

Train Orders

Official Newsletter of the New Jersey Division,
Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association



September 2026

Volume 37 Number 6

In September We're Back in Forked River

Glyn Thomas, Superintendent

Following close on the heels of our bumper August edition of Train Orders, this edition is abbreviated and intended to mainly provide details of the September meet. From a content perspective, it's dedicated to a summary of the members' survey results, which were presented by Thom at the August meet.

In August we had a beautiful summer's day for our extra meet at Switlik Park. Those who attended were treated to Ray Russell's excellent and thought-provoking pair of clinics on high- and low-voltage electrical safety. These were packed with practical suggestions to improve safety, but some layouts may require rewiring or rebuilding. I took away some immediate actions, and on the way home bought a fire extinguisher and fire blanket to be dedicated to the layout room. Other low-hanging fruit include cleaning out combustible trash from under the layout, disposing of end-of-life electrical equipment, and creating an evacuation plan for your layout room, especially considering that rooms can get busy during operating sessions and not everyone will be familiar with exit routes. Ray has offered to assist members with recommending electrical best practices if they're setting out on building a new layout, and we'd be happy to connect you if you're interested.

I was gratified when George Giacono brought his interpretation of one of the pocket module kits to the meet. The standard showed its benefits when we were able to attach it to the modular layout in seconds. George also brought a locomotive and caboose, which were life savers, since the ancient Rivarossi switcher I'd brought failed after a few circuits of the layout.

Summer is garden railroad season, and both Jim Shepard's inside and garden layouts were open as part of the August tour. Jim has done a great job of blending his outdoor railroad scene into the

naturally grown landscape.

Several Division members made the trek down to Chattanooga for the NMRA National Convention at the end of July. I couldn't attend, but I heard many positive comments from those who did go. Attendance in general was strong, and this gave everyone plenty of opportunities to connect across the hobby and across the country. This bodes well for the future of model railroading and the NMRA.

For the September meet we will be returning to Lacey United Methodist Church in Forked River. Our two clinics there will be Ralph DeBlasi on improving the performance of Athearn blue box locomotives and Joe Travia on building a farm stand from a craftsman kit. MineMountModels, who make the farm stand kit, will also be in attendance, so you can buy a kit to follow Joe's techniques at home. Our contest this month will be a railroad-related structure.

The September meet will also be the Division's Annual General Meeting. We will be ratifying the recent Board member elections and reporting on activities across the Division. We'll try to keep this brief, but it is your opportunity to question officers and make your comments heard.

Looking ahead, we have the Mid-Eastern Region convention, "Tracks to Tidewater", coming up between October 15th and 18th in Virginia Beach, VA. Preferential rates are available if you book before August 31st, so now is the time to commit to this. Let me or another Board member know if you're planning to attend and we can try to connect for a meal or the banquet.

See you in Forked River! 

Next Division Meet

September 19th
Lacey United Methodist Church
203 Lacey Rd, Forked River, NJ
08731

Clinics

Ralph DeBlasi - Improving Blue
Box Locomotives
Joe Travia - Building a farm
stand from a craftsman kit

Model Contest

Railroad-related Structure

Extras

Silent Auction

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George Giacono's N Scale Pocket Module



Jim Shepard's Garden Layout



Circus Train on Rick Spano's Layout

Train Orders

Official Newsletter of the New Jersey Division. NMRA
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126 Gary Drive
Trenton, NJ 08690

Train Orders is published 5 times per year for the NMRA members and friends of the New Jersey Division. Online newsletters are always available at the NJ Division website.

Mailed hardcopy newsletter is \$20.00 per year.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Division. Products and publications mentioned in Train Orders in no way constitute an endorsement by the Division. Train Orders welcomes contributions from the New Jersey Division membership. Letters, articles, photos and other items may be submitted to the editor. Please include return postage if you would like materials returned.

Division Officials

Superintendent: Glyn Thomas	Membership Director: Rick Stoneking
Interim Assistant Superintendent/	Director: Geert Marien
Clinics/ Contest: Thom Radice	Editor: Steve Woodward
Clerk/ Secretary: Gary Stroh (Joseph Zebrowski retiring)	Retiring Editor: Fritz Plenefisch
Paymaster/ Treasurer: Thomas Neukirchen	
AP Chair: Chris Conaway	

To contact one of the Directors of the New Jersey Division, fill out the [Contact Us](#) form found on the NJD website.

Visit us at <https://njdivnmra.org> and join us on Groups at: <https://groups.io/g/NJDivNMRA>

IMPORTANT NOTE: Scam emails have been reported requesting money for a division or charitable purposes. No one from the New Jersey Division will ever request money for gift cards or any other type of funds. These emails are completely fraudulent and should be ignored. If you're not sure, DO NOT REPLY to the email in question. Contact the official Director using "Contact Us" link as listed on the New Jersey Division website

NJD Information Page

NJ Division Meet

September 19th
Lacey United Methodist Church
Forked River, NJ

MER Regional Convention

October 15-18, 2026
"Tracks to Tidewater"
Virginia Beach, VA
Registration opens Spring 2026

Joint Meet with Philadelphia Division

November 7th
Brandywine Town Center
4050 Brandywine Pkwy
Wilmington, DE 19701

Joint meet with Philadelphia Division

Mid-January 2027
Deptford, NJ

NJ Division Meet

Mid-March
Switlik Park
Hamilton Township

Joint Meet with Garden State Division
May 2027

Membership Information

Any NMRA member who lives within the boundaries of the Division as defined by the NMRA is considered to be a Division member.

NJ Division Annual Activity Fee:
\$15.00 (optional and includes 5 meets) or individual meets \$5 at the door.

First time guests, no charge!

Model Contests and Displays

Each meet we run a model contest with the winner selected by popular vote. When we have a joint meet hosted by another division, this category becomes 'display only', with no voting. See the topics for the next few meets in the table below. The model that gets the most votes will get a Framed Certificate and a voucher to cover our yearly activity fee. When you come to the meet please remember to vote for Best in Show. Information cards, indicating provenance and any special features of a contest entry, are permitted as long as they don't identify the contestant.

Scheduled Meet	Contests	Special Notes
September 2026	A railroad related structure	
November 2026	No contest	
January 2027	Detailed diesel	
March 2027	Diorama depicting a railroad mishap	
May 2027	No contest	

August Contest Results - Head End Car

Bill Howard's entry in the August 2026 head end car contest.



Joe Zebrowski's winning entry in the August 2026 head end car contest.



Glyn Thomas's entry in the August 2026 head end car contest.

Awards and Certificates

Ray Russell receives Clinician Certificate for his stellar presentation on Electrical Safety, High and Low Voltage.

SECOND SECTION

Layouts open for viewing for the September Meet

We have 4 layouts open to visit at the time this TO is issued.

Maps listing them along with directions and the time they will be open are available at the meet.

Please contact a board member if you would like host an open house for your railroad when we are close to your area.

Layout #1

This multi-deck layout is based on the N&W's Pocahontas Division. Representing the late steam era in HO scale. Trackwork is about 90% done as is the electrical. Scenery is underway.



Layout #2

This multilevel "Jersey Beach Lines" runs from Jersey City, NJ to Beachwood, NJ in the early Conrail era. It is 100% scenicked and takes up 75% of the basement.



Layout #3

Operationally focused layout with a yard and 6 cities that receive 8 car trains, 1 car to each of the 8 industrial enterprises, so it requires a yard master and 6 engineers.



Layout #4

An active and historic club, with large layouts in O, HO, and S scales.

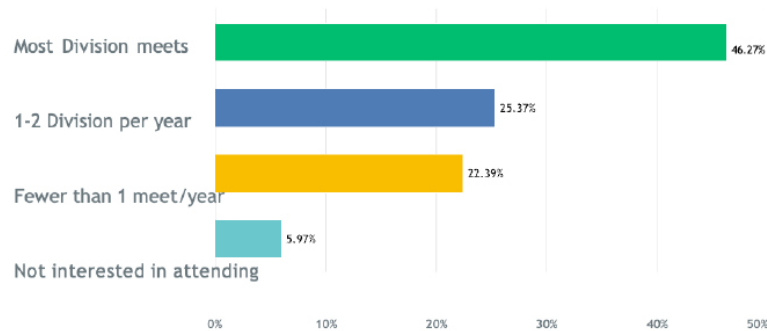


New Jersey Division Annual Member Survey

The annual member survey of the Division took place between May 26th and June 21st. We received 67 responses which is about a 38% response rate, and good enough to draw some statistical conclusions.

The results per question are summarized below.

The Division runs regular meets. I attend..

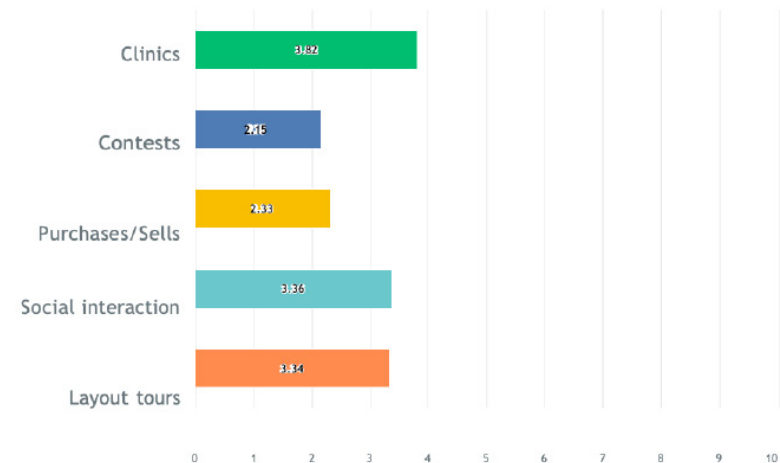


Why don't you attend more Division meetings?

Common themes:

- Too distant
- Age/health issues
- Scheduling conflicts, e.g., Other model train events
- Unexpected family needs/obligations.

How would you rank the relative value/ importance of the meet components?

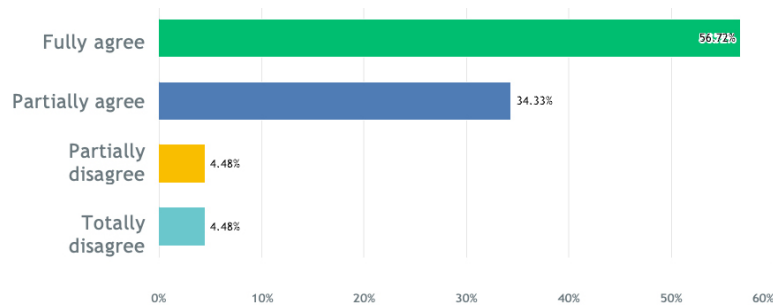


A suggestion I have that would help make the Division meets more interesting is...

Common themes:

- Running trains or Op sessions
- Brief descriptions on what members are working on
- Integrate audience participation, e.g., continue Works-in-Progress
- Outside clinicians/speakers
- Technology clinics
- Bring & Brag.

The New Jersey Division Board listens and responds to member's



Please list any concerns

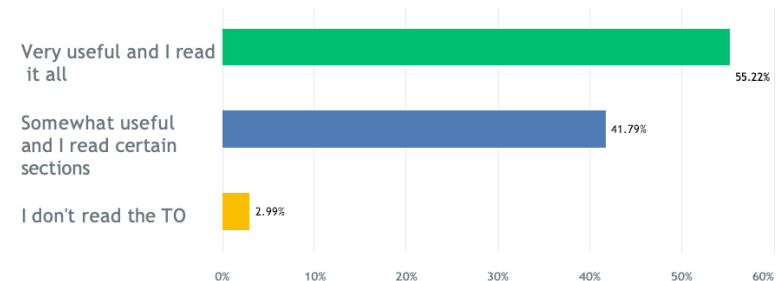
Common themes:

- None or NA (52), e.g., not here long enough to know; haven't interacted with the board to know; no issues.
- Reach out to new members, e.g., members are aging, and the need to attract younger and female modelers
- Continue the partnership with other Divisions
- Continue to pursue a mentoring process for new members
- A way for Board members to engage new members

Individual comments:

- Who and who cannot be open for layout tours? Members only or anyone. *[Ed. – this has recently been discussed at the Board and we've decided to not include non-member layouts in tours due to insurance concerns]*

How useful is the Division's newsletter, Train Orders?



Are there additional sections and content you'd like included in Train Orders?

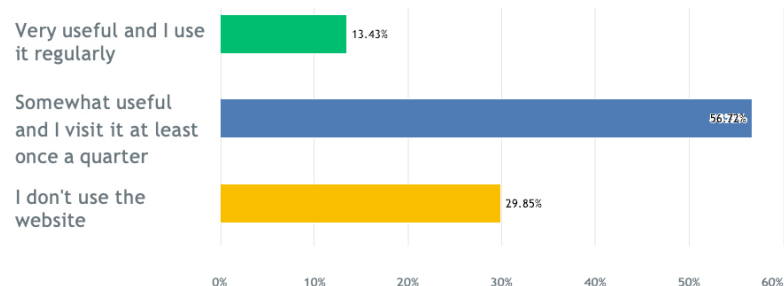
Common themes:

- NA, None (48);
- More layout photos, information about member layouts, or layout tour content;
- Operating sessions;
- An expert column and/or member articles;
- Coming events whether model railroad or railfanning; Sales section, e.g., how to list or buy.

Individual comments:

- Full explanation of the NMRA insurance and coverage
- More skilled modeling
- Have a more on-line presence
- More content of Division member activities, e.g., members share what they are doing in the hobby. Perhaps someone from the Board assists members with the writing of an article, or writing it for them, and less of the Board talking at us through the newsletter.

How useful is the Division's website?

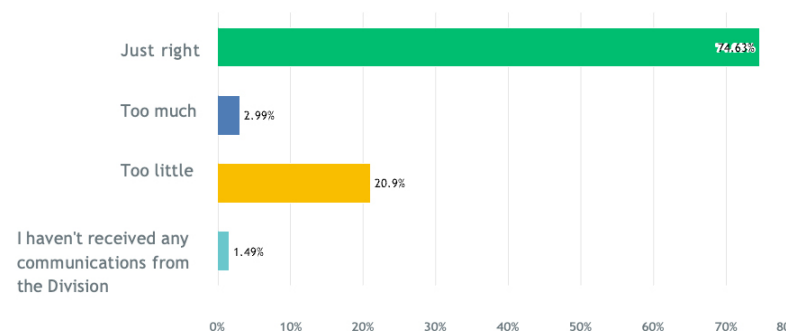


Is there additional content (or features) you'd like included on the website?

Common themes:

- Model building articles, e.g., suggested tips
- Sales section
- Frequent updates, e.g., modeling, member's layouts updates and/or photos
- Links or information about phototype events, e.g., Big Boy 4014
- Content about Division members
- Responses/answers
- NA or No (43)

How would you rate the frequency of written/email/social media communication from the Division?

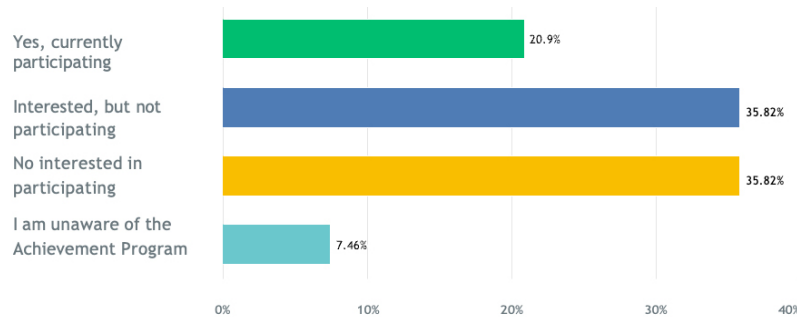


Suggestions I have regarding communications from the Division are...

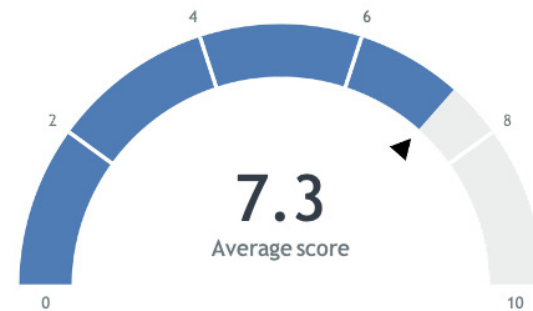
Common themes:

- Social media platforms, e.g., Discord, Facebook
- Post new members when they join
- Q&A to address member "How-to" modeling questions

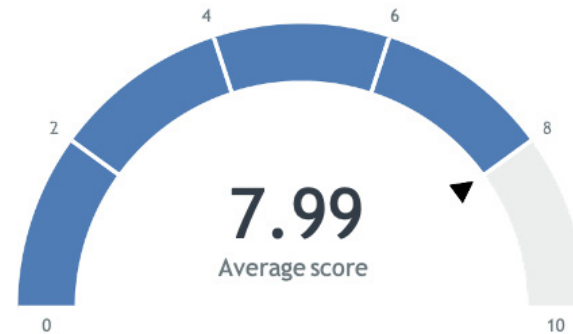
Are you interested in participating in the Achievement Program?



How likely are you to recommend joining the NRMA to a novice modeler?



How likely are you to recommend joining the NRMA to an experienced



What would make you more likely to participate in the Achievement Program?

Common themes:

- Nothing / NA / Not interested; too time consuming
- Clinic, Zoom tutorial or article about the benefits to learn more about the program; help getting started; accessibility to evaluators
- Continue to highlight during meets
- Less paperwork; clarify the paperwork requirements
- No favoritism; it's not a contest; not a competition; not a rivet counter
- Get more projects completed; need to complete required documentation
- Timely response to materials submitted for each certificate. It should not take a year or more to finally get your certificate. Talk about being discouraged participating.

Interchange Track

This section is intended to sell model railroad related items, any scale or era. Advertising is free of charge to any current NJ Division member, but is not open to vendors. Please send a brief description of the articles for sale, ideally with photos, with details of how to contact you and how articles will be exchanged (ideally, in-person at a Division meet). Information can be sent to the Division's Editor or Superintendent.

The family of past NJ Division member John Swift is selling his collection of photo slides. Photo slides of past NMRA conventions and PRRTHS railroad trips. 50 boxes holding 36 slides ea. Will take the best offer. Contact; Dianna Swift, 210-264-5568

Wall mounted 6 shelf locking and lighted HO display cabinet with wheel flange grooves. Wood base and shelves, aluminum frame.
48" W X 36" H. \$125.00
Joe Weisbrod
732-239-5640





ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD APPLICATION FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR

Member's Name _____ NMRA#: _____ EXP: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Prov: _____ Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____

The Golden Spike Award will be awarded to any NMRA member who has completed the Qualifications Checklist, obtained the necessary signatures and who does not hold MMR status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratchbuilding and superdetailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist, obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.

QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

☐ Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or super-detailed commercial kits.

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

☐ Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.

☐ Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or superdetailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

☐ Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.

☐ All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).

☐ Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Witness: _____ Name: _____ NMRA #: _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ Region: _____