



THE SEMAPHORE

March 2025

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



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.

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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:

<https://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:

<https://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.

<https://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.

<https://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

1) How do you attend FVD meetings?	2) What format would you prefer the meeting be held?	3) How would you feel about only On-line meetings in the future?
Responses: 14 In person. 16 Virtually via the on-line Zoom application. 11 I rarely attend.	Responses: 2 In person only. 1 On-line. 22 Hybrid. 8 I rarely attend.	Responses: 14 Zoom meetings. 7 Bad idea. 4 No Opinion 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. 11 Group excursions. 8 Refreshments 11 Q & A 20 All of the above.	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. 1 Work shops where we could help each other work on models. 1 I really loved the on-your-own home layout tours that were conducted a few years ago.	Responses: 4 Yes 28 No
		7) List your clinic topics?
		Responses: 1 Building Lighting. 1 Tourist Railroads of the west. 1 In the future. 1 Don't know.

FVD Survey Results - continued:

8) *Do you read the Fox Valley Division's Semaphore publication?*

Responses:

32 Yes.
0 No
1 Rarely.

9) *How would you like to receive the Semaphore news letter in the future?*

Responses:

23 PDF File.
2 MS Word file.
15 Email format.
3 US Mail.
0 Rarely read it.

10) *If you do not regularly attend the FVD meetings in person, what are some of your reasons why?*

Responses:

1 Need Ice Breaker activities.
8 Other priorities, weekend.
4 Sunday conflicts.
2 Driving distance.
3 Not active anymore.

11) *Do you visit the FVD website?*

Responses:

8 Monthly.
13 Occasionally.
12 Rarely.

12) *What FVD website pages do you occasionally visit?*

Responses:

20 The Semaphore.
17 The Timetable.
7 Hobby Shops
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.

13) *What topics would you like to see on the website?*

Responses:

1 Member layout photos.
1 Kit-Bashing.

14) *Are you active on Social Media?*

Responses:

10 Facebook
8 YouTube
18 Not a Social Media user.

15) *What topics would you like to see on Facebook?*

Responses:

1 Mainly if the meet is on.
1 Layouts.
1 DIY tips and videos.
1 Member achievement.
1 Meeting summaries.
1 Model photos.
1 Layout tour photos.
1 Schedule announcements.

16) *Any additional comments?*

Responses:

3 Open Houses & operating sessions.
1 I want to be more active.
1 Meet more modelers.
3 Appreciate the BoD workers.
1 More discussion on recruiting new members.

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:

<https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html>

About the Fox Valley Division

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 represented in our division. Subscriptions to the Semaphore newsletters are free. NMRA membership is available through the NMRA at:

<https://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 information 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:

<https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/>

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Mailing address:

Fox Valley Division
P. O. Box 1535

Arlington Heights, IL 60005-1535

Website:

<https://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:

<https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.v2.html>

Editor: Jim Osborn, MMR®

Assistant Editor: Michael Hirvela

Assistant Editor: Keith Dart

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<https://www.facebook.com/fvdmra/>

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

<https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html>

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