



The Nickel City Dispatch

News From The Nickel City Line Railroad

AUGUST 2006

NICKEL CITY EXTENDS RAIL SERVICE TO PHILADELPHIA



NCL Commuter Train 100 passes through new territory enroute to Philadelphia.

July 2006 – For the weekend of July 8th and 9th, the Nickel City Line operated on new trackage in downtown Philadelphia as part of the National Model Railroad Association's Independence Junction Convention and National Train Show. Four modules from the Nickel City Line (Bristow I & II, Canova Creek, and Chessie City) arrived in the City of Brotherly Love on Wednesday, July 5th. The four

modules along with 21 other modules from the Prince William County Model Railroad Club combined with four other clubs from the Philadelphia Area to create a large modular layout named the Alleghany Western. Since the Nickel City Line's venue is in the Alleghany Mountains, the name of the modular line was more than appropriate for NCL equipment.

Long trains and plenty of traffic were seen on the pike by Sunday. NCL equipment ran without incident and train crews were satisfied with their participation in the annual convention.

Workin' On The Railroad

Since the last Ops Session in June, the NCL has been busy making long awaited improvements.

The Grass is Greener in Bristow

At the end of June, the NCL had completed scenery and module improvements on the Bristow II module outside the town of Monserrat. Scenery, trees and a creek were installed on the module. The module also incorporated improvements underneath. A Digitrax DS54 stationary decoder was installed under the module to control the two sets of turnouts for the module. Turnouts can be controlled via a handheld controller or by switch commands from any Digitrax Throttle. There is a power cut off switch to disable the DS54 should an address conflict occur during a modular show setup.



A Bristow II module with scenery!

Electronic Changeover in Progress

The NCL Electrical Department has begun the long awaited change over to state of the art circuitry for turnout and signal control. The railroad purchased several Digitrax SE8Cs and DS54s along with computer interface hardware over the last several years. Crews have completed installing the DS54s and some of the SE8C boards. With the boards installed, employees have started phasing in a change over of turnout controls to the new system. The NCL Yardmaster's Panel is the first project completed. Hardwired wiring to turnouts has been replaced with electronic interfaces. Slight changes to procedures to activate turnouts will occur, but the new system expands the abilities of the yard and begins incorporation of signal control for the yard as well. Employees will next start to change over the mainline turnouts from Nickel City to Sheppardsfield.

NCL Dispatch has reported repeated problems with the internal routes in the DCS100 Command Station. In recent months, the DCS100 internal routes have ceased to operate. After weeks of investigation, the problem still remains unsolved. Even consultation with Digitrax has netted no results. In an effort to overcome this issue, the management has incorporated JMRI software to handle train routing on an interim basis. Trains in Baltimore, Buffalo, Driftwood, Emporium, Harrisburg, Rigway, and Rochester are now routed via computer. The Dispatcher's console has been equipped with a computer screen which provides a diagram of trackage in the affected areas. The Dispatcher will use a mouse to click on a particular route or turnout on the screen to activate the route or signals. This interim step is temporary until new circuit boards are added which will control routes from the Distacher's Panel instead of the DCS100 command station.

Engine Yard Power Management

Maintenance crews have installed the first set of power cutoffs for storage tracks in the locomotive yard. Tracks L1 to L8 are equipped with SPST switches. Locomotives located on these tracks can now be powered down, providing more power to the mainline and yard operations. Power cut off switches for Tracks L9 to L16 will be installed in the near future.

Future Ops Sessions

More Ops Sessions will be coming this Fall. Due to scheduling conflict, an August Ops Session could not be arranged. The next Ops Session is tentatively set for September 9th. Confirmation of this date will be made shortly. Additional dates are tentatively scheduled for October 28th and November 11th. More to come on all ops sessions.

That's it for August. See you all in September.