



FEBRUARY & MARCH 2005

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From The Editors' Desks

- The change of seasons is always a time for celebration. This spring (or fall, depending on where you are), why not celebrate your membership in NERR by rediscovering some of the older routes? With lots of work orders added in the past few months, there's bound to be one you haven't run.
- For the purposes of the email pdf version of *Ramblings*, we have combined the February & March editions. There are a total of 43 pages – enjoy!

31 March

- 1 **new work order** for you today - on the East Metro division - NEEM-268-01a. It's 10:35am on a clear autumn day. For the next hour, you will be driving a pair of U23Bs plus tank cars, box car, and caboose in part 2 of the Oil City Local work order. In this part you will perform the switching tasks at Oil City to set out the delivered empty tank cars and supplies, and prepare your train for the return trip to Big City with the loaded tank cars.

29 March

- The latest **NERR Award of Excellence** has been given to **Rick Foss**, aka silvermeteor (ID# 42). The award citation reads:

"Rick has been with us since September 17, 2003. Rick has created many of our maps and graphics on the site. He also has been instrumental in the opening of a new VR and can always be counted on to help out. Thank you for all the hours of fun! Rick Foss is a model engineer."

The boxcar issued to commemorate Rick's award can be downloaded from the Download Roster page.



- **Mike Simpson, the developer of Route-Riter**, the MSTS utility that many of us regard as essential to our sanity when we use MSTS and install new routes, work orders, and equipment, posted the following message at t-s.com a day or two ago:

"New Route-Riter uploaded - Possibly the last one?"

"I have uploaded v6.2.55 of Route-Riter here today; it should be available within a few days. I have also uploaded a patch for existing users on my site and Yuri's site. New version includes options to Alias sound/cabview files, and a Fix .CVF file option.

I have been working on RR for many hours each week since 2001. This has involved myself in considerable costs (2 PC upgrades, software etc) of nearly \$5000. I am a disabled pensioner.

On top of this, I have sent/received some 2,500 emails regarding RR and answered several thousand queries on various forums.

Route-Riter has been downloaded over 60,000 times in various versions from sites worldwide.

So, when in January this year, I placed a PayPal logo on the RR start-up screen to enable users to make a small donation towards my costs, I did think that a few users would contribute say \$5 towards the cost of maintaining the program.

However, since then, I have received only a handful of contributions, one of which was very generous, so it would appear that the majority of users do not think the program is worth anything at all.

Under the circumstances, I am now considering withdrawing the program altogether and concentrating on other hobbies, as it hardly seems worth the effort (and the sarcastic emails I get from time to time) if no one is interested in the first place.

Mike"

Mike also posted the message at the forums at UKTrainSim.

There was an immediate wave of responses from all sections of the MSTs world saying how much they would miss having Mike's program available to them. Many said that they would contribute now, using the PayPal link on the program's front page.

Mike later posted the following message:

"Just a quick note to say thanks to all who have responded to my posting.

I posted my message yesterday following a few recent emails which frankly p...d me off and made me wonder why I was bothering at all. I was not really after payment for the program, if that had been the case, I would have brought that in with version 2, not v6.

All your kind words have made the world of difference.

Thanks,

Mike"

Now, to make sure that Mike does not feel that we do not appreciate his much hard work and wonderful utility - and the amazing speed with which he responds to requests for additions or changes or patches, please consider either or both of the following:

- Send Mike a message in the NERR forums (or the other forums, or by email) to let him know the positive benefits that RR has had on your enjoyment of MSTs.
- Send Mike a \$ contribution to help him with the costs of continuing to provide us with a brilliant add-on to MSTs.
- If you are into graphics work in MSTs, you should note that **AceIt v1.3.1** is now available over at t-s.com. "AceIt is a program designed to produce Kuju ace format texture files from many common image formats. It is intended to be used as a replacement for the makeace and makeacewin tools. DirectX 8.1 or higher and a graphics card capable of 32-bit Direct3D modes are required. Now includes 16-bit dither optimizer. By Scott M. Miller Also includes TGATool2a by Martin Wright."
- If you have the payware **Niagara Corridor route** from Maple Leaf Tracks, you can now download the cab update for the locomotives that are supplied with the product. You will find the 15+Mb download on the Maple Leaf Tracks website.
- Joe has posted an update for the **North Coast Railroad** route in the NCR forum section of the NERR forums - it's a 1.9Mb download that adds to the flexibility of the route for our work order developers.
- 1 **new work order** for you today - on the Full Bucket Line - NEFB-100-8: You will be in charge of a GE 44 ton diesel locomotive for this work order today. It should take you a bit over 2½ hours for this one. It consists of a yard switching job to assemble Train 200-2 in the Fort Fairfax yard. The switch list is in the documentation, but, just to give you a taste of what you are in for, here is a summary:

- Pick up #619 and 620 from Siding 4 and set out on Siding 1.
- Pick up #308 from Siding 1 and set out on Siding 2.
- Pick up #113, 114, 115, 116, 1024, 636, 617, 915, and 710 from Siding 1 and set out on Siding 3.
- Pick up #545 from Siding 2 and set out on Siding 4.
- Assemble on Siding of your choice:
 - For ST JOSEF: Cars # 605, 609, 1213 and 1214 from Siding 3;
 - for YONDER: Cars # 614, 615 and 1022 from Siding 3;
 - for NEWTON: Cars # 542, 544, and 546 from Siding 4, 535 from Siding 2, 703 from Siding 3 and 536 from Siding 2;
 - for LAKE HURST: Car #621 from Siding 4;
 - for PROVING GROUNDS: Car# 905 from Siding 3; and
 - for MOUNT OLIVER: Cars # 1012 from Siding 4, 433 from Siding 2, 1013 from Siding 4 and 434 from Siding 2.
- The final consist should be 19 cars. This will be the pickup for NEFB-100-8A.
- This work order will terminate when you run #1044 to FORT FAIRFAX WYE 2.

And that's it! That should keep your palms sweaty for a while! 😊

28 March

- You can find some great looking French locos and rolling stock at the [Project ESK page](#), including a TGV, steam locos, a very interesting railcar, crane set, electric and diesel locos, passenger coaches, and some DMUs. And there are plenty of French routes available to run them on.
- **Other Downloads Page**: Route-Riter version 6.2.55 is available. Mike Simpson, the developer of R-R, writes: "New options - 'Fix .CVF files' to fix bad CabView entries, and a new option on the Unicode Editor screen to automatically insert Sound and CabView aliases into .ENG files. There is also a new, separate Help file to find out how these work."

27 March

- **Other Downloads Page**: Route-Riter version 6.2.53 is available. There was another update (6.2.51) yesterday, but Mike was too quick for us and brought out this latest version. The changes in the two latest versions are:
 - v6.2.51 - "I have fixed a bug in the 'Fix .Eng' option whereby it was possible for the WagonShape entry to be accidentally deleted from an .eng file. The Fix .sms option has been improved; it fixed automatically around 80% of 500 bad .sms files on a test system. The MSTs Path option on the Files menu has been improved so that invalid paths can no longer be input. "

- v6.2.53 - "Includes a new option to Activate/Deactivate Routes in MSTs. This works similarly to the program 'Routes on/off' but works on systems with multiple installations of MSTs. Deactivating a route simply renames the route's .trk file (e.g. Europe1.trk to Europe1.off). Reactivating it turns the route back on. This makes MSTs load much faster. Using this option will also show which routes are on/off, and for users of TrainStore this will indicate which are probably in store (but will not unstore them for you). "
- 2 **new work orders** today - you can get them from NEAWOS. A quick preview for you:
 - **Chippewa Valley** - NECV 110-SF03g Cascadia Loads - Special Freight. You climb into your SD70 with the AC6000helper and leave at 1915 hours on a clear summer evening. Cascadia Mines Inc. Hoodoo Pass District plans a large expansion of their mining operations, due to the discovery of very large high grade ore deposits. To gain access to the ore bodies, new tunnels (drives) need to be driven from the existing mining area to reach the ore bodies. Then new mining galleries need to be built, so that mining of the ore can commence. Many materials are needed, including explosives, treated logs, shoring fixing systems, cement, heavy machinery, and new drilling equipment. Also new railway lines for the underground haulage system. You need to collect the required loads from various NERR Divisions. In this work order, you will transit through the Chippewa Valley District.
 - **North Coast Railroad** - NENC-018-04. You and your USRA 4-6-2 (Pacific) work a passenger run from Alderpoint to South Fork on a clear spring morning. Once a week, Train 20 heads north from Willits, stopping at all the logging camps, shifting the logging crews in and out. You're driving Train 20 today, continuing on up towards Scotia. This is part four of the work orders for Train 20.
- Another **new/revised route** is now available at t-s.com - the "BNSF/UP Route Whitefish 6 (2 zip files totaling something over 60Mb) - Sandpoint & Eastport. It requires XTracks (any version). It now includes Stryker-Eureka, Bonners Ferry and Sandpoint reworked. Major update, rework and extension of Route Whitefish 2 (BNSF Kootenai Subdivision)."
- And if you are into **payware routes**, Maple Leaf Tracks has recently released its first new route since the break-up of the company. From their [website](#):

"**Niagara Corridor** is a recreation of Canadian National Railway's Dundas Subdivision. As part of the CNR's corridor through Southern Ontario, Canada, it has high speed Via Rail passenger service, Norfolk Southern trackage rights runthroughs, as well as an unending number of hotshot, wayfreights, and heavy manifests of Canadian National.

The route starts in Hamilton, Ontario, at the Western end of Lake Ontario through the world famous railfan location of Bayview Junction and climbs the Niagara Escarpment at over 1%. It then levels out across some of Canada's heartland agricultural areas and urban centers. Many industries dot the right of way with yards and stations all modeled to give the look and feel of the region."

25 March

- 5 **new work orders** today - you can get them from NEAWOS. A quick preview for you:
 - CGW route - Transit through the Chicago Great Western District from Stockton to Chicago. Pick up Helpers from the Helper siding. Pick up the consist from the

East Stockton 7, and then pick up the original consist from East Stockton 5.

- A passenger work order that is the final leg of Ike's trip to Florida.
- 3 passenger work orders on the North Coast route - 2 Passenger runs taking loggers to camps, with some mixed freight duty also, and 1 that is a continuation of a local passenger/freight run northbound from Willits.

24 March

- **Other Downloads Page**: Route-Riter version 6.2.49 is available. It was developed a couple of weeks ago but has just been added to our website.
- As far as I know, there has been no update to the version of ConBuilder that is currently available on our website - 2.3.28.

23 March

- **Other Downloads Page**: The latest version of XTracks (3.13), with Build 29 of the Global tsection.dat file, is now available in self-extracting form - easy for everyone to install.
- There are 17 rookies involved in the WCN induction program, all but one of whom joined in March. It's great to see new engineers joining up.
- In the next few days, the HR Department will be following-up on engineers who have not fulfilled their commitment to submit 2 NERR time slips each month to ensure that they still want to be members of the NERR. If you are in this category, you have until the end of the week to bring your callboard entry up to date. If you don't, then there will be a number of new yellow entries on the callboard.
- And there are still a good number of MSTs **routes under construction** or just released in both North America and Europe - a great sign that the MSTs VW is still strong. These routes include:
 - version 9 of Wupper Express and a new version of the Stadtbahn tramway route available soon.
 - Maple Leaf Tracks has released their new Niagara Corridor payware route.
 - a new Dijon to Paris route in France is progressing well.
 - the LIRR line into Brooklyn, along Atlantic Avenue - an elevated route that will include freight movement opportunities - not yet finished.
 - available now from t-s.com - the Norfolk Southern Pocahontas District Route 1.0, which runs from Bluefield WV to Williamson WV. Deep within West Virginia coal country, the Pocahontas District covers 250+ miles of double track mainline and numerous mine branches.
 - also from t-s.com - GM&OSS "The Springfield Switch". This route traverses the corn and hay fields of central Illinois around the Springfield area. You can see Lincoln's Tomb off in the distance, and the Illinois State Capitol and lots of farmland while running the route.

Average hours per time slip	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.55	1.92	1.54
Total wages	\$43,290	\$37,296	\$37,014	\$47,070	\$36,117	\$55,041	\$48,045
Average wages per time slip	\$54	\$48	\$52	\$49	\$47	\$57	\$46

- Some **work order statistics for February 2005** :

Work Order Name	Times Run	Ranking
NEWC-1-Grainmove	71 (8)	1 (1)
NECV-007-03a	65 (5)	2 (2)
NEWH-100-01	53 (5)	3 (3)
NEFB-045-01	53 (8)	3 (5)
NEFB-045-02	50 (8)	5 (10)
NECV-007-03b	50 (5)	5 (5)
NENE-KA-001	49 (1)	7 (3)
NEWH-150-01a	49 (6)	7 ()
NEFB-100-05A	48 (5)	9 (8)
NEER-110-01	47 (3)	10 (7)
NEWH-100-01a	47 (6)	10 (11)

NENE-163-01a	46 (6)	12 (14)
NENE-018-1a	44 (3)	13 (11)
NECV-010-BR2	44 (3)	13 (11)
NEWH-150-01b	43 (4)	15 (15)
NELV-260-01	43 (6)	15 (18)
NEFB-045-03	42 (?)	17 (-)
NECV-007-04	41 (3)	18 (16)
NEWH-150-01c	40 (2)	19 (16)
NEFB-100-05B	40 (6)	19 (23)
NENE-061-01	38 (2)	21 (19)
NEWH-100-01b	38 (4)	21 (23)
NECV-010-BR1	38 (2)	21 (19)
NEDF-109-X01	37 (2)	24 (21)
NEMP-003-01a	37 (?)	24 (-)
NEMM-110-01	37 (2)	24 (21)
NEFB-123-01a	37 (3)	24 (23)

- Some **Divisional statistics for February 2005** : These were taken directly from the main NETS screen. Remember that the Divisions do not have equal numbers of engineers (NE = 84. SE = 31. CT = 41. SW = 49. NW = 63.).

NERR Divisional Statistics for February						
Rank	Time Slips	Div	Hours	Div	Pay	Div
1	272	CT	433.7	NW	\$13,011	NW
2	267	NW	309.3	CT	\$9,279	CT
3	176	SW	297.3	SW	\$8,919	SW
4	108	NE	168.8	SE	\$5,064	SE
5	74	SE	145.2	NE	\$4,356	NE

1 March

- There will be no material published this month until about the 20 March. Your writer will be overseas at conferences in Brighton, England, and in Cork, Ireland. I apologise for the inconvenience. I hope that you will use the time profitably - run extra work orders for the NERR / BRS / P&A / GL&A network - we need the revenue, and you need the wages!
- Keep watch on the [ConBuilder Home Page](#) for updates until 20th March. If you would like to make a donation in appreciation for this program, you can use the PayPal facility on that web page.
- Keep watch on the [Route-Riter Home Page](#) for the latest version until 20th March.

26 February

- The [Bison Rail System](#) has its first members-only work order available, which marks a further development in the NERR network of VRs. The work order is for the for the Monon route, and you will "pick up and drop off wagons of Indiana Limestone at quarries around Clear Creek. It requires Bison Rail equipment."

24 February

- Has your MSTS been crashing lately? There are 1001 reasons why that might be happening, and we can't solve them all here and now. But one reason might be that your sound system is having problems handling the sounds in MSTS. Some people have had great success with the following change to one of the files in their MSTS installation. These notes are adapted from an article by Stuart Williamson on the Steam4me website.

- It does not matter which sound card is in your computer; it is set up to use the same resources. So, by default, MSTS use 40 3D and 20 2D streams. These numbers of streams give MSTS the ability to play that number of independent sounds simultaneously.
- So that means that MSTS can play a maximum of 60 simultaneous sounds. That might seem a lot, but when you add up all the sound sources in MSTS, 60 can run out very

quickly - player train, wagons, environment, track, ...That's why sometimes you have to drop the sound slider to keep MSTTS running.

- You can make a change in your MSTTS installation that will increase that limit of 60 to something much higher. Try the following.
- Go to the Global folder and make a backup copy of `soundcfg.dat`. This step is most important - if anything goes wrong, you must have a backup of your original file.
- Open the `soundcfg.dat` file for editing in your Unicode editor.
- Look for this line near the bottom of the file:

SoundSystem (5, 40, 20, 31457280)

In that line, the 40 sets the 3D buffers, the 20 sets the 2D buffers. Leave the 20 as it is, as the cabview sounds need 2D buffers. **Increase the 40.** I have been using 200 for a couple of months without any problems. My line is now:

SoundSystem (5, 200, 20, 31457280)

I don't know how many simultaneous sounds my sound card can play, but it is certainly more than 60. Maybe it's less than 200, but I don't know exactly.

There are no guarantees that this will solve any problems that you might be having with your sounds. If things go funny, go back to the default settings.

It is suggested only that you increase the level 5 sounds, because if you aren't able to run the MSTTS sounds at their highest level, then why try to improve them. If you look at the default settings, you will see that SG5 has more streams defined than SG3 which has more than SG1 which has more than SG0. (SG2 and SG4 aren't used by MSTTS). The final figure in the brackets in the line above is the amount of memory dedicated to that sound level.

23 February

- One **new work order** today. You can download it from the NEAWOS:
 - NEHP-256-01d - As you climb into your GE AC6000CW, in the rain on a cold autumn morning, you read your work order instructions. "This will be a short trip on the Hoodoo Pass, transferring power at South/SE Route Extension. It will be a quick turn around, as the new engineers are ready to take over your power, and your new power is ready and waiting for you." And you think to yourself that this sounds good! And your dispatcher is thinking to herself: "Wait until he sees what I've got for him next!" It's just as well that you can't read her mind!

22 February

- The **January 2005 Engineer of the Month** was announced yesterday. The engineer awarded the personalised boxcar this month is:

Lloyd Shinkle (Archer01, #063)

Lloyd joined the NERR on March 03, 2004 and has driven 109 Work Orders totaling over 226 hours of Safe Driving. His rank is Engineer.



- The MSTSVworld has lost another website. The European site, simulatortracks.com, closed down this week. The owners of this site produced the Lille to Paris route a couple of years ago.
- Three **new work orders** today. You can download them from the [NEAWOS](#):
 - **NEWE-105-01** - Today on the Wupper Express 8 route, you are driving the Bombardier/Alstom Acela for a 2 hour work order from Dusseldorf to Dortmund on a clear summer morning.
 - **NENC-268-01** - On a clear autumn morning on the North Coast route, you will be driving two C424 locos (#452 and #454) with 15 cars of mixed freight. On this portion of the run, you will depart Eureka at 6:45 am and head south, working your way down to South Fork. After entering siding 1 at South Fork the activity will end. This should take you about 2 hours 45 minutes.
 - **BRS-MN-0001** - You are driving a Bison Rail EMD SD40-2 on the Monon Route (Middle And Southern Divisions) today. If you are not quite sure about that at the start of your run, that's because it is just after midnight! Wait for the passing quarry train to clear. If it stops at switch in front of you, then reverse slightly to show the engineer your intentions; he will then proceed. After the signal changes to yellow, proceed forward until all your train has passed over the road level crossing. Then reverse onto the branch which is now on the right of the siding where you started. Proceed in reverse to Woolery & Sons Mill and drop off your empty wagons on Woolery bypass siding (left siding). Move forward out of the bypass and then reverse up Woolery siding (closest to the building) to pick up the loaded wagons from the quarry to the north of Woolery. Drop them off at Woolery siding. Then go to the bypass and push the empties up to the north quarry. Leave the back 6 empties there, returning the others to the bypass. Repeat at the quarry south of Woolery - pick up the loaded wagons and couple them to the other loaded wagons on Woolery siding. Drop off the remaining empties at the south quarry. Pick up all the loaded wagons and head for Clear Creek where the manual switching ends. Proceed to the McDoel Yard siding on the set path. You will be notified of where to stop for the activity to complete (about opposite the engine turntable). All this should only take you about 50 minutes.

18 February

- One **new work order** today. You can download it from the NEAWOS:
 - **BRS-CGW-0001** - You are driving the BR SD24 #2407 with the NERR BQ23-7 #3085 as 2nd loco. Your shift starts at 08:30AM on a clear autumn day. The first contract on CGW has been won by BRS - it's a weekly grain run for Williams Grain. The first run is to transport empty grain wagons from Oelwyn to Oneida, with a pick up at Thorpe's Grain on the way.

The following story is taken from "Railway Drama", edited and written by Mark Tronson.

Double Line

One driver was undertaking his first trip, under instruction of an inspector, working on double line and a diesel locomotive. All his driving and firing had been on steam engines, and more so, all on single line.

On his first trip, they were entering suburban Auckland from Hamilton, and the driver was taking careful notice of the control stand, with its handles and what have you. Looking ahead was not of major concern, as the inspector was looking ahead - his task was to keep to speed and maintain a correct speed by adjusting the throttle and applying the brakes where necessary.

There were several tight bends, but nothing to worry about really; however it was of some considerable interest to the driver - this "double line business". Running on single line working was straight forward. Double line working had different safe working regulations; the signals were operated and functioned differently - the whole situation was new.

On this his first trip, he had not as yet even had a train pass him on the opposite line - so even that was new, something that would be taken for granted by other enginemen who'd worked this section of line throughout their working lives.

As the diesel was throttling up and travelling around a 30 miles per hour curve, the driver concentrated on increasing the throttle to notch 8 for full power, keeping an eye on the gauges and load meter. The inspector saw his chance - it was the first time a train was coming in the other direction. The inspector yelled out with panic in his voice: "A train!!"

The new driver, somewhat startled, looked up and around the curve - coming towards him was this enormous diesel locomotive, travelling at what seemed to be top speed. The driver, in shock, leaped from his seat, reached forward for the emergency brake, missed it, and landed headlong on the floor.

Next thing he heard was this thunder and roar as the oncoming train sped harmlessly by on the other track - double line working.

The driver got up sheepishly, steadied himself, checked his heart beat, looked at his panel, looked ahead, and turned and moved toward the inspector, who was in a state of uncontrolled hilarity.

Never in the history of mankind had a man been seen to change mood in such a short moment in time from unbelievable joyous humour to religious piety, where forgiveness became an urgent plea for mercy, and death an evident possibility. That night, heading for their respective cars to go home, the inspector was seen to be carrying the driver's tuckerbox, and opening the driver's car door for him, as a sign of genuine repentance.

17 February

- On the [UKTrainSim site news page](#), there is a report on a Train Artisan video of the current state of their replacement for MSTS. When you read the report, remember that it is a report of a video that was shown at the exhibition.
- **Handy Hint** from GaryH (ID# 100), who found it on Yuri's [Steam4Me MSTS website](#):

Breaking consists has been a problem in MSTS since day one - not the break you get when you gun 4 Dash 9s on the front of a long consist, but rather the unexpected ones that occur even with gentle driving. Many users resorted to increasing the coupler strength to minimise coupler break, but it's been discovered that there's a better way.

The problem appears to be that damping is a decelerative force and therefore needs to be measured in Newtons/metre/second (N/m/s). Kuju left off the /second (/s) in all their default .wag and .eng files and everyone has slavishly copied them since.

Open your .wag and .wng files in a Unicode-aware editor (eg Wordpad) . The line to change is marked in blue below:

```
Coupling (  
Type ( Automatic )  
Spring (  
Stiffness ( 1e6N/m 5e6N/m )  
Damping ( 1e6N/m 1e6N/m )  
Break ( 3.2e6N 3.2e6N )  
r0 ( 20cm 30cm )  
)
```

Change it to

```
Damping ( 1e6N/m/s 1e6N/m/s )
```

and the damping will then work correctly, leading to more prototypic behaviour.

- One **new work order** today. You can download it from the NEAWOS:
 - **NECS-109-12c** - On this clear summer morning in Lowden, on the Clinton Sub, you are given the Baldwin 4-8-4 (Northern) steam loco. You are continuing your way across the Clinton Sub with most all of the NERR System brass, press and invited guests on board, so you are working under a magnifying glass. Keep it smooth, keep them happy and you will be rewarded. You are back in the station on #109, waiting for the go-ahead from the station master, which will give you a couple of minutes to get it all together. The following is your schedule: Be at MP41 - 10:50-10:52 Lowden - Short wait; MP30 - 11:05-11:06 Calamus Station; MP18 - 11:20-11:21 DeWitt MP01 - 11:43-11:45 Clinton. All of these are crossovers with Station Sidings (45mph & 20mph) respectively, so beware.
- News item about a **train vs truck collision** in California on 15 February:

Amtrak Train Hits Truck

Several people injured near Oxnard

OXNARD (AP) - An Amtrak Pacific Surfliner train carrying 80 passengers from the Los Angeles area on Monday crashed into a truck hauling strawberries, spilling several gallons of diesel fuel and causing injuries to several people in vehicles involved in the crash, authorities said.

The train crashed into a truck transporting 155 one-gallon drums of strawberries at about 4:30 p.m.

The impact caused the train's engine to separate from the six cars it was pulling, said Oxnard Police Department Commander Martin Meyer. The truck driver was not injured.

Television images by KCBS-TV showed the damaged truck and its fallen strawberry containers parked near the tracks. Several gallons of diesel fuel were immediately cleaned up after they spilled on the tracks, authorities said. Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari said that the truck was either parked on the tracks or passing over the tracks when it was struck by the train.

"As the train approached, this vehicle was in the path of the train," he said, noting Amtrak was still investigating the crash. Magliari disputed reports by Oxnard authorities that the train engine had unhooked upon impact.

Five vehicles were involved in the crash. Four people on board the train had minor body pain but refused treatment, Meyer said. Two others in two separate vehicles had body pain, including one person with neck and back pain who was transported to the hospital. Amtrak chartered two buses to transport passengers to their destination, Magliari said.

16 February

- The *Old Heading* article this month is an evolving document about **Track Warrants** and how they are used. Keep checking each day as we add more pieces of information. This is an RW method of track control that a number of people around the P&A and NERR are working to include in the way that we operate.
- On the **Other Downloads** page: Route-Riter version 6.2.39. From Mike Simpson, the developer - "Fixes a few small bugs, includes an updated version of TsUtils with some problems with the Merge function now fixed." The full version 6.2.16 is also on the website.

15 February

- Four **new work orders** today. You can download these from the NEAWOS:
 - **NECV-256-01c** - Driving a GE AC6000CW late one clear autumn morning, you will be leaving the Wye at East End to pick up 30 reefers from Main Yard #2 at East End. Once hooked up, you will be head to Hoodoo Pass. There are 30 full grain cars at Cobbin Grain Siding - these have to be coupled to the end of the reefers to be taken on to Hoodoo Pass.

- **NEHP-256-01e** - Driving an ALCo C636, you head out on a rainy autumn morning on a short return trip to Chippewa Valley. Your consist is mixed empty wagons.
- **NECV-256-01f** - Still in your ALCo C636, and still on that rainy autumn day, you head off for the continuation from Hoodoo Pass with the empty wagons. They are going to the CV Yards, and this is where your day will end, and a new crew will take over.
- **NEFB-268-01** - This afternoon, it is wet, and it is coming into winter. But you are lucky! You have a nice, warm SD40-2, with 2 more behind that, plus a caboose. And you have been called for an easy run today. Pick up your engines and caboose on the Yonder Wye. Run as a cab hop to the Thomas Mine switch. Then back up to the mine. Set your caboose out on the short spur on the way up and then pick it up on the way out. Oh yes, you'll be doing all this in the rain! Better take your slicker. Watch for mainline traffic. It's heavy today. The dispatcher will control all switches except those on the Thomas Canyon branch.

14 February

- On 12 February, Kip announced that he was about to start redeveloping the **San Diego & Arizona route** for the NERR. You do not have many weeks before the current version no longer exists, so why not run the current work orders on the current route? Then, when the new version of the route is released, run them again - and see the difference. It will give you an insight into how much route building has progressed since May 2003, when the SD&A route was released.

"This route extends the entire 69.9 miles from Division to El Centro, rising 1466ft and then dropping 3613ft in elevation. The line through Carrizo Gorge was operated by the SDA, which used the route to run passenger and general freight between San Diego and El Centro where the line linked up with the Southern Pacific Railroad. Desert Line: Extends northeast from the International Border (Division) to Seeley, where it joins the Southern Pacific (SP) Line from El Centro. The Goat Canyon Trestle, built in 1932 as part of a realignment of the main line following a tunnel collapse, extends for 633 feet, 185 feet high. It is claimed to be the highest and longest wooden trestle bridge in the United States." If you haven't seen the Goat Canyon Trestle on this route, you have missed one of the most impressive sights in the MSTs world!

Milestone Reached!

The first NERR engineer to submit time slips totaling

1,000 hours

is

Dan Dierker

(dandy1, ID# 10)

Congratulations from all of us
on your commitment to the NERR.

Dan's achievement in just 13 months has meant that he has driven an average of about 2½ hours each day, as well as managing the WCN program for new applicants to the NERR, writing for the forums, leading the Central Division until recently and then being one of the leaders of the Bison Rail System, including repainting equipment and developing work orders (e.g. the 14-part series for the Frisco Fort Smith route). All of this in the NERR's VW, while being a full-time RW farmer and family man. Dan, your commitment and friendship has been a great example to all of us. Congratulations!

- Four **new work orders** today. You can download these from the NEAWOS:
 - **NECS-109-12a** - Today, we are driving the NERR's Railbus. While the NERR's guests are enjoying themselves in Cedar Rapids on this clear summer's morning, we are taking the CEO and Officers to hand-deliver some contracts to some of our new shippers. What better way to do it than in a museum piece like the Railbus? Although the main unit will be heading East in one hour, there really is no time constraint, since they can't leave without us! Our job is just to get them around safely and accurately. Our Stops and Times are scheduled tightly. You are responsible for arriving and departing on time, since there will be no prompts to do so. However, your performance will be monitored. You have a 45 second grace period before being considered late.
 - **NECS-109-12b** - It's now 10.00am, the Baldwin 4-8-4 (Northern) is all fired up and ready to go, and we are continuing our way across the Clinton Sub with almost all of the NERR System brass, Press and invited guests on board, so you are working under a magnifying glass. Keep it smooth, keep them happy, and you will be rewarded. Also MR's crew is available in the RPO car behind you in case there is trouble along the way. Only four stops on fast track, so shouldn't be any problems. We're sitting at the station waiting for everyone to finish boarding, then we are on our way ... as soon as the Railbus gets out of our way.
 - **NEDF-109-L04s** - You and your 2-8-2 (Mikado) are taking a load of empty loggers and chippers to Cureton Logging. The yard crew has you fired, watered and ready to go, sitting on the wye tail. They've set your switches for you, just follow their lead. Should be a walk in the park, but you know how things like that go. Pick up both sets of cars on Outgoing #2. Back out of the yard and head for Cureton. CCDispatch will give you clearance when ready. Too many residents have been complaining about 'black clothes' hanging on the line, so there's a 15mph limit until after the CC Station. Dispatch says there's a big one coming down the mountain at you at around MP7, but you shouldn't have to wait long. He's not known for growing grass on the wheels. Should meet it at approximately 8:27am at the Passing Siding. You may be on either track depending on who gets the green first. Cureton - MP13.5 - Drop #32785-0-6 on CLog Holding #3, Drop #32780-0-6 on CLog holding #4, and Drop Chippers #32780-7-11 on Chip Loading track. When finished, go and pick up the loaded ones on the log loader track, where the activity will end if you accomplished everything correctly, getting ready for the return trip.
 - **NEDF-109-L04as** - This is the return trip from Cureton Logging with a load of lumber, chips and wastewater for points East, continuing from where we left off in L04s. You are responsible for switching until you get to the main. Back to CLog holding #2 to pickup #32775-0-7 then CLog Holding #1 for #32776-0-10. Leave #32776-0-6 at Bulk #1, Pick up the boxes on CL Supplies, and the rest are going to Circus City then East. Should meet the Steam Excursion train at the passing siding about 10:09am or so. MP2.5 - At Buckeye Paper Mill, Pickup #32786-0-1 and take them with you. At the yard, back your train in, drop your cars, and then proceed to the coal loader where the activity will end. NOTES:

Beware, the entire Buckeye installation is on a 'healthy' grade. This run is not as simple as it first looks.

13 February

- Bob and Jim did a great job for virtual railroading in their segments on the [Let's Talk Trains internet radio show](#) today/yesterday (depending on where you live!). Click here to go to their website, where you can listen to the archived show. Bill Prieger added an excellent section to the show, when he phoned in and gave his perspective, from the point of view of an ex-RW railroad engineer. The other caller was George, from the [Monon Railroad Historical Technical Society, Inc.](#) - he knows the developer of the Monon route that the NERR uses in our network and will talk with him about the NERR. Congratulations on a second excellent show, guys!

The Monon Route is also known as the Hoosier Line. For those who don't know what a "Hoosier" is, you might like to [check out this website](#). From the MSTS Monon route description: "Main Lines are the Milwaukee Road, Latta (Jasonville) to Bedford (60 miles), and the Monon Lafayette to Louisville (210 miles). Branch Lines are the Monon - Smithville Branch (old main), the Harrodsburg to Clear Creek (8 miles), the Monon - Wallace Junction Branch, the Wallace Junction to Victoria (57 miles), the Monon - French Lick Branch, the Orleans to Cuzco (25 miles) - French Lick to Cuzco is Southern Railway."

From the Monon Society website: "The Monon was Indiana's home railroad, the shortest line between Indianapolis and Chicago, and connection to Chicago for Indiana's fine universities. Though the founders envisioned the railroad as a facility for interchange with steamboats at New Albany on the Ohio River and at Michigan City on Lake Michigan, the railroad's principal function proved to be northbound freight haulage from southern rail connections at Louisville. Founded in 1847, it had poor physical plant, which handicapped it relative to its main rivals, the Pennsylvania, New York Central and the Chicago & Eastern Illinois. John W. Barriger III dieselized the railroad, streamlined the passenger fleet and attempted to upgrade the physical plant. Barriger was only able to make two major betterments in the railroad. These improvements allowed the Monon to survive some difficult periods until the final merger into the Louisville & Nashville in 1971."

BTW, a hoosier is a person born in Indiana.

- On the [Other Downloads](#) page: ConBuilder version 2.3.28 - now available. "What has changed? Changed the shape file errors to be more readable (understandable), added a shape section to the CBhow-to.chm file, with some examples. Changed the Cb-SYS-chk tool to look for more items to help us help you while troubleshooting."
- Some [new work orders](#) today. You can download these from the NEAWOS:
 - **NECS-109-12**: Today you are driving the NERR's Baldwin 4-8-4 (Northern) on a clear summer morning on the Clinton Subdivision. You have been "chosen" to make the inaugural passenger run for the newly-acquired Clinton Subdivision. All the NERR System brass, Press and invited guests will be on board, so you are working under a magnifying glass. Keep it smooth, keep them happy, and you will be rewarded. Also, MR's crew is available in the RPO car behind you in case there is trouble along the way. The fuel facility where you are had the fuel oil needed for us. You've been fired, watered and are ready to go. You need to pick up your cars on Yard Track #5, then back out so you can make a 'grand appearance' at the station for all the press and dignitaries. From then on, everything should be smooth and rather mundane. However, you are a low priority since revenue

earners come first, so there may some waits. Dispatch will take care of all your switching.

- **NESD-018-2:** Climb into your USRA 2-8-2 (Mikado) for a run of about an hour on a clear summer morning on the San Diego & Arizona Subdivision. You're shuttling equipment and materials between Dos Cabezas and Tunnel 15, where work crews are shoring up track after an unexpected summer storm. Dos Cabezas is the staging area for supplies coming from El Centro. Tunnel 15 has no passing track, and the spur there is just too short to bring up everything needed at once. Get these empties back to Dos Cabezas, where you'll pick up more materials for the work crews. You can take a break when you get back here.

12 February

- Some **new work orders** today. You can download these from the NEAWOS:
 - **NENE-235-01a-d** - Part a is the first part of a four part series of work orders. Pick up your power (3 GE AC6000CW) for today at the fuel track in Eckington Yard and proceed to Mack Trucks siding to pick up 19 flats loaded with 1 USMC vehicle to each flat. These flats are to be delivered to the Philadelphia Navy Yard. It is a beautiful clear summer morning. In the second work order in this four part series, you depart Mack Trucks Siding with 19 flats loaded with USMC military vehicles. You are going to MT. Winans Yard to pick up another 7 flats loaded with 2 military tanks to each flat, and then continue your journey to the Navy Yard in Philadelphia. In part 3, you are continuing the transporting of military hardware from the Washington DC area to the Navy Yard in Philadelphia. This part of your run is sort of a ho-hum drive. In the final part, you make drop-offs at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia. Drop flats #11-21 on track 1 and flats #3-10 on track 2. Make the drops about 20 feet from bumpers - they like it that way. Then turn the train on the wye and drop the tank flats on track 3. The dispatcher will throw the switches for you. Continue on to Girard Point Engine service to put the power to bed.
 - **NECV-256-01** - A single Day in the Central Division, pickup and dropping off, to various sidings around Chippewa Valley and Hoodoo Pass. In this work order, you will move Reefers from East End to the Chippewa Valley Yards with a GE AC6000CW. It is a clear autumn morning, so you won't have any problems with the weather.
 - **NECV-256-01a** - There are thirty empty 100-ton grain hoppers at Dierker Grain sidings, 10 each on sidings #1 to #3. They need to be moved to Cobbin Grain Siding. You can pick the cars in any order you wish. Once all 30 hoppers are hooked up, you can head out towards Cornell. The hoppers are to be dropped of at Cobbin Grain Siding. Once you have unhooked, head to Cornell Wye, then reverse back into Cornell Power #1. It should take you about 50 minutes. Your motive power today is a GE AC6000CW. It is a clear autumn morning.
 - **NEFB-045-1966 & 1996a** - This is Part 1 in a series of 3, where you have been selected to deliver a new SD40 loco to Simonville and conduct load trials. In Part 1 you run from Fort Fairfax to Yonder with a local freight and pick up the SD40 which was delivered to Yonder last evening . In Part 2 you run from Yonder to Simonville with the SD40.

- **Route Development Announcement** - *NERR's San Diego & Arizona 1.0*:

The NERR, through the work of kip (Honorary Engineer, ID# 57), has been given permission to modify the San Diego & Arizona route to NERR specifications. It will be known as NERR's San Diego & Arizona 1.0. This new version will have its own folder, so that the original can still be used ... separately. The redevelopment work will be undertaken by kip over the next few weeks and months.

Bob (ID# 1) has been notified of these plans, with the full endorsement of the route's original developer, Mark DiVecchio.

This is what kip is certain, at this stage, that he will be doing:

1. Signal revision. (Mainly, cutting back on them) Searchlight or semaphore?
2. Re-aligning terrain on track.
3. Deleting any objects further than 500 meters. This will help with frame rates on the route.
4. Revise Whistle signs.
5. Revise speed limits.

There will be no track revision, and no deletion of "permanent fixtures" such as bridges, buildings, etc. He might re-name or name sidings and spurs. The route integrity will remain as much the same as the original as possible. This route will be for NERR and NERR only. We would like to thank Mark for his blessing in this endeavor.

You will be able to follow the progress of kip's redevelopment work in a thread in the SW division forum.

11 February

- And here is our interview for February. **Claude Thibault** (ID# 23), one of our Canadian members, is an F-Team member and a lively participant in the NERR forums. Claude is also a superb beta tester of anything that is added to the NERR - he can find bugs in anything. He is also an excellent dinner companion and quaffer / connoisseur of red wine, as Brian, Cedric and I found out in Ottawa in February 2003, when we met up there for dinner at one of the first NERR International Conventions.

1. Where do you live? Have you moved around much during your life? What is your RW job or business?

Born and raised in Montréal, Québec, I bought a farm in a small town called Yamaska (pop. 1500) in 1976. I was a high school teacher for 32 years, before retiring 4 years ago. I have 2 greenhouses (6000 sq ft) in which I grow and sell annual flowers and vegetable plants. This keeps me busy from March to the end of June. The rest of the year I take care of my 2 horses ... and play MSTs. I'm also involved in the theatre world as an actor. I've played in approximately 15 different productions in the last 10 years. Semi-pro... half-paid half the time! I even played in a movie a few years back.... Bit part, no dialogue, tiny check. I've built a world for my family in the country. Planted trees, built facilities for the horses, a big patio, swimming pool, a wooded

lot, etc. I don't dream of things I would like to do..... I do them! I took all my dreams and made them real. Now don't go thinking I'm rich.... I'm not! I just put the little money I have into my dreams... that's all!

2. How did you get interested in trains (assuming that you are interested in trains!) Do you ever ride on RW trains?

When I was a child, my father brought home a picture of him seemingly driving a Canadian Pacific steam engine. I thought he was an engineer. Actually he was a layman for the RR company, but I was too young to realise that and was sure he was the one driving the big machine. That's where my love of trains began. Ever since, if a train passes by me as I'm driving, I become a menace. I forget the road ahead and keep my eyes on the locomotive, trying to see if my father is driving it. I rode on trains a lot in my childhood but have not done so in many years.... I still believe it is the best way to get from point A to point B but... maybe this summer! (If I can find a horse-sitter).

3 (a). How did you start with MSTs? What were some of your early experiences - good and bad?

When I saw the box containing MSTs on the shelf, I think I almost fainted! A train simulator ... my dream!

3 (b) What did you get out of MSTs?

Played every activity on every route (6) then, bored, put the game away.

4. Did you have any experience with other VRs? (You can name names here!)

I discovered ACR through the MS site. I was hooked - a new world was opening. There was this fellow, Artim, who was really the heart of ACR. I loved his work, and when he announced he was leaving, I thought that would be the end of train-simming for me, and then.... He announced NERR, and I jumped right in, the first day.

5. Why do you stay with the NERR?

NERR is the only VR for me. I love the people and everything going on. The forums are great, the work is fun.

6. What part of the VR world and MSTs do you enjoy the most - running trains, doing work orders, or ...?

F-team work is No. 1 for me.

7(a). Where do you think / hope MSTs will be in 5 years' time?

Third shelf on the right, just beside Links!!! No, seriously, I really don't know. I'd like to see an update but....

7(b). Where do you think / hope the NERR will be in 5 years' time?

I hope NERR stays like it is - fun people who respect each other, for ever!

7(c). Where do you think / hope that you will be in the VR world in 5 years' time?

I hope my imagination doesn't let me down, so I can still keep my column in RR lively for years to come.

8. If you could add or change two things to the VR world and/or to the NERR, what would they be?

Combine MSTs, Route-Riter, XTracks, Train Store, etc. in one big user-friendly, no-bug, program.

9. What is your favourite type of activity / work order? Why?

Depends on how I feel. Tired..... give me a quiet passenger activity. Gutsy, bring on the yard

work, in between, freight from point a to b.

10. Is there anything else that we should know about you - family, hobbies, likes (e.g. red wine, Marie, ...) and dislikes (e.g. people who are nuisances)...?!

I have 2 daughters - one a chemist and the other is completing a masters degree in agriculture, one wife, one dog, one house cat, 12+ barn cats. I have written different columns in different publications in the last 30 odd years, but I must admit that the one in the Roundhouse is the most demanding. It's like walking on eggs, knowing you are writing for people from different nationalities, different beliefs, different ways of living..... I spend most of my column-writing time auto-censoring myself.

11. If you have any photos of where you live, or your flowers or horses, or ... (whatever really!), that would be great as well - would add to the interview (like the photos of Bob at work).

I think I suffer from a rare disease. I can't bear the past; I only look ahead. I have photos but never look at them. I hate pictures of my little world, because pictures show me things like they were before, in the past, for example if I look at the picture of my girls when they were 4 or 5 years old, I get all mushy because I miss those little girls. Same thing with pictures of travels I have made. I'm a little nutty when it comes to photography of my world. I have a film of every play I acted in. They are all on a shelf in my office. I never, even once, looked at them. I have no souvenirs of places I've been. Theatre posters, newspaper clippings, casting pictures - I never keep anything that reminds me of things that were. I am really nuts! Even the magazines in which I wrote, I never look at. I think I'd better stop now before an analyst reads this and decides to put my case in a curriculum for shrinks!

10 February

- Do you have problems with MSTS crashing when you start it. The following information, collected from a variety of sources, might explain what goes on when MSTS loads:

One of the most common causes of crashes as MSTS loads is that it runs out of memory. When you double-click on the Train Simulator icon, MSTS reads and loads a large number of files from your computer's hard drive, including:

- all the locos and rolling stock in your Trainset folder. First, it checks all the .eng and .wag files that it finds for errors. It then loads all the consist files from the Consists folder and all the .eng and .wag files that are listed in the consist files. MSTS uses all this information to put together the list of locomotives to choose from in the "Drive a Train" menu. The more equipment you have, and the more variety of equipment in the consists, the more memory that MSTS uses to hold it all.
- all the saves of all the activities that you have run. This can take up a lot of the computer's memory, so clean out your Saves folder often.
- the .trk files of all your routes. They are only small, so they don't take up much memory - but any saving can help MSTS run better.
- the .act files for all the activities for all your routes.
- some .dat files from your Global folder. The most important .dat file is the tsection.dat file in the Global folder. With the latest versions of XTracks, Newroads, and maybe the other possible track versions, such as Scale Rails and FineScale the file size for the standardised tsection.dat Build 27 is over 3Mb, all of which needs to be loaded into memory as MSTS loads.

If you are running close to the limit of your computer's memory, running a route in Explore mode might still be possible, but you might start to see "failed to load .s" errors with scenery items - and the files are present in the folders! These are warning signs that MSTS is running close to its limits.

But if you now try to load an activity, MSTS needs to load even more files, such as the traffic for the activity, the .eng and .wag files of all the AI trains, the services files of these AI trains, and so it goes on. These files can become large, depending on the length of the AI train, the complexity of the AI service, the number of stops, etc. This might be enough to push your computer over the limit of its memory.

There are some prevention measures that you can put in place:

- Route-Riter lets you customise your Global folder's tsection.dat (Use the option "Make tsection.dat") This creates a new file which contains only the .s files you actually have installed. The result is a much smaller file. But please be sure to make a back-up of the original file first. The tsection.dat in the Global folder is absolutely crucial for MSTS to work!
- You can use TrainStore to "hide" the route, consist, engine and wagon files you do not want to run for the time being. As well as freeing up memory, it also results in MSTS loading a lot faster!
- Tidying up your MSTS folders is worth the effort. Go through your Trainset and Routes folders and remove items that you don't run. Move them to a temporary folder first, so that you can re-install them if you later regret the removal decision. Then start ConBuilder and check for the items that are missing from your consists; modify the consists by swapping the missing locos and wagons for items that you have kept. Whatever you don't miss during the next couple of weeks - delete from your back-up folder, or burn them to a CD.

Other members might have other ways of helping clean up your MSTS installation to minimise crashes - search through the forums for other ideas.

- Are you a fan of the **Alco diesel locomotives**? Well, today is your lucky day! Train-Sim has a pack of 16 of these noisy, smelly beasts! From the readme file: "7 RS-11 : #339 and #346 are improved versions of the previously released engines (nw_rs-11.zip). Improvements are shape file corrections (blurry frame sides), more effective LOD's, easier brake handling, improved lights and improved shape file management for better cab views. #339 runs long hood forward. #386 was rebuilt with an RS-36 style long hood after an accident. Runs long hood forward. #396 and #404 are newer RS-11's and have different air intake arrangements. #396 runs long hood forward. #2562 and #2567 are ex-NKP engines without dynamic braking and additional headlights still present but unused. #2562 runs long hood forward.

4 RS-36 : #408 and #411 are rare high-nosed RS-36's. #408 runs long hood forward. #2869 and #2873 are low-nosed ex-NKP engines without dynamic brakes. #2873 is an improved version of the previously released engines. Improvements are the same that the RS-11s show, plus an engineer's bay window. #2869 still has additional NKP-headlights but they are unused.

3 RSD-12 : #250, #252, and #256. #250 runs long hood forward, all engines are former NKP engines and don't have dynamic brakes.

2 T-6 : #38 and #24 running cab forward. These units have animated windshield wipers but no custom cab view." You will still have to download other files from the file library for the cab view and the sounds. You can also view other packs that the developer has produced at [his website](#).

9 February

- As far as we can find out, there are only four active VRs left in the English-speaking world - NERR (freeware), the P&A (subsidiary of the NERR, payware with some freeware), the GL&A (subsidiary of Virtual Railz, payware with some freeware), and the OVS (freeware with some payware). Bison Rail (freeware) currently is available only to engineers from the Central Division of the NERR (and NERR admin members) and so is considered to be part of the NERR for the purposes of this article. None of the other known VRs in North America are currently operating fully.

It appears that the VRs that were operating in the UK (e.g. N W Trains and the Alternative Network) have ceased operations, and there do not seem to be any left anywhere else. This means that there might be some fertile ground there for an enterprising, well-organised group of people to set up a VR using UK routes and aim it specifically at people in the UK.

There are some excellent **UK routes**, available either as freeware downloads from UKTrainSim (largest freeware website in the UK), or as payware (e.g. Severn Valley, Cambrian), or by buying "Community CDs" from UKtrainSim. These Community CDs cost GBP4.50 for each route, which usually includes equipment and associated activities. The cost also covers airmail postage to anywhere in the world and one month's Premium Membership of the UKTrainSim library (unlimited access - normally GBP3 per month). I ordered 4 routes on 3 February. The packet was postmarked on 4 February with a postage cost of GBP2.80, and I received an email advising me that the CDs had been posted that day. The packet was on my desk today - 9 February. This is very good service, from both UKTrainSim and the two postal services used!

One of the routes that I ordered was the **Thames-Mersey route** - covering the line from London Euston to Liverpool Lime Street that used to be operated by the London North West Line - several hundred miles of track. The route installed using an automatic menu system on the CD: Route-Riter found no errors (about 550Mb). The activities (50 - diesel, electric and steam, freight and passenger) and equipment (about 400Mb) installed using another item on the same automatic menu system: ConBuilder and Activity Analysis found no errors. MSTS started, I selected an introductory work order, the terrain buffers were generated, the work order loaded properly, and I ran a few miles with no problems. Too easy! I have not explored enough of the route to give a full review of it, but the bit that I saw had good track work and great scenery, but with very variable frame rates on my computer (8-50fps) - and hundreds of sidings of all types!

And there are lots of others - including some suited to fast electric and diesel mainline running (large routes like Thames-Mersey, Warrington), others set up for steam (Cannock Chase), and others with a quiet branch line atmosphere (Thaxted). From running some of these during the past couple of weeks, there appear to be some real differences between the UK and North American routes and activities, and differences in what people seem to want from MSTS in the two areas of the world. These include:

- Passenger activities are a much more important part of the UK MSTS scene. Example: there are many series that form a morning's or afternoon's timetable work on the route. This is probably because railway travel has always been a more important part of people's lives throughout the UK than in North America. And so DMUs and EMUs are a very important part of MSTS equipment in the UK.
- There are lots of shortline routes, many of lines that are closed - Talylllyn, Rye & Camber -

or preserved - Alston, Severn Valley. There also seem to be fewer fictional routes in the UK scene than in the North American MSTS world.

- Speeds on many of the UK routes are slower than on North American routes - makes the shorter routes feel longer!! I have run some activities on the West Highland route in Scotland - very nice route, but the speed limit is 45 mph and less, with some stations but not many sidings - makes a 2 hour activity seem very, very long.
- Steam seems to be a much more important part of the UK MSTS scene - even taking into account the steam fanatics that we have around here at the NERR!
- The UKTS forums contain a forum especially for MSTS beginners, where they get very patient, ongoing help and support - like they get here at the NERR, but unlike the situation in another major North American forum, which can be very variable.

Try some UK routes some time if you want a change of pace and scenery - you won't be disappointed. You can pretend that you are taking a vacation overseas!!

- There are currently 25 rookies undertaking the **WCN program**. We have had 4 new graduates to the NERR in the past 5 days. New applicants are coming in every day or two.

8 February

- **Yesterday, I published an index** that showed, rather crudely, the relative performance of the routes in the NERR network, as measured by the average number of times that their work orders were run, weighted for the length of time that the route has been part of the NERR network. I have changed that table for today (but it is still in the same place below) - removed the word "popularity" from it, and made the index an integer, with no "multiply by 100" factor. I think that the result of the second change is that the routes appear, with a few exceptions, to be much more similar in performance than yesterday's table showed. I removed the word "popularity" because it is a very subjective term - a work order or a route is popular with different people for different reasons.

I hope that your thinking about this table has the following sorts of outcomes:

- Some of the divisions might urge their engineers to run more of the work orders on the routes in their own divisions. Look at the "Last Month" tables on the Divisions web pages and see how many of the top 5 engineers were outside their division.
- Some of the work order developers might take another look at some of the routes that have been in the network for a long time and produce some new work orders for them. I see a trend towards more series of connected work orders - engineers seem to really like these. Examples: the 010-BR series for the Frisco - Fort Smith route, the 109-GAS series across the network. We have not yet used all of the possibilities in many (any?) of our routes. The routes are sitting there waiting for work orders to be developed. There is a series of four new work orders for the North East Corridor route in the testing phase. They use areas of that route that I have never seen before. They are not complicated work orders (I managed to do them!). And I am sure that there are similarly unused areas in many of our routes. We have schematics for most of our routes now. Maybe some of our work order developers could take another look at them.
- When you run a work order, you always remember to submit a time slip. Now you also need to remember to go back to the work order sheet on NEAWOS and leave

a comment about the work order - your likes and dislikes, any problems that others should note, and so on - do an advertisement for the work order that will attract others to run it.

- It also appears that the "new toy" syndrome is alive and well. A new route is added, a number of work orders is produced, engineers run some of them, and then we wait for the next new route. Our engineers might run some of the older work orders that they might have overlooked in the past - some of them have been run only half a dozen times - and that's by over 100 very active engineers! Try this: for the next month, don't run any work order that has been run more than 10 times. The search page in NEAWOS shows the "Times Run" when you look at a work order sheet, so you will know which ones to bypass for the next month. Also, to make it even easier for you, the table below shows a small random group of work orders - all of which have been run only 7 times since our recording system started and/or since they were added to the NETS. They are from a variety of routes. Try them! If they are part of a series, run the series! The routes in the table are listed alphabetically by work order route code.

NEDF-109-11-F02d
NEEM-092-03
NEFB-066-03b
NEFL-114-04
NEGP-038-02
NEHN-010-BR4
NEHP-260-Fert-01a-2
NEMM-110-SF01a
NEMN-120-BR01
NENE-100-02
NENJ-065-05
NEOW-223-01a
NERP-100-01E
NESE-094-01
NEWC-048-019
NEMB-045-02

- On the **Other Downloads** page: Route-Riter version 6.2.34. From Mike Simpson, the developer - "Adds the ability to select any Terrtex\Snow texture for the 'Make Deep Snow' option. Fixes some bad .sms files which had an extra set of quotes before a File name. Fixes a bug in Compact Route where there might be a blank .ace texture name."

7 February

- On the **Other Downloads** page: ConBuilder version 2.3.27 - now available. You can get help with this program in the ConBuilder section of the NERR forums.
- Here is a first attempt at producing a **Performance Index** for the NERR network routes.

- This is simply a measure that takes the average number of times that the work orders for a route have been run, adjusts it for the length of time that the route has been part of the NERR network, and multiplies the resulting figure by 100 to remove the decimal places.
- It is a very simplified procedure that contains lots of assumptions. For example, it assumes that all work orders for a route were produced at the same time as the route was introduced - and that is very incorrect, but I'm not going to try to work that into the formula!
- NETS started in January 2004. All measurements are taken from that time, which is why most of the routes are listed as being in the NERR network for 13 months.
- It produces an interesting rank order, as shown in the table below. And it does provide a sort of a measure of the popularity of the route with both work order developers and engineers.
- The Frisco route has been part of the NERR network for only a very short time, but a connected series of 14 work orders were published at the same time as the route was added - this seems to have been an excellent way to introduce the route to NERR engineers. If the number of time slips submitted for the Frisco route does not keep increasing, then the index will drop sharply next month.
- We would like to refine this index, so if anyone would like to improve on the formula, please let us know.

Route (Division)	Work Orders	Time Slips	Months In NERR	Performance Index
Frisco - Fort Smith (CT)	14	175	2	81
Whitefish (NW)	17	424	12	27
Chippewa Valley (CT)	38	944	12	27
North East Corridor (NE)	45	944	13	21
East River (SE)	19	375	13	20
Glorietta Pass (SW)	22	407	13	19
Full Bucket Line (SW)	57	998	13	18
Wupper Express (NE)	4	68	13	18
Newark & Jersey City (NE)	30	478	13	16
Marias Pass (NW)	45	717	13	16
Raton Pass (SW)	20	283	13	14
Dual Fictional (NW)	91	1275	13	14
Montgomery & Mobile (SE)	16	201	12	14
Lehigh Valley (NW)	18	244	13	14
Wisconsin Central (CT)	36	480	13	13

Ohio Rails (NE)	56	734	13	13
Seattle (NW)	30	383	13	13
Hamilton Norfolk (CT)	27	293	12	12
San Diego (SW)	9	103	13	11
East Metro (SE)	17	194	13	11
Hoodoo Pass (SE)	50	510	13	10
Monon (CT)	44	406	12	10
LGV Med (NE)	13	94	13	7
Niederelbebahn (CT)	10	65	12	7
Melbourne-Ballarad (SW)	9	57	12	7
Blue Mountains (CT)	10	62	12	7
Unterland (NE)	10	67	13	7
Florida (SE)	9	56	13	6
South Rail (SE)	14	70	11	6
Clinton Sub (NW)	0	0	3	N/A
North Coast (SW)	0	0	2	N/A

6 February

- Joe Smith, part of the ConBuilder development team, has requested that we not use **ConBuilder version 2.3.26**, as they have found a problem with it that they want to fix urgently. The link on the Other Downloads page has been removed until the new version has been provided to us. Apologies for any inconvenience.
- On the **Other Downloads** page: Route-Riter version 6.2.32. From Mike Simpson, the developer - "Fixed a couple of obscure problems - one in the Common Files routines, and one which caused a problem if certain words occurred in a route's .trk file. This stopped RR from checking the Chicago Great Western railroad."
- There has been a press release from Trainmaster, the developers of one of the next generation train simulators :

Trainmaster Train Simulator Progress update: 02/04/05

"Things have been quiet recently on the TMTS front. This can be read as a good sign that we are working away!

"We want TMTS to be more than 'just another sim.' The original TrainMaster had a reputation for good physics, and this is something we have carried over. TMTS

will have the most advanced physics engine ever available in a consumer Train Simulator. Tie this in with modern, graphically rich game engine technology and you have yourself a driving experience which is both realistic and immersive.

"If you are wondering why you haven't heard much from the community's top developers, it may be that their pens are capped by our non-disclosure agreement. In fact, they are providing very valuable help in a number of areas. We are currently working on the route editor and all the tools for creating additional content in TMTS. Our goal is to produce a well supported set of tools everyone can work with, and have a route editor which can produce working content quickly and easily.

"I know many of you are interested in the content TMTS will contain. All I can say at this moment is that you will not be disappointed. We are working with the best designers the community can offer. The default content will exceed the standards you as a community have come to expect. In addition to this, the locomotives, cars, and scenery will have many new features provided by the TMTS engine.

"One of our primary goals in this project is to provide a forward path for MSTs content, so that all of the past work the community has produced will not go to waste."

5 February

- **Mike Simpson, the developer of Route-Riter has posted the following message in a couple of forums:**

MS have recently released a program called *AntiSpyware Beta1*, which is quite a good anti-spyware program along the lines of Ad-Aware etc. Unfortunately it has a bug with implications for MSTs users if you have it running on your system, and your MSTs installation is on a different hard drive. When you try to run an *InstallMe.bat* file to install a route, you will get a pop-up window telling you that .bat files can be used for bad purposes etc. and asking if you really mean to run it.

Answer Yes, (and tick the box which says Remember This) and the batch file runs, but if you carefully watch the DOS window, you will see it says '0 Files copied' after each line.

I think what is happening is that when the pop-up window appears, it changes the drive to the drive on which the Antispyware program is installed, accepts your response OK, but does not change the drive back again, so that the batch file is looking in the wrong drive for files to copy.

To get around this, close the DOS window and click on *InstallMe.bat* again, then everything works OK.

- A couple of days ago, Edwin van Birgelen (ID# 40) completed a set of maps for the **Unterland route**, part of the North East Division of the NERR network. Today, he provides us with a description of this route (taken from the forums). There are 10 work orders for this route in the NEAWOS, so try some this month!

Unterland - Swiss Route

The route is situated in Switzerland, in an area called the Unterland, or Lower Land. It consists of a portion of the mainline from Zuerich to Stuttgart (Germany), that enters the route at Oberglatt and leaves at Rafz.

The second part of track depicts a local line, which runs from Pfungen to Waldshut. From Buelach to Eglisau, both these lines follow the same path. At Eglisau, the local cuts off to go to Waldshut and Koblenz. A very scenic portion of the route is situated there; it leads from Waldshut to Kurhaus Falkenau. This is a steep, winding portion of track that gives you several perfect views of the valley, Koblenz and Waldshut.

As the route is set in Switzerland, it's a mountainous route. There's almost no flat spot between stations, and road and rail cross each other continuously to make the most of the limited space. The scenery is very good; cities and small towns look like just that. Between the urban areas, there's no shortage of natural beauty. Lots and lots of trees and sloped meadows, small farms, desolated houses and livestock cover the lands. A very nice touch is the station announcement at some of the stations along the route. This makes the route really come alive.

The route is completely electrified; the prototype sees relatively little diesel traction. To operate the route according to prototype, there must be a good balance between passenger and freight traffic. Switzerland sees a lot of traffic that crosses the Alps from Northern Europe to the Southern part of the continent. Most of this international traffic is, of course, freight. A spicy detail is that rail traffic travels on the left-hand side of the tracks. So if you are wondering why the signals are on the left side of the track, it's according to prototype.

The route itself also provides good opportunities to originate and terminate freight and passenger services. Among the industries that dot the landscape are:

- Power plants
- Gravel Pits
- Cement plants
- Chemical plants
- Recycling plants
- Lumber Mills.

Although prototypically the most traffic will come from the gravel pits, as this is a very wide-spread commodity in Switzerland that is exported and used extensively, there's no shortage of potential rail customers.

There's really a lot of potential in this route, and I hope that we can all pull together to squeeze out as much of it as we can. This is a very good route.

3 February

- On the **Other Downloads** page: Route-Riter version 6.2.30. From Mike Simpson, the developer - "Added a feature to 'Quick Consist Check' to automatically change any .CON file discovered to be in ASCII to Unicode format. Fixed an error in both 'Consist Check' and 'Quick consist Check' which added the last locomotive in the list (alphabetically) to each consist - strange that no one noticed this?"
- In recent weeks, I have been looking at some of the **UK routes** - and there are some excellent ones. Yes, I know that they drive on the other side, but that's not a major hassle

for an experienced engineer (is it?). There are differences between the ways that the MSTs world has developed in the UK and North America. I'll put together some more words on this topic in a day or two. If you have anything that you would like to say about UK routes, send me an email or PM.

- Even more **January statistics**, sent in by Scott. Which locomotives were run last month?

Locomotive	Runs
EMD GP18 (Bison Rail)	74
GE AC6000CW	72
EMD GP9 (Bison Rail)	64
EMD SD40-2	59
EMD SD70MAC	59
ALCo C636	50
GE C44-9W	47
EMD GP38-2	35
EMD SW1500	32
None (Unspecified)	28
GE AMD	27
EMD F7A	19
Baldwin 4-8-4 (Northern)	17
ALCo/MLW RS-18	16
GE U23B	16
GE C30-7	15
EMD F45	14
GE 44 ton	13
Budd RDC	12
EMD SD40-2 (DV&W)	10
EMD GP40-2 (MOW)	9
EMD GP60 (NERX)	8
EMD SD40T-2 (Bison Rail)	8
ALCo C424	7
ALCo RS1	7
EMD GP18 (BR&T)	7
EMD GP40PH-2	7
GE/PRR/Baldwin/Westinghouse	7
Bombardier/Alstom Acela	6
EMD SD24 (Bison Rail)	6
GE 44 ton (Bison Rail)	5
GE BQ23-7	5
23 Ton Box Cab	4
ALCo S1 Switcher	4
EMD GP9 (NERX)	4
EMD SD24	4
EMD SD45 (CEFX Lease)	4
FM H16-66	4
FTL (TGV)	4
Shuttle (Series 2000)	4
EMD F59 PHI	3

EMD GP30	3
EMD SD40-2 (FURX Lease)	3
EMD SD50 (NERX)	3
USRA (Various) 4-8-2 (Mountain)	3
EMD GP38 (BR&T)	2
GE E60CH	2
GE U23B (High Hood)	2
USRA (Various) 2-8-2 (Mikado)	2
250 Ton Crane	1
CMT Shuttle	1
Comets	1
EMD GP38-2 (ex-GNRR)	1
EMD MP15 (NERX)	1
NERX	1
NERX MP15AC	1
Regiorunner	1
Tamper (Plasser & Theurer)	1
USRA (Various) 0-6-0 (Switcher)	1

3 February

- On the Routes page: Edwin van Birgelen (ID# 40) has produced a set of schematics for the **Unterland route** in the North East Division. It is a 10 page document in a 500Kb PDF file. Thanks for the maps, Edwin - they will help greatly.
- Some more January statistics, sent in by Scott - the **ranking of the routes** by the number of time slips submitted during the month:

<i>Route</i>	<i>Time Slips</i>
Frisco - Fort Smith	115
Full Bucket Line 3.0	71
Chippewa Valley (NERR)	56
Northeast Corridor 4.0	56
Monon Route (Middle And Southern Division)	55
Dual Fictional Railroad	47
Hoodoo Pass (NERR Version 1.0)	42
East River District	36
Marias Pass 3.1	35
Montgomery To Mobile (CSX)	34
None - Unspecified	28
Wisconsin Central (NERR)	28
Ohio River & Western (Build 10)	26
Seattle	24
Hamilton Norfolk	21
Newark & Jersey City	19
Priest River Railroad 2.5	19
Glorietta Pass	18
Lehigh Valley ver. 2	15

Whitefish	13
East Metro	11
Melbourne (Footscray)-Ballarat	11
Wisconsin Central (Reedsburg)	8
Raton Pass II	7
Florida High Speed Rail	6
San Diego & Arizona (Carrizo Gorge)	6
Wupper Express 8	6
Blue Mountain	3
LGV Med	2
Niederelbebahn	2
Southrail	2
Unterland	2
Full Bucket Line 2.0	1
Lehigh Valley ver. 1	1

- And some more from Scott:

- **Type of work order:**

Freight	668	83%
MOW	22	3%
Pax	111	14%
Total	801	

- And some more:

- **Work orders by type of locomotive:**

Diesel	750	94%
Electric	25	3%
Steam	23	3%
Total	798	

- Anyone that thought NERR was anything but a freight hauling diesel driven VR might want to look at the stats!! And we know that the stats do not all add up to be equal - don't worry, it's not that critical.

2 February

- On the **Other Downloads Page:**
 - Route-Riter version 6.22.29 is now available. From Mike Simpson - "Fixed some instances in 'Check Route' where the last file (alphabetically) in a file type might not be checked (e.g. the last forest item or last transfer).
 - ConBuilder version 2.3.26 is now available. From Joe Smith - "We found an error that we missed during testing, and it was removing the jpg files from the shape viewer folder. So people will need to re-install Shape Viewer."
- **Claude's Corner** is back this month with a very thoughtful comment on life. Thanks,

Claude.

- More statistics from January 2005. The table below shows the **performance of the NERR engineers**. January shows significant increases in performance over the previous month. Management is considering banning Christmas vacations this year! Divisional Directors are increasing the pressure on their engineers to increase their workloads so that the Division will rank higher on the main NETS page boards - as shown in yesterday's news items. The active engineers averaged about 13 hours work each last month.

	August	September	October	November	December	January 2005
No. of active engineers	124	109	112	105	116	141
No. of time slips submitted	795	772	716	721	774	957
No. of NERR time slips	652	606	643	561	697	830
Total hours	1443	1264	1234	1569	1203	1834
Average hours worked per active engineer	11.6	11.6	11.0	14.9	10.4	13.0
Average hours per time slip	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.55	1.92
Total wages	\$43,290	\$37,296	\$37,014	\$47,070	\$36,117	\$55,041
Average wages per time slip	\$54	\$48	\$52	\$49	\$47	\$57

1 February

- The statistics for **January 2005** taken from the main **NETS** page show the following performances of the 5 Divisions for the month. It has to be remembered that the Divisions do not have equal numbers of engineers (NE has 79. NW has 56. SE has 29. SW has 44. CT has 37. HQ has 12.).

NERR Statistics for January 2005						
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Time Slips</i>	<i>Div</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Div</i>	<i>Pay</i>	<i>Div</i>
1	256	CT	282.4	SE	8,475.00	SE
2	141	SE	256.4	CT	7,694.10	CT
3	132	NW	216.0	NW	6,480.00	NW
4	104	NE	185.1	NE	5,554.50	NE
5	100	SW	156.7	SW	4,701.00	SW

- Some more statistics from **January 2005** - the table below shows the **Top 25 Work Orders** as

measured by the number of times a time slip for the the work order has been submitted since the NETS was implemented in January 2004. In the Times Slips column, the number inside the brackets shows how many time slips were submitted for that work order in January 2005. In the Rank column, the number inside the brackets shows the work order's rank in the previous month.

W/O No.	Work Order Name	Time Slips	Loco	Rank
383	NEWC-1-Grainmove	63 (3)	Diesel	1 (1)
595	NECV-007-03a	60 (5)	Diesel	2 (2)
81	NENE-KA-001	48 (0)	Diesel	3 (4)
411	NEWH-100-01	48 (2)	Diesel	3 (5)
596	NECV-007-03b	45 (3)	Diesel	5 (5)
483	NEFB-045-01	45 (3)	Diesel	5 (7)
106	NEER-110-01	44 (4)	Diesel	7 (7)
414	NEFB-100-05A	43 (4)	Diesel	8 (12)
371	NEWH-150-01a	43 (3)	Diesel	8 (10)
531	NEFB-045-02	42 (4)	Diesel	10 (14)
623	NECV-010-BR2	41 (2)	Diesel	11 (7)
240	NENE-018-1a	41 (4)	Electric	11 (14)
412	NEWH-100-01a	41 (1)	Diesel	11 (12)
552	NENE-163-01a	40 (3)	Diesel	14 (19)
372	NEWH-150-01b	39 (1)	Diesel	15 (14)
597	NECV-007-04	38 (4)	Diesel	16 (19)
373	NEWH-150-01c	38 (1)	Diesel	16 (17)
380	NELV-260-01	37 (3)	Diesel	18(22)
622	NECV-010-BR1	36 (1)	Diesel	19 (19)
299	NENE-061-01	36 (3)	Electric	19 (17)
124	NEDF-109-X01	35 (1)	Diesel	21 (17))
434	NEMM-110-01	35 (0)	Diesel	21 (-)
415	NEFB-100-05B	34 (?)	Diesel	23 (-)
447	NEFB-123-01a	34 (?)	Diesel	23 (-)
413	NEWH-100-01b	34 (1)	Diesel	23 (22)
374	NEWH-150-01d	34 (1)	Diesel	23 (22)

Claude's Corner

by Claude Thibault, NERR Engineer #23

2 February

I Did It Again!

Did it again ... While waiting for everything to be set up at a voice-over session, I started talking computers and simulators with a technician. He was telling me how he was set up for Flight Simulator and was currently learning to play with it. I made the mistake of mentioning MSTS and NERR. ... Train simulation to him sounded far too easy, so I tried, again, to explain NERR. I will never learn. The more I explained, the less he understood, and the less he understood, the more my explaining was confusing. I was relieved when they called me up to get to work, because I realised that all this NERR business is absolutely un-understandable to any non-NERR engineer. I must admit that to a flight-simmer, train simulating seems rather childish. "You're on a track," he said, "so you open the throttle and you move. What's the big deal; you can't deviate from the track, and you can't crash!" "You mean grown men from around the world working for a virtual railroad, riding virtual trains on virtual tracks and sharing all this free stuff? Yeah! Right!" And on and on..... Now as others were joining us and not understanding, I secretly swore to never again try to explain, never, niet, non, no! NERR?... never heard of it!

I had two friends.... but one of them died. He never abused.... Never! He did not like fast food, he liked spinach, he ate salad for lunch. He had a glass of wine on week-ends and sometimes a bottle of beer. He exercised. He led a perfect life. House, wife, two kids, one dog. Ask any doctor, any dietician, any gym instructor, and they all will tell you to exercise, eat well and drink with moderation. That was how he lived his life. He should have died at 100. He was 40, he got into his car and just died. Game over.

I have a friend... ... I used to have two, but one of them died, so now I only have one. He used to live in my town, but now he lives in Chicago. He's big brass in a mega company. He wears a tie and a suit... he makes tons of money.... People respect him because he has an expense account that is bigger than most people's salary. His job is to butter-up big customers. He takes them to dinner in Paris, in New York, in London. He takes them to Holland to see the tulips. He takes them to France to taste the wine, to Germany to drink the beer, to Russia to eat caviar..... This is his job. He has enough frequent flyer miles to take all of his family to Europe each year, and we're talking about one wife and 4 kids plus boyfriends and girlfriends. When

he dies, he's going straight to hell because he has his heaven on earth. He is a VIP. When Avis is all out of cars at the airport... he still gets one. When a fancy restaurant is booked solid... he still can get a table. He is always well-dressed, he is always clean-shaven, he is always playing a role....

Except when he is with me. When we meet, he lets loose. He lets it "all hang out". He over-eats, and he over-drinks and... since I'm around, I over-eat and I over-drink. It's a twice-annual ritual. Once in the summer and once around Christmas, he and his wife come over to my house. I prepare a gourmet meal for an army, and he brings the wine. Always 4 pairs of different wines. 8 bottles in all, plus one bottle of Port. The idea of the game is that we eat like pigs and empty ALL the bottles. Nobody is driving, and we do this orgy only twice a year.

Been doing this for over 30 years. 30 years ago it was easy.... today... the morning after..... I want to die! Actually I should say the month after, because this is how much time my 56 year old body needs to function properly again. I am in a kind of a daze for weeks. For days I feel like a truck ran over me. I ache in places I didn't know I had. I promise myself; never again but, every year we start over again and you know why? Because I had two friends, and one of them died!

Old Heading

by Bill Prieger, NERR Engineer #269

Article #3 - 14 February 2005

Track Warrants

In dark territory, as a route like the NCR is portrayed as, a track warrant in effect takes the place of signals in a CTC system. The track warrant (TW) treats each piece or trackage between 2 stations, or 2 sidings, or a station and a siding as one block. As long as there are no conflicting movements (meets with another train or 2 trains that will occupy the same limits even if going the same direction), the track warrant treats the limits notated in lines 2,3,&4 (see picture to the right) as one block. If there are no other trains working that territory with you, you own that track until the limits of the TW or actions required by the TW are fulfilled.

In the rest of the article, I'll show you how to fill out a TW so you have an idea how to read and follow a track warrant.

[Click here to download a ZIP file containing a PDF file with the TW as shown below \(63Kb file\).](#)

Pacific & American Railroad Track Warrant

W/O _____ NO. _____ Date: _____
To: _____ AT: _____

1. Track Warrant NO. _____ Is Void.
2. Proceed From _____ To _____.
3. Proceed From _____ To _____.
4. Work Between _____ To _____.
5. Not In Effect Until _____.
6. This Authority Expires At _____.
7. Line No. _____ Not In Effect Until After Arrival Of _____
@ _____.
8. Hold Main Track At Last Named Point.
9. Do Not Foul Limits Ahead Of _____.
10. Clear Main Track At Last Named Point.
11. Between _____ & _____ Limits Occupied
By Train Or Engine _____ And All Movements Must Be
Made @ Restricted Speed Unless Train Or Engine Reports
Clear Of Limits Of Line 11.
12. Line No. _____ Is Void @ _____.
13. Do Not Exceed _____ MPH Between _____ &
_____.
14. Do Not Exceed _____ MPH Between _____ &
_____.
15. Track Bullitms In Effect _____
16. Other specific Instructions: _____

OK'd @ _____ Dispatcher _____
Relayed To: _____ Copied By: _____
Work Order Reported Completed @ _____

Let's start filling one out:

First thing you need to know: a line is not considered in effect unless the little line next to the number has an "X" placed in that little field. The term for placing this X is 'check', i.e. PA139 "check" line 1 track warrant # blah, blah, blah .

W/O: insert 'PANC-SC-WI-Lumber-P1'. I created this input field so you can keep track of what w/o this TW is for, in case you want to run the w/o again. I know that I will.

NO.: insert 1 - this is the w/o number. Always start with 1. As we are going to use three for this w/o we'll insert 2 for the next one and 3 for the third - since this is a series of w/os. You must remember to continue the number progression throughout the series. The first TW in Part 2 will be numbered 4 and so on, until the last TW is created for the last instalment of the w/o series.

Date: use one that coincides with the time of year portrayed in the weather portion of the w/o, i.e. for summer/clear use something like June 15, 1959. Also, RRs use this method of dating TWs as there is less chance of a typo creating a misleading TW.

To: insert the lead locomotive # or Train ID and Symbol for pax, i.e. freight PA139W

At: insert the starting station for the run. If TWs are delivered *en route*, you would put the station that the TW is delivered at, i.e. TO: PA #14 AT: Klamath Falls.

Line 1: insert a previous TW that was fulfilled or expired, i.e. Track No. 1 is void. This would be filled in only if a second TW is delivered *en route*. When you reach the point of the next TW authority, then the w/o developer should put a pop up stating that TW 1 is Void. You know to proceed under the direction of TW2. This is how authority is handed off from one TW to another. Also, you would use this line if the dispatcher made a mistake, or if a train sat too long without a crew, and the first TW time limits expired. The term void means means the TW is finished and no longer has any train authority. When a crew fulfils a TW, he writes VOID in big letters across the front of the TW, so there is no mistake as to whether this TW is good or not.

Lines 2 & 3: insert the starting station or MP of this TW's track limits to be run on and the last station or MP of this warrant's limits. This line is directional only, as the train can proceed only from point A to B - no going back the other way. If you missed a pull from a customer - tough luck, no going back. Now in the GCOR there is a little rule here that does allow you to back up. As long as it is clear that there are no following trains you can go back 1 mile (MSTS, because our routes are shorter), 2miles (RW). That's it - any more ... say goodbye to your card. Now why are there two lines for directional movements? You can give authority in line 2 to go from A to B. You do this if you want the train to stop

here for a meet. You would then check "Other Specific Instructions" and insert "Line 3 not in effect until after the arrival of PA145". So until this train goes by you, you have no authority to enter the limits of line 3.

Line 4: This line is checked for locals or way freights that will go out to a point and then return to the original starting point. You are free to move back and forth as much as you want. You can share this territory with other trains as well. You will then check line 11 or 12 if the other train is a MOW train or gang. Does this mean you are confined to Restricted speed cause other trains are in the area? No, and I'll explain why when we get to that line.

Line 5: Check this line then fill in the blank in one of 3 ways.

- Insert a time, if you don't want the train to enter these limits until a certain time for whatever reason -be it to wait for an AI to pass, or set up; or developer's discretion.
- Until TW 1 is void. Remember you cannot have more than one TW in effect at the same time. By inserting "until TW whatever # is void", you prevent this TW from becoming active, even if other conditions for its ability to be active are met.
- You can also use line 16 to substitute for line 5 if there's not enough room to convey your line 5 intention. In this case you would insert "see line 16". An example of what you could put on line 16: "Track Warrant # not in effect until train PA1876E reports clear of limits". Use line 16 for any special conditions that must be met before being allowed to proceed into the limits of the TW.

Line 6: If you want this TW to expire at a certain time, you insert a time. I should also note, so we are on the same page, that we will use 24 hour military time. A railroad can use either format, but since the AE uses military time, and Boss Bob was in the service military time it is. The RW RR I use to run for used am/pm, and the UP used 24hr. Switching back and forth was a real pain.

Line 7: Use this line instead of, or in conjunction with, a time on Line 5. The first Blank is filled in with the ID of the train you want cleared, and the 2nd blank or field is the station, siding or MP. This line would be good for setting up AI traffic. Remember you can use any point in the run for this. If you want your player train to wait until an AI clears somewhere first, then use this.

Line 8: If you're going to end the w/o with your train on the main, you check line 8.

Line 9: You can use line 9 instead of line 7.

Line 10: If the w/o ends with the player train leaving the main track, be it yard or siding or industrial spur, then check this line.

So to review, we know how to label our TW and give authority to a thru train as well as a local. You know when a TW is voided and how to define its limits for

that run. Also we know the different ways a player train can enter the limits of a TW. Also how to define when a TW is in effect. But one thing to remember - at least line 5 and/or 7 or 9 must be checked as these define the starting conditions of your TW.

Line 11: for example here: (11. X Between Ada & Circus City Limits Occupied By Train Or Engine 7724W, 8623W, 3547W And All Movements Must be made @ Restricted Speed Unless Train Or Engine Reports Clear Of Limits Of Line 11.) This example is used below in the discussion.

What we are saying here is that you have three other trains working or travelling within your limits of line 2, 3, or 4. That doesn't mean they are there now, but that in the course of their travels, they will enter your limits sometime in the the time frame of your TW. Now your train is confined to restricted speed once you enter the limits of line 11. The limits of line 11 do not have to mirror the limits in line 2,3,or 4 - only the limits that any other train might share with you on your trip.

Now how do we get out of the RS requirement? Developers - pay attention to this, as pop-ups in the sim are needed to get the player train relief from RS. You must contact the other trains listed in line 11, in this case 7724W, 8623W and 3547W, and verify their location. They must answer back and tell you if they are cleared of the shared limits of line 11 or give their present location. Once you have talked to all three and verified that they are not in the shared limits, you can continue on at maximum authorized speed. If one of them is in your limits, he can let you know how far he is or where he is in the shared limits and relieve you of RS up to that location. Now, some of these trains may have an on-duty time later than yours. This would be noted on line16. Here the dispatcher would put "8623 not on duty until 11:00". In this case you are relieved from RS against this train until 11:00. At that point in time, you need to try and contact that train and verify its location. Whew! If you don't understand all this, please ask questions.

Line 12: Is exactly how I explained earlier - you can void any line of this TW as well as the dispatcher.

Line 13 & 14: These lines are for any temporary speed restrictions that may have been given to the dispatcher by MOW personnel within the last 24 hours. Normally speed restrictions, other than posted track speed, are listed in Track Bulletin Form A (to be discussed further down). Or if a speed restriction develops while you're *en route*, the dispatcher will call you, and the conversation will go like this:

"Dispatcher to 2222E (your train for now) - prepare to receive a speed restriction for TW 1 dated July 4, 1976. Over."

"Go ahead Dispatcher. Over."

"2222E, check line 13 of TW 1. Do not exceed 10mph between MP 235 &

Connelly. Over."

"OK dispatcher, 2222E, check line 13, do not exceed 10mph between MP235 & Connelly. Over."

"2222, that is correct. Dispatcher out."

Another important thing: any changes made to a TW during a run are not considered in effect until the dispatcher says "That is correct". You must always repeat any changes back to the dispatcher. If you are giving territory back to the dispatcher, such as voiding a line 2,3,or 4, he must repeat what you have told him, and he cannot put the changes into effect until you say "That is correct."

Line 15: There are three types of track Bulletins.

- **Form A:** this TB (track bulletin) lists any slow orders on the route you are travelling on. Some of them may not be in your limits, but for ease of understanding for the hoppers, let's only list one that in the limits of his run. I will have a sample of slow orders on the next post with a sample of a filled out TW.
- **Form B:** this is the TB that lists the the limits of where any MOW crews are working. Under no circumstances is a train allowed to enter these limits without getting clearance from the Foreman-in-Charge of the MOW gang. The MOW limits must show the limits at each end of the track he is working on, specifically, by using MP# or station or siding names, and the date and start time his limits are in effect (the time they actually occupy the track).
- **Form C:** This form lists any special conditions to track structure or anything the engineer may need to watch out for, e.g. animals may be on track; parade traffic may foul the track in a town; non-RR work crews may be working close to track. Basically anything that the hopper needs to be aware of.

Line 16: On this line the dispatcher will put any information that is not covered elsewhere - like times when other trains will enter shared limits; times that various lines e.g. 2, 3, 4, 11 are in effect. When in doubt, put it here. If a speed restriction in your Track Bulletin form A has been removed, you can put it here.

OK'd @_____ : No TW is good unless this line has a time in it. Usually it will be your on-duty time.

Dispatcher: If the w/o developer writes the TW, he is the dispatcher. If the developer has a second party write the w/o, the second party must affix their name to this line. If there's a mistake on the TW, here is where the blame stops. The Dispatcher on duty affixes his initials - why, I don't know. If you want to use your handle, that would be great; that way if someone wants their real name kept private, they can.

Relayed to: If you get a TW *en route* at, say a depot, the station agent or

depot name can be put here.

W/O completed By: I put this here so you have a place to write down how long you took to complete this w/o. I can never remember from the time I see the evaluation time until I get to the enter time part of the time slip.

Below is a Zipped PDF and [Openoffice.org](https://www.openoffice.org) filled out TW for a P&A activity for the NCR as an example of what I have been talking about in the above discussion. We can use it to go through and decipher what it says.

Bill, I hear the UP dispatchers here give a "track and time" to the MOW crews. Can you explain that one?

"Track and Time" is a way of giving a section or Block of track to the MOW crew to be able to work on it. The Dispatcher must put Blocking devices (done electronically) into the CTC program for his territory that will put up a permanent Red at the Controlled signal at each end of the section being worked on, so no trains can enter that area. Before he does this, he must have a clear board on the CTC machine, and then he puts up the Reds at each end. He then by Radio or Telephone dictates to the MOW crew the time and limits of the block being given to the MOW crew. He will also give an 'until' time. This is when he expects the track to be given back to him for train movements. If the MOW crew cannot finish in the expected time, they can ask for a later until time or transmit a speed restriction for the exact spot they are repairing.

The dispatcher will take back the track and transmit a verbal speed restriction to any trains he moves thru that area. If the track being repaired is next to a siding or the siding itself, he can give track and time for the siding or main (each siding and main at a siding have controlled signals at each end) & route trains thru the other track usually he will add a restricted speed notification.

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