

Commuter Operations for Model Railroads:

Introduction

Like many aspects of modern life, model railroading has gotten very sophisticated. A variety of special interest groups (SIGs) exist and some have evolved to become a hobby within the hobby. One of the more prominent is the Operations SIG (www.opsig.org).

However, while model railroad operation has become a very active area of interest generally, commuter operation specifically has received, at best, only a passing reference in the model railroad press. Commuter operation can be an interesting and even an integral part of a model railroad operating session. Simply put, the goal of this book is to provide a basic reference tool to enable the reader to develop, implement and integrate a simulated commuter service on a layout as part of the operating sessions.

I plan to accomplish this goal by meeting three main objectives:

1. Examine three prototype examples that can be used as a basis for designing a model railroad commuter operation.

2. Examine how one prominent model railroad club uses commuter operations as an integral part of its overall operating scheme.

3. Provide some how-to tools for developing and implementing a small

commuter operation to a model railroad.

Hazardous though it may be, I have to make several assumptions about you, the reader:

First, I assume that you either have a home layout, or are planning a home layout, or you are a member of a club that has an existing layout, or has one in the planning stage.

Second, I assume that you are interested in prototype operations in general.

Third, if you are a member of a club, I assume that the other members are also interested in prototype operations.

Fourth, I assume you and/or your club is open to making changes to your layout to incorporate commuter operations, if necessary.

Fifth, you're not modeling a specific prototype, era or location where commuter operations is/was not appropriate.

In addition to the above, it's important to mention what is not in this book.

I will not cover long-distance, intercity passenger operations, nor

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do I discuss mail and express or other accommodation trains in this book. These interesting trains and their operation are covered more extensively in other publications.

With all that out of the way, let's get started. The first part of this book will examine why you should consider a commuter operation for your model railroad, examine three prototype examples of simple commuter operations you can use as a basis for your own service and look at how one of the most prominent model railroad clubs in the United States incorporates an extensive commuter service in its operating sessions. In Part 2, I'll offer some tips, tools and lots of opinions about how you too can add a commuter service to your model pike.



A Metro-North Railroad “west-of-Hudson service” commuter train crosses the former Erie Railroad’s Moodna Viaduct, on its way to Port Jervis, NY in 2012. The train originated in the former Lackawanna Railroad terminal in Hoboken, NJ and has just made its station stop at the Salisbury Mills-Cornwall station. This photo would have been impossible to take prior to 1983, as the line was freight-only. Today, the trestle and the single-track line is owned by Norfolk Southern, but maintained by Metro-North. The trestle has been in service since 1909. Photo by Scott Dunlap.