

THE BRASS POUNDER



Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Division 12, Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

Volume 24 Number 9

September 2024

Division Coming Events

CSD Annual Picnic:

Kannapolis Village Park
700 West C Street,
Kannapolis NC under
shelter B, on September
21st starting at 11:00am

Superintendent's Corner

By Andrew Stitt

Summer hasn't officially ended even though school season is upon us. For those who have school age children, time to reinstitute some discipline in bedtimes, and getting up in the morning. Those of you who are still working for a living know about such discipline. For many years, as an outside salesman, I was on the road by 7 AM after having planned my days expectations the night before.

So let me interject that some discipline in pursuing our hobby is a good thing. While I'm all in favor of goofing off from time to time, very little gets accomplished when that is happening. Sure, everyone's definition of goofing off may vary, but I suggest to you putting hands on projects is a good thing. Being able to work on a model even in small steps provides progress toward a desired end. Why else would you have started the project? Similarly, working in the train room to build the layout shows discipline to get things done. Cutting wood for joists or putting together the framework of a T Trak module requires precision and planning. Things that lead to an enjoyable end point. Trackwork, ballasting, wiring, scenery all might seem like work, but the learning is fun, and (hopefully) the end result is something you will enjoy.

Another tribute to September is the annual Carolina Southern Picnic. We will be holding it at the park in Kannapolis again as we did a couple of years ago during the pandemic. You can find more details on our CSD website. Please note, that as a result of feedback from a few members who attended the August CSD meeting, Joe Skorch was fortunate enough to get the reservation date for the shelter changed from September 14th to the 21st. Hopefully this will accommodate many of our members. Please sign up so we can get a head count to know how many hamburgers and hot dogs to provide. I hope to see many of you there!



Editor's Notes

By Chad Barnette



I'm nervous! You see, Dave Thrans has recently invited me to participate in this November's layout open house event. That sentence contains the keyword – layout. Is what I have considered a layout? Just a few measly modules? Would anyone possibly want to see it?

I was just down in the basement yesterday trying to cobble together some of my T-trak modules together. Realizing I don't have much scenery at all done and that I don't like any of the structures, I started to feel a little down. I think that's ok to feel sometimes. Some good came from this visit to the basement – I realized I have improved in some aspects that made me cringe at some of the things that I saw.

So perhaps I hit the jackpot on the point of any hobby. Do the things you enjoy doing and try to get better at them. You know, maybe it's ok to do the equivalent of a sketch artist. You can picture the scene in your mind right.....the artist, realizing something doesn't look quite right, takes the sheet of paper and rips it up, balling it up just before attempting an office three-pointer. I was able to part ways with some things I truly didn't like. No longer feeling like I have to hold on to something just because I worked on it is a freeing feeling.

Finally, having a date on the calendar to work to is forcing me to work on some things in faster, more iterative way. Even if no one arrives that day, I'll know that I've adapted my attitude and made progress on my personal journey. Perhaps you too are nervous about opening up your layout – please, join the list of open houses! I truly believe we all have so much to gain from just letting go and having some fun!

Division and Regional News

Wade's Train Town

Wade's Train Town – August Stats

Open houses: 4
Attendance: 98
Volunteers: Ed Smith, Gil Brauch. Keith Iritsky, Tim Rust, and Bob Halsey



AP Awards from the Plywood RR Desk

Contributed by Neal Anderson, MMR

Neal Anderson has provided the following updates for the achievement program activity last month.

1. Keith Iritsky will be receiving a merit award for his work on Barlow's BBQ.

Check out the most recent installment Keith wrote on Barlow's BBQ [here](#). Great articles Keith. Thanks for your awesome submissions!

CSD August Meeting Minutes

Contributed by David Myers, Division Clerk

Carolina Southern Division, Mideast Region
National Model Railroad Association
Monthly Meeting
August 17, 2024

Mecklenburg County Northern Region Recreation Center, Cornelius, NC

The meeting was called to order by the Superintendent at 10:00 AM. Attendance included seventeen members present and no members online.

Neil Anderson reported that he is arranging evaluation visits for those who have applied for awards. Keith Iritsky's "Barlow's BBQ" (see the latest Brass Pounder newsletter) was being presented for evaluation after the meeting.

Gil Brauch reported that Train World was averaging 15-20 visitors each Saturday. Most visitors are small family groups. The children are very enthusiastic about the train displays.

The Superintendent reported:

1. The NMRA has a standardized banner that can be modified with the division name and logo. Such a banner could be used to "advertise" the division at train shows and events.

A discussion of alternate and less expensive sources of banners followed. More information will be gathered on banners. The target date for procurement of banner(s) is the spring train show in Hickory.

2. Doug Algire is no longer able to serve as RMU Dean and has resigned that position. Someone willing to assume the duties of RMU Dean is being sought.
3. The meeting schedule and calendar for the remainder of 2024 was presented:

September 14 (note-second Saturday), Division picnic, 11:00 a.m., Kannapolis Park Shelter "D". (Watch the newsletter, this may change to Sept 24)

October, no Division meeting, MER Convention Oct 17-20 in Durham, NC

November, weekly "open house" tours of members' layouts

- Nov 2, Gaston and west Charlotte area
- Nov 9, south of Charlotte (Waxhaw, NC and Lancaster and York counties SC)
- Nov 16, northwest (Hickory and surrounding localities)
- Nov 23, northeast of Charlotte

December, no meeting

4. The next Annual Meeting will be held on January 18, 2025, at the Newton Depot.

Dave Thrans expanded on planning for the November layout tours in November. Current intentions are to: schedule tours from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm each Saturday; plan each Saturday's tours in a convenient geographic sequence; have division members encourage friends or neighbors who may be interested in the hobby to participate in the tours. Dave solicited photos and descriptions of layouts that will be open for tours.

No further old or new business.

With business completed, Jimmy Angel, CSD member and producer of “DIY & Digital” on YouTube, made an very interesting presentation of developments in the hobby of model railroading. Highlights included:

1. He has seen a growth in interest in the hobby during and since the recent pandemic.
2. DCC has evolved with DCC++ and DCC-ex enhancements based on Arduino microcontrollers. He displayed and demonstrated some examples
3. He described the capabilities of 3-D printing and showed an example of an N scale building he had “printed”. He discussed differences between different filament and resin printers.
4. He discussed laser cutters.
5. Jimmy thinks 3-D printers and laser cutters are helping to encourage a return to the popularity of scratch building.
6. He showed some products from Diorama Lighting (compatible with Just-Plug) produced in Hendersonville.

Jimmy concluded by emphasizing the model railroading is a “STEAM” hobby, STEM with Art added. He encouraged all to be ambassadors of the hobby.

The Superintendent adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Submitted by,

David Myers, Division Clerk

Mark Your Calendars



25 Layout Tours
41 Clinics
10 Operations Sessions
3 Prototype Tours
Model Contest, Company Store and More!

Piedmont Junction

October 17-20, 2024

Raleigh - Durham Marriott at Research Triangle Park
4700 Guardian Dr., Durham, NC 27703

Hotel Rate is \$79 USD per night
Subject to Availability: Rate Ends 9/17/24

Phone: +1-919-941-6200 or:
Go to convention website below for the registration
link on the “Location/Hotel” tab.

Website: PiedmontJunction.org

Convention website for registration and all information



Mama, I Wanna Go Fast!

Tales from Ricky Bobby, Talladega Nights

Contributed by Joe Skorch

Well, I used to think that. There was a time in my life where I wanted to race, anything and everything. When I was racing there was a driver meeting where one of the stewards asked the group “can anyone tell me why we are here”? Everyone gave the answers that you would expect a bunch of group “A” male personalities to give. The steward’s response was not what I expected but rather something that I will never forget, “We are here to turn dollars into noise”. So that has been in the back of my mind for over 20 years.

Now all I want to do is get up in the morning and try to remember what day it is. After I decided to slow down and find a hobby that I could do and not have to leave the comfort of my home, I rediscovered my second love, model railroading.

In the early 2000’s I realized that I had a spare bedroom that I could build a train layout in after my daughter left the nest, and so I did. Taken from a book, I built the Granite Gorge layout. I didn’t even get the scenery done before I was bored with it and let it sit. A few years later I experienced a change in my life and relocated to the East Coast from Arizona for work. A mistake and a blessing all at the same time. The job that I had was working for an International Transit company that had an opening in Baltimore MD. That was the mistake part. The blessing was that the same company had just acquired a contract in Concord NC and they needed someone to manage the bus shop. This was an area that I was always hoping that I could relocate to and so here is where the story leads to today. I was able to rent a house in Kannapolis which was close to work (too close) that had a basement that was partly finished. My eyes lit up when I saw what was in front of me, a possible train room. Still, it was a rental so I could not really attach anything to the walls, but that was okay, I didn’t care, I could build a layout. And so I did.



Figure 1 panoramic view of the first layout



Figure 2 Scenic fictional town

I had put a lot of after work time and effort into that layout but somehow something was missing and I began to lose interest in it. I visited Hobbytown in Charlotte and there I saw a flyer for something called Railroad Modelers University. WOW! There are others here that like Model railroading as much as I do. So, I attended a couple of classes and was introduced to some other modelers. From that point on I began to regain my interest in model railroading.

Shortly after this time, I was introduced to Andrew Stitt who used his layout for operating sessions. I had never done this before so I was nervous and intrigued by the thought of it. Andrew's layout was a model railroad that had a purpose instead of a layout that was cool to look at while trains ran round and round. And this brings me to the point of this article.

Operations keeps my interest level up and gives a sense of purpose to the layout. I immediately began tearing the layout down and in 2016 I was also able to purchase the house, so I had free reign to build whatever I felt would keep my interest up. With this in mind I used a program called AnyRail to design my layout. I was informed by "she who must be obeyed"



that I could use half of the basement which I was happy to agree to. I got a little more experience with operations and read as many articles on the concept of operational layout design. I even joined the Layout Design Special interest group but they seemed much too serious for me.

With the help from Andrew Stitt and Don Zufall I had guidance and used their knowledge to make design changes as the layout build progressed.



Figure 4 The inspector Luxor scrutinizing the progress.

The layout trackwork is now complete and I have been hosting monthly operating sessions for a few years. The operating sessions are not without a few hiccups but everyone expects that there will be some along the way and since I model the Southern Pacific, they are somewhat realistic. Which brings me to the point of this whole article, why do I host these sessions if they have problems every time? It is because the thing that gives me the greatest joy is watching the operators having a good time running trains and watching the comradery between friends along with some good-natured kidding that goes with it. It doesn't matter your skill level as we all had to start somewhere nor does your layout need to be big, it just should have a reason to exist. Mine is to interact with good friends and make more as time passes on. Oh, and now I am not turning dollars into noise.



Figure 5 Operations taking place on the Southern Pacific Coast line



Figure 6 a familiar face visiting the oil refinery

Let's Celebrate

Contributed by Dave Thrams

November is National Model Railroad Month and after all, it is also the world's greatest hobby, so let's celebrate! I've gone to some model railroad shows over the years in November but have never participated in a celebration like this before.

Our Carolina Southern Division Superintendent, Andrew Stitt, tossed this idea out at a Board of Directors meeting recently and immediately set this idea in motion by appointing Alan Hardee and myself as the ones to put this together. Alan knows most of our CSD members as he is a recent past Superintendent, current Assistant Superintendent, and he was the layout tour organizer during the 2022 MER convention hosted by CSD in Charlotte. I, on the other hand, just happened to be at the right meeting at the right time, so I was appointed (railroaded?). Although I will confess, I enjoy getting model railroaders together and sharing our wonderful hobby with others.

So, what's happening? How are we celebrating? The Carolina Southern Division (CSD) has asked and is still asking model railroad layout owners in our Division to open their layouts to our members. Model Railroading has been called the World's Greatest Hobby for a very long time, so in my mind, when you mix all this together, we've got a celebration. To make sure my memory isn't so terrible, I looked up the definition of celebration and found this:

Celebration: *noun*

1. the action of marking one's pleasure at an important event or occasion by engaging in enjoyable, typically social, activity.

Bingo! Hot dog! Daggum! We've got a celebration!

Even better, as I prepare this article to tell you about our fun, sixteen layouts are already scheduled to be open. Will you add your layout to the celebration? If you would like to do so, let Alan or I know. Alan can be reached at assistsuper@carolinasouthern.org, or I can be reached at paymaster@carolinasouthern.org.

If you don't have a layout to open, come join the fun by visiting the layouts. You are why the layouts are open! I will have my under-construction, no-scenery, maybe-no-trains running layout open on one Saturday, but I will also have the opportunity to visit layouts for three other Saturdays!

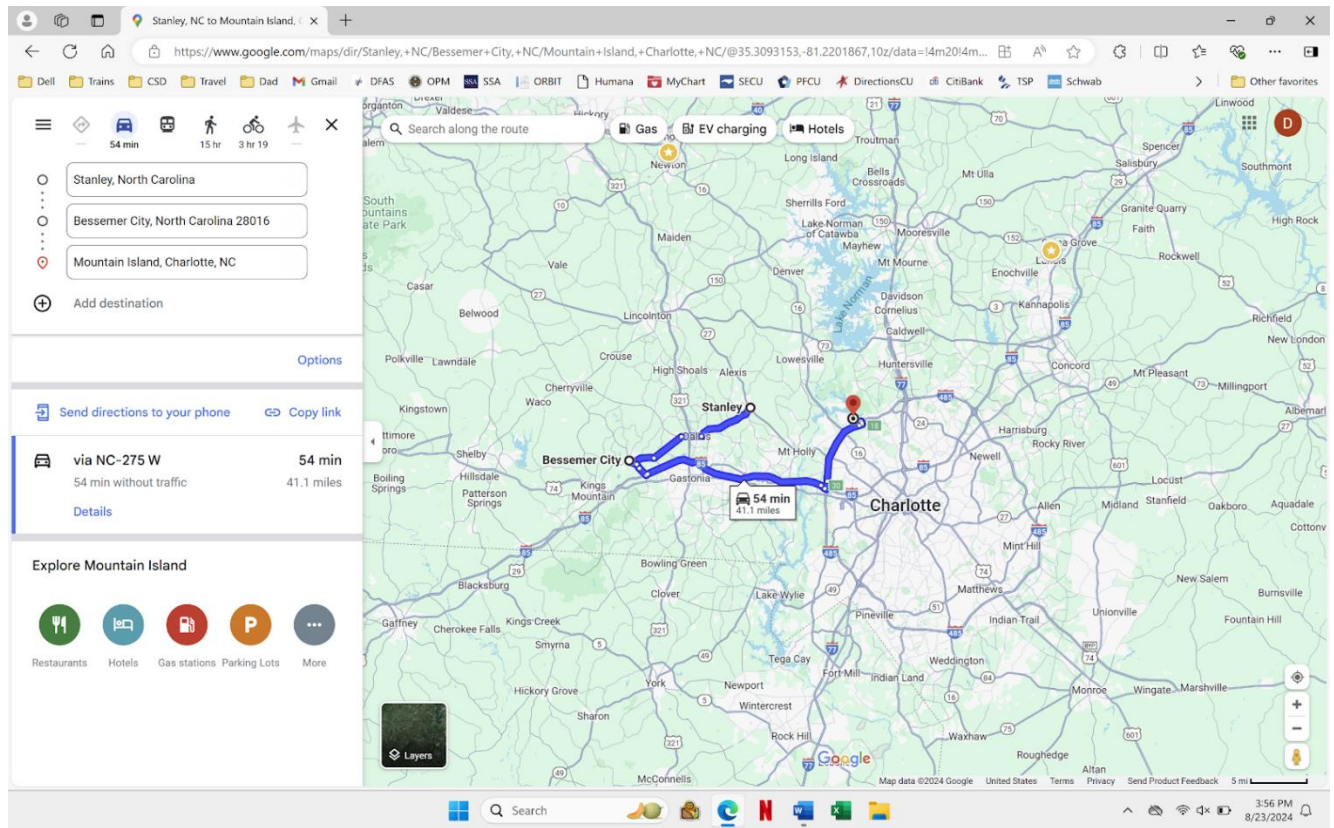
If you choose to visit any layout, no matter what phase of construction, scenery, or operation, you will learn something from the layout owner, and you may have a great idea that will help the layout owner solve a problem. Remember, every layout owner is opening not only their layout to you, but years of hard work, so please be considerate when talking to them. You and that owner could become lifelong friends after a great visit.

A few of these layout owners have told me that having their layout open this November is motivating them to either get it operating again, clean up the layout, improve the layout, or as in my case, build more so I can have trains running. I speak from real experience from helping run layouts for a couple NMRA national conventions, that people enjoy visiting layouts in all phases of construction. When a layout is under construction, visitors can see how the wiring is done, turnouts are mounted, and benchwork is built. I've heard a few folks say "Hey I think I can do this!" On the other end of the spectrum, when visitors come to a fully scenicked operating layout, visitors see the results of tree making, industries built, active switching possibilities, and also go away saying "Hey I think I can do this!"

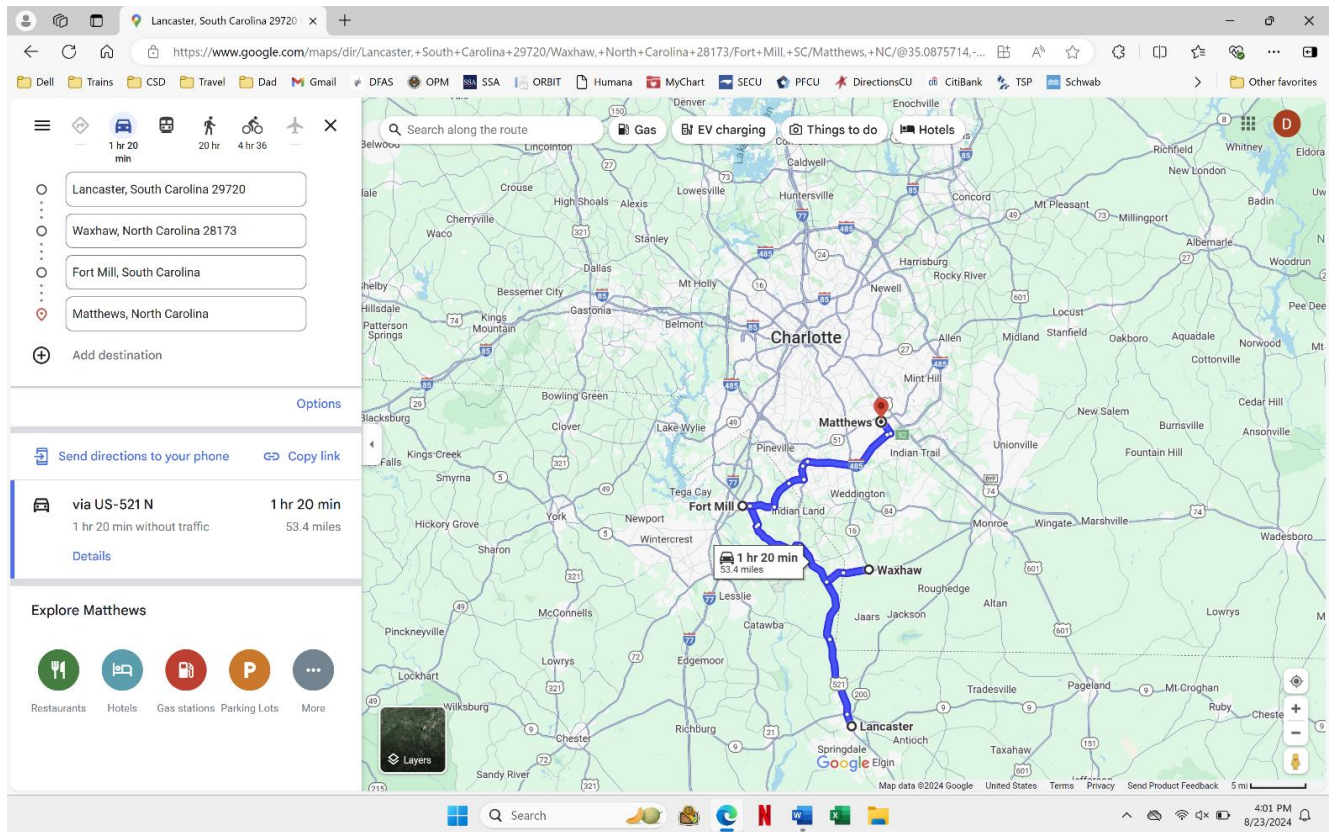
For this celebration, we divided our Division geographically as best as possible. Since this is our first CSD annual celebration for National Model Railroad Month, I'm sure there will be room for improvements. We hope you give us feedback so we can improve for next year. At this point in time, to help with your planning, we can show you the areas where layouts will be open.

While reading below, if you decide you can open your layout to CSD members, or if you live outside the areas shown and are interested in opening your layout, let us know. We would love to include you either by adding you to this list of layouts or hold our monthly CSD meeting near you so we can visit you and your layout at another time. Again, please let us know.

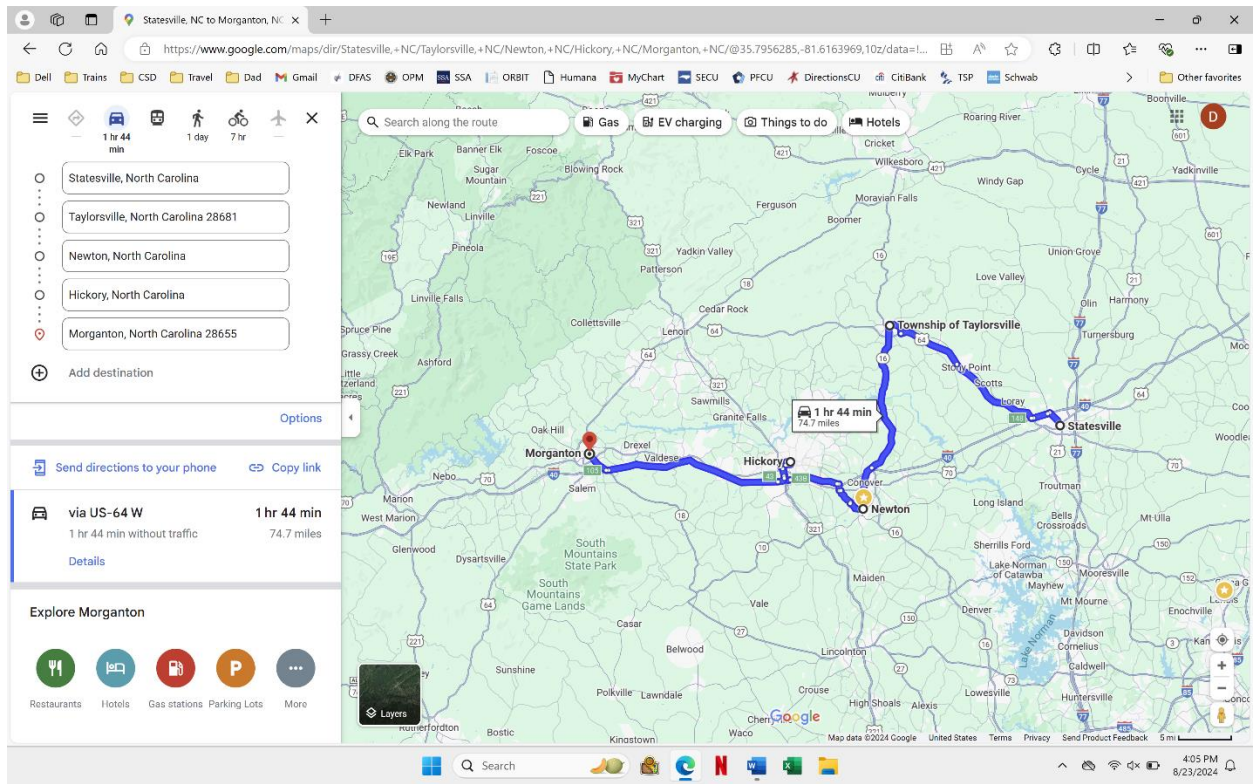
The maps below are only a representation of layout locations to help with your early planning. Registration to see some or all of these layouts will begin in October on the CSD website and you can visit them in any order you want. We will alert all our members when registration is ready.



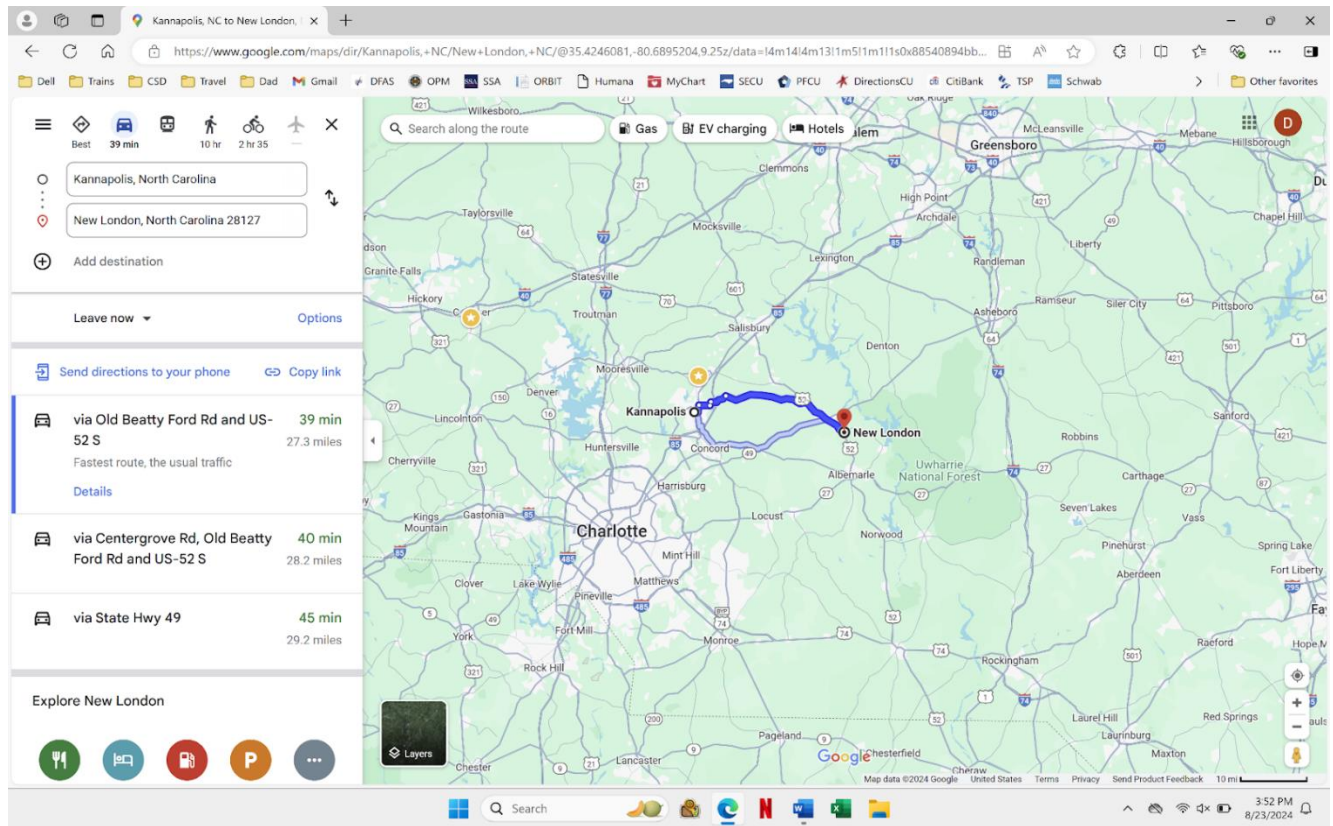
For the first Saturday, November 2nd, in our west Charlotte area, we currently have four layouts open. Two in Gaston County are mine and Alan’s layouts in Stanley and Bessemer City, while two more layouts, Seth Gartner’s New York Central and Jack Parker’s Piedmont and Western model railroads are close to each other in the Mountain Island area.



For November 9th, in our South area. Gordon Miller (Matthews), Chad Barnette (Fort Mill), Dave Myers and Dick Bronson (Waxhaw), and Tim Rumph (Lancaster SC) have committed to open their layouts. You can start in this order shown starting in Matthews or start from the other end in Lancaster and you'll get to see five layouts. What a great day!



For November 16th, in our Northwest area, five layouts are currently open. Neal Anderson (Statesville), Ed Smith (Taylorville), Wades Train Town (Newton), Gil Brauch (Hickory), and Keith Iritsky (Morganton).



For the last Saturday, November 23rd, in our Northeast area we currently have two layouts open. Andrew Stitt (New London) and Joe Skorch (Kannapolis) have offered to open their layouts.

Some of these layouts may never been open before, some maybe once or twice, and some have been open many times for CSD cookouts, open houses or tours, and some have hosted our monthly CSD meeting.

When the registration page is open for us to signup and visit some or all of these layouts, there will be links that describe the layout with a couple photos if the layout owner sends them to us.

Seven of these layouts can be viewed on the CSD website right now. You can click on this link: [CSD Member Layouts \(carolinasouthern.org\)](https://www.carolinasouthern.org/CSD-Member-Layouts), or go to [carolinasouthern.org](https://www.carolinasouthern.org), click on 'What we do' tab, click 'Member Modeling Activities' tab, and then click 'Member layouts' tab. We have a pretty good website, so doing all this clicking may show you all the other cool stuff on the page.

Of those seven layouts on our website, these are the days they will be open:
November 2

- Seth Gartner New York Central Railroad Piney Fork Branch
- Jack Parker Piedmont and Western Railroad

November 9

- Dave Myers Southern Railroad
- Gordon Miller Pittsburgh Northern Railroad, North Pittsburgh Division

November 16

- Neal Anderson KK&L Railroad

November 23

- Joe Skorch Southern Pacific Railroad
- Andrew Stitt ET&WTC Railroad

Next month's Brass Pounder will have photos of some of the other layouts we don't have on the CSD website yet.

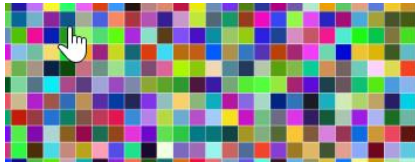
So, I'm going to circle back around and repeat some things you read in the beginning of this article. Come Celebrate with us! Whether you join us one Saturday or all four, I think it will be enjoyable.

If you would like to open your layout for CSD members, let Alan or I know. Alan can be reached at assistsuper@carolinasouthern.org, or I can be reached at paymaster@carolinasouthern.org. Registration to visit the layouts will be on the CSD website in October and will be announced when it is ready.

If you don't have a layout or don't feel you're ready to open your layout this year, join in the celebration by visiting these layouts. It will be more fun when you participate!

Happy Model Railroading!





Digital Distractions

A Look at our hobby online

This month's digital distraction comes to you thanks to the late, great Roy Smith. For those unfamiliar with Roy's work, Roy is an amazing friend to the hobby that we just recently lost. I always loved watching Roy's channel, and will continue to do so. Thanks to Roy's hard work, his knowledge and, more importantly, his kind spirit live on. Roy believed strongly in sharing the hobby. I encourage you to check out his channel and see the Mr. Rogers of our hobby!

<https://www.youtube.com/@n-scaleunionpacificevansto6569>



N-Scale Union Pacific Evanston Subdivision

@n-scaleunionpacificevansto6569 · 16.9K subscribers · 358 videos

On this channel, I share with you the process of building and operating my N-scale Union ...more

facebook.com/groups/724442657753901

Subscribed

Division Brass

Superintendent
Asst. Superintendent
Clerk
Paymaster
Director 2025
Director 2026
Director 2024
AP Chairman
Webmaster
Newsletter Editor
Program Chair
RMU Chair
Membership Chair

Andrew Stitt
Alan Hardee
NEW David Myers
David Thrans
Ed Smith, MMR
Joe Skorch
NEW Keith Iritsky
Neal Anderson, MMR
Joe Skorch
Chad Barnette
Keith Iritsky
Doug Algire
Nancy Campbell

superintendent@carolinasouthern.org
assistsuper@carolinasouthern.org
clerk@carolinasouthern.org
Paymaster@carolinasouthern.org
director1@carolinasouthern.org
director2@carolinasouthern.org
director3@carolinasouthern.org
Apchair@carolinasouthern.org
Webmaster@carolinasouthern.org
editor@carolinasouthern.org
program@carolinasouthern.org
RMUchair@carolinasouthern.org
membership@carolinasouthern.org