THE SEMAPHORE

November 2026

NMRA

Midwest Region



The Green Spike by Jim Osborn, MMR®

I recently accomplished a "golden spike" moment on my home layout. Actually, I call it a green spike because I finally covered the last bit of barren track board with a yard scene of buildings and scenic material. The entrance and exit of the staging yard is shown above. The raised grade in the center under the buildings covers up turnout linkages and position sensors for controlling and signaling the yard. (Note the left side gray building flat enhanced with photographic sides and ends that I discussed last month.)

Continued on page 3.....

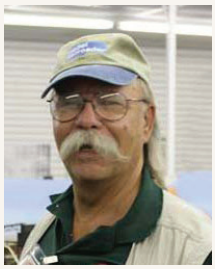
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About the Fox Valley Division, the Semaphore & FVD Board of Directors.

Next Division Meet - November 15, 2026 at the Mt. Prospect Library - 1::00 start.

November Model Celebration: **Any Structure - bring a photo if your favorite structure is not movable.**

Mike's Minute ... Our 2026-2027 season is well underway, and I am encouraged by the support of our members and the attendance at our monthly meetings thus far. I hope this Mike's Minute finds you not stuffed from left over Halloween candy, but looking forward to November's events and the upcoming holidays. In November, of course, is TrainFest at the Baird Center in downtown Milwaukee on November 7 and 8. Also, Veteran's Day, November 11, is a day to reflect on those who have served our country. If you have a chance, attend an observance in your area, you'll be glad you did. Additionally, November 14 is the Mid- West Region (MWR) Fall Board meeting which I have the privilege to attend and participate.



Our meeting locations have been changing as meeting room reservation schedules have gone crazy and costs continue to escalate. Certain places with meeting rooms only schedule their room two or three months in advance, and others have exorbitant per hour rental costs. As a result, our November's meeting will again be the Mount Prospect Public Library. December's meeting will be at the Morava Recreation Center in Prospect Heights. We are continuing to get locations nailed down for 2027. We may have to resort to Zoom meetings in the coming months, but it has not yet been decided.

Last time, I asked members of the division to contact their local library, park district or even a church you attend and ask whether they could accommodate a Sunday afternoon meeting for 3 to 4 hours. I heard from one member who inquired at his local library on the north side of Chicago without success. Most libraries and park districts serve their clientele who live within their boundaries. As an 'outside' organization, we are at the mercy of their schedules. So, let me ask again for the members to please contact your local entity and inquire about meeting space and let a board member or me know what you find. Of course, WI-FI and Internet access, a screen or LED TV for presentations are a big plus. Please let us know. We would like to be able to schedule January through May of 2027.

Please also check out the calendar of events on the FVD website. There's a lot going on through May next year.

See you at the next meeting. We'll let you know where.

May all your signals be green. Regards, MH, Superintendent

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

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

Also check out other RR events at:

https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/rrevents.v2.html

The Green Spike, continued.....

The yard is actually a 5 track staging loop to store & launch trains during operating sessions. The yard loop covers a helix in a corner of the train room. The freelanced area is what I call Proviso Yard - the eastern most point on my layout. It is rimmed by **Kings Mill** building flat photographs against the backdrop wall and has a few kit-bashed **Kalmbach** building flats that view block the center portion of the yard loop tracks. Rich Hoker helped move the project along by donating 5 very nice buildings from an estate collection that he brought to a recent FVD meet. The whole project took about 4 months to complete.

I like to develop scenes in layers. First a plot plan, then buildings, roads, ballast and ground cover. Next steps include various details such as trees, foliage, weeds, and brush. Finally, signs, junk, riffraff, people, lights and vehicles. There's nothing sacred about the order for me - just the concept of layers so the project doesn't have to be completed all at once. An added benefit is that you get a sense of the scene as you develop it -- and you can make any necessary adjustments.

So here we are, 18 years after the first board was cut and no more naked track board is showing. There's still plenty of room for additional details on the entire layout -- but, after all, model railroading is a journey not a destination. A couple of more photos of the yard and a few details about my layout are below. Model Railroad Projects are always Fun!
Have some fun! Jim Osborn, MMR .....



A landscape view of the departure end of the staging yard.



A glamor shot of the next day's scheduled work -- positioned and waiting for crews and clearances to depart. A description and a few details about the entire layout are on the following page.

The Western Division

Designed: 2006
Construction: 2007 - Present

Features:

Prototype-based, freelance design
550 ft. Mainline run
Single & double track mainline
40 foot long yard complex
250 & 100 car capacity freight yards
3 switching-orientated branch lines
23 car mainline freight lengths
Double-deck construction
150 foot helix run
NCE DCC Control System
Operating Target and Semaphore signaling using JMRI Panel Pro

NMRA MMR® Achievement Awards for: Cars, Dispatch, Civil, Electrical, Structures & Scenery categories.

Operations:

Point-to-point operations
4-Cycle Waybill car routing
2 Yardmaster positions
3 Branch lines with interchanges
Express & Local Passenger service
Dispatcher authority
9 operators per session
27 operating jobs per session

Contributing modelers:

David Leider, MMR®
Jim Allen, MMR®
Don Cook, MMR®
Jim Spice, MMR®
Michael Hirvela
Tom Mabie
Rich Hoker

Welcome to the Chicago & NorthWestern

as I remember it in the 1960's

Jim Osborn, MMR® Superintendent

The Chicago & North Western, Western Division is a prototype-based, free-lance model railroad inspired by my memories of the CNW during the 1960's. My interest in the CNW was cemented as a young boy growing up in Northlake, IL near Proviso Yard, the local roundhouse and the east-west Galena division mainline.

The model railroad operates between Proviso Yard (east staging) and Omaha , NB (west staging). Classification yards in West Chicago, IL and Mason City, IA handle all freight car traffic routing. The model operates double track between Proviso and Blairstown, IA. Unlike the prototype, the right-of-way continues west as single track to Omaha, NB. Three branch lines interchange with the mainline serving various towns and industries. These lines are the CBQ branch to Wellsburg, IA; the Sioux City branch from Cedar Rapids, IA and the Gravel City branch from Mason City.

Mainline manifest trains service the interchanges between Proviso and Mason City. Branch line turns depart from the various branch and interchange points, and local turns operate to and from the yard complexes. There are several unit trains that operate between the east and west termini, Gravel City and the Sioux City industrial complex.

Layout Specifications:

Scale: HO
Dimensions: 42 x 16 Irregular shape
Style: Walk-in, double-deck, one 50" duck-under
Era: 1960's or so - with modeler's license
Minimum Radius: 30" Mainline, 24" Branch line
Minimum Turnouts: #8 Mainline, #5 Branch line
Maximum Grade: 2% Mainline, 2.5% Branch line
Mainline Run: 550 feet
Total operating trackage : 1400 feet
Benchwork: Open-grid
Height: 33"– 37" Lower deck, 52"-57" Upper deck
Road bed: Cork on Micore 300 over 3/16 luan ply-board
Track: Code 83 Peco & Code 100 Atlas in the Helix
Control: NCE DCC, plug-in throttles, JMRI Panel Pro & Decoder Pro
Detailed scenery: 100% complete

The October model Celebration featured any car. See larger photos of the models brought to the meet on the web page at:
https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contests.v2.html



HO Scale RTR Illinois Terminal Observation Car, submitted by Denis Zamirowski.



LEGO Scale passenger car from the Harry Potter film series, submitted by Michael Hirvela



HO Scale Kit-bashed G.N. Wheel Car built by the late Don Cook.



HO Scale CNW Historical Society Kit of the Davies Steel Corp. Gondola, submitted by Jim Osborn.

The 2026-2027 FVD meeting schedule:

Date	Clinic or Program	Contest	Time & Location
• Sep. 20, 2026	Hand Laying 7-1/2 Gauge Track	Any Locomotive	1:00 pm @ MPL
• Oct. 18, 2026	Building a 7-1/2 Gauge Turnout	Any Car	1:00 pm Zoom Only
• Nov. 15, 2026	Using AI in Model Railroading by Pat Fleming	Any Structure	1:00 pm @ MPL
• Dec. 20, 2026	TBA*	Your Favorite Locomotive	1:00 pm @ GMC
• Jan. 17, 2027	TBA*	2 Refrigerated Billboard Cars	TBA*
• Feb. 21, 2027	TBA*	One Illuminated Structure	TBA*
• Mar. 21, 2027	TBA*	An Odd Consist	TBA*
• Apr. 18, 2027	TBA*	One Load Spanning 2 - 3 Cars	TBA*

We will also Conduct our Annual business meeting and hold the election of Assistant Superintendent & Paymaster at this meet. Contact the Superintendent or Chief Clerk if you would like to run for either office.

• May 16, 2027	TBA*	A Kit-bashed Structure	TBA*

* Clinics, programs, meeting location & start times will be scheduled as the year progresses. Always check the Fox Valley Division Timetable web page or the Semaphore for the latest program information.

*Location note: GMC = Gary Morava Center, Prospect Hts. - GPL = Glenview Public Library
MPL = Mt. Prospect Public Library: https://mppl.org/

Rail Related Happenings:

GREAT MID-WEST TRAIN SHOW (aka: the DuPage Swap), at DuPage County Fairgrounds, Wheaton, IL. 9 am to 3 pm, on the following dates: December 6, 2026 and in 2027: January 3, February 7, March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6

"Train Fest" at the Baird Center in downtown Milwaukee on November 7 and 8, 2026
https://www.eventcreate.com/e/trainfest-2026-reg

Rock River Valley Division Train Show April 3 & 4 2027
Harlem High School Gym, Alpine Rd. MacHesney Park, IL https://rrvd-nmra.com/

Titletown Train Show April 24–25, 2027 Green Bay Wisc. https://ttsgbllc.com/

2027 NMRA Convention in Tacoma, Washington August 10-15 https://2027.nmra.org/

2027 Midwest Region Convention Dates TBD

2028 NMRA Convention in Rochester,NY Dates TBD

For more details on these and other events, please visit the FVD Railroad Events webpage:
https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/rrevents.v2.html

NMRA

FOX VALLEY DIVISION

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 130 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/

2025-2026 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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Regular meetings are held virtually via Zoom and in person at the Gary Morava Center, Mt. Prospect Library or the Glenview Library generally from 1:00 until 4:00 PM per the schedule listed in this publication and on its website at:

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

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

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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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