

Telegraph Key



The Most Important News This Month

This month we celebrate National Train Day or the anniversary of the driving of the final spike in the Transcontinental Railroad. The golden spike was driven on May 10th, 1869. This year, National Train Day is being displaced by Mother's Day. What do you think about that?

Iron Horse 2026

The Sunshine Region, Iron Horse 2026, Convention will be at the Ocala Convention Center on Thursday October 15th through Saturday October 17th.

Scenic Express 2026

The 2026 NMRA National Convention will be held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, from July 27 to August 2, 2026, featuring layout tours, prototype excursions, and a world-record T-TRAK layout.

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NEW Editor:**
Todd Slaughter

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Editor's Message

.....

Happy National Train Day, Sunshine Region!

I am honored to take the throttle as your new editor of the Telegraph Key. I look forward to your suggestions for improvement. This is the first time I have undertaken a journey like this and I hope to learn a lot as I go. Hopefully we can tailor our newsletter based on your feedback. So, please, tell me how the Telegraph Key can better serve you. You can email me at todd.h.slaughter@gmail.com.

Just a little about me...

I am a retired US Army Warrant Officer. I am about to retire from the Department of the Air Force and really looking forward to being a full time model railroader.

I have a wife: Jennifer; and two daughters: Sophia and Daphne. We are all NMRA members! We also all participate in the NMRA Special Interest Group (SIG): Special Needs Model Railroading Association (SNMRA).

I am a "rubber-scaler." I have a 1:32 scale garden railroad, quite a few N-scale T-TRAK modules, and an HO proto-freelance RR "Clay Sink Line," which is under construction.

I hope to see you in Chattanooga,

We are all headed to the national convention in July.

Todd

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President's Message

.....

Here we are, already in May, and if you're anything like me, you're wondering where 2026 went. This year isn't just moving fast, it's screaming by. One minute we were talking about New Year plans, and the next we're deep into show season, planning layouts, clinics, and the next big gathering of our community.

And speaking of big, all eyes are turning toward Chattanooga this July for the NMRA National Train Show and Convention. This one is shaping up to be something truly special. The T-TRAK community is pulling together what can only be described as a jaw-dropping record-breaking layout, covering roughly 10,000 square feet. Think about that for a moment, 10,000 square feet of N Scale. That is not just large, that is historic. It is a powerful example of what can happen when model railroaders come together with a shared vision. By all accounts, this convention is poised to outshine most we have seen in recent history.

Closer to home, I am proud to say that our Sunshine Region convention last year was a tremendous success. It marked a turning point, delivering a much stronger and more enjoyable experience than we had seen in years past. The energy, the clinics, the operations, and most importantly the people, all came together in a way that reminded us of why these events matter.

Looking ahead, this year promises more of the same, and then some. The team is working diligently behind the scenes to ensure another outstanding convention experience. If you have not already done so, take some time to visit the Sunshine Region website and stay up to date on the latest details. There is a lot in the works, and you will not want to miss it.

At the heart of everything we do are the values that define us, mentorship, fellowship, and community. These are not just words we say, they are the foundation of who we are as a region. Whether you are a long-time member or just getting started, there is a place for you here. Our conventions, local meets, and club gatherings are where those connections are made, where knowledge is shared, and where lasting friendships are built.

So, as we move through this fast-paced year, I encourage you to stay engaged, get involved, and come together with your fellow model railroaders. The Sunshine Region convention is one of the best places to do exactly that.

I look forward to seeing you at the convention!

Andy,

Andy J. Zimmerman
ATCS AW USN Ret.
NMRA SSR President
NMRA Standards and Conformance Manager
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Treasurer's Message

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May is in the air and our convention is in full swing. Our website has been updated and ready to accept your registration and hotel reservation. We've updated our guest speaker information for the banquet which will prove to be an interesting time.

Hi All,

Unfortunately, we have limited seating for the banquet so please do not wait to register. Given the great time everyone had last year I'm expecting an even greater turn out this year and want everyone to be able to enjoy the event. So please, don't wait until the last moment to register for the convention.

We've made convention registration easier by bundling your registration and banquet together. One click and you are set.

Please let us know if you'd like to be a clinician, are looking for a certain type of clinic, if you're bringing a model to be judged or have a question.

Lastly, as you are reading this I will be finding myself up on the Oregon Train with my son and his wife enjoying my first grandson as his arrival is anticipated on May 2. Needless to say I will be out of pocket until about the 10th of May but I expect to return and find 50 registrations have been completed – make me do flips if we hit 75!!

See everyone soon!!

Glenn



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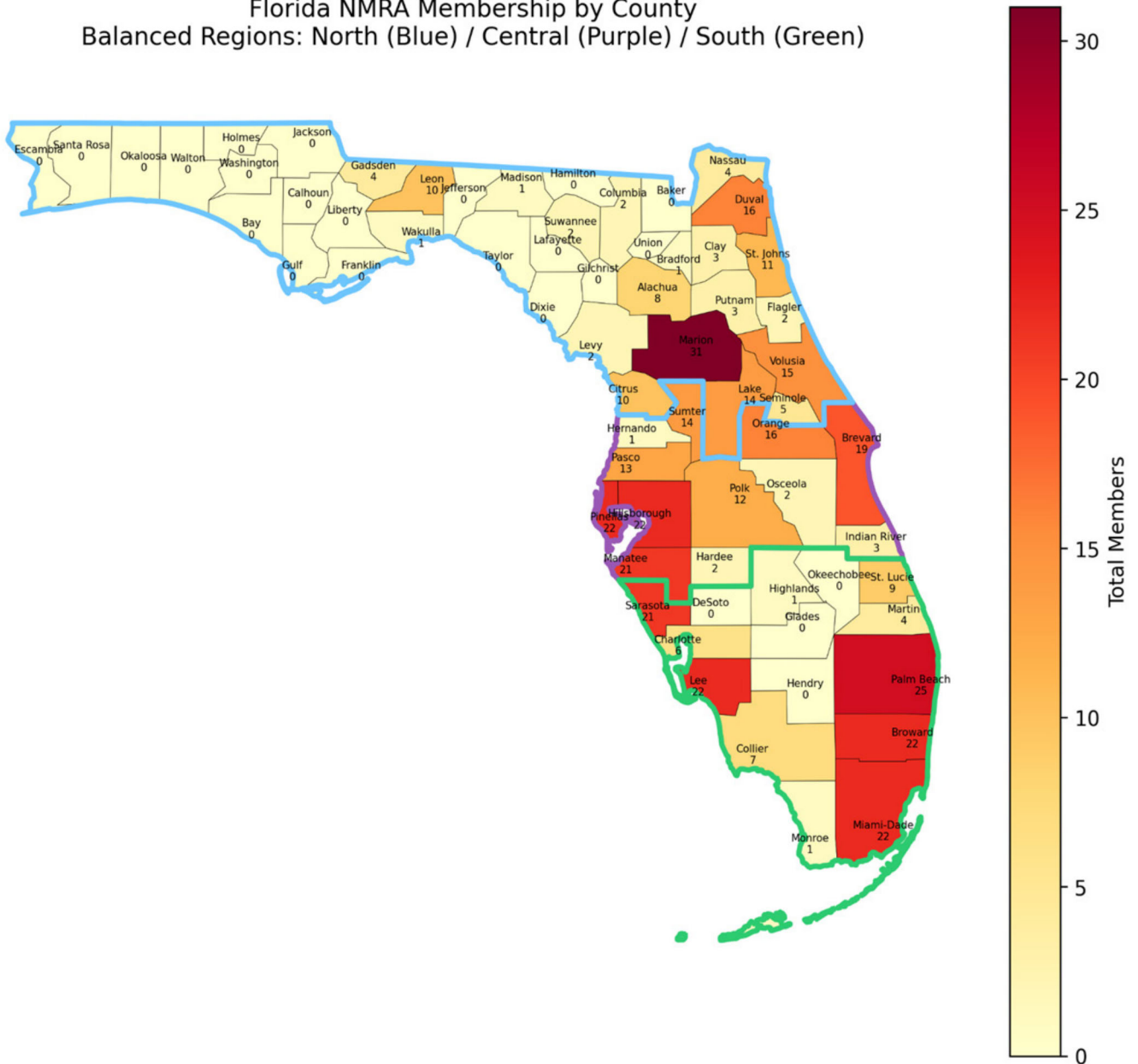
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New Divisions Map

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Florida NMRA Membership by County
Balanced Regions: North (Blue) / Central (Purple) / South (Green)



IRON HORSE 2026



NMRA Sunshine Region Annual Convention

Step into a weekend dedicated to model railroading at its very best at Iron Horse 2026, the annual convention of the National Model Railroad Association Sunshine Region. This event brings together the core values of the region, mentorship, fellowship, and community, in a setting designed to inspire, educate, and connect modelers of all experience levels.

Location: Hilton Ocala, Florida

Dates: October 15–17, 2026

Member Meeting: October 18

Iron Horse is more than just a convention. It is an immersive experience where attendees can expand their knowledge, refine their skills, and engage directly with others who share a passion for the hobby. Whether you are new to model railroading or a seasoned operator, you will find meaningful opportunities to learn and participate.

Attendees can expect a full schedule of clinics and workshops presented by experienced modelers, including hybrid clinics featuring clinicians from across the United States and Canada, bringing a broader range of expertise and perspectives to the program. Topics will span scenery, operations, electronics, and emerging technologies. Operating sessions provide hands-on opportunities to experience realistic railroad operations in a collaborative environment. The convention also features contests and awards that highlight the craftsmanship and creativity within the community, along with raffles and vendor participation that showcase the latest products and innovations in the hobby.

All activities are hosted in one convenient location, allowing participants to fully engage in the convention without missing any of the experience. Just as important as the formal program is the opportunity to connect with fellow modelers, exchange ideas, and strengthen the sense of community that defines the Sunshine Region.

Whether your goal is to grow your skills, expand your network, or simply enjoy time running trains with others, Iron Horse 2026 offers an experience that reflects the very best of model railroading.

Iron Horse 2026. The Best Region under the sun!

E C H O E S

EAST COAST H O EXHIBITORS SOCIETY
MIAMI, FL



E.C.H.O.E.S is a modular model railroad club located in Miami-Dade, Florida, dedicated to building and displaying our HO scale model railroad layout. Our purpose is to enjoy and promote the hobby of model railroading and preserve the history of railroading in South Florida. The club was started in the summer of 1985, with the goal of presenting a HO scale modular model railroad layout for display at "The Harvest Festival". Throughout the years, the layout has been displayed at regional conventions, four NMRA National Train Shows (Atlanta twice, Ft. Lauderdale, FL and Orlando), and other events in Miami Dade and Broward counties. We do running/operating sessions several times a year and welcome guests to join us. Membership is open and we welcome anyone who shares an interest and passion for Model railroading.

For more information, please contact:

Rick Diaz	rickdiaz@att.net	305 496 9266
Tracey Sanders	tassailor@mac.com	786 514 5667
Herb Ford	ehf640@gmail.com	786 375 1424





Central Division

.....

Hello Centraleers! Welcome to May!

First off, please take note of the Upcoming Central Division Meet on Saturday, June 13th. The info is at the end of this column.

So – I’ve kinda decided that I will take a break from my HO shelf layout since it seems that I’m a bit stuck on what to do next. I don’t know why, but I am. In place of my layout and to keep me modeling, I talked to my wife and she said she’d join me in building a couple T-TRAK modules. Yay! After 30+ years together, she is going to be a Model Railroader! I bought a couple “double” modules for us to work on and picked up used track from our local Tampa Bay hobby shop, Zitnik’s, to start laying working.

In discussing my desire to start T-TRAK with our new TK editor Todd, he told me he has a buddy who also wants to get into this aspect of our hobby. And Lo, [Tampa T-TRAK](#) was born. We will be a loose group of modelers who gather to run trains on our modules. That’s about it! Nothing official. I’m hoping we can have fun and do model railway stuff together. If you’re interested, please visit the “Tampa T-TRAK” page on FB. We are still forming and need to figure out how we will communicate and organize “meets” and we’d love to have you involved too.

While I was at the hobby shop the other day, I met up with Keith Chaisson, who is a member of the [West Pasco Model Railroad Association](#), and he told me about a pretty awesome event that recently happened in our Division. Members of the WPMRA visited [Central Florida Railroad Modelers](#) at their club and had a joint operating session. He said that 10 operators ran trains and another 6 observed. CFRRM members served as “pilots” and were assigned to each visiting operator for guidance. Keith said that the fellowship between clubs was exciting and a reciprocal visit is in the works. He also said that conversations are beginning with the [Suncoast Model Railroad Club](#) and [Chicago, Peoria and Western](#) club to set up similar events. Click on all the links above to check the clubs out.

Speaking of the Suncoast Club, they will have their end of month Open House on Saturday, April 25th. I’m hoping to attend, maybe you’ll be there too. Say Hi if you happen to see me. Click on the link for more info.

The West Pasco club has an Open House scheduled for Saturday, June 20th. Click on that link too.

If this Telegraph Key reaches any member of a club in our Central Division, please contact me so I can get you and your events represented here. I will promote any model railroading in the Division that I can. I want to engage with clubs as we may also be able to work together to set up model railroading events that benefit all our modelers.

Now...

Please join me at the upcoming SSR Central Division Meet at the Safety Harbor Public Library on Saturday, June 13th.

As an ending note, in rereading my article in the April Telegraph Key I realized that I didn’t fully recognize the support of the CP&W Club in preparing for and conducting our Feb 28th Division Meet. I especially want to thank Jim Hopes for his “boots-on-the-ground” work and Royal Bruce for organizing the help of the club members. That event would NOT have happened without Jim, Royal, and the rest of the club.

And, as always, I hope to see many of you out and around. Please work with me to do great things for all of us.

Thanks,

Mark Lewalski

Central Division Superintendent



The Western Bay Railroad is a 950 square ft On30 layout in Port St Lucie. We meet almost every Tuesday evening. We are looking for new members to join our group. There are OP sessions & scenery that we are still working on. If you're a modeler and serious about learning, give us a try! Go to our website or contact Al Sohl MMR als0622@yahoo.com

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Central Division

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SSR Central Division Meet

Saturday, June 13th

Safety Harbor Public Library

101 2nd St. N, Safety Harbor, FL 34695

10:30am – 3:30pm

\$15 per person, Pre-Registration Only

Mail checks with attendee name(s) to:

Mark Lewalski, 827 Duval Ct., Safety Harbor, FL 34695



Coffee, Water, Sodas included

Lunch break on your own. Map of local restaurants will be provided

Clinics

T-TRAK for Beginners – Todd Slaughter

DCC Basics – Carl Marchand

Creating a Small Switching Layout – Mark Lewalski

Shelf Layout, T-TRAK Modules on Display

PLEASE BRING YOUR MODELS TO DISPLAY

For More Information, Contact:

Mark Lewalski, SSR Central Division Superintendent 727-542-6731

All Model Railroaders and Train Enthusiasts Are Welcome!

*You **DO NOT** need to be an NMRA member.*



Southern Division

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Welcome to Spring, everyone! I'm sure that comes as welcome news to our brethren in the northern parts of the country where this has been the most severe Winter in many years. I'm back from my travels, and I'll start out with a huge Thank You to Bob Leonard, who has filled in for me the last couple of months. I didn't get to see any model railroads during our travels in South America, but we did get to ride on a steam train in the most southern part of the continent with a gauge of only 0.5 meters, roughly about 19".

During my absence, the division boundaries were modified, and so I will begin covering activities of the southern Gulf coast of Florida in addition to our regular news on the Atlantic side of the state. I am looking for clubs and group of model railroaders to connect up with, so please let me know about you.

In model railroad club news:

Starting with the Gulf Coast, I have established contact with the ScaleRails of Southwest Florida club, located at 1262 Piney Street in North Fort Myers (zip code 33903). This is a well established and very active club with roughly 50 members. They have operating layouts in both HO and N scales. The HO layout models the southwestern US and incorporates an Hon3 operation located in Colorado. The modular N scale layout depicts the mid southeastern US. Their skills with scenery are impressive, featuring exact replicas of several iconic structures and well-known railfanning locations. Those interested in visiting the club may come on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday between 10 AM and 2 PM, with the exception of 11AM-12 Noon on the 2nd Saturday of the month when the club members hold their monthly meetings. The club runs operating sessions on Monday nights, open only to members. For additional information, please contact the club president Jim Morse at jpmorse48@comcast.net or by phone at (239) 286-2499. The club web site is found at www.scalerrails.org.

The Florida Citrus Model Train Society (FCMTS), having completed their displays and shows for the 2025 holiday season, are in a quieter period during April. If you are interested in meeting the members, they hold a breakfast club on Tuesdays and Fridays at 8:30 AM at the Plantation Diner at 6903 West Broward Blvd, zip code 33317. Please contact Ken Sargeant at (954) 253-0413 for any additional information. Their web site is found at www.fcmts.org.

The East Coast HO Exhibitors Society (ECHOES) club will be running every weekend in April at the Gold Coast Railroad Museum located at 12450 SW 152nd Street, Maimi, FL 33177. They are running at the museum from 10 AM to 4 PM, but please note that there is an entrance fee to the museum (see the Gold Coast Railroad Museum web site) which includes many displays of vintage full size locomotives and cars. If you are interested, ask about their operating sessions. For additional information on ECHOES events, please contact Rick Diaz, rickdiaz@att.net or Tracey Sanders, tassailor@mac.com.

The Palm Beach Model Railroaders (PMBRR) is located at the South Florida Fairgrounds, 9067 Southern Blvd, West Palm Beach, 33411. They successfully completed their big open house held during the Palm Beach County Fair. During the fair the layout is open all day, every day. During April they will be running their regular Tuesday evening operating sessions for club members. They can be contacted at PBMRRCclub@gmail.com for additional information. The club's web site is www.pbmrr.org.



Southern Division

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The South Florida Railway Museum (SFRM) at the Deerfield Amtrak and Tri-Rail station at 1300 West Hillsboro Boulevard plans their next open house on Saturday, April 11th with visitors welcomed from 11 AM through 4 PM. Both N scale and HO scale layouts are open and on display. There are wooden trains set out on the outdoor deck to keep the small children happy, as the “look but don’t touch” rules do not apply to the extremely rugged wood trains and track. The HO layout team is currently finishing up their locomotive terminal and additional scenery upgrades are also in progress. The N scale layout is scheduled to begin demolition soon after this open house with plans for an entirely new layout. If you would like a final look at the current layout, please come to this open house. The museum will be closed April 15-21st for the layout demolition. The museum currently maintains a Facebook page in addition to the web site www.sfrm.org . For additional information, contact Bob Leonard, leonardstrait@gmail.com.

South Florida Railway Museum

**View the current “N” scale
layout for the last time, this
April 11th**

The Museum is Open on the 2nd Saturday of the month, the following dates are our 1st quarter **04-11, 05-09, 06-13 from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM** Follow us on our website www.sfrm.org and our Facebook page

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Southern Division

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Home Layout Tours:

For the last few years, the SFRM and the NMRA Southern Division have held an annual series of home layout tours. Last year we had 10 layouts on display, in N, HO, and O scales. As the organizer of this event, I need to begin scheduling the visits with a target of visits during May and June 2026. Please watch this column for information on the layouts and when they can be visited. Note that most home layouts in Florida are in limited spaces as we have no huge basements, so only a few people at a time can see each layout. The hosts typically have set up a gathering room for visitors to talk while they queue up to enter the layout rooms.

For any inquiries, my contact info is rwberger@comcast.net.

That's all for now. Please enjoy the warmer weather prior to the beginning of the annual hurricane season. We'll have more updates in May.


Richard Berger

Southern Division Superintendent

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