

# Vol. 26 No. 2

Apr.—June 2025

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<https://wba-tca-eastern.org>

## WB&A Board of Directors

### Officers:

President: John Buxton

Vice Pres: Charles Doring

Treasurer: Michael Ackerman

Secretary: Bob Gray

Past President: Tom Salen

### Directors:

Doug Campbell

Dave Eadie

Wayne Fletcher

Ron Edwards

John Gomoljak

Dan Rollyson

### Eastern Division Representative:

Bob Heine

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## "The Trolley" The Official WB&A Newsletter



WB&A Chapter - Eastern Division - Train Collectors Association  
Established 1964

## President's Report

Another year in the books for WB&A as we celebrated 60 Years as a Club. I saw and met many Members at our 60th Anniversary Lunch in Annapolis last Spring. We were given a 60th Anniversary Award Letter by Kevin Quinn of TCA National for this accomplishment. Many thanks to Chuck and Carol McGinnis for organizing this celebration.

A Big thank you to Ron Edwards & our Board of Directors' Leadership Team that put on our 1st Virginia Show since Covid (Including an information table at Greenberg's Chantilly). We also had a very successful & well attended Annapolis (Thanks John Gomeljack) & Arbutus Shows (Thanks Carol & Chuck McGinnis) in 2024

Our Start Your Day gatherings every month have been well attended, and will continue in 2025.

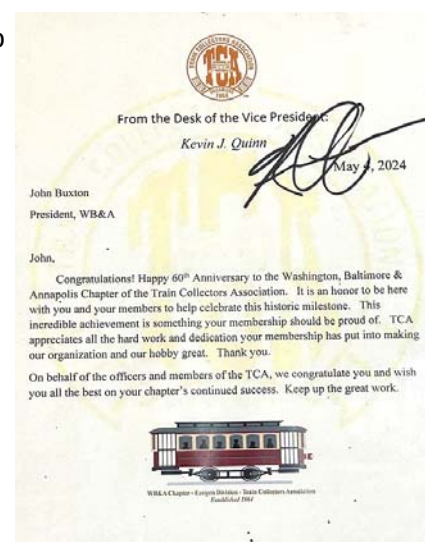
We have scheduled a full slate of Maryland and Virginia 2025 Shows & Events and I look forward to each one being a club supported gathering.

I see the biggest challenge for 2025, as how to generate member interest at in-person non-how-to gatherings. I realize, many club members have not been interested in our on line Social Media Group, my concern is with such little member interest in non-show gatherings, what our future will look like as a club. The hobby is changing with modern technology and toy trains of today are very different from the classic Lionel / American Flyer trains of our youth. If any member is operating things like Lego Trains or Digital Trains, I would be interested in learning more about them.

As always thank you to each and every board member and officer, past & current, and others who have selflessly given their time and resources to make this club a success. I invite each and every member to do what you can do to grow our club in activities and members. I am always available to meet or speak with members by phone (410-952-7356) or in person to hear their compliments, concerns, and ideas for the club.

Remember this club is your club and we need your help.

John Buxton – President 2025



There are only 21 **WB&A 60th Anniversary Boxcar** available for sale. The price is \$60.00 plus \$14 shipping. Send a check to Carol McGinnis at 5400 Vantage Point Road, #1005, Columbia, MD 21044. Or you can order on-line at our web site (\$2.00 Convenience fee).



## ***Treasurer's Report as of 03/1/2025***

By Mike Ackerman

The Chapter's financial activities for Jan. 1, 2024 through Nov. 1, 2024 are summarized below. If you have any other questions or comments feel free to contact me at [mjackermn@gmail.com](mailto:mjackermn@gmail.com)

Check Book Balance — Jan. 1, 2025      \$31,022  
Check Book Balance — Mar. 1, 2025      \$31,089

Significant Activities Jan. 1, 2025 thru Mar. 1, 2025

	Income	Expenses
Train Meets	2781	1863
Membership:		
Dues — 2024	165	
*Dues Prepaid — 2024 (197)	2955	
Dues — 2025 (47)	712	2
*Dues Prepaid — 2025 (52)	780	
Dues — 2026 (1)	15	
*Dues Prepaid 2016 (1)	15	
Dues—2027 (0)		
Meetings		
Supplies		73
Social Activities		140
Trolley—2025((1 Issues)		148
Election—2025		
Board		
Web Site (5 Years)		1380

\* Note: Revenue and expenses listed as "prepaid" were received or paid before Jan. 1, 2025 and are therefore not accounted for as revenue or expense for 2025 since they are included on the Check Book Balance of January 1, 2025.



## ***TOP TEN WB&A BENEFITS***

- 1 Fun and Fellowship with your Train Friends
- 2 Wealth of information available from other collectors, operators and layout builders.
- 3 A wonderful opportunity to participate at the local level in the world's greatest hobby.
- 4 Free admission to local WB&A Train Shows. (Show advertised in local newspapers).
- 5 Free admission at Members Only WB&A Swap Meets.
- 6 Receive quarterly the WB&A Newsletter "The Trolley".
- 7 Do you use Facebook? If so, request to join our Facebook Affinity Group. Contact the Group Moderator
- 8 Share in the excitement of the Toy Train Hobby.
- 9 Serving as a committee member or officer at the local level is very rewarding.
- 10 Buy, Sell, Trade with local train enthusiasts.

## ***WB&A Board of Directors Minutes***

September 14, 2024

Michael Ackerman's Home

Meeting Start Time: 10:00 AM

Meeting End Time: 12:00 Noon

### ***In Attendance***

Present: John Buxton, Bob Gray, Ron Edwards, Bob Heine, David Eadie, Michael Ackerman, Tom Salen, John Gomoljak. Absent: Charles Doring, Chuck McGinnis, Doug Campbell

**I. Call to Order/Certification of Quorum** - A quorum being determined, the meeting was called to order by John Buxton, WB&A President.

**II. President's Welcome Comments** – President John Buxton welcomed the Board members and guests.

### ***III. Reports***

**A. President's Report** - President, John Buxton, reported that planning for the WB&A train shows is going well and that one week from today we will hold our Springfield Show. The Baltimore Streetcar Museum is reserved for our November General Business Meeting.

**B. Approval of Minutes** from Previous BOD Meeting – Bob Gray reviewed the minutes from our previous Board meeting. A motion was made to

approve the minutes. The minutes were approved.

**C. Treasurer's Report** – Michael Ackerman distributed a copy of the Treasurer's Report. The Board discussed the Club's expenses for the Kids' Train Show at the National Trolley Museum. Michael noted that considering the WB&A financial contribution, we should be receiving more recognition from NCTM for our Kids' Show Event. A discussion was held regarding expenses for WB&A General Business Meetings/Mini Meets in relation to the attendance numbers at these events.

**D. Membership Report** – Bob Gray reported that the WB&A membership stands at 221. He reported that of that number all but 65 have paid their 2024 dues.

**E. Social Committee** – Bob Gray reported that he would be requesting confirmations for the John Simms visit on October 5, 2024 in the next few days. Note: This coming December WB&A Start Your Day will be held at Weber's Cider Mill Farm instead of Union Station in Washington, D.C.

**F. Election Committee Report** – The Task List for Elections was distributed. Two vacancies must be filled. Possible candidates were discussed. An email to all WB&A Members will ask for members to run for board position that will include the time and dates of the four meetings held per year via ZOOM. (Members without email will receive information via regular mail) Board members will make personal appeals to members to run. With candidates in place, we will distribute via email ballots and candidate resumes to the membership.

Looking ahead to next year's elections when we will have to fill a large number of positions, the election committee offered the following ideas to streamline the election process and make it easier for members to serve on the board.

- 1) Precisely describing roles and responsibilities of board members. (refer to WB&A Bylaws)

- 2) Make personal appeals (phone call/personal letters) to potential board members that we identify as having leadership skills and a commitment to actively participate in the major functions of the Board.

- 3) Establish a year-long calendar of Board Meetings so potential members can understand their time commitment and plan ahead.

- 4) Minimize the driving time and meeting time commitments of board members by having concise meeting agenda and a Zoom option for all board meetings.

- 5) Our Start Your Day get-togethers seem to be a way to identify more active club members. Appeal to these folks to become board members.

- 6) With 12 "Start Your Days" to interact with members, do we need "face-to-face" General Business meetings. Would "ZOOM" General Business Meetings suffice and perhaps increase member attendance?

- 7) Invite the membership to all Board Meetings via ZOOM.

- 8) Allow any Board member to attend any board meeting via ZOOM.

- 9) Hold only 4 Board meetings per year. These meetings are scheduled in December of the preceding year so that board members can know in advance what their responsibilities are. Additional meetings will be Committee meetings, called when needed. Tom Salen noted that these meeting must be concise, limited to one-hour in length.

- 10) Develop a yearly schedule of WB&A events in December of preceding year. If there are no volunteers to manage an event, that event will not be offer in the coming year. That further defines the responsibilities of board members.

- 11) Hold WB&A election via E-mail to save time and cost. The Board agreed that the upcoming will be conducted via E-mail. Those without E-mail will receive ballots via USPS.

John Buxton made the following motion. It was seconded and approved.

- 1) All WB&A Board of Directors Meetings will be held via ZOOM

- 2) WB&A will hold four (4) Board of Directors Meetings per year.

- 3) WB&A Board of Directors Meetings will take place on the second Thursday of the following months. (January, April, August and November)

- 4) The start time of the WB&A Board of Directors Meetings will be 7:00 PM

Dave Eadie spoke on to the benefits of holding the WB&A elections on-line.

John Buxton reminded the group to copy all WB&A email to the WB&A Club email address (wbataclub@gmail.com)

A brief discussion on the benefits of amending the WB&A Bylaws regarding the required number of Board Members.

The Board discussed the purpose, format and possible venues of WB&A General Business Meetings/Mini Meets

2024 Election Ballots will go to John Buxton at (wbataclub@gmail.com)

John Buxton explained that using (wbataclub@gmail.com) provides us with an archive of Club communications via email.

**G. Eastern Division TCA Report** – WB&A Representative to the Eastern Division of TCA Bob Heine, reported that for the 1st time the Eastern Division on Wednesday at 4:00 pm will have a (one) bus tour of TWO great model train layouts and that will include a dinner. The roundtrip will be for roughly 5 1/2 hours (and the TOUR sign up will be "first come, first served").

#### **IV. Ongoing Board Business**

**A. Springfield Show Update** – Event Chairperson, Ron Edwards shared the floor-plan for the Springfield

Show. All 8' tables have been sold, nine 6' tables available. Layouts will be set up by John Buxton, Ton Salen, and Bob Gray. Bob Gray will set up the Kids' Play Area. LLCA will be donating materials to give away. A Taco truck and Kona Ice Truck will be on site.

**B. WB&A Fall Mini-Meet & General Business Meeting Update** – John Buxton said we should continue to have an “in-person” General Business Meeting on the weekend. We do have the next general Business Meeting planned to be held at the Baltimore Streetcar Museum on November 9, 2024. The Board approved an expenditure of \$200.00 for two signs to go on streetcars at the Baltimore Streetcar Museum.

**C. Manassas Railway Festival Update** – We will not participate this year because of a conflict with the Arbutus Show but will consider doing so next June.

**D. Arbutus Meet Update** – Chuck McGinnis submitted a written report stating that there will be 120 tables available, 45 have been paid for, 23 have been requested but not paid for, 52 tables are available.

**E. Annapolis Show Update** – Event chair, John Gomoljak reported that table rentals are going well and that set up for the event will be done by a crew we are paying. He said that he doesn't think we need to raise the entrance fee to the show to cover expenses. Bob Gray and Bill Moss will make a presentation at the Anne Arundel South County Recreation Center in early February to promote the Annapolis Show,

**F. Trolley Update** – Bob Gray thanked Board members for submitting their Trolley articles ahead of schedule for the latest issue and Paul Pullen for getting it edited and type-set early.

#### **V. New Business**

A. John Buxton suggested that we set up displays in public libraries to promote the hobby.

**NEXT MEETING** – The next BOD meeting will be held on November 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM via Zoom.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to adjourn at 12:00 noon.

Minutes submitted by: Bob Gray, WB&A Secretary  
Minutes approved on January 9, 2025.



### ***TCA's TTML Paper*** ***A Source of Friendship and Information*** ***Michael Ackerman***

Are you looking for solutions to some of the mysteries contained in your collection? Are you interested in the background stories associated with items in your collection or in the history of railroading? Would you like to meet like-minded toy train enthusiasts without leaving your home? Then TTML is for you.

TTML (Toy Trains Mailing List) is an official TCA sponsored and maintained web based forum. The late Ron Morris (HR 70-3178) founded it in 1996. TTML provides a platform where TCA members can discuss,

inquire, and share knowledge about the collection, operation and history of toy and full-scale trains. It is not for buying and selling trains.

TTML is currently in its 28th full year of operation. TTML's nearly 1300 members participate by sending and receiving emails; by posting and downloading text, images and files to / from the TCA/TTML web site. Members can search the TTML online archive, which, as of March 2025, contains 173,925 messages and over 11,000 photographs, going back to its origin in 1996.

In October 2020, TCA initiated a Sunday evening biweekly TTML Zoom meeting. Each session has a theme topic but there is always plenty of time for socializing, raising questions, hearing answers and discussing the latest news of interest to the participants. Video recordings of past TTML sessions can be found on the TCA/TTML web site.

Dr. Joseph Lechner has posted a daily Railroad History lesson since 2006. Chris Allen began cross-posting these articles on TCA's Facebook pages in July 2022. Facebook subscribers often respond with additional information, which is then shared through the TTML. These railroad history stories have been re-posted (with permission) on other Internet discussion groups, and re-printed in newsletters of the A. C. Gilbert Society, various TCA divisions and chapters, and other clubs.

TTML members possess a vast storehouse of information about trains, both toy and full-sized. Queries posed online receive quick answers, whether they seek keys to wind century-old clockwork locomotives or wiring diagrams for modern-era engines. For example, few had heard of this battery-powered plastic train until Charles Brumbelow posted photos, and Bill Drake identified it as a Marilyn 49er (1¼"; 6V DC; early 1950s).



Participation in TTML is open to any TCA member. TTMLers enjoy meeting face-to-face at York, TCA national conventions, and other toy train venues.

You can join TTML by sending an email message to [toytrains+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:toytrains+subscribe@groups.io) or by visiting our web site: <https://groups.io/g/toytrains>.

The TTML moderating team members are Chris Allen ([sparkyshome@cox.net](mailto:sparkyshome@cox.net)), Carl Blum ([carl.blum@comcast.net](mailto:carl.blum@comcast.net)), Joseph Lechner ([jlechner@mvnu.edu](mailto:jlechner@mvnu.edu)) and Stuart Rankin ([lionellc@hotmail.com](mailto:lionellc@hotmail.com)).





***Trains, tracks, and tradition: Lionel Celebrates 125 years of Christmas fun***  
***By Jeff Lunden***  
***On NPR***



Ken Bianco Sr. and son Ken Bianco Jr., owners of TrainLand in Lynbrook, New York are the largest retailers of Lionel trains in the nation.

As kids for generations have done, Landon Tennant looks longingly at a streamlined Lionel Santa Fe engine as it chugs around a tiny display with houses, mountains and bridges at TrainLand, a hobby shop on Long Island, New York.

"I think I want to get, like, another one of the locomotives," Tennant said, barely containing his excitement, "because those look pretty cool, like that one."

When you think of Christmas, you might think of model trains around a Christmas tree. And there's a good chance it's a Lionel. The iconic American toy train company is celebrating its 125th anniversary starting this Christmas season and running through 2025.

"Everybody likes Lionel. It's nostalgic," said Ken Bianco, Jr., who's the third-generation owner of TrainLand and TrainWorld, the largest retailer of Lionel Trains in the country. He points towards the model trains.

"This layout here has three different Lionel train sets on it running and kids could operate the remotes over there. You see him pressing the horn?"



Caden Renna watches the Lionel layout at TrainLand. He came to the store to buy his first Lionel train, a Christmas gift from his grandmother.



An employee shows a custom-made Lionel train hat at Trainland on National Lionel Train Day.

His dad, Ken Bianco, Sr., says Christmas has always been their biggest and busiest time of the year, both in person and mail order. In addition to their regular items, Lionel makes "Christmas sets, Christmas engines, Christmas cars, Christmas accessories," he explained. "You can do just a layout of Christmas items. And it's spectacular."

The company began making and selling toy trains in 1900, a time when electricity in homes was new and not yet widespread. Lionel CEO Howard Hitchcock says a young man saw potential in harnessing this new technology.

"It really all started with Joshua Lionel Cowan, who is the founder and for which the company is named," Hitchcock says. "And he was sort of an inventor and a young man, very entrepreneurial and, you know, really was working with electric motors. It was a fairly whiz-bang sort of toy. It was not simple. It was not wind-up. It was purely mechanical."

And technological innovation continues to this day. For years, the company's toy trains have offered realistic train sounds, smoke and digital remotes. And now, you can even operate your Lionel train from your smartphone.



Customers at Trainland on Long Island enjoy a special Christmas layout.



The Lionel train mascot Lenny holds special edition Lionel boxcar at TrainLand in Lynbrook, New York.

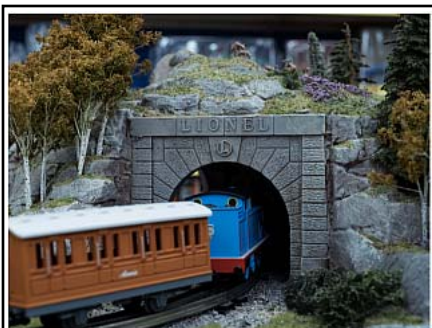
"The young kids today are on their phone 24/7," says Ken Bianco, Sr. "So, Lionel said if they're going to be on their phone, we want them to play with trains on their phones. So, now with the Bluetooth set up Lionel has, they can play with their trains, multiple train sets on the layout."

"And Lionel's largest trains, called O Gauge, appeal not just to kids as toys, but to serious collectors too. Benjamin Laremont, an aerospace engineer in the Atlanta area, has more than 100,000 followers on his Instagram account, Ben's Trains. He got his first Lionel engine when he was 8 years old – and he still has it."

"My roster currently consists of about 47 engines," he said. "I know there's people who have way more than that, but for me, that's where I'm at right now. That's subject to change in the next few weeks!"

Laremont invests in the high end, highly detailed models and makes videos of them running on the tracks in his basement. But he's not beyond a bit of whimsy. For instance, Lionel offers different smelling -fluid for steam locomotives, which makes steam puff out of the smokestacks.

"I'm currently running gingerbread smoke -fluid and also blueberry smoke -fluid," he explained. "But since it's Christmas, I'm heavy on the gingerbread this time of year."



A Lionel Thomas the Tank Engine train set enters a tunnel at TrainLand. It's one of the many brands Lionel licenses.



Four-year old train collector Augie DiMartino watches the trains go by at Trainland on National Lionel Train Day.

Laremont hopes to purchase a Polar Express toy train set this season – one of the many brands that Lionel licenses.

Ken Bianco, Sr. of TrainLand notes that set is the most popular with customers. "Polar Express, Christmas every year. The other Christmas sets do very well, too, but Polar Express is number one - and it has been for the last 20 years."

Jack Martinek has been collecting for over fifty years, even though his Queens, N.Y. apartment is too small for a permanent layout. But where there's a floor, he says, there's a place to run Lionel trains.

"I bring them out for Christmas time, Fourth of July, Halloween, St. Patrick's Day," Martinek exclaimed, laughing. "I got trees for every holiday!"

And he is planning to buy more trains, maybe one of the new sets Lionel is putting out for its birthday bash – like some new Star Wars themed models.

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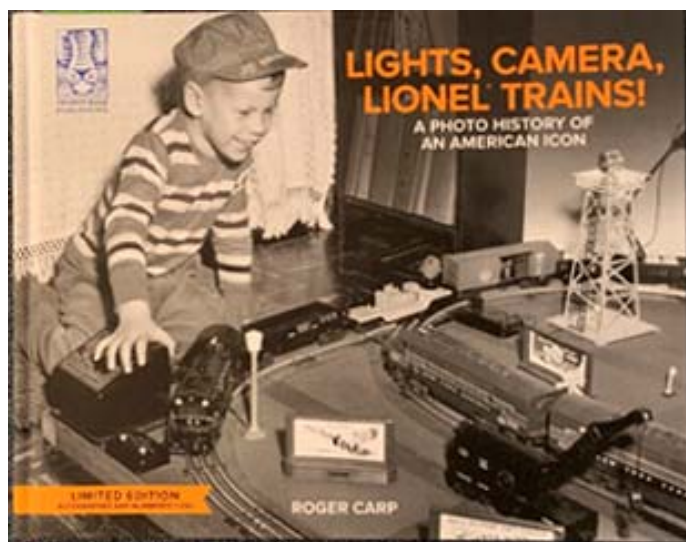
Photos by Sara Messenger For NPR



## ***Two GREAT additions to a toy train lover's library!***

***By Douglas Campbell***

I must HIGHLY recommend a BRAND NEW book from Project Roar Publishing ([www.projectroar.com](http://www.projectroar.com)) called LIGHTS,CAMERA, LIONEL TRAINS! -A photo history of an American icon - as the truly fascinating old photos that ROGER CARP has chosen to include and fully describe with a page of fascinating text, will bring back so many wonderful memories to all of our older WB&A members!



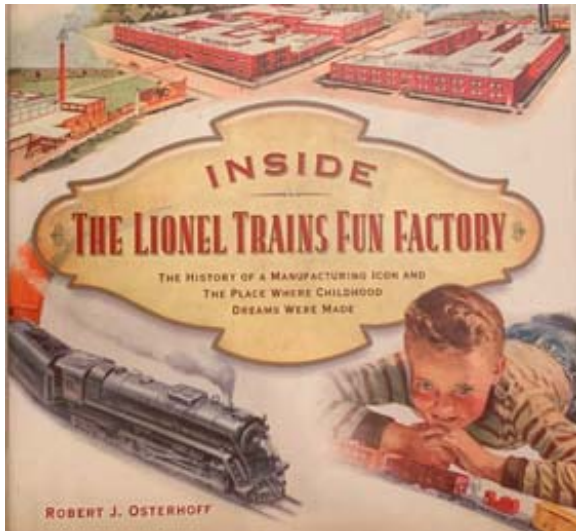
If you are from the Baltimore area, there is a chapter on the old "Hamburger Junction" restaurant, on Joppa Road, where your food order was delivered around the counter on a Lionel train! There is also a chapter on the old Baltimore Hutzler Brothers Department Store's toy department, which was a boy's haven for Lionel trains back in the 50's.

It's a book I couldn't put down before reading and savoring all those old great photos, cover-to-cover! I ordered the signed, limited-edition, as I like signed books, but there is a less expensive edition available too, and the many unusual, and rare Lionel memories are well worth your investment in a copy! I think a lot of our older WB&A members will find this new book of fond interest! The book is 224 pages, hardbound.

Back in October, 2008 at the Fall York TCA, Project Roar Publishing released another truly fascinating volume -



“Inside the Lionel Trains Fun Factory” (The history of a manufacturing icon & the place where childhood dreams were made) by Robert J. Osterhoff. (Hardbound, 248 pages) .



This colorful volume takes us , via many of the old Lionel employees, inside the manufacturing facilities of Lionel Trains. It describes many of Lionel’s innovative manufacturing practices, and uncovers many long hidden archival stories of this fascinating empire of Joshua Lionel Cowen. Over 575 photos and images will delight your interest in the truly fascinating story of how Lionel made its great products. Enjoy these two books in YOUR library !



## Upcoming Events

Apr. 24-25, 2025	TCA Eastern Division York Train Show
May 17, 2025	WB&A/NCTM Kid’s Show, Silver Spring
May 21, 2025	Start Your Day w/WB&A, Vienna, VA
Jun. 18, 2025	Start Your Day w/WB&A, Parkville, MD
Jul. 23, 2025	Start Your Day w/WB&A, Fairfax, VA
Aug. 12, 2025	WB&A BOD Meeting #3, Zoom Meeting
Aug. 20, 2025	Start Your Day w/WB&A, Rockville, MD
Sep. 17, 2025	Start Your Day w/WB&A, Gambrills, MD
Sep. 20, 2025	Springfield VA Train Meet, Springfield, VAA
Oct. 22, 2025	Start Your Day w/WB&A, Gambrills, MD

Please send any train-related articles, stories, and/or print-ready photos for consideration in any upcoming publication of “The Trolley” or on the

Chapter Web Site. Send via e-mail to:  
pullenp@gmail.com

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES  
FOR Jul.-Sep. 2025 TROLLEY  
Jun. 10, 2025**



Jim Dash  
Paul Dahler

***Look who just  
joined WB&A!!!***

## Arbutus Train Show 2025

We have a problem. At this time we don’t have a Show Manager for the Arbutus train show scheduled for December of this year. After several years of successful Arbutus Shows hosted by the WB&A Train Club, continuation of the event in jeopardy.

Management of our train shows involves the efforts of a lot of people doing a variety of tasks, but the key person in the endeavor is the Show Manager who pulls all the pieces together. Over past several years we have benefited from the services of excellent work done by Skip Lee, John Buxton, John Gomoljak, Rod Edwards, and Chuck and Carol McGinnis. They all deserve a hearty “Thank You” for provided us with opportunities to buy and sell trains, present our hobby to the public, gain new WB&A members, introduce youngsters to model railroading, and most importantly providing an opportunity for members to socialize together. With those thoughts in mind we are hoping that there is a WB&A member who would be willing to step forward and assume the role of Show Manager for the 2025 Arbutus Train Meet. The Board of Directors and other club members will be there as always to provide the manager with their experience, expertise, and helpful hands. We have a detail plan of action for this assignment and a lot of documentation for implementation.

If you are interested in being our Arbutus Show Manager or would like more information about the process, contact our WB&A President John Buxton at [jbrookbuxton@gmail.com](mailto:jbrookbuxton@gmail.com).



Find us on  
Facebook

***Do you use  
Facebook?***

***If so, request to join our  
Facebook Affinity Group. Contact  
the Group Moderator.***

## Lionel's Magic Electrol Train Set

**Lionel 0-27 Gauge**  
**ELECTRIC**  
 Remote Control  
 COUPLERS

**No. 1061**  
\$42.75

Two-train outfit includes a pair of electric, remote control switches and a large quantity of track.

Scale model switching engine is accurately detailed and has electrically operated pilot coupler. Stopping-back tender contains an operating back-up headlight.

**FIRST TIME EVER! A TWO-TRAIN COMBINATION!**

**MAGIC ELECTROL**

Thank the creative genius of Lionel engineers for this happy solution to the old problem of operating two trains on the same track at the same time—for here is the perfect answer. For each train, there is a separate remote control button... either train can be started, stopped or reversed while the other, unaffected, runs merrily on.

**New, Sensational Mystery Motor Enables Two Trains to Run on Same Track Circuit, at Same Time, Individually Controlled!**

Outfit No. 1061 consists of:  
 1—No. 1666 Locomotive. 1—No. 2689T Tender.  
 2—No. 2640 Illuminated Pullman cars. 12" long.  
 1—No. 2641 Illuminated Observation car.  
 1—No. 1663 Switching engine with electric coupler.  
 1—No. 2201T Tender.  
 1—No. 3651 Electric lumber car. 6 1/2 inches long.  
 1—No. 2679 Box car. 9 1/4 inches long.  
 1—No. 2657X Caboose. 6 1/2 inches long.  
 10—Sections of No. 1013 Curved track.  
 17—Sections of No. 1018 Straight track.  
 1—Pair No. 1121 Electric Switches.  
 2—No. 1019 Remote control track.  
 1—UTC Lockon. 1—No. 168 Controller.  
 Type "Q" Trainmaster Transformer.  
 Track forms oval 72" by 54". Electric couplers throughout. Freight train is 42" long. Passenger train is 53 1/2" long. Price \$42.75

Outfit No. 1061 includes Type "Q" Trainmaster Transformer and this bank of controls for the operation of switches, electric lumber car, electric couplers and for starting, stopping and reversing each train individually.

"MAGIC ELECTROL" is Lionel's "happy solution to the old problem of operating two trains on the same track at the same time" as in the 1940 catalogue description above.

Each train's direction is individually controlled by the No. 168 controller's labelled buttons. The "TRAIN 1" button (No. 1663 Locomotive) and the "TRAIN 2" (No. 1666 Locomotive) independently control each locomotive's direction. Lionel's application of advanced technology made possible the creation of this impressive two-train outfit. An early 1930s designed low cost, reliable, small rectifier was activated by the TRAIN 1 button. The rectifier sent a low voltage DC current to the track. The current powered a relay in the No. 2201T tender. The relay then sent current to the E-unit in the No. 1663 locomotive. Each time the TRAIN 1 button was pressed, the No. 1663's E-unit sequenced (Forward, Neutral, Reverse, Neutral, Forward.)

The TRAIN 2 button (No. 1666) is a simple on-off button. Each time the button is pressed the AC track power is momentarily interrupted, and the No. 1666's E-unit sequences (Forward, Neutral, Reverse, Neutral, Forward). The TRAIN 2 button's interruption does not sequence the No. 1663's E-unit (Forward, Neutral, Reverse, Neutral, Forward).

The outfit came with a Q transformer that supplies the same track power to both locomotives. The speed of each locomotive is not separately controlled. This creates operator challenges!

To achieve separate directional control a whistle could

not be included in the No. 1666's tender (No. 2689T), because blowing the whistle would activate the Magic Electrol device in the No. 1663's tender No. 2201T).

Lionel used a similar rectifier and relay for its whistle tenders beginning in 1935. Pressing the whistle button sent a DC current to the tender relay which powered the whistle mechanism inside the tender.

Lionel offered this Magic Electrol as outfit No. 1061 in 1940 and in 1941 and as outfit No. 1136 1942, but not again after World War II. The outfit was complicated to use and quite expensive. In contrast the remote controlled whistle was easy to use and only cost \$5 more. It was highly popular and continued with strong sales after World War II.

The Magic Electrol system was a very creative addition to the Lionel line. Unfortunately its high cost (two-train outfit) and complicated use limited its marketability.

Available from WB & A. Please go to:

<https://square.link/u/9yg3DcKq>

Bruce Greenberg, the author, will make a donation to WB&A for each book sold through this website.



\*Excerpted from Greenberg's Guide to Lionel Trains, O Gauge, Vol. 3: 1937-1942.

Outfit No. 1061, Nos. 1666 & 1663. Magic Electrol 1940.





## ***Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Power Supply Is Ancient and Failing And it's largely the fault of one outdated piece of infrastructure.***

By Nolan Hicks



This train could be going 150 miles an hour if we fixed the overhead wires. Photo: Doug Kanter/AFP/Getty

At least ten times in the past two months, tens of thousands of people had their days ruined by a failure of one of the most fundamental pieces of infrastructure in America: the electrical system that powers Amtrak and New Jersey Transit trains on the Northeast Corridor. Stranded riders were furious. Amtrak and New Jersey pointed fingers. The whole region was left wondering how this could happen to the transportation backbone of the densest part of the country. How could one piece of passenger rail in this country that more or less, kind of, approximately, works as a business — the closest thing we have to a modern electric European railway — break down so often?

The answer is likely a toxic combination of deferred maintenance on a fraying and ancient power supply. The catenary — the overhead arrangement of poles and wires that supplies electricity to moving trains — on the Northeast Corridor was inherited from the Pennsylvania Railroad, which went out of business in 1970. Most of the catenary system is about 80 years old. Fifty years ago, federal officials were already saying that they needed to replace it wholesale with a modern setup, only to shelve the program amid budget overruns. Attempts at incremental upgrades, in turn, have been beset by mismanagement and poor accounting at Amtrak. To make things all the more maddening, the decrepit power system is also one of the biggest reasons that Amtrak's bullet train, the Acela, is so slow.

Amtrak's own regulatory filing from last year states that not one inch of the overhead wiring between Washington, D.C., and New York's Pennsylvania Station — zero percent — is in a state of good repair. On a scale of zero to five, with zero signifying that the system is so decrepit that it cannot function, Amtrak rates the electrical system a 1. In that document, called the Infrastructure Asset Line Appendices, Amtrak's Electric

Traction unit, which manages the catenary, acknowledges that it's getting worse: Electric Traction "acknowledges that preventive maintenance activities are not consistently completed due to limited resource availability and a need to provide ET staff to support other asset classes ... or capital projects. This has resulted in a growing maintenance backlog, which is becoming a major priority." That backlog, which measured less than \$100 million in 2018 according to Amtrak charts, now sits at an estimated \$829 million. Another \$2.9 billion is needed to replace or repair poles and other structures that hold the wires. Amtrak's figures say that each of the three units in its Electric Traction division is understaffed, and the group that keeps up the wiring in the mid-Atlantic states is in the worst shape. (A spokesman for the railroad said it has hired more than 300 trainees across the division.)

"They've been reduced to a patch type of program — that's what they say here," said Joe Clift, a transit advocate who previously served as Long Island Rail Road's chief of planning, when reviewing the documents. "If they have a reactive approach to maintenance, then you know two things: that they're spending the least amount in the near term, and at the same time, guaranteeing service outages that really screw the customer." He added: "Because it's the trunk line of the New Jersey system, everybody gets hit."

That lack of planning and maintenance, said a source who is knowledgeable about the extent of the problem, extends to Penn Station, where power went out several times over the past several weeks. Amtrak is backing an unfunded \$16 billion program to build a giant new extension of the rail hub immediately to the south of the existing station but has no plans to upgrade what's there now. "You're going to do this \$16 billion thing and just leave all these shitty tracks and signals and catenary in place," said a person familiar with the plans. "As far as I know, nothing has changed with that."

The wiring that Amtrak and New Jersey Transit rely on is a bespoke system that was built by the Pennsylvania Railroad nearly a century ago, then run by its successor Penn Central, then handed over to the public after the railroad went broke and was nationalized. In the 1970s, the federal government plotted an aggressive set of upgrades meant to revive train service along the Northeast Corridor by substantially increasing its speed and reliability. They identified several major problems, including — according to a report completed in 1975 that I obtained as part of a fellowship investigating rail modernization at New York University — that, unlike those on high-speed rail systems elsewhere, the wires are not constantly tensioned. Instead they just hang.

That has a threefold effect. First, it makes the whole system vulnerable to heat, because as the temperature goes up, the wires expand and sag. When they do, Amtrak and NJ Transit have to slow their trains down. Second, the drooping power lines increase the risk that the wires get tangled up in the pantographs, the linkages atop of the trains that slide along the catenary and draw power from it. If that happens, a moving train can rip the whole business down, causing major damage. (Amtrak and NJT have traded blame over who's responsible for snagged wires.) Those reliability and speed worries are a big reason

why the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the MTA spent \$912 million on a couple of projects between 1993 and 2021 to methodically replace all of the wiring between Pelham and New Haven with tensioned wires. So far, this summer, Metro-North's New Haven Line has avoided the meltdowns plaguing the other side of the Hudson.

Third, the old catenary limits the speed of trains, even at middling temperatures. As many Amtrak observers have noted over the years, our "high-speed" rail from New York to Washington, the Acela, is far slower than the bullet trains that other countries run. That 1975 document determined that the catenary we have on that line is good up to about 110 miles per hour, well below the corridor's then-target speed of 150 miles per hour. "Above 110 mph, the only way to obtain good and stable dynamic characteristics is through a constant tension system," the engineers wrote. An updated assessment in 1986 found that the wiring between Washington and New York was "in relatively good condition" and shows that Amtrak had managed to use tweaks and upgrades to reliably squeeze speeds up to 125 miles per hour out of the system. But it reported that faster speeds would require major upgrades.

Those upgrades proposed in the 1970s were included in the new power system Amtrak built northeast of New York, between New Haven and Boston, in the 1990s. It took Amtrak two decades to get the White House and Congress to fund its construction, and until then the line ran on pokey diesel-powered trains. The tensioned cables overhead let the Acela trains race at up to 150 mph on stretches through New England, although they slow down through Connecticut owing principally to sharp curves. Those same trains could likely reach 150 miles an hour for most of the run to Washington, which is straighter, with a new catenary. Instead, they are throttled to a peak of about 125 to 135 miles per hour by the fragility of the wires above. A colleague of mine at NYU, Alon Levy, calculates that upgrading the archaic power system alone could cut ten or 11 minutes off each trip between New York and Washington. That would mean an Acela trip journey making the usual stops — Newark, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore — down to about two hours and 50 minutes, finally getting it below the long-sought benchmark of three hours. That's fast enough to finally get the Acela's top speed into the same Zip Code, if not the same ballpark, as the EuroStar that links London to Paris, topping out at 186 miles per hour. Put it together with greater reliability and lower maintenance costs, and it's unquestionably worth doing.

We have, it turns out, paid for this upgrade, or at least a partial one. Despite a slew of attempts by conservative lawmakers and the Bush administration to privatize the railroad, Amtrak finally scored the funds from Congress to upgrade a segment of the wiring between New York and Washington in 2011. The \$450 million grant — part of the economic stimulus package backed by then-President Barack Obama — was supposed to pay for replacing a 23-mile stretch of the Northeast Corridor between Trenton and New Brunswick. But the program was a mismanaged disaster that resulted in two probes by Amtrak's inspector general, including one that determined that an unnamed Amtrak executive engaged in "improper hiring, indications

## Northern Virginia Model Railroaders

<https://www.nvmr.org>

231 Dominion Road NE  
Vienna, VA 22180

All times - 1 to 5 PM  
Saturday, July 12

Saturday, September 13

Saturday, October 18

Saturday, November 15

Monday, December 1 (Vienna Holiday)  
Stroll, 6 to 9 PM

Saturday, December 13



of favoritism, conflicts of interest, and gross mismanagement of resources." Amtrak cut back the tensioned catenary program from the 23 miles to 14 miles, and a subsequent report in 2017 by the IG showed that only seven miles' worth was actually built.

In the aftermath of this summer's meltdowns, Amtrak and New Jersey governor Phil Murphy announced they would step up inspections and maintenance of both trains and power systems and would attempt to find new grant money to finally replace and upgrade the catenary. "The performance of late, across the board, has been unacceptable," Murphy told reporters in Newark on June 27. "People don't care why it happened. They want to get home." Amtrak declined to comment for this story but pointed to statements issued by railroad executives, including a letter from its president, Roger Harris, to Northeast Corridor customers after the recent outages. It reads, in part: "We are reviewing each incident with the goal of improving future travel, while continuing to advance unprecedented investments that are modernizing and strengthening the NEC."

But 50-odd years after the federal government took over the Northeast Corridor, and even though the Gateway Tunnel has finally been funded, there's still no holistic overhaul plan for the busiest railway in North America. Instead, it's piecemeal and patchwork. The Federal Railroad Administration's 2024 Northeast Corridor Project Inventory includes a \$611 million proposal to replace — but not upgrade — the overhead wiring from the New Brunswick to Newark, and even that project is \$101 million short of full funding. "The frequent inspections are reactive, not proactive," said Liam Blank, a former staffer at the MTA's Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee, who's the author of an extensive report on Penn Station modernization for transit group Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "They should be focusing on the long term answers, which is replacing," he continued. "Without the actual solutions, upgrading the catenary and the pantographs, you're not actually fixing the problem."

Borrowed from <https://www.curbed.com>





## ***Start Your Day with the WB&A***

Each month of the year, WB&A members gather on a Wednesday morning to socialize and talk about toy and model trains. These Start Your Day Events alternate between locations in Maryland and Virginia. These gatherings provide an excellent opportunity to share information regarding local events as well as TCA, TCA/Eastern Division, and WB&A activities. Members are encouraged to bring a railroad item for discussion

Our February 19, 2025 Start Your Day event was held at the West Friendship Fire Department in Howard County, Maryland. Our host for the morning was WB&A member, Carroll Roles, a Life Member of the West Friendship Fire Department. See the picture below.



After an hour of chit-chat and train talk, the group was given an insider's tour of the amazing West Friendship Fire Department, an excellent example of a modern fire-fighting facility. In addition to meeting the needs of the community it serves, it includes up-to-date equipment, training areas, sleeping quarters, bathrooms, shower rooms, a kitchen, parking and public spaces.

The essence of our Start Your Day get-togethers is to enable members to meet face-to-face with others who share our interest in model railroading. Check the WB&A Calendar of Events for the location of future gatherings.

If you have any question, contact Bob Gray at [bgray5002@yahoo.com](mailto:bgray5002@yahoo.com).



## ***WB&A Spreads the Word***

### ***Model Railroading is Alive and Well***

WB&A members Bob Heine, Bill Moss, and Bob Gray made a presentation on model railroading at the South Anne Arundel County Senior Center on February 13. Members of the Senior Center received a schedule of events for the month and sign up for those that interested them. The result was that an enthusiastic group of men and women showed up for a talk and demonstration on trains.

As the group entered the room, they were confronted with the sights and sounds of four mini layouts with running model trains and a variety of railroad accessories. We began by asking the audience to tell us what drew them to this session. As you might guess, we heard stories about model trains under the Christmas tree, layouts set up by family members, travels by rail, scenic train rides, and the sounds of passing trains heard in places they lived.



Then we demonstrated our trains and accessories. A highlight was Bill Moss's O-scale box car that shoved containers out of its doors. The craftsmanship of Bob Heine's huge truss bridge dazzled our guests. Our largest demonstration layout was a Garden Scale log train with a steam engine. The next was Bob Gray's 1952 Lionel Scout train. This was followed by two Thomas the Tank trains, one in HO Scale and one in N-scale.

Guests were surprised at the list of famous people who are model train enthusiasts. The list included a number athletes, actors, politicians, and business people; such as Walt Disney, Joe DiMaggio, Winston Churchill, and Tom Hanks.

A discussion followed on "What is it about trains that fascinates people? Topics included: nostalgia and history, engineering marvels, scenic travel, the romanticism of train travel, sound and motion, collecting and modeling, and the impact of the railroads on community and culture.

After answering questions, we invited those in attendance to visit the WB&A Annapolis Train Show that occurred shortly after this presentation.

In all, it was a very enjoyable morning with delightful people whose interest in model trains ranged from merely family memories to several attendees who were active model train enthusiasts.



## WB&A Kids' Show 2025 Update

You are invited to be part of the 2025 WB&A Kids' Train Show. We need members that will set-up and operate small layouts that will fit on round or rectangular folding tables. Our goal is to have representatives of as many sizes of model trains as possible: tiny "Z-scale" up to "Standard Gauge." We really need some small layouts featuring streetcars and trolleys. After all, we are at the National Capital Trolley Museum.

Participating in the Kids' Show is a great opportunity to work with other WB&A members in a really good cause. As you know our mission is to promote and grow the hobby of collecting and operating toy, model and scale trains.

Please consider taking part in this worthwhile endeavor. The WB&A makes no money from this show. It is our investment in the future of the hobby we enjoy so much.

Contact Bob Gray at [bgray5002@yahoo.com](mailto:bgray5002@yahoo.com) if you are interested in being a part of this year's KIDS' Train Show.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### WB&A Month by Month Calendar Updated December 5, 2025



- \* Saturday, May 17, 2025 WB&A/NCTM Kids' Show 1313 Bonifant Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20905, Set up 8 AM-11AM. Quiet Hour for Quiet kids 11AM – Noon. Open to public Noon-4 PM. Bring your kids and invite others. See different gauge layouts. N Gauge, Lego, Thomas, HO Gauge, O Gauge, Garden G Gauge, S Gauge and Standard Gauge. Contact Bob Gray for details. Bgray5002@yahoo.com. 301-367-7447
- \* Wednesday, May 21, 2025 START YOUR DAY w/ WB&A. 10 AM – Noon Panera Bread, 136 Maple Ave, Vienna, VA 22180
- \* Wednesday, June 18, 2025 START YOUR DAY with WB&A 10-Noon. Weber's Cider Mill Farm Inc, 2526 Proctor Ln, Parkville, MD 21234
- \* Wednesday, July 23, 2025 START YOUR DAY w/ WB&A 10 AM – Noon Silver Diner, 12251 Fair Lakes Pkwy, Fairfax, VA 22033
- \* WB&A BOD Meeting #3, Tuesday, August 12, 2025, 7:00 - 8:00 pm Via ZOOM (Contact Bob Gray for details) Bgray5002@yahoo.com. 301-367-7447
- \* Wednesday, August 20, 2025 START YOUR DAY with WB&A 10-Noon. Panera Bread, 1780 E Jefferson St. Rockville, MD 20852
- \* Wednesday, September 17, 2025 10 AM-Noon START YOUR DAY w/ WB&A. Grumps Café, 2299 John Hopkins Rd, Gambrills, MD 21054
- \* Saturday, September 20, 2025 9 AM – 2 PM Springfield Virginia Train Meet. Greater SPRINGFIELD FIRE HALL., 7011 Backlick Rd, Springfield VA, 22150 Contact Ron Edwards for details at 703-401- 7307 or ronedwards2@hotmail.com.
- \* Wednesday, October 22, 2025 10 AM-Noon START YOUR DAY w/ WB&A. The Roast & Café, 5205 Glen Arm Rd, Gambrills, MD 21057
- \* WB&A BOD Meeting #4, Tuesday, November 11, 2025, 7:00 - 8:00 pm Via ZOOM (Contact Bob Gray for details) Bgray5002@yahoo.com. 301-367-7447
- \* Wednesday, November 19, 2025 START YOUR DAY w/ WB&A 10 AM – Noon Silver Diner, 12251 Fair Lakes Pkwy, Fairfax, VA 22033
- \* Wednesday, December 17, 2025 START YOUR DAY w/ WB&A 10 AM – Noon 198 Restaurant, 15540 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD 20866

