



Controlling trains

The trains are controlled by a digital command system (Digitrax) that enables multiple trains to operate on the same section of track, even in opposite directions! This is accomplished by throttles which send signals to a command module which relays the signals along the tracks to a special computer card inside the locomotive called a decoder. We can run up to 122 locomotives concurrently (but we don't).

Our digital system is connected to a computer and software called JMRI which allows us to also run trains by mobile devices like phones and tablets by installing the free Engine Driver app (Android) or the free WiThrottle app (iOS).

Most of the time you control your own train. But for two hours on Sunday, the club has a dispatcher direct your train using two-way radio headsets for additional realism and fun.

What we operate

We have passenger trains based on North American and European prototypes. Our short freight trains serve local industries with a mix of freight car types while our long freight trains often serve unit or specific interests like automotive, intermodal or tank trains.



A scene from the Wilkes Crossing module

New Members

Have an interest or passion for model railroading? We have a probationary period to see whether club membership will work for you.

Regardless of your model railroading experience, we have an orientation program that can be tailored to your expertise and knowledge. It teaches club specific procedures and safe train operations.

Contact the club at our e-mail address.

Ottawa Valley HOTRAK

Eastern Ontario's largest modular railroad club
operating trains of all types, eras and locales
since 1996.



Website: <http://www.hotrak.ca>
Contact: hotraksec@gmail.com

About HOTRAK

Our Philosophy

At HOTRAK we are a diverse group of people who share an interest in the world's greatest hobby. Our 50 some membership includes ages from under 15 to over 70 ranging from inexperienced to master of all hailing from Ottawa, Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec. We are a welcoming club and encourage membership regardless of age or experience. You only need to have fun!

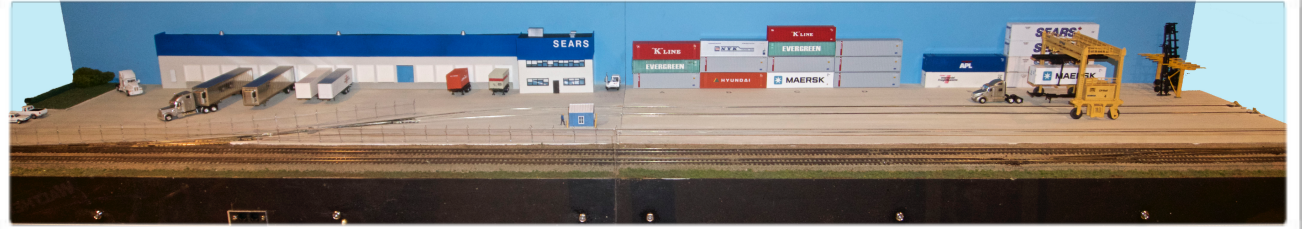
Our model railroading approach

HOTRAK is an HO scale modular railroad club that integrates double and single track modules into large free-form layouts. These layouts fill a large hall in Little Italy 8 times a year. We use Digital Command Control (DCC) and easy operations through a car-card/waybill system.



The OVAR boxcar has been spotted at Adamson's Car Shop for inspection. Photo: Mike Hamer

Vaughan Intermodal module



What we do

First and foremost we run trains! 8 times a year (September through May) we get together for a weekend (until 3:30pm on Sunday) to run trains over a layout which is different each operating session. During our operating weekends, members come and go as their schedule permits.

Secondly we socialize with like minded individuals to learn about the myriad of aspects that make up the hobby of model railroading and to enjoy the camaraderie that comes from shared interests.

Our modules and layouts

Our layouts are built around the concept of a module which is a small, stand-alone block(s) of track with a specific purpose or industry. Since these blocks (typically 2ft by 4ft) connect in a standard way with other modules we can rearrange them like puzzle pieces, but the final puzzle looks different each time.

The layouts typically involve over 66 modules, including over 40 industries and a large freight yard. This allows us to design freight and passenger operations plans with an eclectic and diverse set of rolling stock filling a 40X80' room.

How we operate

We use a well established, easy to learn, system to run our trains. Ready made trains are pre-staged at the yard. Set your locomotive on the track, hook up to the train and get your instructions (train card and car-card/waybills) from the yardmaster. These cards tell you where to go and which freight cars in your train need to be set out and picked up at the various industries on each module. We even give you a map to navigate around the layout. Just be sure to watch out for those non-scheduled through freights barreling over the layout at high speed!

Passenger trains run according to a series of timetables and indicated station stops. Local trains follow a set route and stop at all stations. Regional trains make fewer scheduled stops just along the mainline while Trans-Canadian trains only stop at major stations. Excursion trains take people for a ride and stop for photo ops occasionally.

It's not uncommon for an operating weekend to see more than 10 different trains be run 77 times accounting for 17 hours of train running using 180 freight cars. Once a year in January, we set up in a large ballroom where the layout size grows to almost 60X90 feet!

Operating sessions are the essence of the club and where all the fun happens!