



## Background to the HOTRAK Club

The Ottawa Valley HOTRAK club was founded in April 1996 as a reincarnation of an earlier modular club in Ottawa that had disbanded a few years earlier. The founding members got together and laid out some basic principals for the club. The three most prominent were, Operations, double and single track Main Line running and loop to loop operations with branch lines as opposed to running in a circle as virtually all other modular groups did at the time. They set out Standards for module construction based on Moccasin Modular Railroad Club Standards and Free-mo Standards and adjusted them as needed to marry the two together using Transition Modules. All modules or groups of modules were to be independent from each other and had to physically and electrically match at the interfaces.

The next major decision was how to power the layout. Block Control was looked at and quickly discarded as the realization of what a horrendous logistics problem there would be in trying to wire it, connect modules together and control it. Digital Command Control (DCC) was just coming on to the market at this time and the only other system readily available was CTC16. DCC was chosen as the wave of the future since it had much greater capacity for Cabs and was an off the shelf and ready to install product. Digitrax was chosen as the Standard for the Club.

From September till June the Club gets together approximately every four to six weeks for an Operating Session. Mixed in with this we also participate in the Railfair Train show every other year and each year the OVAR (Ottawa Valley Associated Railroaders) Rally and the OVAR Flea Market. For an Operating Session a call goes out to the members for what modules are available and a Track Plan is developed. On the appointed weekend the members gather and assemble the Layout. The Layout can be set-up and ready to run in as a little as two hours, but usually when the set-up room is available on the Friday evening we do a more leisurely set-up of about four hours with lots of socializing.

The room we normally set up in is about 40 feet by 86 feet and we will have about 50 to 70 modules in the layout. A typical layout is a Main Line comprising of single track and double track sections with a large Yard and return loops at each end. There may also be one or more Branch lines coming off the Main Line. Our largest layout to date was about 110 modules in a 60 by 100 feet Ballroom in January of 2005.

A typical Operating session on Saturday starts about 10:00 AM in the morning and runs through till 4:00 to 5:00 PM in the afternoon. We operate with a Dispatcher when traffic on the Main Line warrants it and use Car Cards and Waybills to make our deliveries. The Yard Master will assemble any where from two to five Locals for doing deliveries around the Layout and simultaneously there will be Passenger Operations going on using trains the size of Continental Trains down to RDCs and Doodlebugs.

After the Operating Session is finished on Saturday the Layout is then available to members with very few restrictions on what they do. This is the time when Members get out their new equipment to try it out and break it in.

On Saturday Evening a number of the Members will retire to a local Pub for Supper and a Union Meeting after which they will come back and run trains until they drop or the management of the building shuts us down which could be the wee hours of the morning.



On Sunday the Operating Session again runs from about 10:00 Am till 4:00 PM after which we Tear down the Layout and pack it all away. Tear down generally takes about an hour and a half. During the weekend the Club usually runs one Clinic each day. At a Set-up you can find expertise on virtually every aspect of Model Railroading.