

**March 2025**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| **Assistant Superintendent, Denis Zamirowski, shared his photo of a Northshore interurban car at the February FVD meet. The car is heading outbound on the Illinois Railway Museum demonstration right of way.** |
| ***In this issue:***  **Page 2: Comments from Superintendent, Michael Hirvela in his *Mike's Minute* column*.***  **Page 3: The results of the Fox Division membership survey. Please review the results, the Board of Director comments, and think about how you can pitch in to help the division prosper. Let us know your thoughts. *"Many hands make for little work!"***  **Page 5: A layout wiring tip to save time and effort. Page 5: The 2024-2025 FVD meeting schedule.**  **Page 6: Help wanted.**  **Page 6: About the Fox Valley Division and the *Semaphore*.** |

# Mike's Minute ...

**Happy almost Spring!** Those who attended the FVD meeting at the Glenview Public Library (GPL) in February noted I was not there. I was in Madison, Wisconsin, with a modular group, The Bluff City Modular Engineers (of Lake County), participating in the 2025 Mad City Train Show. Overall, it was a good show as shows go, but attendance was affected by the weather. Cold and snowy on Saturday, such that I know folks who had pre-purchased Saturday tickets were calling the show asking if they could use the Saturday tickets on Sunday. Sunday had packed aisles and an inquisitive crowd. Overall, the preliminary attendance figure was 4,800. I did get a chance to wander the show floor and found something I had been looking for. And some other stuff.

**Division business:** The member survey: The division hadn’t done a survey in a number of years, and we’re going through the responses as you will find summarized herein. I’d like to thank those who participated by taking those few minutes it took to fill in the survey and get it back to us. These will help us understand whether we are satisfying your hobby needs and desires and will have an impact on future activities of the division. We received some interesting replies. Sadly, we received a response that a member had passed away. We would not have known if not for the survey.

**Election** for the next terms of Assistant Super and Paymaster will occur at the April meet. If you are interested in tossing your name in the hat for either office, contact me or the Chief Clerk, Rick Hoker.

**Meetings:** We will be at the Glenview Library for our March and April meetings and also over the net this time. The reason for moving the meetings around is to stretch our resources (meaning $$). The library doesn’t charge us for the room, while the Prospect Heights Park District does. We still may move the meetings around the division, so watch for notices. We are trying to be good stewards with what funds we do have. If you know of a place that could accommodate us - let me know! We need space and Wi-Fi.

You can see the full schedule, clinics and contest topics on page 5, or at:

**h**[**ttps://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.v2.html**](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.v2.html)

Always check the Timetable on the website for the latest meeting updates.

**The Semaphore:** The Semaphore newsletter has become a shorter web-based information platform which any member can access via a computer. We would still like a member to step forward and take over editorship. It’s not that tough and is very rewarding. We are doing a full length Semaphore this month to share the survey results and action.

**Happenings**: You can see a complete list of train related activities around the area posted on our website. Check out:

**h**[**ttps://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/rrevents.v2.html**](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/rrevents.v2.html)

**Summer Activities:** We’re already talking about a summer outing. Lots of ideas. Got one? Let me know. We are also planning on a layout tour or 2 plus an operating session for those interested. Stay tuned.

As we continue through our early 2025 schedule, I want to thank each and every member for their participation and support, no matter how you choose to contribute. I appreciate this more than you know. Planning has already started on the later half of 2025 and into 2026.

I hope everyone has a great summer of train watching. Regards, Mike Hirvela, Superintendent

**A couple of interesting links:**

If you have not seen it, check out the video tour of the Tichy Train Group factory tour.

**h**[**ttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4k9I2o6KVEE**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4k9I2o6KVEE)

Join Nowhere Video Productions as we explore the remains of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad's "Pacific Coast Extension" in its final stretch across the State of Washington. Join host Todd Hilton in this full length documentary featuring on-location footage, amazing drone video, and historical photographs. Courtesy of Bob Wundrock.

**h**[**ttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygue8DN-HUY**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygue8DN-HUY)

## FVD Survey Results:

The BoD completed the January 2025 survey of Fox Valley Division members. 105 invitations to participate were sent and 70 members opened the email. 37 members completed the survey. The BoD reviewed the results and came up with the several key points & take-a-way actions. They are listed below along with suggested actions.

* Hybrid meetings are the preferred offering.
  + We will continue with the hybrid meeting format.
* Meeting location does not seem to be a deterrent.
  + Physical location will continue to rotate with the goal of saving FVD financial resources.
* The meeting format and content appears to be acceptable.
* Several suggestions for additional meeting content were offered.
  + We can do hands on clinics - we need volunteers. Please sign-up to do a clinic. We will consider a Model railroad school.
* The ***Semaphore*** is a desired form of communication via email and PDF download.
  + We need a full-time editor - please help the division out.
* The content of the website is widely acceptable - more layout photos and projects requested.
  + We will look into layout photo sessions - we need volunteer layouts.
* 50% of respondents do not use Facebook - 30% do. Suggestions for additional Facebook content were offered.
* Layout tours and excursions were mentioned as desirable.
  + We will set up a summer excursion along with layout tours and operating sessions. This will require member volunteers.

### Please let us hear your thoughts on the survey & it's results!

**Email us at:** [**mwr.nmra.webmaster@gmail.com**](mailto:mwr.nmra.webmaster@gmail.com)

1. ***How do you attend FVD meetings?***

### Responses:

1. ***What format would you prefer the meeting be held?***

### Responses:

1. In person only.
2. ***How would you feel about only On-line meetings in the future?***

### Responses:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 14 | In person. | 1 | On-line. | 14 | Zoom meetings. |
| 16 | Virtually via the on-line Zoom | 22 | Hybrid. | 7 | Bad idea. |
|  | application. | 8 | I rarely attend. | 4 | No Opinion |
| 11 | I rarely attend. |  |  | 7 | I rarely attend. |
| ***4)*** | ***What meeting topics do you find interesting?***  ***Check all that apply.*** | ***5)*** | ***What other topics would you be interested in at the meets?*** | ***6)*** | ***Would you be interested in presenting or moderating a clinic?*** |

**Responses:**

22 News.

15 Oﬀerings.

17 Virtual clinics.

18 Hands on clinics

15 Model displays.

12 Model contests.

13 Modeling challenges.

16 Home layout tours.

### Responses:

1 Historical presentations

1 I enjoy hearing about the news of clubs that are within the division

1 Topics that are less esoteric and more general interest.

1 Converting prototype scenes

- activities into model work.

### Responses:

4 Yes

28 No

1. ***List your clinic topics?***

**Responses:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 11 | Group excursions. | 1 | Work shops where we could | 1 | Building Lighting. |
| 8 | Refreshments |  | help each other work on | 1 | Tourist Railroads of the west. |
| 11 | Q & A |  | models. | 1 | In the future. |
| 20 | All of the above. | 1 | I really loved the on-your- | 1 | Don’t know. |
|  | | | own home layout tours that |  |  |
| were conducted a few years |  |  |
| ago. |  |  |

## FVD Survey Results - continued:

1. ***Do you read the Fox Valley Division’s Semaphore publication?***
2. ***How would you like to receive the Semaphore news letter in the future?***
3. ***If you do not regularly attend the FVD meetings in person, what are some of your reasons why?***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Responses: Responses:**  32 Yes. 23 PDF File. **Responses:** | | | | | |
| 0 | No | 2 | MS Word file. | 1 | Need Ice Breaker activities. |
| 1 | Rarely. | 15 | Email format. | 8 | Other priorities, weekend. |
|  |  | 3 | US Mail. | 4 | Sunday conflicts. |
|  |  | 0 | Rarely read it. | 2 | Driving distance. |
|  |  |  |  | 3 | Not active anymore. |
| ***11)*** | ***Do you visit the FVD*** | ***12)*** | ***What FVD website pages*** | ***13)*** | ***What topics would you like*** |
|  | ***website?*** |  | ***do you occasionally visit?*** |  | ***to see on the website?*** |
| **Responses:**  **Responses:** 20 The Semaphore. **Responses:** | | | | | |
| 8 | Monthly. | 17 | The Timetable. | 1 | Member layout photos. |
| 13 | Occasionally. | 7 | Hobby Shops | 1 | Kit-Bashing. |
| 12 | Rarely. | 9 | News |  |  |
|  |  | 7 | Model celebration. |  |  |
|  |  | 10 | Railroad Events |  |  |
|  |  | 3 | Contact us. |  |  |
|  |  | 0 | Executive Handbook. |  |  |
|  |  | 4 | Local Clubs. |  |  |
|  |  | 9 | Clinic Notes. |  |  |
|  |  | 4 | AP Program. |  |  |
|  |  | 0 | Estate planning. |  |  |
|  |  | 7 | Model photos. |  |  |
|  |  | 5 | Prototype photos. |  |  |
|  |  | 8 | NMRA National. |  |  |
|  |  | 6 | Midwest Region. |  |  |
|  |  | 2 | All the above. |  |  |

1. ***Are you active on Social Media?***

### Responses:

1. ***What topics would you like to see on Facebook?***

### Responses:

1. ***Any additional comments?***

### Responses:

1. Open Houses & operating

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 10 | Facebook | 1 | Mainly if the meet is on. |  | sessions. |
| 8 | YouTube | 1 | Layouts. | 1 | I want to be more active. |
| 18 | Not a Social Media user. | 1 | DYI tips and videos. | 1 | Meet more modelers. |
|  |  | 1 | Member achievement. | 3 | Appreciate the BoD workers. |
|  |  | 1 | Meeting summaries. | 1 | More discussion on recruiting |
|  |  | 1 | Model photos. |  | new members. |
|  |  | 1 | Layout tour photos. |  |  |
|  |  | 1 | Schedule announcements. |  |  |

***Save some time and effort with a wiring tip from Jim Osborn, MMR®***

I recently added a pair of illuminated crossbucks on my layout. I used the *LogicRail* Grade Crossing Pro and expander unit controllers with Infrared diodes for train detection on a double track mainline. Unfortunately, there are 22 connections that had to be made under the layout. Fortunately, Steve Miazga, a fellow MMR***®*** passed on a tip to save both my time and effort.

Steve suggested buying some Wago "***Lever Nuts"*** to make the wiring connections a breeze. I found them at Home Depot in 2, 3 and 5 wire connection configurations. Get the ones that specify AWG 24-12 wire size. Those will work for almost anything we wire up on our layouts and they are the least expensive of the offering.

I mounted the controller PC cards on a small wood board for easy installation under the layout. In this case, I prewired 4 inch pig tails to the various controller connections that had more than one wire connection. Then I attached one Lever-Nut with the appropriate number of connections to the pigtails while sitting at my work bench. I also used a label maker to ID each of the Lever-Nuts. After installing the crossbucks and the IR components on the top of the layout, I mounted the controller assembly under the layout at a central point. I then ran the wiring from the various components to the controllers - using the Lever-Nuts to make the connections. It was amazingly fast and easy to make the final connections. Just lift the lever, insert a wire and close the lever. This saved time, effort and my back while lying under the layout. Life is short and we are all not getting any younger.

I know I could save money by using small wire nuts, but I have found that small wire nuts often do not make a reliable connection with fine wires - especially when connection is a solid wire to a stranded one. The wires often end up getting broken while twisting the connection - and then you get to do it all over again!

Here's a couple of photos of the Lever-Nuts off the Home Depot website so you'll know what to look for. They come in 2, 3 & 5 ports, cost about $0.32 to $1.00 a pop depending on the size - but in my view - they are worth it.

Model railroading is fun, -- have some fun! Jim



|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The 2024-2025 FVD meeting schedule:** | | | |
| Date | Clinic or Program | Model Celebration | Time & Location |
| Sept. 22, 2024 | Car Routing on the CNW Lakeshore Div. by Michael Hirvela | Any Freight Car | 1:30 at the GMC |
| Oct. 20, 2024 | Pulpwood cars by John Drozdak | Any Structure | 1:30 at the GMC |
| Nov. 17, 2024 | Dry Powdered Glue by Eric Petersen, CID | Load spanning 2-3 Cars | 1:30 at the GMC |
| Dec. 15, 2024 | Grand Central Station by Edward Koehler | A Humorous Load | 2:00 at the GPL |
| Jan. 19, 2025 | Other Livestock Operations by Steve Sandifer | Any Vehicle | 2:00 at the GPL |
| Feb. 16, 2025 | Swiss Rail Fanning by Mike Wood | A Train Photo | 2:00 at the GPL |
| Mar. 16, 2025 | Modeling Urban Scenes by Brian Sheron | An Unfinished Project | 2:00 at the GPL |
| Apr. 27, 2025 | TBA | A Diorama | 2:00 at the GPL |
| May 18, 2025 | TBA | Anything about trains | TBA |



***Semaphore Content and Help Wanted ....***

Interested in keeping the ***Semaphore*** alive? Send us your model or prototype pictures, stories, modeling tips, etc. to share with others in the hobby. **We are also looking for an editor!** Contact any officer with your interest at:

**h**[**ttps://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html**](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html)

## About the Fox Valley Division

**Superintendent, Mike Hirvela**

**Fox Valley Division Board of Directors**

**Asst. Superintendent, Denis Zamirowski Chief Clerk, Richard Hoker**

**Paymaster, Bob Landwehr**

**Achievements & Contests, Jim Landwehr Clinics & Programs, Gary Saxton**

**Social Media Coordinator, Keith Dart**

**Semaphore Editor, Vacant Ways & Means, Vacant**

**Membership Services, Erich Abens Membership Promotions, Mike Hirvela Web Technologies, Jim Osborn, MMR**® **Public Relations, Keith Dart**

**Need to contact any BoD members? Click this link to:**

**htt**[**ps://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html**](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html)

**©Copyright 2025 by the Fox Valley Division of the NMRA, Inc.**

If you receive this newsletter, you are an NMRA member & live in the Fox Valley Division area of the Midwest Region and of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA.) The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of Lake and McHenry, as well as parts of Cook and Kane Counties in northeast Illinois. About 150 members of varied ages and modeling ability levels are in the FVD. Almost all modeling scales are repre- sented in our division. Subscriptions to the Semaphore newsletters are free. NMRA membership is available through the NMRA at:

**htt**[**ps://www.nmra.org/**](http://www.nmra.org/)

2024-2025 FVD monthly meetings are held September through May on-line via the ZOOM virtual meeting technology & at various physical locations per the schedule in this issue. Each meeting features a clinic, modeling celebration of member projects, and infor- mation of interest to the membership. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions may also be organized.

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to answer your questions, help improve your modeling, and help you better enjoy the

great hobby of model railroading. Visit us on the web at:

**htt**[**ps://www.foxvalleydivision.org/**](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/)

The ***Semaphore*** is published by the Fox Valley Di- vision of the Midwest Region of the NMRA once a month, ten months a year, from September to June.

The Fox Valley Division of the Midwest Region of the NMRA is registered 501(c)7 not-for-profit Illinois corporation.

## Mailing address:

Fox Valley Division

P. O. Box 1535

Arlington Heights, IL 60005-1535

## Website:

**htt**[**ps://www.foxvalleydivision.org/**](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/)

Regular meetings are held virtually via Zoom and in person at the Gary Morava Center generally from 1:30 until 4:00 PM per the schedule listed in this publication and on its website at:

**htt**[**ps://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.v2.html**](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.v2.html)

Editor: Jim Osborn, MMR® Assistant Editor: Michael Hirvela Assistant Editor: Keith Dart

Follow us on Facebook:

**htt**[**ps://www.facebook.com/fvdnmra/**](http://www.facebook.com/fvdnmra/)