



FEBRUARY 2024

## Metra Fare Changes Effective February 1

Metra is revising its fare structure and fare options effective Feb.

1. The biggest changes are eliminating the 10-Ride Ticket as a fare option and reducing the number of fare zones to 4 from 10. All downtown stations are in the new Zone 1, with the remaining stations assigned to Zones 2 through 4. In addition, effective Feb. 1, tickets will no longer be sold at ticket windows; you may buy them from vending machines or the Ventra app. (BSNF windows closed on Jan. 8.)

For full details about Metra fare changes, including the new fare zone map, please see

[Metra](#)



## In this issue

L'Obsession **P.3**

Next meeting **P.3**

Upcoming Events **P.4**

Contest Calendar **P.5**

Contact Info **P.5**

## Letting the Kids Drive

### Getting the next generation involved in the hobby

I've only been part of the model railroad scene for a short while, but the ongoing concern about declining hobbyist participation and a lack of younger members has been persistent. It has ramped up recently with announcements of the closure of a couple long-running stores on both sides of the pond (Model Train Stuff and Hatton's). Are model railroads in trouble? I don't think so. I think we just like worrying out loud. Misery loves company after all.

I do want to address the concern of getting younger people involved in the hobby. I've got a couple granddaughters of impressionable age whom I believe will make great test subjects. I want to discover if it's possible to plant the seeds for a future modeler. Or see if we even have a *present* modeler.

The approach is simple: do small modeling projects with the girls and see what sparks their imagination. They explore, and I follow to see where it leads. And clean up the mess. At this age the journey seems to be less about trains than it is about the adventures that occur, with railroads being

a background to the story.

They're in a good environment to pick up on train vibes. Literally. Living in sight of the Union Pacific Northwest line, they sit on the front porch on warm evenings and see, hear, and feel the trains rumbling past, with the old house rocking a little each time one passes.



*Future modeler test subjects A & B; a.k.a., Ellie & Ada. Even without their thinking hats, they're much smarter than grandpa.*



At home they've accumulated a large collection of Brio track and accessories, which is usually spread out to cover the living room floor. When they come to visit, they pull out our old set, which includes a variety of circus animals.

Running trains around a flat track was a bit boring, so they snatched a feather comforter off the bed to model mountainous terrain. While the cars tend to fall off the steep slope, it's given them valuable insight into the hazards of unstable ground and the need for reliable connections between track sections.

On the modeling side, Ellie has been assisting on the construction of an experimental layout, which will have a water feature.

She's painted several riverbed colors to see which one looks best when covered with water.

## 👉 Railroad Operations, preschool version

*Left: Ada explains how to save animals that tangle with a high-speed freight. The heavily bandaged horse knows the drill.*

Key findings so far:

- The girls enjoy their own version of railroad "operations." When a toy animal is hit by a toy train the suffering creature is transported for surgery, bandaged, and sent back to the field. Voila: operations. I'm assigned ER support, standing by with sticky surgical tape to bind wounds on any creature that tangles with an unstoppable locomotive. We haven't discussed realism, so the subject of fake blood and getting ketchup stains out of carpet hasn't yet come up.
- Adult consensus: when walking barefoot, Brio tracks are less painful than Lego bricks.
- Ellie was a bit miffed to discover that model railroading does not work like a demolition derby. At this age the girls' only interest in operating scale electric trains is cranking the throttle to 11. Belatedly, locos have been programmed for a maximum throttle setting to be half engine speed.

Going forward, imaginative play with wooden trains, animals, and hospital operations will continue. I've got a battery-powered loco that'll haul the circus from winter zoo to summer performances. Ellie's much more interested in landscapes and structures, so that's where we'll head next. If there's anything newsworthy to report -- or if there's nothing else to publish -- you'll read it here next.







## Amherst Show Highlights

Didn't make it to the annual show out east? Well, if you're just sitting there in front of the computer, you might as well watch these videos.

[YouTube Amhurst Listing](#). Interesting episodes:

- [Live Show Tour](#), Human[c]ity Junction, 2h 47m
- [Manufacturers and Vendors](#), My Life's Tracks, 25m
- [Show Layouts](#), John Reall, 18m
- [What's New in Model Railroading](#), Nsmodeler24, 20m
- [She Dragged Me Here!!](#) Real Toy Trains, 23m

Next show is January 25 & 26, 2025.



## 👉 L'Obsession

Crazy about the CTA? This board's for you

Are you an L fan? Get this: an electronic map showing the real-time location of trains in transit to every station. Tri-color LEDs shine on a circuit board, updated 60x/minute, silver traces showing the routes, with "a representation of Lake Michigan and the Chicago River using a contrasting copper pour beneath the green solder resist of the board," according to the company website. Includes a fiberboard stand, power supply and cable. Requires a Wi-Fi connection. \$279 at [traintrackr](#). Train and weather maps are available in other cities in the US and UK.

Set this up on your bedroom shelf, turn off the lights and watch the flow. And get your significant other a sleep mask.

## Next FVD Meeting

- February 18, 2:00
- Glenview Public Library & Zoom
- Clinic: *Shooting the Diesel That Did It*
- Model Achievement: Up to 3 weathered cars or structures
- Show & Tell

## 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
2/18/24 2:00-4:00 PM	Glenview Public Library and Zoom
3/17/24 2:00-4:00 PM	Glenview Public Library and Zoom

### • Midwest Regional Events



**SAVE THE DATE**

**AROUND THE BEND**  
MIDWEST REGIONAL CONVENTION  
**MAY 2ND-4TH, 2024**  
The Century Center, South Bend, Indiana

Regional Train Event • Clinics • Layout Tours • Open to the Public  
Operating Sessions • Display Room • NMRA AP Program Evaluation  
Railroad and General Interest Tours • Help for Getting Started

[Around the Bend Convention Information](#)

### • Train Shows



**MODEL RAILROAD SHOW**  
Feb. 17-18, 2024 • Alliant Energy Center • Madison, WI

**Delavan Train Show:** Fri/Sat March 9, 9 – 4, March 10, 10 – 4. Begin the show at the Delavan American Legion Hall where you will receive your map and train "ticket" to be punched at each location you visit. 111 S. 2nd St., Delavan WI

**Great Midwest Train Shows:** monthly at the [DuPage Event Center and Fairgrounds](#) in Wheaton. The traveling show will be in East Moline, IL March 16-17. Information on both shows can be found on [Trainshow.com](#).

# Contest Calendar

Division Meeting Date	Contest
February 18	Up to 3 Weathered Cars or Structures
March 17	Up to 3 Steam Locomotives
April 21	Up to 3 Refrigerated Billboard Cars
May 19	Up to 3 Freight Cars 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

**Superintendent:** Michael Hirvela  
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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:

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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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