



## In this issue

Mike's Minute **P.2**

Next FVD Meeting **P.3**

Train Simulators **P.4**

Upcoming Events **P.6**

Contest Calendar **P.7**

Contact Information **P.7**

## 'Tis the Season

The CPKC Holiday Train is just one of many seasonal happenings. See details on Upcoming Events, page 6



## If it's November it must be...NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD MONTH!

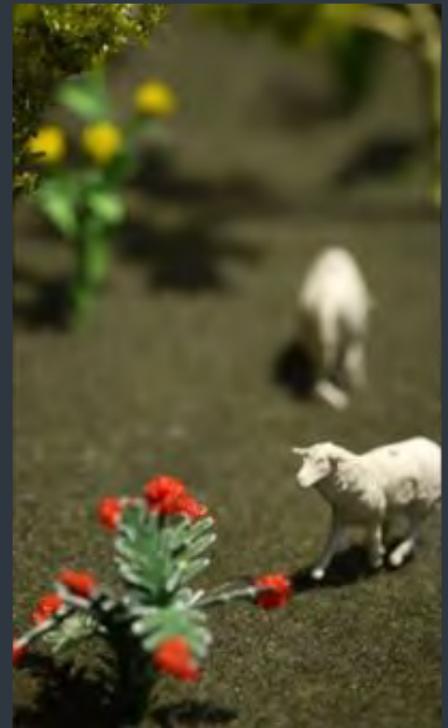
This is the time for you to promote our hobby by showing non-model railroaders what it's all about, and how much fun it is.

Here are a few ideas:

- Have a layout open house for your neighbors
- Bring a model to your workplace
- Hold a clinic at your local public library
- Take photos of your layout and show friends and coworkers

See the [NMRA site](#) for more details.

## T is for Tiny



Sheep frolic in the field...





## Mike's Minute

November marks the observance of “National Model Railroad Month” and there is no shortage of model railroading activities here and there in our neighborhood. See [Upcoming Events](#).

At our October meeting we had 21 folks present at the Morava Recreation Center in Prospect Heights and another 10 over the ‘net’ for a total of 31. I appreciate everyone attending in whichever manner they choose.

We’re trying to be as accommodating as possible for folks to attend as they see fit because this hobby seemingly has no limit to the information, technology and techniques that can be applied. Such was the case with our October topic. Ken Mosny of the RRVD did a 2-part presentation on his experiences in 3-D printing while he had a printer running on the kitchen counter. It amazes me the level of detail that can be achieved using these machines. Afterward, he demonstrated techniques in cleaning the parts and equipment. His presentation was inspirational, and I have no doubt several members are planning on learning more about the equipment, supplies and techniques.

Almost 400 people attended the [Chicagoland Railroad Prototype Modelers](#) conference, held in October at the NIU Conference Center in Naperville with the FVD as a co-sponsor. Sufficient money was collected to cover costs as well as seed dollars for next year.

I noted at least 5 FVD members, including two Legacy members attending, along with a number of customers I see regularly at the DuPage swap. VIPs on hand included Mid-West Region President Bob McGeever from Stoughton, Wis., NMRA President Gordy Robinson from the UK, TV actor and railroad enthusiast Michael Gross, plus several notable hobby names.

Speaking of presentations, the November presentation will be by FVD member Dan Cahill on a trip he made to Ireland not long ago. Trains and railroading are a little different over there, with different terminology, but it’s still railroading. In all my Navy travels, I never made it that far North. I’m looking forward to Dan’s presentation. We’re always searching for interesting and informative topics to present to the membership, so if you have photos of a trip, or of a visit to a

...as the train approaches...



... passes the flock, ...



...and goes around the, uh, *mountain*?



historical site, and yes, even “where I went on my summer vacation” that is of a railroad-related nature, please contact Gary Saxton or myself. We can help you put together a presentation. It may not win an Emmy or an Oscar, but if you found it interesting, we will too.

Our December meeting will be held in one of the meeting rooms at the Glenview Public Library. The GPL is a little closer to most of our members and is adjacent to the Metra Line, which makes getting to the meeting convenient. We're trying this location to determine IF it will be an alternative or substitute for the Morava Center for future meetings in view of rising room rental rates. We still have the option of participation via Zoom as we have obligated to continue to use that system into 2024. Your input and feedback on the use of these facilities will be of great help in determining where the 2024 meetings will be held. If you are aware of another suitable location, please let a member of the Board of Directors know. We have had discussions regarding moving the meeting location around the division, but location is always a stumbling block.

Our webmaster sends a notice a few days before our meetings which includes log-on credentials to make Zoom easy to use. We'd really like to see you in person, but if you'd rather participate via Zoom, that's fine too. Either way, I appreciate you taking the time and effort to attend. Please be sure we have your current e-mail address on file and advise of any change.

Regards, Mike Hirvela

## Next FVD Meeting

**When:** Sunday, November 19, 2023, at 1:30 PM

**Where:** [Gary Morava Recreational Center](#) and [Zoom](#)

**Presentation:** *Irish One Rail System* by Dan Cahill.

Description: In a remote backwater of Ireland, economic necessities led to the construction of one of the first successful monorail lines in the world.

**Contest:** One Illuminated Structure

**Show & Tell:** Display any category or train related item

**Silent Auction:** Bring your train items to sell or look for bargains and bid on them.

Hmm, that train is running pretty close to the edge...



...of her hat?!



T-gauge layout designed, built and “modeled” by Simone Giertz, Swedish inventor and [YouTube](#) / [Instagram](#) / [TikTok](#) personality.



## On Another Track: Train Simulators

Want to drive a train? Try this.

Text and screenshots: Chris Mattimiro

Left: Sunset on the Metrolink Antelope Valley line north of L.A. Sim screenshot.

In addition to scale models, many members' train-related activities extend to other areas. History museums, such as the Illinois Railway Museum (IRM), train-related art, music ([Billboard: The 20 Best Songs About Trains](#)), to say nothing of actually traveling via train. How about driving one? Ever wish you could climb aboard and be the engineer of a 4500-ton freight or run a commuter train on a schedule? [IRM's recent Diesel Days](#) offered one such choice.

Train simulators present another possibility. Unlike a physical scale model, simulators (sims) use a mathematical model of the real world, fully animated, in a high-resolution virtual space. Physical scale replicas and sims represent two aspects of the realism that can be achieved in modeling. When I get tired of hanging upside down under my layout, I run simulations in Train Sim World.

The similarity is that they're both models containing railroads and a simulacrum of the environment. The difference? One is a scaled down, physical layout that you control standing alongside; while the other is a full-size virtual representation, running in real time on your computer, that you drive as an engineer in the locomotive cab.

The sim lets you learn how to control various locomotives—steam, diesel, electric; high speed and slow switchers—pull freight and passengers on railways throughout the U.S., U.K., and Europe. You can set the time of day and year. The weather is also at your command, making your forecasting much more dependable than the TV news.

When we discuss realism in scale modeling, it's about the attention to tiny details that make objects appear much like their real-world counterparts. In sims, realism starts with accurate representations of those objects (exterior and interior), then illuminates them for the appropriate time of day and weather. Here are some examples.



An old Deutsche Bahn BR363 diesel shunter moves tank cars through a chemical plant near Dresden, Germany. Graffiti adds a touch of color. Sim photo

Interior of the BR363 cab. Most of the dials, indicators and controls in this sim screenshot are functional. Point, click and drag using a mouse. Game consoles are also supported.



Real  
or  
Sim?



Left: Record-setting LNER Class A3 4472 Flying Scotsman – the real one. Right: Sim Scotsman

The realism extends to the movement and interaction between all the objects in the virtual world. Examples:

- If you attempt to start rolling on snow-covered rails with too much throttle, the driving wheels will spin, but the rest of the train won't move an inch. Better apply sand to get more traction.
- If a red signal forces a stop on an upslope in the rain, the train may even start sliding backwards!
- You're driving a BNSF freight up the Cajon Pass in California with three ES44C4 locos pulling 57 cars, 3900 feet long, 4524 tons. Each locomotive generates 4400 traction horsepower, which sounds like a lot, but the consist will struggle to get above 25mph on the upslope.
- The same freight has now reached the pass and is going down the other side towards the yard in San Bernardino. There are three types of brakes: Dynamic, Automatic, and Independent. They each work differently, with various amounts of stopping power and agility. The most powerful brakes are the slowest to actuate and release. Which brakes should you modulate to effectively keep the train under the speed limit, but not come to a complete stop?

In these scenarios the sim is realistically calculating how the train will move given the interaction of mass, gravity, friction, momentum, grade (slope), etc.

Operation of train subsystems is modeled as well, requiring the engineer to learn startup/shutdown and operating controls. Once you've got the basics mastered you can move on to the automatic train controls on the high-speed trains. They permit hands-off operation, but still require vigilance.

So, what to make of simulators? They're not *to scale* but they are models. These "games" don't really compete with the hobby as we know it, but they do offer an entirely different definition of fun. Correction: they do compete, for your time and your money, but can coexist if you budget accordingly.

## Upcoming Events

### • Monthly FVD Meetings

Held the third Sunday of every month at either the [Glenview Public Library](#) or the [Gary Morava Recreation Center](#), the meetings are an opportunity to share information, either in-person or on Zoom. Here is the meeting schedule through the end of the year. See the full schedule on the [FVD website](#).

When	Where
11/19/23 1:30-4:00 PM	Gary Morava Recreation center and Zoom
12/17/23 1:30-4:00 PM	Glenview Public Library and Zoom
1/21/24 1:30-4:00 PM	Gary Morava Recreation center and Zoom
2/18/24 1:30-4:00 PM	Glenview Public Library and Zoom

### • Midwest Regional Meetings

[Board of Directors](#) Meeting is November 18 in Danville, IN.

[2024 Convention](#) will be held May 2-4, 2024, in South Bend

### • Club Events

[Kenosha Train Show & Swap Meet](#) November 12, 9 AM – 1 PM. 3030 39th Avenue, Kenosha, WI. \$5 admission. Call 262-331-0392 for more information.

[Lionel Model RR Club](#), New Berlin WI. Open Houses November 18, 19, 25 & 26

[North Shore & Western Model RR Club Display](#) at the Glenview Public Library  
December 9, 9 - 4:30; December 10, 1 - 4:30.

### • Holiday Trains

[Metra Holiday Trains](#) are sold out. Book early next year!

[CPKC Holiday Train](#) will be in [Bensenville](#) November 25, 6:45-7:30 PM; [Pingree Grove](#) November 26, 8:45-9:30 AM; and [Gurnee](#) December 3 5:10-5:40 PM.  
Select the links to see town locations.

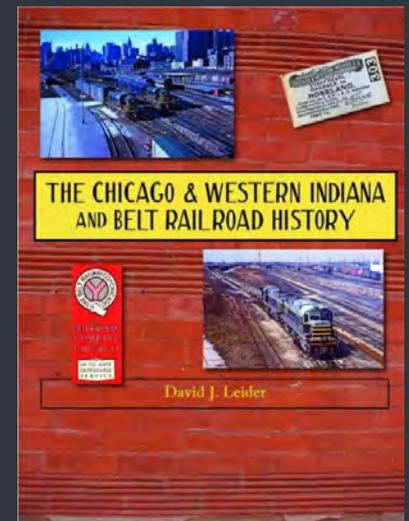
[Happy Holiday Railway](#) at Illinois Railway Museum, various dates in November & December. See [website](#).

### • Train Shows

[Great Midwest Train Shows](#) are held monthly at the [DuPage Event Center and Fairgrounds](#) in Wheaton. Traveling shows will be in Illinois in Springfield on November 11 & 12, and in Collinsville (near St. Louis) on November 25-26. Information on both shows can be found on [Trainshow.com](#).

The [Central Indiana Division Train Show](#) will be held Saturday, November 18 from 10 AM to 3 PM at the [Hendricks County Fairgrounds](#), west of Indianapolis.

## New Book by Local Author



Dave Leider's *The Chicago & Western Indiana and Belt Railroad History* is available! Order [now](#).

## Caution: Hacked Hobby Websites

The website of ReSourced Rails, a model train store in Des Plaines was recently hacked. Although they've since recovered it bears repeating to be cautious when navigating the web, especially with smaller hobby shops and vendors that may not be as well defended as larger companies.

Boston University has a concise [guide to avoiding unsafe websites](#).

# Contest Calendar

Division Meeting Date	Contest
November 19	One Illuminated Structure
December 17	One Steam or Diesel Yard Switcher
January 21, 2024	One Caboose
February 18	One Weathered Car or Structure
March 17	One Steam Locomotive
April 21	One Refrigerated Billboard Car
May 19	One Freight Car with an Open Load

## Contest rules

Future contests be held in person at the meet. There will be no photographic entries. All entries will ONLY be displayed at the meet.

## About the Fox Valley Division

### Board of Directors

**Superintendent:** Michael Hirvela  
**Asst. Superintendent:** Denis Zamirowski  
**Paymaster:** Richard Sieben  
**Chief Clerk:** Richard Hoker  
**Achievements & Contests:** Jim Landwehr  
**Clinics & Programs:** Gary Saxton

**Membership Promotions:** Michael Hirvela  
**Membership Services:** Erich Abens  
**Public Relations & Social Media:** Keith Dart  
**Webmaster:** Jim Osborn, MMR®  
**Semaphore Editor:** Chris Mattimiro

Contact any board member [here](#).

## About the Semaphore

The Semaphore is published by the Fox Valley Division of the Midwest Region of the NMRA, a registered 501(c)(7) not-for-profit Illinois corporation.

### Staff:

Editor: Chris Mattimiro  
Assistant Editor: Michael Hirvela  
Assistant Editor: Jim Osborn

If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region, Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of Lake and McHenry, as well as parts of Cook and Kane Counties in northeast Illinois. About 180 members of varied ages and modeling ability belong to the FVD. Most modeling scales are represented in our division. Subscriptions to the Semaphore newsletters are free. Membership in the division is available through the NMRA at: <https://www.nmra.org/>

Monthly FVD meetings run September through May in-person and online via [Zoom](#). Each meeting features a clinic, model contest, and

information of interest to the membership. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions may also be held.

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to answer your questions, help improve your modeling, and help you better enjoy the great hobby of model railroading. Visit us on the [web](#)!

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