

Mar 2023 Operating Status

Overall, the layout ran quite well. The layout was wired and ready by about 09:30. The test train ran well. However, an electrical issue at City Bakery caused a delay to the start of operations.

There seemed to be a good number of people around Saturday afternoon, mid 20s.

The turntable broke about 1 pm on Sunday. The bottom upper contact plate had come loose and started to push against the lower contact plate. Upon inspection, the bottom plate had been bent over a few times being pushed over the bottom plate. The upper plate had to be completely removed and cut the wire to it. The loose plate was made worse by people forcing the turntable. If you notice extra force is required, stop the rotation and inspect the underside to avoid making the situation worse. If unsure, come get Mark M or anyone else who can diagnose the problem.

On Sunday, there was a period with no yard master on duty. Either no one volunteered or the person didn't show up. This resulted in people having to reach in and do their own car cards, and car movements and parking etc. While we are not aware of any damage, such activity certainly increases the risk. Thanks to Gregg Matthews for stepping in, however, he shouldn't have had to. It discourages me when we rely on a core group of people repeatedly. Eventually they could get frustrated and reduce their involvement, or as in the past, quit. If you don't contribute to the club in other ways, please fill these volunteer positions.

Set up & Disassembly:

A minimum of 14 volunteers was set as the minimum against which we got 17 at our peak, but it fluctuated throughout the day and night. The set was haphazard, and it did not flow smoothly. While most exited the building by 8:30pm, joiner tracks weren't installed, and wiring hadn't been started. Ottawa yard was quite late getting levelled and positioned causing freight ops guys to start populating later than normal. Despite less than an ideal number of people and slow progress, groups of people were still standing around talking instead of working.

The layout positioning was off and as a result we only had 24” of clearance to the wall and about 18” to the front of the dart board next to Jackfish Bay. Two options were available: Move half the layout which had already been connected or remove and rejig the branch. After some heated discussion, safety overruled operations and we removed a module giving us 3.5’ of clearance.

We were advised that Connaught and Orleans would not make it out Friday night and would arrive Saturday. Unexpectedly, Brandon’s new module Debeauju was made available for testing. Since we were rejigging the branch anyways, we decided to: Advise Kim (who wasn’t feeling well) that he didn’t need to bring out his modules on Saturday. We would use Debeauju as a stand-in for Connaught and Orleans (with tape markers) to avoid changing the freight ops plan, put Jeff’s modules back-to-back to into a shallow S curve to equalize the distance between the fiddle yard and mainline. Debeauju was reversed to give max clearance for the fiddle yard. Added the removed module for length in the branch. Surprisingly, it worked out very well.

We observe that there are inefficiencies in the levelling teams. The levelling teams are too big (greater than 3 people). There is poor communication between the stick holder and the drill operator(s). There are too many people giving their “advice” which slows the process down. Stick holding procedures aren’t solid. Drilling procedures aren’t solid.

There were some electrical shorts on Sunday afternoon. Take down started at 2:45 and went well, with a reasonable number of people staying around to help.

Clinic

John Scollick demonstrated his innovations for simplifying loconet wiring. The club will be ordering some of his devices to have on hand for module building.

George Taylor and Tristan Lariviere demonstrated how to program ESU decoders. Stand by for the written guides!

Overall statistics:

Brandon compiled the stats from the 2023-Mar operating session:

A total of 70 trains were run. Of these, 9 freight, 2 MoW, and 9 passenger trains.

Stats breakdown:

<u>Freight</u>		FL5	was run	7 times
Through	15	FL6	was run	2 times
Freight Local	44	FL7	was run	6 times
MoW	2	FL8	was run	6 times
		FL9	was run	1 times
<u>Passenger</u>		FL11	was run	4 times
PT	4	FL12	was run	4 times
PR	1			
PL	4			

Freight Locals

FL1	was run	2 times
FL2	was run	5 times
FL3	was run	5 times
FL4	was run	2 times

No. of trains run by Engineers:

11 engineers	ran 2 trains
9 engineers	ran 1 train
6 engineers	ran 3 trains
2 engineers	ran 4 trains
1 engineer	ran 7 trains
1 engineer	ran 6 trains

Issues to be addressed:

Work efficiency at setup, issues with levelling team, tight corners, number of volunteers at the setup and during operations. The following should be the goal and solutions to the issues identified.

Goals

The goal should always be to:

- Given our 58 club members, we should have at least 18 people at setup and ideally 20-22
- Have the yard positioned and setup nearly first. It should be levelled before dinner.

- After dinner the freight ops guys start populating cars while the rest of us continue with setup. This avoids the freight ops guys from being at the club late into the night.
- All modules are assembled and in their correct locations (some levelled already) by dinner.
- At least two levelling teams work in opposite directions out from the yard or as appropriate.
- The layout is completely setup, levelled and wired by 8:00 pm
- Layout freight car population is complete by 8:30pm
- Saturday's test train is complete by 9:15 am or so, leaving a little time to fix issues.
- Saturday operations start by 09:30
- Sunday operations start by 09:00 or whenever Paul arrives
- All staffing positions are fully manned
- Sunday take down starts between 2:45 and 3:00pm
- Take down complete, last person leaves St.A between 5:00 and 5:30pm

Solutions

Recommendations to the issues identified on Saturday:

- There needs to be solid flow to the setup process to include:
 - The setup foreman studies the track plan beforehand.
 - He ensures modules are dropped off in their approximate locations.
 - He actively supervises people and encourages those standing around to perform a specific task.
 - He ensures that Ottawa Yard is placed and set up as early as possible.
 - Ottawa yard should always be the layout anchor and the layout build off the yard. Exceptions should be rare.
 - If you are in a group just talking, someone needs to step up and suggest to the others that there is still work to be done. You shouldn't need to be told to break up the gathering.
 - Historically late arriving modules should not be placed in critical spots in the mainline that will significantly delay setup.
- Track review:
 - Designers:

- The [HOTRAK Layout Design Principles and Guidelines](#) specifies a minimum of 36" aisles, with choke points going to 30" if needed.
 - Mark aisle widths and choke point widths on the plan.
 - Ops group: Check aisle and choke clearances when reviewing the plan.
- Module availability
 - Please give as much advance notice of module availability or non-availability if your schedule changes to the set-up foreman.
- Safety will always trump layout design and freight ops when the risk is elevated as it was this weekend.
- If there will be no yard master, we should consider moving all the car card holders to the front of the yard, so people aren't reaching over the yard.
- Levelling teams:
 - At least 2 levelling teams, ideally 3-4
 - Max 3 per team (one holding the stick, one with a drill for the front legs and one with a drill for the rear legs). Ideally 2 people who know what they are doing is ideal.
 - The person holding the stick is in charge and issues all the directions. Provide advice if asked.
 - Stick holder calls out distance to level in increments of 1/4".
 - Stick holder knows where the laser is and orientates the stick properly the first time.
 - Drillers slow the drill down as you approach level (as called out by the stick holder).
- Freight car standards
 - Everyone needs to ensure that their cars adhere to the [loco and freight car standards](#).
- If something is wrong or feels off (like Turntable) investigate and report the issue immediately. If you don't know what is going on or don't know how to fix it, get help rather than making it worse. That just causes more work for us during the work sessions.