Cantrak Train Running Guidelines

This document is designed to give members an idea of what they should be doing when running trains for Cantrak. While this is focused on shows, it is also applicable to play days although at play days you can expect more testing and more potential for issues, stopped trains, derailed trains, track fixes underway etc. Note that we have a "Show Manager" for each Show and / or Play Day, if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please direct them to the Show Manager. While we have a number of guidelines below, the Show Manager may decide to change specific items (such as Train length, speed, direction etc.) as they see fit.

A. Train Length:

1) When the viewing public comes by our layout they typically don't have a lot of time and will slowly walk by. Thus, in order to show them the most we can it is desirable to have multiple trains spaced out on the layout. To accomplish this, trains should generally be no more than 2 to 3 tables (8 to 12 feet) in length. Longer trains, up to what will fit within the fiddle yard are OK as long as they are running well and are not in constant need of attention (fixing derailments, stalls etc.). And shorter trains, including just running your engine around are just fine.

2) If you wish to run really long trains, talk to the show coordinator to schedule times to run your long train. All of the model train guys love to see long trains so we should schedule the running of these from time to time. When running your long trains, try to run at closer to prototypical speed (50 scale mph +/-).

B. Train Speed:

1) By necessity, all trains will need to run at the speed of the slowest train. Our viewing public is generally used to seeing toy trains and doesn't really understand the relative speed of our trains and so to keep interest, we need to keep to a decent speed. If we are running groups of trains (ideally 4 +/- at a time), those trains should be running around 60 scale mph. If you are running and are holding up multiple trains behind you then you are running too slow (even though it may be prototypical). If you are running and there is one train right behind you but other trains well spaced out then the train behind you is likely too fast so if you are running the train behind, slow down.

2) Trains should be well spaced out. At a minimum of about 2 table lengths (8 feet). If you are running multiple trains, you may want to change this distance.

3) Unless otherwise noted, Train Speed will be judged based upon a speedometer. Either a portable or a built in one (currently on the Engine Repair Return Loop).

4) If you wish to run your train at faster speeds, you can slow down until the straight is clear and run quickly down to the other end however, you may wish to talk to the Show Manager and get a time slot to run fast trains, that way you can do multiple circuits at a high rate of speed.

5) Similarly, if you wish to run your train at slower speeds than “normal”, please talk to the Show Manager and get a time slot to run slower trains.

C. Train Direction:

1) Our normal running direction is in a counterclockwise direction with the outside (closest to the front) set of rails (at the 4 ½” mark) running from left to right (from the spectator viewpoint). Note that you may at times want to back up on the mainline for switching operations. If you are doing this, it is your responsibility to NOT impede the flow of other trains and if someone runs into you, you get to pay the fine, not the person running the other train.

2) If you decide you wish to run in the opposite direction, in the words of Elmer Fudd, “be vewy, vewy careful”. Or, better yet ask the show manager for a time slot when you can run in the opposite direction.

D. Train Parking:

1) No parking of trains is permitted on the mainline. The only stopping of trains on the mainline is when you are waiting for another train (eg someone is rerailing a recalcitrant engine / car). Or, you are stopping to back up onto a siding.

2) If you wish to park your train on the layout off the mainline, we ask that you park for no longer than about an hour. The exception to that would be if you are running multiple trains and wish to park one while running another but again try not to park any one train for more than an hour. There are 3 potential parking areas on the layout:
    1) The fiddle yard:
        a. The intent of the fiddle yard is to set up trains to go run them, then bring them in to take them off the track.
        b. If you wish to park a train to go for lunch or for a break you can use the fiddle yard to do so. Please park in an area that is closest to the back board and again, if you are gone longer than about an hour, please remove your train to make room for others.
    2) Sidings:
        a. Sidings have two purposes. One is to populate them with trains so that there is more for the viewing public to see and the other is to park trains temporarily so you can have a break.
        b. When it is your module, you are free to do whatever you like.
        c. If you are parking on someone else’s module and intend to be there for more than about a half hour, please talk with the module owner to make sure they are OK with that.
        d. If you are parking on a club module siding, we again request that you only park for an hour to let others park if they want to. If you are there for an hour and move to some other location, that’s fine as long as you’ve freed up the siding for 15 to 20 minutes.

e. If you are parking on a siding which has a switch to turn off power to the siding we recommend that you use that switch so that your engine (and lit passenger cars) don't consume power.

3) Return Loops:
   a. Each of the return loops have 2 separate loops and either loop can be used. The "mainline" is the straight through loop which is reached by not throwing any turnouts. That section needs to be kept clear at all times.
   b. The second loop can be used to park trains but as it is also used as a passing section, parking should only be used if other spaces (sidings, fiddle yards) are full.

E. Run Schedule:

1) Unless otherwise noted, you are free to run your trains at any time you'd like. We like to have a minimum of 4 trains running at a time (dependent upon layout size) to generate interest from the public so if you are at an event and there are fewer than 4 trains (and especially if there are fewer than 3 trains), then please put one of your trains out.
2) If you are at an event and didn't bring any trains or would like to try something different, talk to other members there. The club has a number of trains that it owns and some will generally be available plus, many folks bring 2 or 3 or 4 or more trains and are fine with other folks taking them out for an hour or so.
3) Depending upon the show there may be a "run schedule" where the show manager has put together a daily (or part day) schedule indicating who is running at what time. If this is the case and you wish to run a train and you aren't on the schedule, please check with the show manager (or the folks currently running trains) to make sure it is OK to run your train. Normally that's fine.

F. Public Presentation:

1) For our shows we are there for the public and need to maintain a professional and courteous mannerism. We should all be wearing our Blue Cantrak golf shirts along with a name tag that identifies us.
2) If you are not running trains, please consider walking around the outside of the layout and talking with people. All you need to do is to say hi, ask them if they have any questions and if they don't seem interested in chatting, move on. If you'd like to start a conversion with them you can get more in depth and ask them a few questions about what they like about trains or our layout or a specific engine and go from there. Yes, there are times when we are tired and want to just sit down for a bit and we should but we don't want to have a half dozen Cantrak folks sitting behind the fiddle yard chatting between themselves when there are lots of spectators. Play Days and other sessions are for when we want to chat amongst ourselves.
3) If you are running trains remember that your highest priority is running your train and running into the back of someone else will incur a penalty regardless of the reason. Answering a couple of short questions from the public can be done pretty easily while still running (as long as you weren't too close to the train in

front) but if it becomes more involved than that you'll either need to stop your train (but as per the above we don't want trains stopped on the mainline) or move into a siding (this is where occupying the second return loop as a siding is beneficial).

G. Signup Sheets:

1) WiFi unit:
    a. Each of the Digitrax LNWI units can handle up to a maximum of 4 people. To be safe we'd like to just use 3 slots until all 3 units have the first 3 slots occupied then move to the fourth slot.
    b. The signup sheet is by the OUT module. Check which WiFi address you are using (LNWI #1, #2 or #3) and record your name and device you are using.
2) DCC Address List:
    a. We are using this to help make sure that we don't have DCC address conflicts.
    b. Put your name on the sheet and write in the DCC addresses you plan to use after checking to make sure that a given address is not being used.
    c. If someone else is already using that address then talk to them to figure out who is going to run and when as you can't both use the same address at the same time.

H. Additional Items:

3) Track Cleaning:
    a. Our modules often sit for months in dusty conditions and the areas we run in are often dusty as well. As such, the track should be cleaned once the layout is set up as well as at the start of every day, at a minimum. Please use appropriate track cleaners, NOT sandpaper or files. Note that you may need to use a small piece of sandpaper inbetween the rails on a turnout that routes power as these connections can fail over time.
    b. It is best to do a "track cleaning session" where everyone stops running and the track is cleaned.
    c. After cleaning I will run a locomotive around and carry a club track cleaning cork with me to do a quick clean on any areas that still suspect.
4) Scenery Repair:
    a. As our modules age, they begin to show issues with the scenery. If it is a member's module then they should be doing regular maintenance to keep the module looking great. However, if it is a club module then it is up to the membership to keep it looking great. If you see a module that needs some repair, discuss this with the show manager and bring along a few scenery materials and repair the module first thing in the morning (or last thing in the evening).
5) Security:
    a. Our little trains are valuable and we don't want to loose them. We put up a barrier to create a bit of distance between the modules and the public however the public tends to push this in over time so if you see this, please put the barrier back where it was. And, if you see anyone reaching across

to “touch”, please remind them not to. And, speaking of the barriers, they will often come apart, especially as kids try to lean on them. When this happens please reconnect them.

b. If the barrier is coming apart at one location consistently, masking tape can be used to secure. I’ve found that putting a strip of tape on lengthwise and then adhering each end with a circumferential strip works well.

6) Electrical:
   a. If, for some reason the layout quits working please contact the show manager or a member of the electrical team. Also, if you have members of the public that would like to talk to someone about this, please direct them to the electrical team / show manager.
7) Problems:
   a. If you experience a problem, please troubleshoot it to the best of your ability within reason and then document it and give that documentation to the show manager. There is always a pen and some paper around to do so. We are all very busy at shows so it would help if you followed up after the show by sending an email to the show manager.
8) Turnouts:
   a. Remember to throw any turnouts back to the mainline once you’ve crossed the turnout.
   b. While the majority of our turnouts are manual, the ones within the fiddle yard and on the Entry / Exit module are electronic. Please use the appropriate button / switch to activate them and refrain from manually activating them except in case of an emergency.
   c. We have one turnout (and Glenn’s Alsask module has a few) turnouts which are controlled by a hand switch and can NOT be moved by any other means than that switch. It has a green painted side for “straight through” and red painted side for “diverging”. Again, return to the default running position when you use this.

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