The Trolleyville Times

May 2015

**C car project. These cars were seen in Philadelphia from 1975 through 1982!!....These unique PCC cars were all ex**

# Trains Control Systems Keep Alive™ !

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Way back in the "stone age", when Digital Command Control was just trying to enter the model train market, there were all sorts of prohibitions being promulgated by many. There was the huge size wire needed and then there was multiple wheels contact to the track and so forth and so on. When it came to using trolley poles to collect current, the horror stories abounded. DCC just would not work reliably. It did not take long for one member of the Southern California Traction Club to take one module and convert it to DCC and experiment for himself. Using a Digitrax Zephyr, he connected it to the layout using a, A-B switch with the Innovator 3500 used on the module for years and off he went.

Yes, dirty wire was a problem, as predicted, and a little to a lot more than on DC, especially with decoders with delayed accelerations curves. But then we discovered "conductive lubricants", having never heard of this before. The late Bob Santelli of Allied Model Trains pointed us to "Track & Rail Cleaner - ACT-6006", a product of Aero-Car Hobby Lubricants, P.O. Box 336, Western Springs, IL 60558, 768-246-9027 phone & fax, harkan@sbcglobal.net. It was available in 8 oz bottles. One little drop on the wire and the dirty wire problems just started to disappear. The next problem was surface area. We found that the more area that the contractor touched the overhead wire, the more reliable the contact. This was also a case for keeping the wire at the same height over the track over the entire layout (where possible). this made for a better contact. We also found that the more a shoe "wore in" the better contact it made. We also discovered that the NMRA trolley contact, as specified in NMRA S5 performed well in DCC operation.

But there still were as many issues as there had been with DC operation. Then Train Control Systems sent us their Keep Alive™ decoders to test. The Keep Alive™ is a decoder that has the capability of powering a train from 2 to 5 seconds or 5 to 10 seconds when power is temporarily lost. The Southern California Traction Club replaced 8 inches of overhead wire with fishing line and continuously ran it trolley through that stretch of wire without one stall. It was almost unbelievable. If the car was equipped with LED lights instead of incandescent bulbs, it would run even farther without power. The club played with these for months.

| DECODER | CAPABILITY | SKU | MSRP |
|---|---|---|---|
| KAT12 | Two-function, 2 to 5 second power during interruption | 1461 | $49.95 |
| KAT14 | Four-function, 2 to 5 second power during interruption | 1462 | $52.95 |
| KAT16 | Six-function, 2 to 5 second power during interruption | 1463 | $56.95 |
| KAT22 | Two-function, 5 to 10 second power during interruption | 1464 | $49.95 |
| KAT24 | Four-function, 5 to 10 second power during interruption | 1465 | $52.95 |
| KAT26 | Six-function, 5 to 10 second power during interruption | 1466 | $56.95 |
| KAM4 | Four-function, 6 to 15 second power during interruption | 1485 | $52.95 |
| KAM4-LED | Four-function, 6 to 15 second power, during interruption, supports LED lights | 1479 | $52.95 |

These "Keep Alive™" decoders make operation under powered overhead wires more reliable than in the DC days. Slower, smoother operation is also possible. Suggest you check them out!

# Never Too Late to Learn!

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In 2005, Custom Traxx along with the Southern California Traction Club came to the conclusion that a Ready-To-Run HO scale trolley of scale quality should be made available to modelers. Despite the fact that ready-to-run streetcars in HO scale might seriously impact the decal business, they began to approach many manufacturers and got some interest but no bites. Finally Lee English of Bowser Manufacturing bought into the program. It did not hurt that Bowser had realized that the four metal bodied trolleys that he had been making for years had run their course and that Ready-To-Run was then dominating the model railroad hobby. That trend does not seem to have changed. If anything the trend seems to be growing as older hobbyists pass on.

So in 2009 after research and a lot of evaluation, the decision was to make all fourteen of the ex-Philadelphia all-electric PCC cars that opened San Francisco's now famous F-line in 1995. This was followed by PCC streetcars from other cities and then the New Orleans St. Charles streetcar and several clones. Another PCC streetcar is now in the planning stage.

But there was still a hole in the model railroad hobby, the lack of model Light Rail Vehicles (LRV). Remember the term Light Rail Vehicle was coined to replace the word 'streetcar' which many companies had spent millions to bad mouth starting in the 1950s. Of course, Europe and the rest of the world had always called them trams. They never abandoned the concept so there was no need to reinvent an idea that worked and continued to work for them. So Custom Traxx has set out to get an American manufacturer to make a Ready-to-Run model Light Rail Vehicle with all the "bells and whistles" that DCC can produce.

Two things had to be done. First, there had to be research about the many different cars being used as it seemed that no two cities bought the same cars and then we had to learn something about catenary construction and operation. We had become very familiar with simple trolley wire over the past 50 years but catenary. there wee no manufacturers of model catenary systems in the United states and we were not sure if the methods used here were the same as those used in Europe.

So this fell on George Huckaby of Custom Traxx. His first job was to contact J. R. Lowe of the Orange Empire Railway Museum, who was at that time was the knowledgeable overhead wire expert and Chairman of the Board of Directors for the same museum. He made arrangements for George to come out and work with him on the museum overhead wire in February 2015. Below right is George working with J. R. on the overhead wires at the museum. The wires were hot at the time and contained the required 650 volts for streetcar operation (a fact greeted with some trepidation at first). Next George arranged with Bruce Shelburne, LACMTA, George Flowers, Exposition Construction Authority and David Leuchter, Construction Manager, Mass Electric Construction Company, to allow him to visit their facilities and to closely inspect the overhead wires being erected directly in front of his home on the EXPO 2 line. These wires would NOT be electrified at the time of the visit. After all necessary formalities were taken care of, the examination took place during March 2015 and George is shown below right examining an insulator in the 10900 Block of Exposition Boulevard.


Next stop.....learning more about pantographs with a visit to the Los Angeles Country MTA Blue Line shops and maybe making a workable model.....we will see!

# Two Hobby Shops in MU!

***[A Possible Light in the Darkness!]***

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Now for something positive in the model railroad hobby! After all the bad news in the model railroad hobby shop arena in the past few years, how about some thinking out of the box? Last year, Jerry Keys, who in 2001 had opened a model railroad hobby shop called Milepost 38 in Anaheim Hills, decided that he wanted to retire so he placed his store up for sale. Arnie's Trains was already Orange County's Model Train Store. Jerry Arnold and son, Greg, had opened the store in 1975. Jerry was a retired Great Northern Railroad employee, who passed on in 1997. Greg continued the shop but could not resist the temptation to acquire Milepost 38. But Greg decided to move Milepost 38 right next door to him, a move greeted with much skepticism in the model railroad community. Here is where it gets interesting. Why would you move competition right next door to you?

Greg is originally from North Dakota, a state where our webmaster, George Huckaby, spent some of his United States Air Force days (1965 to 1971). North Dakotans or Nodaks *(as they are sometimes called)* are a hardy group of people who routinely put up with temperatures like 40 degrees below zero and 50 mph winds so you can expect some independent thought here.

So here is the thought process. Take Arnie's Model Trains and specialize in scale model trains and the scales of HO, N and Z while converting Milepost 38 into Milepost 38 Toy Trains and feature O (Lionel), G (Large Scale) and Thomas the Tank. Keep the replica ALCO PA diesel cab nose in that shop as a symbol of continuity. The left photo shows the two stores in their side-by-side location and the right photo shows the interior of the new Arnie's Model Trains.


The next part is to go after the newer and younger hobbyists. What better way to do that than to procure a young dynamic store manager for the new Arnie's Model Trains, Kevin Honda, who is not yet 30 years old and knowledgeable in DCC systems. He can give direction about DCC systems made by Digitrax, Prodigy, NEC and the Roco Z21 for starters. He can speak the language of today's modelers. He knows computers, smart phones and the internet. John McWhirter of the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC) is shown below left at the DCC counter talking to Kevin. They were discussing the merits of Soundtraxx sound decoders versus ESU Lok Sound sound decoders when this photo was taken. John has familiarity with both due to the Bowser PCC project. In the right photo above, Warren Stockton, another member of the SCTC, is shown standing to the right of one of the three Leopold Halling (Austria) tram models owned by members of the club. This model represents one of the thirty Bombardier Flexity Trams used currently in Innsbruck, Austria. The five section tram has similarities to the 206 vehicles currently being delivered to Toronto to replace their current fleet of CLRVs and ALRVs by 2018.

Kevin is somewhat of a traction fan also, so we were not surprised when we found several HO scale streetcars from Bachmann, Bowser and Con-Cor displayed in one of their excellent cases.


Greg told the Times that he considers the "Two Hobby Shops in MU (Multiple Unit)" concept a complete success seven months after it started. Their original projections have been met and exceeded. We believe that it is worth your while if you live anywhere in the Southern California area to visit this place at least once. You might just like it. We will be returning for a full story when the complete renovations are done. The store is also stocked very well. We have never seen such a complete display of Walthers HO scale structures anywhere recently as the photo below shows and we left with some in our hands each time we visited the store:


Greg himself, below left, was caught in front of some of his excellent display cabinets, during which time, he spoke his mind about the model railroad hobby shop situation. Our hobby shop is determined to stay in business and may just do that. Greg told us that the fact that many shops have recently closed means that they must have been doing something wrong. This justifies any new sensible approach. Their business truck, shown below right, finishes the statement.


We will be reporting more on this unique model railroad hobby shop experiment.

**This just in -------** Arnie's Model Trains /Milepost 38 Toy Trains is planning their Annual Open House on June 20, 2015. from 10:00 AM to 6 PM. Get directions here! We have been told that representatives from Athearn, Bachmann, BLMA, Custom Traxx, LGB, and Soundtraxx, among others, will be present. This is something you do not want to miss. So if you do not get to the store before that, get there on June 20th. More about this event in the June 1 Trolleyville Times.

# Please Tell Us About Your Models, Layout or Club!

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We all know about the aging and shrinking of the hobby. In fact the news can get downright depressing at times. But we also know there are several small traction clubs with just a few people and individual traction layouts hidden away in basements, attics and garages. We are inviting any of you to tell us about what you are doing. The scale makes no difference. This is a forum for electric railway modeling from 1895 single truck cars to modern multi-section Light Rail Vehicles. Send articles to Trolleyville. The more manufacturers know about our numbers, the better our chances of getting new products.

# Streetcars Return to Milwaukee!

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**by Edward Havens**

Milwaukee, Wisconsin's largest city with a population of nearly 595,000, once was a hub for electric traction -- both streetcars and interurbans but urban street railway service ended in 1958 and the fabled North Shore Line abandoned its service to Chicago on Jan. 20, 1963. The Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad was noted for its Electroliner cars:

After abandonment, in 1964 both Electroliner train sets were sold to Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Co. "Red Arrow Lines" for use on the former Philadelphia & Western third rail powered route from 69th Street Terminal, Upper Darby, to Norristown. They were renamed Independence Hall and Valley Forge.

They were inherited in 1970 by Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority [SEPTA] which eventually disposed of them, offering them for sale in 1981. They operated on the Norristown line until 1980. One Electroliner went to Illinois Railway Museum; the other to Rockhill Trolley Museum in south-central Pennsylvania. The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Co. operated interurban routes to various Wisconsin cities. Its line to East Troy was abandoned in 1939 but the city of East Troy purchased right of way continue freight service and today it's the home to an operating trolley museum. The interurban routes mostly were discontinued in the post-World War II era.

Milwaukee & Suburban Transport Co. took over the city lines in 1952 and started a bus conversion program. The last line -- Wells Street from Wauwatosa to 70th & Greenfield -- was abandoned on March 2, 1958.


Financial troubles forced abandonment of the TMER&L interurbans starting in the 1930s and in 1949 Jay Maeder of Cleveland acquired assets of the remaining Waukesha line. Six cars were acquired from Shaker Heights Rapid Transit in Ohio for the new service, dubbed "Speedrail." Maeder's management also took over the Hales Corners suburban line.

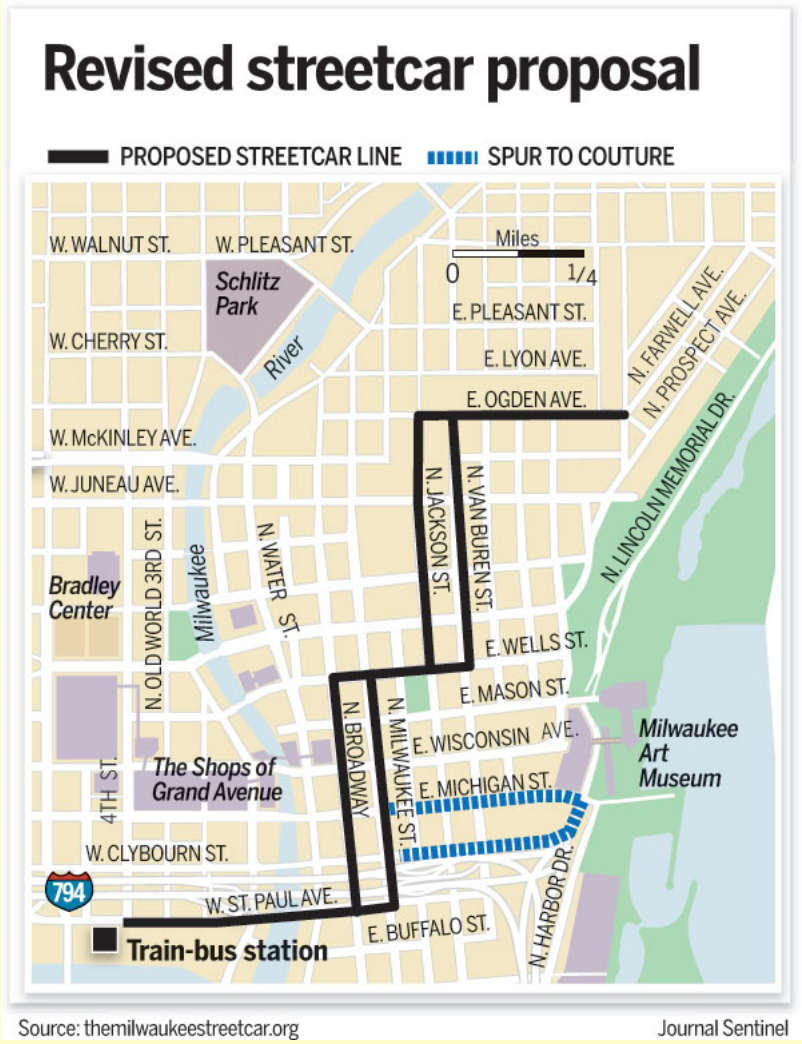

National Model Railroad Association held a fan trip on the Hales Corners route during the 1950 Labor Day weekend and there was a fatal collision Sept. 2, killing 10 and injuring 47. Because of continued financial losses, a federal trustee was appointed. Speedrail soldiered on until June 30, 1951 when both the Waukesha and Hales Corners lines made their final runs.


**Car #61 on Waukesha Line, Last Day; June 30, 1951**

Milwaukee's urban conversion program included replacing streetcars with electric trolley buses [ETBs] which ran from November 1936 to June 1965.


**Milwaukee Pullman 350 on the fantrip on the final day June 20 1965 (Paul Weyrich photo courtesy Ken Josephson)**

By the 21st century, Milwaukee was discussing a streetcar revival and a proposal was developed for a 2.5-mile modern streetcar line as a downtown urban circulator,. The $123.9 million project was approved by the Common Council (city council) Jan. 21, 2015. confirmed February 10 by a 10-5 vote. Operation was projected to begin in mid-2018. The plan was accompanied by the same sort of controversy that dogged the Cincinnati modern streetcar now under construction. After the initial proposal, a Milwaukee developer proposed a high-rise project on the Lakefront to be served by a branch of the car line to the Milwaukee Inter modal train-bus station:



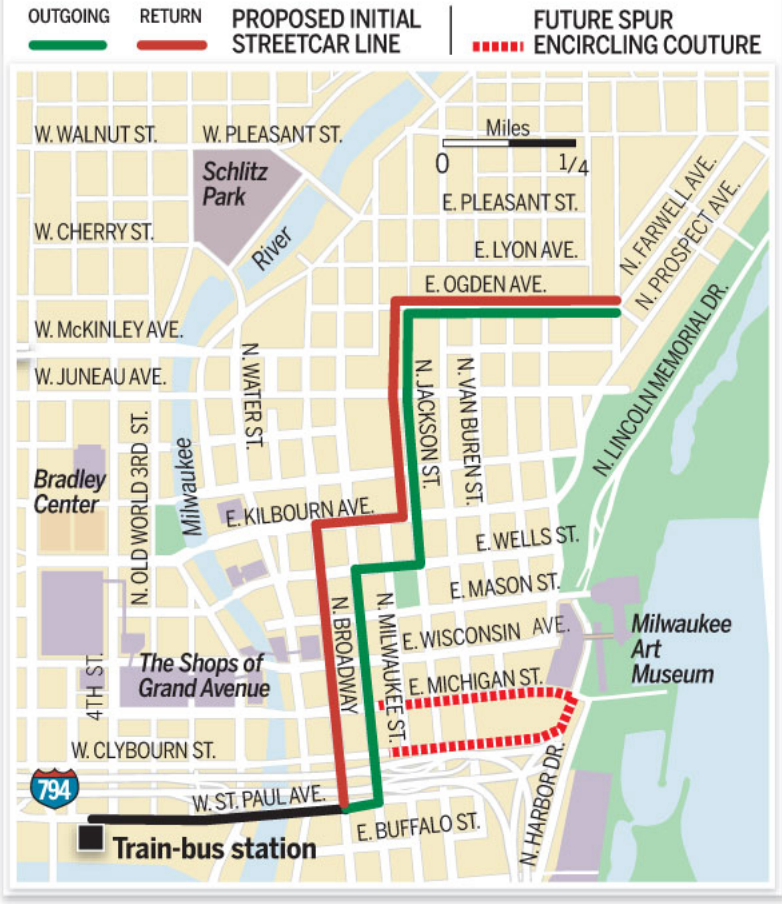

This artist's conception shows how the branch to the Couture development might appear:



The final route remains to be settled by engineering design and the need to avoid costly utility relocation. Here's another version of the map from late 2014, showing slightly different alignments:

# Streetcar proposal riding on tax incremental financing districts

A proposed 2.1-mile downtown Milwaukee streetcar line with a planned 0.4-mile extension to the lakefront will cost an estimated $123.9 million. Mayor Tom Barrett will ask the Common Council in December to approve $49.3 million in city financing, on top of $9.7 million allocated earlier, to pay part of costs. Federal funds would pay the remainder of costs.




Source: Office of the Mayor

Journal Sentinel

The streetcar near the Milwaukee Intermodal Station.

A recent development that would extend the streetcar line is a plan by the Milwaukee Bucks National Basketball Association [NBA] team to build a new $1 billion arena on Fourth Street next to the existing Bradley Center arena which would be razed. The new facility would have a plaza forecourt where the streetcar would deliver fans attending games.

On March 26, Milwaukee Business Journal reported: "The first construction contracts for the downtown Milwaukee streetcar could be awarded in July, with heavy work on the system's track and overhead wires set to begin in one year. That prospective timeline puts the city on course to complete heavy construction on the downtown system in spring 2018 and, after a series of tests, begin service in July of that year, according to project consultants. "The city of Milwaukee issued a Request for Proposals [RFP] April 6 to streetcar manufacturers, seeking bids to supply four vehicles initially for $17.6 million and an additional vehicle later at $4.1 million for the Lakefront extension to Couture. The entire package would includes options for up to 24 low-floor streetcars but some or all of the additional 19 cars could be sold to other U.S. cities planning street railways including Sacramento, California.; Fort Lauderdale, Florida or Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The Milwaukee contract could be awarded in August 2015 with delivery of the first car in 2017.

# ..."Lead, Follow or Get Out Of The Way"...

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*Trolleyville Editorial*

Many of us have heard the above phrase many times during our business and military careers. Unfortunately, there is a fourth option, not often discussed, that we will be discussing in this article.

We have all read and discussed the state of the model railroading hobby during the past few years. In one of the previous articles, we have an example of "Lead" in Greg Arnold of Arnie's Trains / Milepost 38 Toy Trains and we wish him success. Our conclusion is that all of us need to Lead, Follow or Get out of the way. Not everyone can be a leader and there are others who refuse to follow. But if not leading or following, please get out of the way and do not impede progress.

Let's take the increased use of technology in the model railroading hobby. When Digital Command Control (DCC) first appeared on the scene, a few embraced it but many rejected it. In many clubs, DC and DCC were operated on separate lines and all seemed to get along in some manner. In other cases, some refused to "get out of the way" (AKA Obstructionists). In our March issue, the NMRA President mentioned that one organization had voted to dissolve because of one individual. This individual was an example of an extreme obstructionist. While this is an extreme example, over the years we have seen many examples of such behavior, some of which has been very detrimental to the hobby at large. We know of one module club that wants to run DCC but one module, belonging to one member has very DCC unfriendly turnouts and the module owner stubbornly refuses to change them. So the entire club is somewhat held back. We know of another model railroad club where a small group of streetcar fans would like to erect some overhead wire and operate streetcars. One or two individuals refuse to allow that because it "...may make track cleaning difficult...". Since most people join clubs to "have fun" it is understandable but not totally accepted why the remaining club members would not step in and curtail these obstructionists. Not only can individuals be guilty of this negative behavior but major companies and user groups, some in the model railroading business, can be extremely guilty of this also.

When participating in the 1995 founding of the Southern California Traction Club (SCTC), it was felt by many that the club should investigate DCC, then a relatively new item. One of the founders purchased a Digitrax Super Chief and brought it to the clubhouse. It was almost universally rejected before it was even demonstrated. The statement from the 'experts' at the East Penn Traction Club that DCC would NOT work with overhead wire power collections from single point like a trolley pole was the final blow. The obstructionists stated was that they refused to spend $40 for decoders for each of the MANY

units that they were going to run on the layout. *(Of course, the club never saw many of these units without decoders anyway).* The unit was returned and a refund was obtained. This was an early opportunity for progress lost.

Meanwhile, technology moves on. DCC is now being upgraded with the ability of wireless control from a smart phone and/or tablet. Bachmann recently debuted an HO scale engine and system using this technology. Right now, this capability is being led by a European company, Roco/Fleischmann with their Z21 Digital Control System. A volunteer organization here in the United States, JMRI (Java Model Railroad Interface), has developed a protocol that allows smart phones and tablets to be used to operate trains. It is supposed to work with any of the systems currently available such as Digitrax and NCE. One model railroad club got initial exposure to this capability starting last October. They had been trying to blend this technology into their operation for over six months with Digitrax (Zephyr Xtra and PR3) hardware, which they have used almost exclusively for over ten years. They could make it work with NCE hardware and interface easily but not with the Digitrax PR3 interface. So after trying with local help for some time, they went on the Digitrax web site to encounter a notice that they may not expect too much help. So after not getting anywhere they notified Digitrax that they may have to switch to NCE components due to the inability to get Digitrax' hardware (Zephyr Xtra, PR3, MacBook Pro) to work with JMRI. But the response was not any form of assistance but a good luck with our competition's product comment. Embracing new technology is not always fun. There is some work to it. If you do not get familiar with this one, you may be behind when the next one comes. We are already at the point where a certain level of computer knowledge is assumed in our daily lives. Some of us are already activating items in the home from tablets and smart phones.

The program developed by JMRI that allows users to control trains with their smart phone device or tablet is called WiThrottle. It does require a WiFi connection, however. The SCTC had heard a little about this marriage of model trains and smart phones/tablets and ws very interested in the technology but vould not get the system to work with their Digitrax hardware. Then they were introduced to the Roco/Fleischmann z21 System that has such an interface already built-in and comes with all the necessary hardware and software, including a WiFi router, to make this happen. A close model railroading friend of one of the members of the Southern California Traction Club just had a magnificent layout built for him at significant cost. After some evaluation of all the DCC Master Control Systems, he opted for the Roco/Fleischmann z21 because of its smart phone/tablet interface. He is also a European prototype modeler in Calabasas, CA. It was delivered and installed in his home last month so two members of the club had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the system and his grand layout. They also learned that the Z21 had been on the market for over two years.

Can you imagine how great this capability could be for groups and clubs. Members with these phones now have their own throttle. The z21 allows the user to load the information for locomotives onto the smart phone/tablet any time he chooses. Being connected to the z21 is not necessary. After this, he or she can operate trains on any z21 system as long as he or she has the code to the WiFi system used by that z21. This capability was demonstrated so clearly to two club members last month as the Calabasas layout slowly became operational.

The SCTC had their first demonstration of the smart phone / table control capability at their clubhouse n October 2014 by a member of the ZoCal group, Lindley Ruddick. He used NCE hardware connected to the club test track, using an NEC interface, a PC and his own WiFi Router. The club was able to see this system up and running perfectly with NCE hardware but although they tried at that time, they could not get the system to work with their Digitrax Zephyr Xtra, PR3 and MacBook Pro running OSX 10.10.2. The club was really interested in pursuing this technology. Six months passed while the club experimented with different approaches but could not the system to work with their Digitrax Zephyr Xtra and PR3. The club could not get the JMRI Throttle operating on the MacBook Pro, so the WiFi portion of the program could not even be attempted. The problem was either in the PR3 settings or with JMRI. Since The MacBook Pro was using DecoderPro with a PR3 with no issues, the club felt initially that the interface with the PR3 was proper. *(DecoderPro is another fine JMRI product that allows the user to change addresses, read and write CVs and store the information in a file for later reference.)*

The club meets twice a week and the hardware was at the clubhouse so only on those two days could any experimentation be accomplished while they were in front of the hardware.

The club attempted to contact Digitrax but never was there any type of face-to-face discussion with their technical people. They were told to go to their web site and follow the PR3 instructions, *"Using the PR3 with an Apple Intel-Based Mac and JMRI"*. The club thought that they followed the instructions but the system still did not work as stated in the instructions and there is no one to talk to while the computer is alive and in front of the user. Contacting JMRI is done through their users group. The club also contacted the JMRI Users Group. They got some suggestions and were asked some questions to which the club did not know all the answers. Sometimes, there needs to be some one-on-one discussion on these problems and that type of contact is difficult to arrange. It seems that some of these people abhor direct communications. Contacting Digitrax is another story. Right in the bottom of their instruction sheet for the PR3 is the "don't bother us" type message that states:

***"Digitrax, Inc does not provide Technical Support of JMRI"***

They offered to help us with any problem with the PR3 but all we knew is that we could not get the throttle to work. They state that their *"...instructions have been tested on an IMac, Mac Mini and a Mac Book Pro running OSX 10.8.3..."* After almost six months of trying to get some help in making the system work, the club had gotten nowhere. So in desperation, the club contacted Digitrax and told them that they were trying to get JMRI WiThrottle working with their hardware and that the club had been successful in operating JMRI WiThrottle with NEC equipment and we had been trying without success to run JMRI WIThrottle with Digitrax hardware. The club stated that if they could not get it to work with Digitrax hardware, the club would have to consider switching to NEC hardware. The Digitrax written response was:

***"You are correct, we do not provide technical support for JMRI. It is third party software that has its own support by the developers and users. We can help you if you are having trouble if you are using a PR3 as an interface between your computer and command station. Only you can decide what is best for your club and the club layout. We wish you luck in the future if you decide to change to a competitors product."***

What planet are these guys on? The club told them they were trying to use a MacBook Pro using System OSX 10.10.2 with the PR3 and their Zephyr Xtra. The club was trying to use the Digitrax hardware which they already had. The club also told them that they had already been successful in running "...a competitors product..." So, the club interpreted that response as ***"Good Luck with the other system, you won't get any help from us",*** despite the offers to the contrary.

The more the two club members experimented with the Roco/Fleischmann z21 at the Calabasas layout, the more those members liked it and it worked without hitches. So they have invested in one of those systems. It is easy to use and the club has had a lot of familiarity with the z21 on their friends new layout. It was actually more fruitful dealing with the manuals, some written in German, than in dealing with both the JMRI Users Group and Digitrax. After six months, the club could not

get either party to show them how to make the thing work. Two club members have locomotives already loaded onto their iPhones and have run model trains on that layout using the z21 on more than one occasion.

The bottom line is that it should not have taken six months to try and get something to work if good reasonable business practices by either the JMRI Users Group or Digitrax. If someone wants to use your product, why not help them get it done. Take a few minutes and talk to them, find out their level of expertise and "make the sale". The club will now slowly drift away from Digitrax hardware and begin using a system made offshore. Using smart phones or tablets to run their streetcars is a lot of fun and practical for club operation. They will save a lot of money on throttles, since the smart phone or tablet takes that job over. So, after six months of trying to get the JMRI-Zephyr-PR3 combination to work, the club gave up and decided to pursue the Roco z21. So on April 8th the club did notify the JMRI users group that they gave up. The constant failures were ruining the fun of the hobby. So guess what one of the responses from another JMRI users group member on April 9th was: ***"...I can only assume that your unwillingness or inability to answer those questions means that you have never been committed to attempting to resolve or understand the problems you are having...".*** This guy is on the same planet with Digitrax. The club had been fooling around with the hardware since October 2014 during bi-weekly club meetings and consulting those they thought were "in the know". It is this type of response that turned many hobbyists off to any type of computer interaction including adoption of DCC in the first place. *What the club wanted was to talk to a live person because they were not sure of what they were doing!* **All the club did was find a product that worked while they could not get the JMRI/Digitrax combination to work.** Sorry that the club does not have all the brilliant technical knowledge that these people have. While we recognize that Digitrax is a business and JMRI is a volunteer organization, both of them are offering products to model railroaders with the intended purpose of improving the enjoyment of the hobby. The SCTC was never able to arrange a one-on-one discussion in a mutually comfortable environment to learn how to work the JMRI program with their Digitrax hardware.

[Note: The club finally ordered a Roco/Fleischmann Z21 from Reynaulds Euro Imports, Elburn, Illinois (888-762-6872) on April 20th *(for less than $400.00)*. The unit arrived late Saturday, April 25th. It was brought to the clubhouse on Sunday, April 26th. The Wi-Fi and unit were both configured and trains and trolleys were running by Monday, April 27th using the system, thus ending six months of club frustration trying to run trains and trolleys with a smart phone or tablet. It was actually surprising how easy the system was to set-up and get operating.]

We continuously hear many of you say that you really want to help, advance and preserve our hobby, that you want it to continue and be around after you are long gone. To do that the hobby must be relevant to younger generations and people with various levels of computer expertise. Without new members, our beloved hobby is DEAD! So the hobby must adapt to their environment. That includes the latest technology, whether you like it or not. The smart phone or tablet works really well as a train controller where we have used it and almost everyone in the current generation has a tablet or one of the smart phone versions available. And if your computer group offers support, try to get a method where the user does not feel pressured or embarrassed by having their ignorance exposed in an open forum. Try some direct involvement for a change. All this club wanted to do was learn how to use a product and eventually use that product for their own enjoyment! There has to be a better way!

***P. S. After all of this, there are still members of the Southern California Traction Club who would still like to know why they could not get JMRI to work with their Digitrax/MacBook Pro equipment located at their clubhouse in Baldwin Hills, a section of Los Angeles. The club meets on most Sundays and Tuesdays beginning around 10:00 AM. If there is anyone in the JMRI Users group agreeable to some one-on-one discussion at some mutually opportune times, please contact John McWhirter, member of the SCTC Board of Directors!***