



Adobe Flash Player is no longer supported

## The Future of Traction Modeling!

\*\*\*

It is hard to pick up any model railroading publication these days without noticing references to the aging of model railroaders. Everyone seems to have recognized this problem for at least 25 years but little if any solutions are offered. There seems to be a general acceptance of the fact that the hobby of modeling trains does not have a great future.

Some things are certain. Talking to many model railroaders reveals that they tend to model what they saw at one time in their lives. This means that they tend to model the trains that they saw and fell in love with between the ages of 5 and 15 years of age and began modeling as soon as they had the means to acquire models. Lionel trains used to run many ads showing a young boy holding a model Santa Fe F-3 (1940's), or a model Pennsylvania GG-1 (1934-1943). Those youngsters are the adults that are buying the plethora of Challenger models, models of the Union Pacific Veranda Turbines and the many F-7 models. No wonder that most model railroaders are 55 and over.

Streetcar and interurban modelers in HO scale have it even worse. There are great numbers of them and there are **NO** ready-to-run HO scale models of trolleys, interurbans and especially the many colorful light rail vehicles that started burnishing the rails of our many urban and suburban areas since the 1980s. In the HO scale area, Bowser makes a ready-to-run model of a Lehigh Valley Transit 800 interurban in a World War I era green paint scheme. AHM makes a ready-to-run model of a Toronto Class F single truck streetcar and along with the successors IHC and Mehano has erroneously called it a Birney car for almost thirty years. The car has oversize flanges and an inferior drive. The same folks have (until recently) offered a model of the Boeing Standard Light Rail Vehicle (SLRV), which opened up the United States Light Rail Era in San Francisco and Boston in 1975. Unfortunately, these cars had an inferior drive and oversize flanges. Only four of the twelve wheels were powered. The prototype vehicles are considered in some circles to be the worst light rail vehicle ever built but they do have historical significance to traction buffs. Now two of the former San Francisco cars are in museums.

Brass HO scale traction models were mainly available from the 1950s until the 1980s with only MTS Imports, Inc and The Car Works making occasional models today. The prices for unpainted models is high and the painted ones even higher. Recently, one of our reporters saw an MTS Imports, Inc. model of a Pacific Electric single truck 8 bench open car at a show listing for \$599.00.

Model electric transit makers need to try the same methods used by the prototype electric railways in the last century when they built their lines. Their motto was "It you build it, they will come". One only have to look at photos of the now "M" line in San Francisco along with the west portal of the Twin Peaks tunnel to see evidence of this.

Custom Traxx has collaborated with Bowser Manufacturing to provide a fitted chassis with drive(s) for the AHM/IHC/Mehano Boeing SLRV and the Kawasaki Philadelphia Light Rail Transit vehicle. These drives are available at very reasonable prices. (Check [www.customtraxx.com](http://www.customtraxx.com) for details). These chassis' can be easily adapted to any model of the many light rail vehicles being used in Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Calgary, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Newark, Portland (OR), Salt Lake City, Sacramento, Saint Louis, San Diego, San Jose and Toronto. New light rail lines or heritage trolley lines seem to be added annually. If you have a project in this area, please contact Custom Traxx at 310-990-5422 or Lee English at Bowser, 800-327-5126.

*...If you build it, they just might come....*

## World's Greatest Hobby on Tour Coming to Long Beach Convention Center!

\*\*\*

What has turned out to be the most exciting model train show in years is coming to Long Beach on February 19-20, 2005. Over 1000 people waited in line for the first day of the first show in Edison, New Jersey to open in December 2004. Eventually over 19,000 train lovers attended that show and vendors were "impressed". The traveling show then went to Saint Louis on January 8-9, 2005. 33,000 mid-west train lovers attended that show.

This World's Greatest Hobby on Tour show is coming to the Long Beach Convention Center on February 19-20, 2005.

Don't join the numbers of train lovers in Northern New Jersey, New York City and Saint Louis who wish they had attended. Be there!!

## Southern California Traction Club Begins 10th year of operation!

\*\*\*

The Southern California Traction Club announced two major personnel actions on January 30th. Effective February 1st, Fred Gurzeler has been selected as Club Manager. Fred, shown below left, will be the official public contact for the club and will be mainly involved in the search for and acquisition of new members. George Jones, shown below right, George will be responsible for the logistics of public club appearances.



Fred joined The Southern California Traction Club in December 2003. Fred has become an authority on HO scale Los Angeles Railway models and authored an article for the Trolleyville Schoolhouse on the same subject. Fred is employed by the Rand Corporation and lives in West Los Angeles with his wife and two children. George joined the club on October 1, 1997 and since that time has participated in every club appearance to date except the very first two appearances. He has become a center of knowledge on Pacific Electric freight. George also wrote an article for the Trolleyville Schoolhouse on model interurban freight cars. George is a locksmith by trade and lives in Culver City, California.

In the beginning of 2004, the Southern California Traction Club began to consider the future of club operations. The current state of the model railroading hobby (see column one) forces any club to consider means to ensure its survival.

The first step was to eliminate the two officer positions created when the club was founded in 1995. At that time, only one of the initial members had any familiarity with traction modules and hanging operational overhead wire. Now that most of the modules are generally completed and over 200 pieces of rolling stock are certified for club use, it was time for the next generation to contribute. At the 2004 annual election, the club replaced the two officers with a three member Board of Directors and assigned them the responsibility of charting the course of the club for the future. At their initial meeting on January 16th, the Board decided to create the two positions described above.

So if you have any interest in HO scale traction and live in Southern California, call the club at 323-936-2253 and leave a message for Fred Gurzeler if no one is present at the clubhouse when you call. Better yet, contact the club via email at [sctractionclub@earthlink.net](mailto:sctractionclub@earthlink.net). The club would love to hear from you. Please feel free to visit the club website at [www.trainweb.org/socaltractionclub/](http://www.trainweb.org/socaltractionclub/).

## Southern California Model Train Activity

\*\*\*

As we mentioned in the last issue, several potentially great model train shows were scheduled in the first three months of 2005 in Southern California. Two of these shows are now history and the results are in.

The first of these shows was held January 15-16 in Bakersfield. It was hosted by the Golden Empire Historical and Modeling Society and held at the Kern County Fairgrounds, Ming and P Streets. Hours for the show were 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturday and 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM Sunday. Over 2,700 avid train fans attended the show this year. This is a favorite show of many vendors and railfans. Shown below is the line of customers waiting to get into the show on Saturday.



For more information about next years show, visit their web site at [www.gehams.com](http://www.gehams.com).

The On Track Productions Model Train Expo was also held as scheduled on the Queen Mary in Long Beach on the same weekend. This show had been held at Pomona in March 2002 and March 2003. The location and date of the show had been changed for many reasons and this may have been responsible for the surprising low attendance at this show. Custom Traxx displayed the modified Hartland Birney car in progress of being converted to represent Sacramento Northern Railroad car 62. This car is projected for completed prior to the GATS Daly City Show in February.



(Above) Joe D'Elia of Proto Power West / A-line and George Huckaby of Custom Traxx share a moment during the Model Train Expo.

## Custom Traxx California Show Schedule!

\*\*\*

For the traction fan who likes to shop at model train shows, Custom Traxx told the Times last month that they will be exhibiting their line of traction decals, selected brass traction models and traction parts at the remaining first quarter 2005 California shows:

*Great American Train Show, San Francisco  
Cow Palace - February 12-13, 2005*

*World's Greatest Hobby on Tour: Long Beach  
Long Beach Convention Ctr - February 19-20, 2005.*

*Great American Train Show, Orange County  
Orange County Fairgrounds - March 12-13, 2005*

Come see what's new in the traction area. See the new Bowser Standard Light Rail Vehicle and Kawasaki Light Rail Transit Vehicle mechanisms along with the new NorthWest Short Line nickel silver wheels for Bowser trolley mechanisms.

Custom Traxx is considering building a small large scale (1:24) traction layout using cars powered from live overhead wire. This small layout would be displayed at model train shows. If you have interest in this area of traction, please contact Custom Traxx at 310-990-5422 or e-mail at [decals@customtraxx.com](mailto:decals@customtraxx.com).

## GATS Exits Pomona-Fairplex

\*\*\*

The Pomona Great American Train Show was held on January 29-30 in Bldg. 7 (the same building with the extremely rough asphalt floor, which slopes sharply to the south and the world's dingiest restrooms). The Trolleyville Times learned during the January 29-30 Great American Train Show that GATS LTD. has decided not to return to Pomona-Fairplex for future shows. We were told that that show was the last. Of course, the Times wholehearted and ecstatically supports his decision. As we told you in previous issues, this place is run by the "mo money" folks. They seem to be interested in prying as much of your money out of your pockets as they can. Every time, we visit Fairplex, prices are higher for routine items. They advertise themselves as:

### "KINDER-SIMPLER-FUNNER"

This slogan is printed on their cardboard trash cans which are littered throughout the facility. When arriving at the facility, most approach the friendly looking Gate 9 vehicle entrance in your vehicle:



The Southern California Traction Club also displayed at this show with some of the action shown below:



The Great American Train Show, LTD (GATS) hosted what we have been told is its last train show at Pomona-Fairplex on January 29-30. See column 2 for another review of the Pomona facility. This show was held in the same Building 7 that has become a monument to filth, discomfort and dinginess. Any reputable, properly managed concern would have considered this building drastically overdue for improvement or condemnation. Nevertheless, this was a fairly good show with many Trolleyville vendors and the Southern California Traction Club in attendance.



The darkness of the photo is due to the flat black walls of this Building 7, which when compounded with the rough asphalt floor, provides the atmosphere of a subway tunnel. Yet there was some very nice traction brass at this show provided by Holland Traction Supply.



For more data on this and other GATS, LTD shows, visit [www.gats.com](http://www.gats.com).

But when you get to this gate you get to view the sign shown at right. In our last report, we mentioned the parking prices. They were marked:

**GOOD PARKING - \$6.00**

(A very, very long walk!)

**BETTER PARKING - \$10.00**

(A very long walk!)

When we arrived at the GATS show on January 29th, we found another level of parking charges:

**BEST PARKING - \$15.00**

(Just a shorter long walk!)

All of this parking is provided in a very large uncovered lot on the east side of White Avenue. The difference between the three parking levels is the length of the walk to the main entry gate which is separated from the main fairgrounds by a long tunnel under White Avenue. So for most patrons attending any show, including GATS, at Fairplex, you COULD pay more to park your car than to get into your reason for coming there.



**TRANSLATION:**

**WELCOME TO FAIRPLEX - BRING MONEY, NO MONEY MO, MONEY! WE'LL TAKE IT ALL!**



In truth, these parking levels should be renamed as follows:

**BAD (Bring your own scooter!) - \$15.00**  
**WORSE (Have crutches handy!) - \$10.00**  
**PUTRED ( Bring your hiking boots!) - \$6.00**

Not only do these people charge these outrageous amounts for uncovered parking, but even if the trams are running, they do not go into the parking lot. They go no farther than the inside of the main entry gate. You still have to take these long, longer, or longest walk to the gate across this large open parking lot with no shade available anywhere. The trams are only running IF the shows themselves pay for them. Fairplex feel no obligation to their customers to provide any such ride. As far as the customers feet are concerned, so much for **KINDER!**

As far as **FUNNER** is concerned, do not be a vendor at a Fairplex show. Most reputable venues will make an all weekend pass available to vendors. Some even allow the vendors to park without charge but NOT this place. They arbitrarily refused to allow the vendors to drive-in to the building to teardown Sunday evening after allowing same on Friday afternoon for setup. They even turned the lights out in the restrooms during vendor teardown on Sunday evening. This is definitely NOT a class place!

We have not forgotten **SIMPLER!** That adequately describes the minds of current Fairplex senior management! AMEN!

**Good-Bye Pomona-Fairplex and Good Riddance!**

*We all work very hard for our time and money. We want to enjoy ourselves on our time off. We want to go to really Kinder-Simpler-Funner places!*

