

2023 Sep Ops Summary

Overview:

First, thanks to all who made our weekend fun and enjoyable. We started the season off on a positive note, with extra room in the storeroom and new, brighter LED lights in the dart room. We can finally see the trains we run properly now. Other items included:

- a. We got the first operational use of Brandon's new grain module which had its scenery mostly done.
- b. We also had Ben's Brantford-Cockshutt out for the second time.
- c. During the clinic time, we went around the layout noting all the deficiencies of the club modules and solicited ideas to improve them. Those results are summarized in the [Module Improvement document](#) on our website.

I will be following this item up with a more detailed plan about how to make consistent progress on these items.

- d. This was followed by John Scollick who presented the final versions of his electrical boards which will make module wiring easier.
- e. The layout required a larger than normal amount of freight cars due to 3 modules (PGT, Debeaujeu and Brantford) all needing 12 or more freight cars. This was a good thing!
- f. The number of industries and overall size of the layout enabled the creation of 12 trains. There was something for everyone.
- g. A former HOTRAK member, Efram, was a guest engineer on Saturday.
- h. The number of switches misaligned on the mainline was excessive and out of ordinary.

Historically, Sep has always been a well-attended session as people's summers wind down and they look to get back into model railroad mode. However, this year it seemed to me that attendance was lower than average for September. First, our number of pre-committed volunteers for set up was right at the minimum although one or two more showed up. Second, there were visibly less people Saturday afternoon when this time slot is usually the heaviest. There were literally no trains running or people in the dart room over lunch on Saturday. I don't believe we ever ran out of trains. Sunday seemed a little better.

Timings:

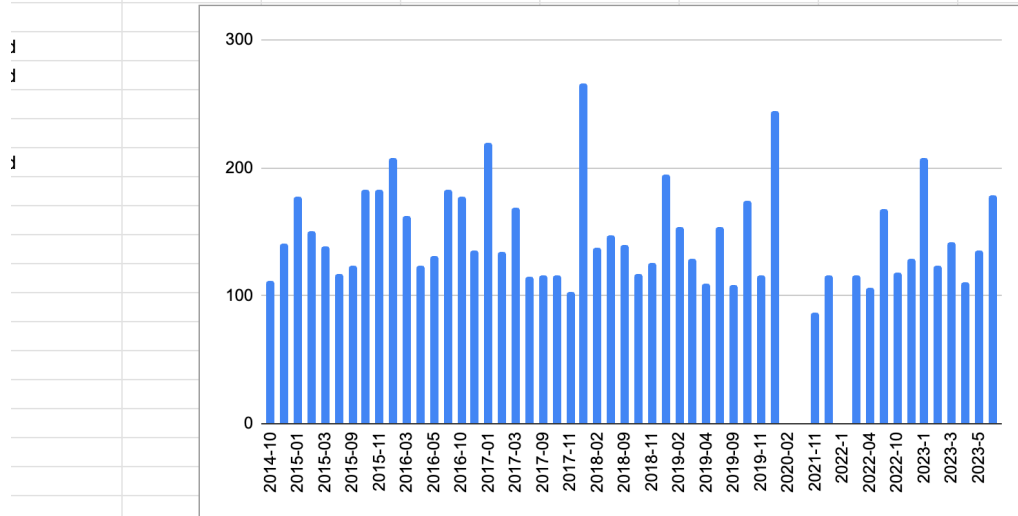
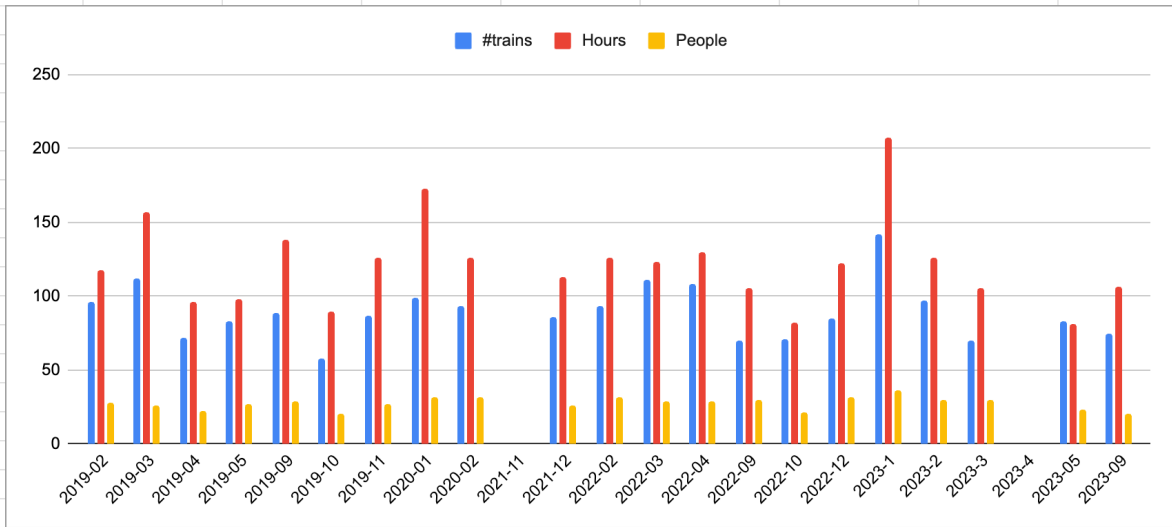
1. We had a small set up crew until later in the afternoon. Despite this, Ottawa Yard got put up quickly which enabled one crew to start assembling and levelling modules out to the west. Another crew got started going in the other direction. The result was that the vast part of the layout was up and levelled before dinner. This was due to having crew members who were dedicated, knew what they were doing and kept focussed on the task without distractions. The result was that the layout was completely levelled by 6:50pm. This is well ahead of the 8pm standard. Well done to all.
2. However, the freight ops team didn't leave until 10pm, 1 hour after the standard of 9pm. This can be attributed to two reasons:

- a. There were 50 additional cars to be populated
- b. The absence of Colin C who gets all the paperwork prepared in time for the rest of the freight team to start populating after dinner.
3. Saturday morning had some electrical issues which delayed our start by about 15 mins at 09:45
4. Disassembly started at 2:45pm and the storeroom was packed up by 5:20 and the last member left at 5:25pm, 5 minutes earlier than the standard of 5:30pm.

Operating Stats:

The stats program is acting a little wonky and not reporting the correct values in some cases. So, I am omitting some of the normal stats and what is presented is close but may not be perfect. Some stats are:

- a. There were 10 freights and 16 passenger trains available to run
- b. We used 179 cars
- c. 75 trains were run
- d. 60 freight, 13 passenger, 1 test, 1 yard
- e. Total running time was 106 hours
- f. 20 distinct people ran trains
- g. 2 newcomers got runs in
- h. FL8 (a and b) was the most run freight(10) followed equally by FL7 (a and b) and FL9 at 8
- i. FL1 was the least run freight, it only ran once.
- j. The most trains ran by an individual was 7
- k. Raw stats summary [here](#)



The above chart (in blue) shows the number of freight cars in use

Closing remarks:

Overall, an enjoyable weekend with good operations on a nice sized layout. However, two items are of concern:

- a. The continued trend of only having the absolute minimum number of people at set up. Although set up generally went very well, it hasn't always been the case. We need more people out sooner if possible
- b. Probably because it was the first session of the season, but the number of misaligned mainline switches was unacceptable. I encountered 5 on a single run! Remember: You must put switches back to mainline routing after switching. If you forget, contribute to the fine box (\$.25).

From the stats, my impression that we had a low turnout of engineers was correct. We had the lowest number of distinct engineers in the last 4 years. The amount of running time was on the lower end of the spectrum, certainly below average.

It was lovely to see new modules and new freight trains servicing them (grain trains) and locals to Brantford.

Hope you enjoyed the weekend session too.

Mark