
SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS



An official Publication of the Susquehanna Division 11
Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA



**SUPERINTENDENT'S
DESK**



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DIVISION

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From the Superintendent's Desk

Welcome to the new year. We have quite a lineup of in-person and Zoom meets. On April 13, we will meet on Zoom, our May 16 meet will again be at Zion Lutheran Church in Dauphin, and don't miss out on our East Broad Top event on August 15, 2026. Keep checking *Susquehanna Sidetracks* or our website, susquehannanmra.org, for our 2026 meet schedule.

By the time you read this, we will have had a joint meet between the Susquehanna and Philadelphia Divisions. I gave a clinic on the Central Railroad of New Jersey's standard wooden passenger stations.

Officer elections are approaching. I have decided to not run for reelection as superintendent. It isn't all that difficult a job; please consider running. We will elect a new superintendent and assistant superintendent. Dean Johnson will stand for reelection as chief clerk. The officers and board of directors meet via Zoom every month or so. The meetings last about an hour.

On a personal note, I continue work on my layout. Right now I'm laying cork roadbed using 1/16" thick cork sheet cut into strips. And I continue scratch building structures.

Alan



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Division Officer Nominations

It is now 2026. This being an even-numbered year, it's once again time to ask for nominations for our three Division Officer positions. The three officers are: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Chief Clerk (Secretary-Treasurer). Each officer will be elected to a two-year term from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2028. To be an officer, you must be a member of the NMRA, reside in the Susquehanna Division 11 area, and be at least 21 years of age. You may nominate yourself or another member you feel is qualified; however, in fairness to the individual please verify they would be willing to serve. If we receive more than one nominee for a position, each nominee will be asked to provide a short (200 words or less) bio-sketch that will then be provided to all members in the May edition of ***Susquehanna Sidetracks***.

The timeline for the 2026 officer voting is:

- **March 30, 2026:** Submit nominations to Alan Mende, Superintendent, either by phone at (717) 469-1047 or email at super@susquehannanmra.org. I need to know as soon as possible so that, if need be, I can turn the dogs loose for some serious recruiting.
- **April 15, 2026:** Candidate bio-sketches (if needed) are due either to Alan by email (see above address) or USPS (306 Manada Gap Road, Grantville, PA 17028). This deadline is necessary for ballot distribution in the May/June ***Susquehanna Sidetracks***. David Ellis, Sidetracks editor, will need your submission/bio-sketch no later than April 15 so publication deadlines can be met.
- **May 1, 2026:** Ballots and nominee bio-sketches (if needed) will be sent to members in the May/June edition of ***Susquehanna Sidetracks***.
- **May 31, 2026:** Ballots must be returned by either email or USPS.
- **July 2026:** Election results will be published in the July/August ***Susquehanna Sidetracks***. The newly elected officers will take office effective July 1st.

Please seriously consider running for a Division Officer position. Our annual programs are developed under the leadership of your Board of Directors (BoD) and all Division policies are approved by your BoD. Therefore, this is your opportunity to get involved in deciding the future direction of your NMRA Division. I know most members are very busy with job, family, hobby projects, and other community programs and, therefore, believe serving as an officer on our BoD would simply require too much time. On the contrary, our BoD only meets in person a few times a year – all other matters are handled by either email, phone, or by Zoom meetings. So once again, please give this important request your most thoughtful consideration. This is an excellent opportunity for you to have a direct say in how your division is managed, and it does not require a great deal of your valuable free time. Please give me a call or send me an email if you have questions about the elections or our BoD operations at super@susquehannanmra.org or (717) 469-1047.

Alan Mende

Notes From the Board of Directors

The officers and directors meet regularly on Zoom to discuss the “business” of the division, make decisions, and engage in planning. Any member is welcome to join us and/or bring up agenda items for the board. You can contact any of us (email addresses are provided on the “Second Section” page) with questions, agenda items, or the link to the next BoD meeting.

In the most recent meetings, in addition to focusing on planning for the 2026 schedule of membership meetings and activities for the Susquehanna Division, we also started planning for this year’s officer election. The details and timeline for the election are discussed above on pages 2-3. Our event schedule for the year, a blend of gathering in person as well as online meetings on Zoom, is discussed in the “Upcoming Events” section on page 6. We are hoping that by planning some hands-on activities at a few of our in-person venues we might gain more participation from our membership.

Please feel free to contact the board with topics or activities that you think would be engaging for the membership of your division!

We are also planning a very special event at East Broad Top this summer, so be sure to **save the date: August 15, 2026**. Details of our current planning for the event are on [our website](#).

FEATURES OF THE EAST BROAD TOP EVENT:

- New South Route and/or North Route — Both behind steam!
- Shop and roundhouse tour
- Train ride cost: \$25.00 for each
- Shop tour cost: \$5.00 with train ride, \$18.00 shop tour only
- Other activities available — make it an all day event
- Reservations and checks by July 1, 2026
- More details and the day’s schedule will continue to be updated on our website at:
- <https://susquehannanmra.org/ebt-event/>
- Barry and Dean, the chairs of this event, will post additional information in the May/June edition

Second Section

Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official Newsletter of the Susquehanna Division 11
Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA

Officers and Directors

Superintendent: Alan Mende super@susquehannanmra.org
Asst. Superintendent: Chris Kier assist-super@susquehannanmra.org
Chief Clerk: Dean Johnson. treasurer@susquehannanmra.org
Director: David Ellis dellis@susquehannanmra.org
Director: Jim Mattern jmattern@susquehannanmra.org
Director: Barry Schmitt sbschmitt@susquehannanmra.org
Director: Rich Wurst rwurst@susquehannanmra.org

Committee Chairs

Achievement Program Chair:

Bob Charles, MMR achievement@susquehannanmra.org

Model Showcase Chair:

Bob Charles, MMR showcase@susquehannanmra.org

Membership Chair:

Howard Oakes membership@susquehannanmra.org

Web Designer:

David Collison

Webmaster:

David Ellis webmaster@susquehannanmra.org

Sidetracks Editor:

David Ellis editor@susquehannanmra.org



National Model Railroad Association

<https://www.nmra.org/>

Mid-Eastern Region

<https://mer-nmra.com/>

Susquehanna Division

<https://susquehannanmra.org/>

Note From the New Editor

As the new editor, I see at least two purposes of our newsletter. First of all, dissemination of information will be a major goal; both about upcoming events and what is going on with the division. A second goal, that I need help with, is helping model railroaders move forward with building or improving their railroads. I will be asking for contributions from you to help with those goals.

Whether you know of an upcoming event that may be of interest to division members or you have an idea for a model railroading related article, the first step is to contact me at editor@susquehannanmra.org. In general, if you would like to contribute an article, attach the text to an email in Word (.doc or .docx) with minimal formatting. Attach any photos or illustrations in jpeg format separately. Please make sure that the photos are yours or used with permission and credited.

David Ellis

January Meeting

On January 12, 2026 we met on Zoom for a virtual membership meeting. We were experimenting with a Monday evening timeframe, and whether it was the timing or an interest in the clinic topics, we had a solid turnout. At one point, eighteen folks had joined the meeting. We started with a short update of upcoming events before moving into the two clinics, both touching on scratch building.



Jim Mattern started the clinics with a discussion of his work “scratch building ore cars — wooden gondolas and hoppers.” He is modeling the Cornwall Railroad, and he gave us some background before explaining his approach to scratch building these unique cars. A PDF of his slideshow, along with other clinics, is available to view on our [PRESENTATION LIBRARY PAGE](#).

Scott Lister then joined us from South Carolina, demonstrating that not only can clinicians join us from across the commonwealth, but also from across the country. He presented how he scratch built his beautiful Lebanon Station model, showing numerous photos of not only the prototype, but also the processes he uses. His techniques might be considered “old school,” but his work is exquisite.



Modeling Article:

Suburban Propane Trucks in HO Scale

Article and photos by Alan Mende

Where I grew up in New Jersey, propane was delivered by Suburban Propane. I vividly recall the driver parked his truck in what we called the teardrop—a turnaround in our driveway. He entered our back gate pulling a thick hose to fill our tank. The truck was a Reo Gold Comet. Since many of us model what we know or grew up with, I decided I needed such a truck.

I was doing my student teaching at Hunterdon Central High School in Flemington, NJ. After school I had to go down to Trenton State College for class. As I drove south on Rt. 31, I passed the Flemington Transit Company's bus yard and spied a weather-beaten Reo truck painted in Suburban Propane's cream and red paint scheme. I later took some photos of it.



Figure 1

I had to build a model of it. At the time, Ivers Engineering was the only company that made Reo trucks in HO scale. Now, you can get several types of Reo trucks from Sylvan Scale Models.

Since I didn't take any measurements of this truck, I was at a loss trying to determine the length of the bed. But I'm a member of the Antique Automobile Club of America, and their library is only a few miles from my home. So I went there and requested information on Reo trucks. Boy, did the library have a lot of information, including drawings with measurements. **See Figure 2.**

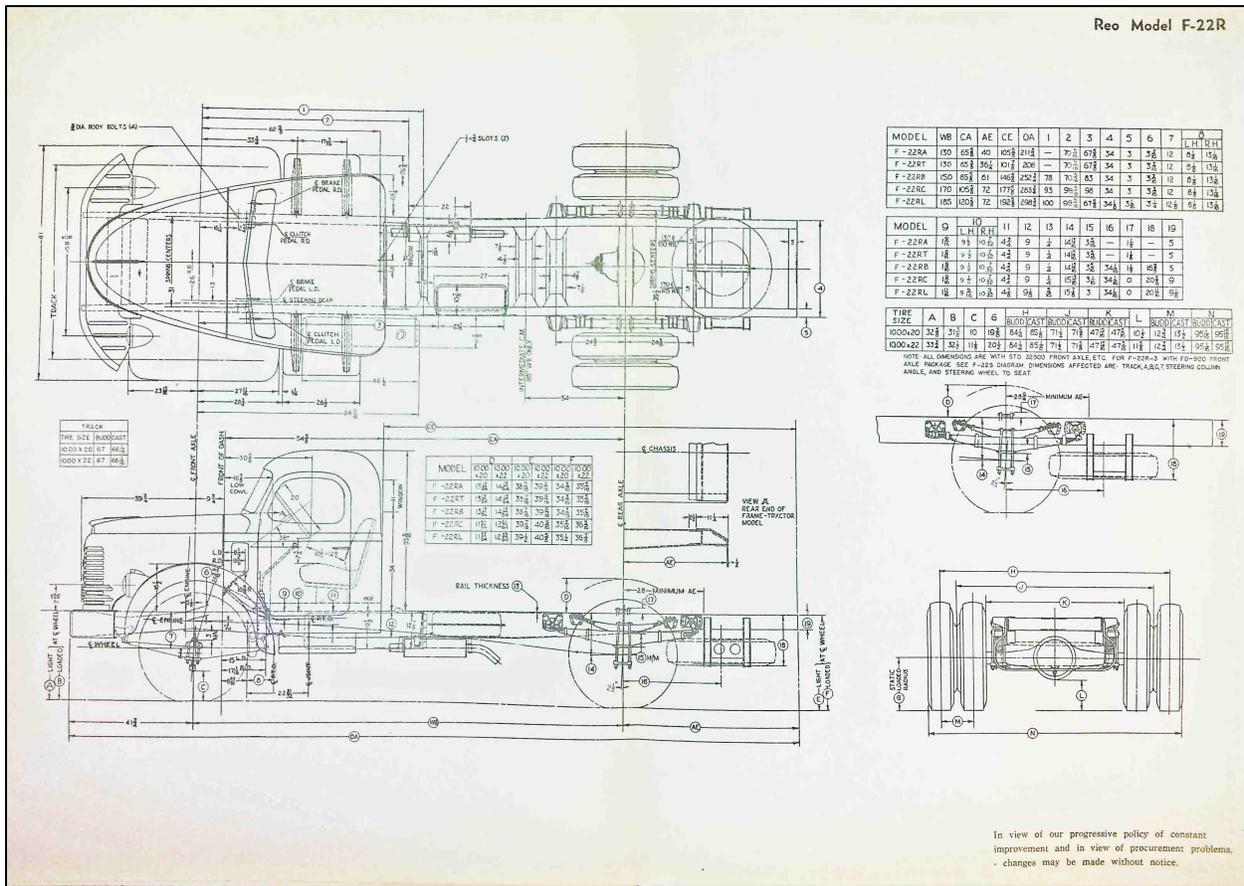


Figure 2

This and a lot of other information allowed me to scratchbuild the bed of the truck. That was half of my project. I also wanted a tank truck. I found online a photo of a miniature tank truck that Suburban Propane apparently gave to kids. See Figure 3. I had a second Ivers Engineering Reo kit and an old Walthers resin propane tank truck. I married the two, but I still



Figure 3

needed graphics. Fortunately, Microscale has set No. 87-941 which includes decals for Suburban Propane but only tiny ones that would fit on the truck doors. What to do?

I found a photo of an HO scale propane tank car lettered for Suburban Propane. Shamelessly, I copied the image and adjusted it. See Figure 4. After adjusting it for size, I printed the image on clear decal paper.



Figure 4

Then it was simply a matter of painting the two trucks with Tru-Color TCO-340 TH&B Cream and TCP-052 Caboose Red. In addition to the Microscale Suburban Propane logos and the one I made myself, I added several warning labels. Online I found some resin cast propane tanks, decaled them, and added them to the back of the delivery truck. Now they were ready for my layout.



Figure 5



Figure 6

Upcoming Events

SUSQUEHANNA DIVISION:

April 13, 2026: Online on Zoom, **Monday at 7:00 p.m.**

Invitation link emailed to the membership. We recently added this one, and we are still in the planning stages. Details will be on the website, as we confirm the agenda.

May 16, 2026: In-person membership meeting at 9:00 a.m. at the Zion Lutheran Church in Dauphin, PA. We are planning on having demonstrations and hands-on stations, tentatively including locomotive maintenance and DCC installation basics along with non airbrush rolling stock weathering techniques.

August 15, 2026: Save this date for a full day East Broad Top outing. This looks to be a great event with lots of different possibilities including shop tours, steam rides, and more. Details are at:

[EAST BROAD TOP RAILROAD EVENT](#)

September 19, 2026: In-person membership meeting at 9:00 a.m. at the Good Hope Fire Company in Mechanicsburg, PA. One of the clinics under consideration will be hands-on with improving your soldering skills as a goal.

November, 2026: Virtual layout visit on Zoom. This is in the planning stages, but we are going to try to tour an outstanding railroad from “the far north of the division” live during our online meeting.

NMRA CONVENTIONS:

July 27 - August 2, 2026: NMRA National Convention in Chattanooga, TN

[SCENIC CITY EXPRESS](#)

October 15 - 18, 2026: NMRA MER Convention in Virginia Beach, VA.

[TRACKS TO TIDEWATER](#)



NON-NMRA UPCOMING EVENTS:

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Harrisburg Train Show

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

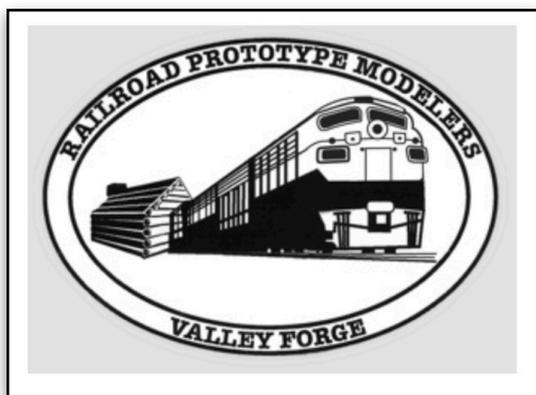
The Scottish Rite Harrisburg

2701 N. 3rd Street

Harrisburg, PA 17110



HARRISBURG TRAIN SHOW



March 19 - 22, 2026

Railroad Prototype Modelers Valley Forge

Malvern, PA

RPM VALLEY FORGE

Saturday, April 19, 2026

Lehigh & Keystone Valley

Outdoor Model Train Sale & Open House

705 Linden St.

Bethlehem, PA 18018

LKV MODEL RAILROAD

