

# Telegraph Key



## *Railroad History*

One of the most significant railroad events in U.S. history occurred on June 4, 1876, when the Transcontinental Express, also known as The Lightning Express, arrived in San Francisco after departing New York City just 83 hours earlier. This was the first coast-to-coast passenger train to complete the journey in under four days, a feat unimaginable just decades earlier when travel between the coasts took months.

## *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.

## *In This Issue:*

**Meet Your  
NEW Editor:**  
Todd Slaughter

**News from the  
President:**  
Stronger  
Together!

**Division News:**

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## Editor's Message

.....

### Welcome to the June *TK!*

In May, during a family trip, I had the pleasure of visiting Scale Rails of Southwest Florida (<https://www.scalerails.org/>). A report from their club follows this page.

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](mailto: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.

We are all headed to the national convention in July.

*I hope to see you in Chattanooga,*

***Todd***

Todd H. Slaughter  
CW3, USA (Ret)  
NMRA SSR At large Director  
Editor, Telegraph key  
Ph- (C ) 941-400-3253

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## Scale Rails of Southwest Florida

.....

The Scale Rails of Southwest Florida model railroad club is currently rushing to complete a series of projects ahead of the annual summer membership decline. Their scribe reports that they tore down about 85% of their existing N-scale layout, redesigned a new track plan and layout that more than doubled the layout's size and tripled the length of the main line. The past year and this season saw the removal and salvage of the old layout, framing and construction of the new layout design table, laying of sub-roadbed, roadbed, and track for mainlines and spurs. The tracks were wired and tested for DCC electrical operation and for physical track running of rolling stock and engines. Upon approval of the installed tracks, the members undertook the erection of plaster-shell scenery, with plaster-coated gauze topped by a thin plaster topcoat. The plaster was painted in a deep tan base color and select structures and many trees were added. So many trees that all the club members were drafted into building them. During our recent club meeting, even the members who generally model in HO were sitting at worktables making hundreds of trees for the N-scale layout's new forest area.

Although the new layout still needs some final polishing, the Scale Rails Club is more than ready to show off what they have accomplished and welcomes a visit from 10 AM–2 PM on Saturdays. Their website has more information concerning club hours, membership, and purpose.

The Scale Rails of Southwest Florida promotes the NMRA Achievement Program (AP). Most members have already earned the “Golden Spike” award. Each fall and winter, the club sponsors a project to help members earn an achievement award. Currently, several members are working to complete the “Model Railroad Engineer – Civil.” In the fall, we plan to switch to “Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical.”

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## Editor's Message

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While the HO layout is 98% complete with track and scenery, it keeps members busy with the ongoing required maintenance. Monday nights offer an operating session, following a group dinner at a local restaurant. Members often furnish their own motive power, and the operating sessions provide a great test bed for repaired, upgraded, and new locomotives. Their HO layout is challenging for most operators to run and keeps everyone involved up to date on their throttle coordination, reducing the use of the word “oops.”

One of the projects undertaken this season was the written description of the supposed prototype line that the model layout represents and services. This has spurred greater interest in operational sessions, along with more challenges. A copy of the Railroad's purpose and service demands provides both visitors and members with a basic foundation for understanding the large HO-scale layout.



*Fun, Friends, Trains*

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Spring Hill, FL 34606

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## President's Message

.....

Good day my fellow NMRA members!  
Wow is it June already?  
Life in the Sunshine Region is warming up... Literally...  
It is hard to believe that we are already 6 months into the year!

As summer arrives and the pace of activity across the Sunshine Region continues to grow, I find myself increasingly encouraged by what I am seeing throughout our Region and the hobby as a whole. Everywhere I go, I see model railroaders coming together, sharing ideas, learning from one another, and most importantly, building community through a shared passion for trains.

*That spirit of mentorship, fellowship, and community remains at the heart of everything we do in the Sunshine Region.*

Over the past several months, I have had the opportunity to attend Division meets, club events, operating sessions, and gatherings where members from all walks of life came together around the hobby we love. What stands out most is not simply the layouts or the trains themselves, but the people. Experienced modelers helping newcomers. Clubs opening their doors to visitors. Conversations between members who may model different scales, eras, or railroads, yet instantly connect through a common enthusiasm for model railroading.

*That is what makes this hobby special.*

Recently, I attended a Division meet that reminded me exactly what our future can look like. We had NMRA members, non-members, local club participants, and even curious walk-ins all participating side-by-side. Clinics were presented, trains ran in multiple scales, ideas were exchanged, and new friendships were formed. The atmosphere was welcoming, energetic, and productive. It was not about titles or positions. It was about participation, engagement, and enjoying the hobby together.

That experience reinforced something important: the future success of the Sunshine Region depends on involvement from all of us.

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# President's Message



The Board can continue to pursue new initiatives, support the NMRA 2035 vision, strengthen our Divisions, and encourage more meaningful events and activities. We can work to improve communication, expand opportunities, and create new experiences for members. But the true strength of the SSR will always come from members who choose to participate, contribute, mentor, volunteer, attend meets, and help grow the community around them.

*Our hobby is evolving, and the Sunshine Region is evolving with it.*

Across the NMRA, there is renewed focus on growing participation, modernizing engagement, and ensuring that model railroading remains relevant and welcoming for future generations. Here within the SSR, there are important discussions and developments underway that are focused on creating more opportunities for members to do what we enjoy most: running trains, participating in operating sessions, learning new skills, sharing knowledge, and enjoying the full model railroading experience together.

One of the highlights on the horizon will be our 2026 SSR “Iron Horse” Regional Convention, taking place Thursday, October 15th through Saturday, October 17th, 2026, with our All Hands Member Meeting scheduled for Sunday morning, October 18th. Events like the Iron Horse Convention represent exactly what the Sunshine Region is all about. They bring together members from across our Divisions and beyond to learn, share ideas, participate in clinics and operating sessions, reconnect with old friends, and welcome new faces into the hobby. These gatherings strengthen not only our Region, but also the relationships and sense of community that make model railroading such a rewarding experience.

The excitement surrounding T-TRAK’s 25th Anniversary and preparations for the massive record-breaking layout planned for the 2026 National Train Show in Chattanooga are also perfect examples of what can happen when people come together with a shared purpose. What began as a simple modular concept has grown into a worldwide movement that brings model railroaders together across clubs, regions, and even countries. That same spirit of collaboration and community exists right here in the Sunshine Region.

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# President's Message

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As we move into the busy summer season, I encourage each of you to stay engaged and involved. Attend a Division meet. Visit a local club. Participate in an operating session. Share your knowledge with someone new to the hobby. Invite a friend to an event. Volunteer where you can. Every conversation, every clinic, every train run, and every helping hand contributes to building a stronger and more vibrant Region.

*The Sunshine Region continues to move forward because of you.*

Thank you for your continued passion, support, and dedication to the hobby and to one another. Together, we are building more than layouts and operating sessions. We are building friendships, preserving traditions, mentoring the next generation, and strengthening a community united by the love of model railroading.

I look forward to seeing many of you at upcoming events, Division meets, and especially at Iron Horse 2026 this October.

*Until then, keep the trains running.*

*Andy,*

Andy J. Zimmerman  
ATCS AW USN Ret.  
NMRA SSR President  
NMRA Standards and Conformance Manager  
Ph- (C ) 850-524-4399

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## Treasurer's Message

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Here we are in June, with the convention just 4ish months away. We are still gathering clinicians and solidifying convention fun. As items are finalized, we will get them up on the website for you to review. However, don't let that delay you from registering and making your reservation at the hotel. Getting everyone registered early helps us plan accordingly.

Hello Everyone,

If you are on the fence about registering, please talk to folks who attended last year and the great time everyone had, or if you attended last year – you know the great time you had, so let's make that registration right now! 😊

I'd also like to thank Brian Campbell, our new Secretary and Web Master, for jumping in and making the needed changes/enhancements to the website. He has just added a new section for Division meets where you can register for the meet and pay for it right on the website. This helps the Div Super to plan better knowing the number of attendees.

Lastly, the call for clinicians is still out there. The more folks that volunteer their knowledge helps all of us. We always ask for clinics you would like to have presented, but sometimes we just don't have a clinician available to teach a course. If everyone would email me a list of specific clinics they would like to see, we can put out a call for clinicians on the website and in next month's TK to try and fill this need.

See everyone soon!!

*Glenn*



**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](mailto:als0622@yahoo.com)**

*'No dues, just a great experience'*  
**[westernbayrailroad.org](http://westernbayrailroad.org)**



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# 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.

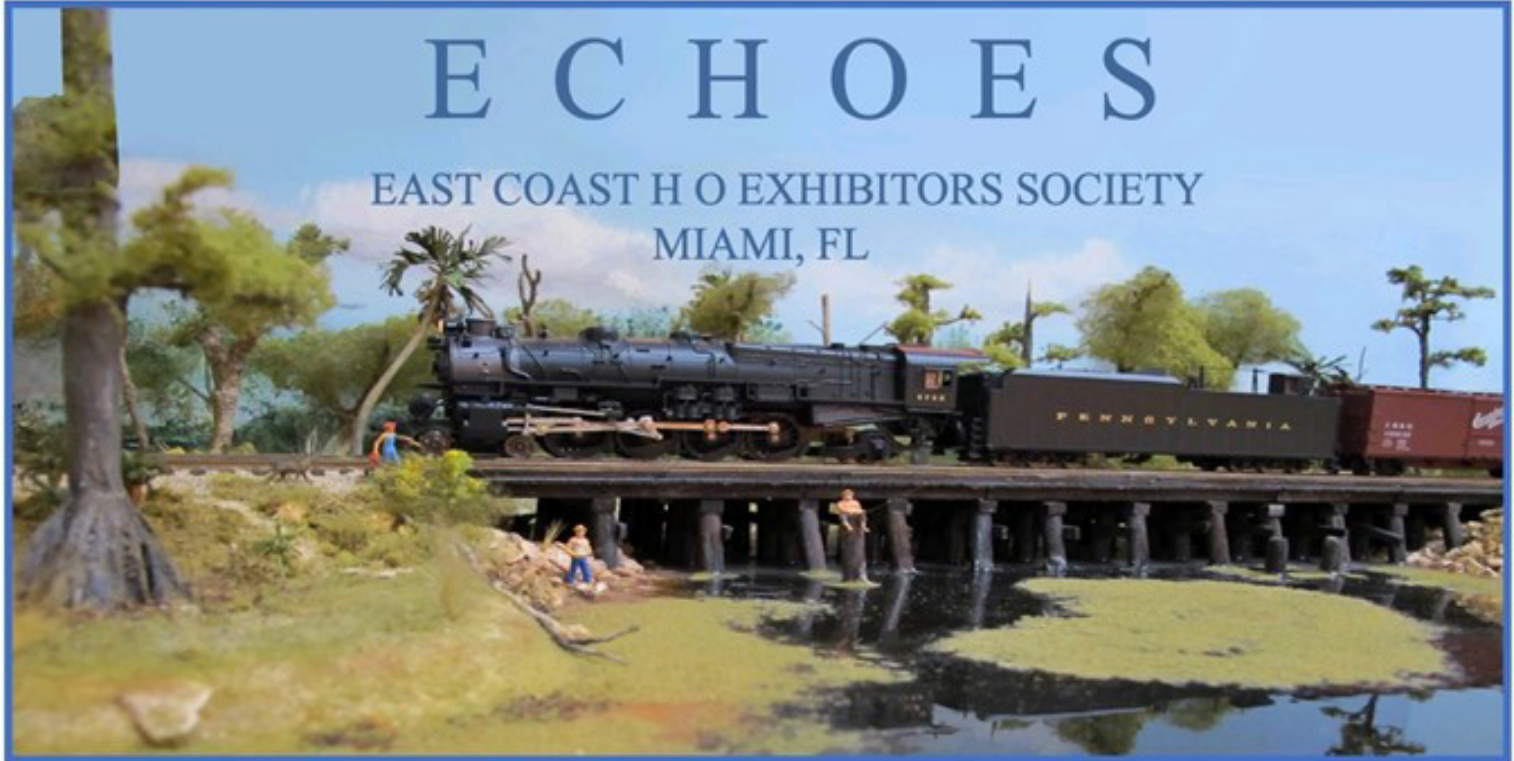
All activities are hosted in one convenient location, allowing participants to fully engage in the convention without missing any of the experience. Just as important as the formal program is the opportunity to connect with fellow modelers, exchange ideas, and strengthen the sense of community that defines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



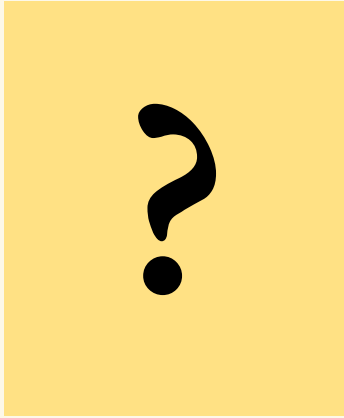
**E.C.H.O.E.S** is a modular model railroad club located in Miami-Dade, Florida, dedicated to building and displaying our HO scale model railroad layout. Our purpose is to enjoy and promote the hobby of model railroading and preserve the history of railroading in South Florida. The club was started in 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:

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





Northern Division

.....

**We need your help!**

Hello Northern Division!

Have you been feeling lonely?

Not feeling the love?

**Superintendent Wanted!!!**

**Apply within.**

You know that the greatest hobby,  
**model railroading**, has given you so  
much.

This is your opportunity to give back.

If you'd like to experience how giving back to the hobby  
by volunteering can be a truly rewarding experience...

Please contact Andy Zimmerman @

[ssrprez@nmra.org](mailto:ssrprez@nmra.org)



# Central Division

.....

First, please take note of the Upcoming Central Division Meet on Saturday, June 13th. Online registration is now available! You can navigate to the website or scan the QR Code and you'll be taken there by the magic of the interwebs.

Hello Centraleers! Welcome to June!

I'd like to welcome you to our CENTRAL DIVISION meet!

I will have a list of local area places to eat lunch for those who want to. There will be modules, my shelf layout (as long as I can get it out of my bedroom through the window!), and I hope to have a T-TRAK layout available.

If you already have a T-TRAK module, please bring it with you.

## SCHEDULE

10:30	Meeting Greetings Coffee, Water, Sodas
11:00	T-TRAK for Beginners with Todd Slaughter
12:00	LUNCH
1:30	DCC Basics with Carl Marchand
2:30	Creating a Small Switching Layout with Mark Lewalski
4:00	Meeting Salutations Cleanup

# Central Division

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## SSR Central Division Meet

Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>

Safety Harbor Public Library

101 2<sup>nd</sup> St. N, Safety Harbor, FL 34695

10:30am – 3:30pm

\$15 per person, Pre-Registration Only



<https://www.nmrasunshineregion.org/event-details-registration/ssr-central-division-meet>



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.*

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# Central Division

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It's official. My HO shelf layout has taken a backseat to my new T-TRAK module. But that's okay, it's ALL model railroading so it's ALL good!

I've decided that I will model a scrap yard scene on my double wide module. I was watching DJs Trains on YouTube and he did a flyover of some scrap yards. I took a few screen shots and printed them out in color then perused the Walthers website to find structures that I thought would fit the proposed scene; I printed those out too. A couple of trips to my local hobby shop Zitnik Trains and a web order from Yankee Dabbler and I'm on my way! I will take my module to the Central Division Meet on June 13th to share.

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.

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.

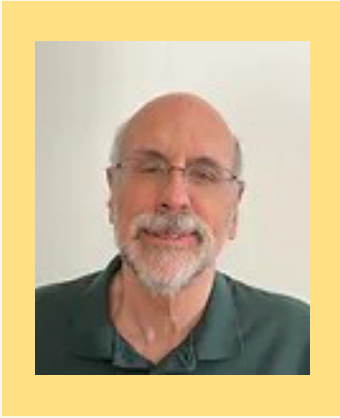
## UPCOMING EVENTS in the DIVISION:

The Suncoast Model Railroad Club, located in Largo, Tampa Bay area, will have their end of month Open House on Saturday, May 30th.

The West Pasco Model Railroad Association has an Open House scheduled for Saturday, June 20th.

Thanks,

***Mark Lewalski***  
Central Division Superintendent



## Southern Division

.....

Hi, everyone. I have recently enlisted Scott Peal of the ScaleRails Club to assist me in gathering information for the Gulf side of the Southern Division. So you may begin hearing from him with requests for information about club updates, special events, etc.

### *In model railroad club news:*

On the Gulf Coast, the ScaleRails of Southwest Florida club is 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 rail-fanning locations. Those interested in visiting the club may come on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday between 10 AM and 2 PM, with the exception of 11 AM-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](mailto:jpmorse48@comcast.net) or by phone at (239) 286-2499. The club web site is found at [www.scalerails.org](http://www.scalerails.org).

There is also a club in Sarasota called the Sarasota Bay Model Railroad Society. Their layout is inside the Sarasota Toy Museum at 3580 17th Street, Sarasota, Florida, 34235. The HO layout depicts Vermont, which was its original location prior to the move to Florida. The layout was designed by famed modeler Dave Frary. The toy museum is open Tuesday through Sunday. It is unclear if you need to purchase admission to the museum in order to see the model railroad, so I will look into that for next month. Their web site is [www.sbmodelrr.com](http://www.sbmodelrr.com) and You can contact David Fontaine at (941) 685-2221 for additional information.

Scott Peal has informed me that he is also in the process of organizing a new club in the Babcock Ranch community. They have a Facebook account that you can check out for additional information <https://www.facebook.com/babcockranchrailroad>. For additional information, please contact Scott at (239) 292-9156

## Southern Division

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On the Atlantic coast, The Florida Citrus Model Train Society (FCMTS) continues to be in a quieter period during June, although they are beginning to work on plans for a summer display in July. The plans are different than usual this year because of the 250th Anniversary of the US. I will report on that when dates and the location are finalized. 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](http://www.fcmts.org).

The East Coast HO Exhibitors Society (ECHOES) club will be running every weekend in June 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. The club is planning to reconfigure the layout this summer to improve the visitor experience and also to add plexiglass fronts to all the modules to eliminate damage being incurred by visitors. They do not expect this will result in closing the layout at all, as it can be updated while the museum itself is closed. If you are interested, ask about their operating sessions. For additional information on ECHOES events, please contact Rick Diaz, [rickdiaz@att.net](mailto:rickdiaz@att.net) or Tracey Sanders, [tassailor@mac.com](mailto:tassailor@mac.com).

## South Florida Railway Museum

**The “N” scale layout is under construction  
(a new trackplan with an increased mainline)**

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](http://www.sfrm.org) and our Facebook page

1300 W. Hillsboro Blvd. Deerfield Beach, FL

(The south end of the AMTRAK station in Deerfield Beach)



Home of the  
South Farmington Rail & Mule RR  
South Florida Regional & Metro

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# Southern Division

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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 June they will be running their regular Tuesday evening operating sessions for club members. They can be contacted at [PBMRclub@gmail.com](mailto:PBMRclub@gmail.com) for additional information. The club's web site is [www.pbmrr.org](http://www.pbmrr.org).

For any inquiries, my contact info is [rwberger@comcast.net](mailto:rwberger@comcast.net).

Located at 1713 SW Castinet Lane in Port Saint Lucie 34953, the Western Bay Railroad is the On30 narrow gauge layout of the Port Saint Lucie O Scale Model Railroad club. The layout depicts the Denver and Rio Grande and Rio Grande Southern railroads. The club meets on Tuesdays. For additional information, please contact Al Sohl at [als0622@yahoo.com](mailto:als0622@yahoo.com) and their web site is [www.westernbayrailroad.com](http://www.westernbayrailroad.com). The club plans an operating session on June 6th.

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, June 13th with visitors welcomed from 11 AM through 4 PM. The HO scale layout is open and on display and the new N scale layout is now under construction with most of the track already laid, and much of the sophisticated electronics package close to completion. 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 museum currently maintains a Facebook page in addition to the web site [www.sfrm.org](http://www.sfrm.org). For additional information, contact Bob Leonard, [leonardstrait@gmail.com](mailto:leonardstrait@gmail.com).

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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 located from Palm Beach to Miami. As the organizer of this event, I need to begin scheduling the visits with a target of visits during June and July 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. I am currently running a bit behind on scheduling, due to the construction of the SFRM N scale layout, but it's on my list to get things in place as soon as I can. If you have a layout with trains that run and want to host, please let me know. For 2026, this will only be on the Atlantic coast, but perhaps by 2027 we can set up a similar event on the Gulf coast.

For any inquiries, my contact info is [rwberger@comcast.net](mailto: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 July.

*Richard Berger*

Southern Division Superintendent