



# Modular Mumblings

## The Amherst Railway Society, Inc. HO Scale Modular Layout Newsletter Fall 2008

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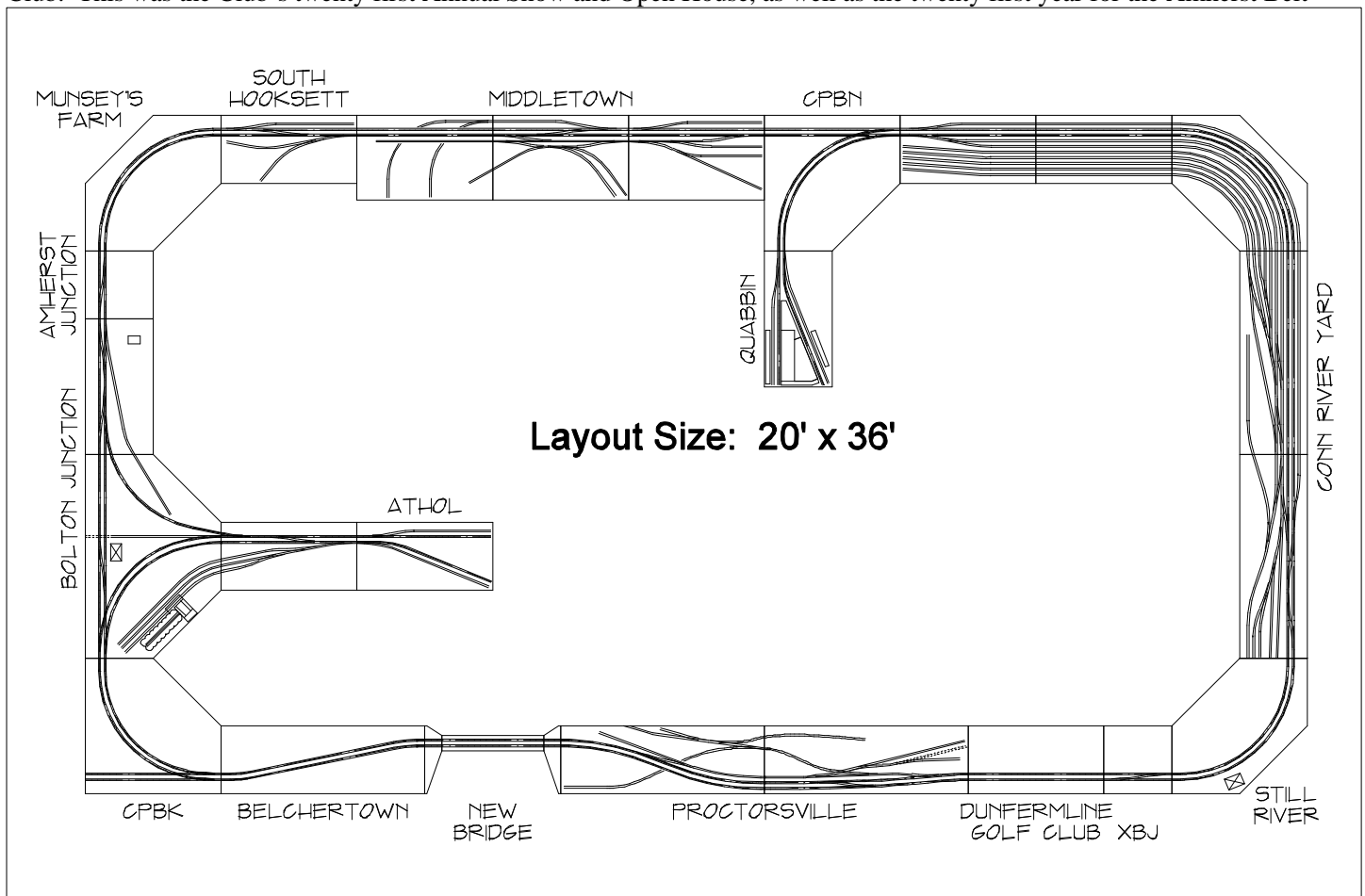
Look for us on the Internet at [www.amherstrail.org/abl](http://www.amherstrail.org/abl)

### Let's Get it Started!

Seems like only a few short weeks ago we were sitting down to write the Summer 2008 edition of the *Modular Mumblings* – oh, that's because it was! Here it is mid October and time to take to the keyboard again with announcements, show details and other news since the last edition. As this is being written, one show is "in the can" and the next four have been confirmed by solid invitations. This season is proving to be as busy as last, so "*Let's get it started!*"

### Pepperell Siding Model Railroad Club Show Report

The Belt Lines has just returned from our first away show of the 2008/2009 season for the Pepperell Siding Model Railroad Club. This was the Club's twenty first Annual Show and Open House, as well as the twenty first year for the Amherst Belt



PSMRRC Show - Pepperell, MA: Layout Plan - 20' x 36'

Lines to participate, and was held again at the Varnum Brook Elementary School in Pepperell, Massachusetts. A hearty “THANKS” is extended from all of your module coordinators to everyone who came out to help with setup, operation and tear down for the show.

Setup went well, with no major issues, and the layout was up and running by about 2:00PM on Saturday. As always seems to be the case, the setup crew was able to fill the time available to complete the job with other preparations for the main event on Sunday. The layout plan appears above and was built pretty much as designed.

Saturday evening the crew headed out to dinner and then off to Keith Shoneman’s Pennsylvania and New England layout for an operating session. Our crew of 18, plus three of Keith’s regular operators, put the railroad through its paces and everyone had a good time. Keith’s hospitality and generosity in playing host for the night is another fine example of why this is such a great hobby: our fellow model railroaders always seem willing to open their doors to a bunch of first timers to their layout, and permit us to put their railroad to the test. Assuming we didn’t mess things up too badly, Keith should be able to pick up the pieces and re-stage for his next regular operating session. A very special “thanks” is extended to Keith, Ken, Mark and Mike for hosting, and piloting us through New York and New England of the 1980’s according to the Pennsylvania and New England!

On Sunday, the show opened to a relatively steady flow of participants throughout the day. Although all reports after the show pointed to attendance being a bit down from last year. The layout operated very well, and primarily through the use of NCE radio cabs. The radio system handled everything that was thrown at it and seems to be a solid system to carry us into future shows (see related article below). The white-board was used to track running trains and crew requests. We will be making some improvements to the procedures here, but in general it seemed to add a positive spin to operations.

Thank you to all who participated. It is with your continued effort and support that we are so successful!

### **Bedford Boomers Model Railroad Exhibition – Bedford, New Hampshire**

Our next show is the Bedford Boomer’s 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Model Railroad Exhibition on Sunday, November 2, 2008 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM. The show will be held at the McKelvie Intermediate School in Bedford, New Hampshire. (This is the same location as in past years, it seems that “Middle School” is out this year and “Intermediate School” is the new term!) The Boomers open the doors for setup on Friday night around 5:30PM (beware of “Trick-or-Treaters”!) and will stay open until about 11:00PM that night. Setup continues on Saturday from 7:00AM until around 11:00PM. There have been clinics and other events sponsored by the Boomers for participants on Saturday and this year will include the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Victor Metoyer Photo Contest; details for the contest are on the web site. The show is unique as it is a *display only* show without any vendors. Displays abound from N scale (1:160) to 1:1 and the Belt Lines has been a regular participant now for 23 years. Check out the Boomer’s web site at [www.boomers-rr.com](http://www.boomers-rr.com) for more information and directions to the show.

The Belt Lines crew will arrive on-site after about 7:30PM on Friday to start unloading the trailer and any ‘private-owner’ modules that are in the layout. We will continue setup on Saturday and head off to dinner around 5:00PM. After dinner, we have been invited to operate at two different layouts, possibly three. As the plans for the evening firm up, we will send out additional information.

If you haven’t contacted one of the module coordinators by now to have your module included in the layout, it is too late; the request for modules was sent out earlier by email with a closing date of early October. However, if you want to participate with the Belt Lines at the show without a module, we are happy to have you come along. Please let Clark know about your interest and whether you need accommodations right away. Please note that we must have a complete roster of participants by October 25, 2008 so we can pass it on to the Boomers Show Management. All participants *must* have a show specific badge for security reasons, so if we don’t have your name, we can’t give it to Staff.

Come on up to Bedford to give us a hand and see something a little different in shows!

### **NMRA HUB Division Model Train Expo – Marlborough, Massachusetts**

After Bedford is over, our following show is the New England Model Train Expo sponsored by the NMRA HUB Division on Saturday and Sunday, December 6 and 7, 2008. The show is at the Best Western Royal Plaza Trade Center in Marlborough, Massachusetts and runs 10:00AM to 5:00PM on Saturday and 10:00AM to 4:00PM on Sunday. Setup will start on Friday around 4:00PM (according to the web site, although we have been there as early as 2:00PM in the past) and end around 9:00PM that night. Setup continues on Saturday morning around 7:00AM.

After the show on Saturday, the crew will head out to dinner and plan some sort of entertainment for the evening. In years past we have had slide shows or gone to layouts to operate. This year's activity has not yet been planned, but will undoubtedly be equally as enjoyable.

If you are interested in attending the show with a module, or just helping out on one or both days of the show, let Alan and/or Clark know by November 9, 2008. If you just want to go to the show without a module, let us know if you plan to be there Saturday, Sunday or both days so that we can let Show Staff know. All participants must have badges provided by the HUB Division for this show and we must provide a list to Staff ahead of time. You will not be let in to the show without a badge or paid admission on Saturday and Sunday!

Check out the HUB Division's web site at [www.hubdiv.org](http://www.hubdiv.org) for more information and directions. Come on out to the show and support a terrific organization!

### **Belt Lines to go Unplugged**

After putting the NCE Radio System thoroughly through its paces at the Pepperell Show, we have decided that we want to limit the use of 'tethered' cabs on the layout. The NCE V1.5 Radio System seems to be pretty robust, if tests at several home layouts and two shows are any indication; we have had excellent performance with the NCE V1.5 Radio Cabs at the NVRRA Shirley Show last Spring, the Pepperell Show this Fall and lots of experience on four – 5, counting Keith's – home layouts. By going to a Radio Cab System, we can reduce the plug-in confusion and crossing cables that frequently occur with tethered cabs during the show, especially at busy locations such as Conn River Yard. In addition, we can eliminate the "where do I plug in?" problems that occur, especially when your train is running out of control and you are unplugged (that never happens, does it?) and talking to the public! Currently, our plan is to limit tethered cabs to the fixed yard locations, such as Conn River Yard, East Deerfield, Middletown, Proctorsville and Bolton Junction, for local operations. This list probably isn't inclusive, and other locations may be tethered as we evaluate layout operations.

Your coordinators encourage you to upgrade your cabs to the V1.5 Radio, but are not yet making it mandatory. A radio equipped cab can still be tethered to your layout if you are not planning on going "unplugged" on your own layout in the near future. You can send your cabs to NCE ([www.ncedcc.com](http://www.ncedcc.com)) or Digistar DCC ([www.digistardcc.com](http://www.digistardcc.com)) for an upgrade. Both firms should be contacted first to determine current turnaround time and parts availability. Clark has sent out additional information on the upgrade to all on the email list; if you need information about the upgrades, please contact either Clark or Sudro or the manufacturers directly. We have been quoted about \$25.00 for upgrades from previous radio cabs and around \$85.00 to \$90.00 for new radio installations.

Due to the "industrial environment" at the Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds, we may have to revert to "tethered" cabs for the Amherst Railway Society show at the ESE in January. So...be prepared, and bring your cab cable just in case!

### **New Email Addresses**

The Amherst Belt Lines has a new email address that appears on the banner of the first page of the *Modular Mumbblings*, right below the mailing address: [AmherstBeltLines@amherstrail.org](mailto:AmherstBeltLines@amherstrail.org). Mail sent to this address will be received by Clark, Sudro and Alan simultaneously, so you get all three coordinators for the price of one address! You can still send messages to each coordinator individually through their respective email addresses, listed below each name on the banner; please note that Sudro's address has an underscore (" \_ ") between the 'Y' and the 'I'. Also, Alan's email address has changed to [ABEL.Planning@amherstrail.org](mailto:ABEL.Planning@amherstrail.org), in order to permit the email forwarding from the general mailbox, so please update your address books accordingly. His old address ([ABEL.Planning@comcast.net](mailto:ABEL.Planning@comcast.net)) will remain active for a few months, but after the Amherst Show, it will be discontinued so please start using the new one as soon as possible.

### **End of the Line**

That will do it for this edition of the *Modular Mumbblings*. We hope to see you in Bedford or Marlborough. If not, a full schedule of the Shows the Belt Lines will be going to, as we know it to date, is on the last page of this newsletter. We will send out information on the Amherst Railway Society Show later in November. Until then...

***Happy Modular Railroading!***

Alan, Clark and Sudro

*Modular Railroading is Fun!*

### 2008/2009 Belt Lines Show Schedule

If you would like to mark your calendars ahead of time for shows the Belt Lines will be attending, here are the confirmed dates from our schedule for 2008/2009 as we know it so far:

- October 31-November 2, 2008: Bedford Boomer's Model Railroad Exhibition – Bedford, NH  
Show is on Sunday, November 2, 2008 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM. Setup starts Friday night at 5:30PM
- December 5-7, 2008: NMRA HUB Division Show – Marlboro, MA  
Show is on Saturday, December 6, 2008 from 10:00AM to 5:00PM and Sunday, December 7, 2008 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM. Setup starts Friday afternoon around 4:00PM
- January 22-25, 2009: Amherst Railway Society, Inc. Railroad Hobby Show – West Springfield, MA  
Show is on Saturday, January 24, 2009 from 9:00AM to 5:00PM and Sunday, January 25, 2009 from 10:00AM to 5:00PM. Setup starts Thursday afternoon around 1:00PM
- February 22, 2009: Worcester Model Railroaders Club Show – Auburn, MA  
Show is on Sunday, February 22, 2009 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM. Setup starts Sunday at **7:00AM!!**

