.
 - Between Ayer and Willows is a good place to start as there are a number of trees that will be required. All members who come to the club are invited to see what has been laid out between Willows and Ayer and comment.
 - For your information the brown masking tape was put down by Matt, and Larry came along later and made some suggested additions and in a few cases alterations in green tape so you can see where they came from.
- Eric expressed a willingness to do the layout with his cloud painting. For those of you who have not seen his layout he is skilled in making subtle clouds that look far away and don't overpower

the layout visually like some backdrop photos do – see below for an example.



We ended the meeting with a brief discussion of priorities. One key one is to do the second deck between the Hudson River and Mechanicville before we do any scenery below it which would be ruined by drip-through. Doug acknowledged he has taken this area as his responsibility.

Side Note:

- Doug made a suggestion – since the plywood is $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, we can get a grade separation of up to four feet or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, simply by using a router, which he has along with the right bits. So, a swamp or the pond between Cains and Harvard Groton Road could be simply done and require no cutting of the plywood. Control of dust will need to be addressed and could be a deciding factor.
