

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: May 9th 2024

ITEM: BOD Report – Old Business – O Scale Layout Donation

FROM: Bob Sims

On April 19th Greg and I visited Chuck Walker's O Scale Lionel Layout in East Verdi to evaluate the feasibility of accepting Chuck's kind offer to donate the layout for display at our museum.

Layout Description – Three 4' x 8' modules are butted together to give an overall size of 8' x 12'. The track plan consists of inner and outer connected loops, at least one passing track and some spur tracks. The inner loop also has two reversing sections. All track is 3 Rail on plastic roadbed mounted on the flat panels with no grades. One nice feature is the modules are supported with adjustable legs, so the layout height can be optimized for younger kids. The layout also has curtains around the lower perimeter.

Two of Greg's photos are included for overall views.





Rolling Stock - It was fairly clear that Chuck has a lot of equipment, both on the layout, in display cases, and in boxes. Most rolling stock on the layout seemed to favor SP and ATSF, which Chuck indicated he wanted to retain. I did not see any WP locos or passenger cars, but there was a WP bay window caboose in a box. Greg thinks he has some WP F units, both freight and passenger, plus some CZ cars that we would get. I'm confident we would get enough rolling stock for a display train. Greg also has some Lionel equipment that he will loan to the museum if needed.

Scenery and Structures – The panels have been painted to represent a city-scape with some roads and a lot of vehicles. A strong point is the many structures both small and large with enough detail to hold a kid's interest. Most of the larger structures are lit.

Electrical and Control – The power and throttles are located in one corner of the layout with the throttles above, a power strip on the fascia, and power supplies below. The mainline throttles are a dual unit with whistle and bell buttons. This should allow separate control of 2 trains running on the inner and outer loops. There are also some remote control turnouts, but it is not known if all mainline turnouts are so equipped.

The lighted buildings have power leads running underneath. We did not go under the layout to inspect the overall wiring setup.

Operation – The optimum display setup would probably consist of a passenger train with the longer cars running on the outer loop and an opposing freight train on the inner loop. With a dedicated operator, other options may be possible.

Disassembly and Transport – It appears that small trim boards are attached to the perimeter fascia to keep the 3 modules connected and aligned. They also support the lower curtains. While not confirmed, I suspect that the **track does not have joints** currently installed at all points where the modules butt together. Greg thinks the spanning track sections can be unscrewed and lifted out. There is painted tape across the joints that can be cut and replaced during setup. Chuck did say that the underneath wiring is continuous and **does not have plugs** between the modules. These 2 factors make it difficult to assess the time and effort required to separate the modules and prepare them for transport. The good news is that the larger structures are removable (hopefully with the wiring), but that will still take time to properly box up.

As for transport itself, using measurements of the white trailer I made years ago for the Z layout, it appears that the 3 modules should barely fit if stacked in a custom jig with L rails to slide them into. This option would be tight and needs to be verified. Chuck said he would cover the cost of renting a truck if that is preferred. Both options would need some method of restraint and possibly cushioning depending on the vehicle suspension.

Setup and Display – There seems to be a consensus that the only viable museum display location is the board room. At a minimum, most everything would need to be removed and find a new home. This should allow adequate aisle space for viewing all around the perimeter. With the modules in a vertical position, we need to verify that they will make the turn from the hallway into the room. By default, all ops crew meetings and lunch or breaks would need to relocate to the lounge/kitchen car. This makes sense anyway just as it does for board meetings. The space and big table would also be lost for any setup during big events like RR Days and the June members meeting. And does the fridge, freezer, microwave, and all storage need to move where?

It's been mentioned that we should probably complete the UV blocking window film that I installed on 1 of the 3 upper window units. I have plenty of film left, some pre-cut, but I don't know if or when I could do that.

My biggest single concern is security for the layout and especially all the equipment when located in an isolated location. The short hallway and north door make for a quick escape route for some low-life who grabs some equipment and flees. At least Lionel equipment

is harder to hide under a coat. I'm not comfortable with any public access, whether during normal museum hours or special events, without a full-time attendant. When will we have a spare volunteer to devote to this task? Chuck said he would be willing to support setup and some display, but as a senior citizen, his availability beyond the near-term is a big unknown. We can give him a comped membership to encourage his continued participation.

Even with security plastic installed, I'm still not comfortable. We learned that lesson the hard way when we left the Z layout out on the shop floor for a short while. Add to that the expense and labor to install plastic. My rough estimate for the plastic alone is at least \$600 for 2.5 4x8' sheets.

Of equal concern is identifying all the volunteer help to make this project happen within a reasonable time frame. And is all that effort justified if it's only open for display a few times a year during special events?

Summary – The key factor in considering to accept this donation is its appeal to our younger visitors. It could even help encourage a few of them to become volunteers at a future date. But it should also be clear that there are many factors above that need further clarification and resolution. A return visit later this year is probably justified. If accepted, the actual move and setup would not happen until sometime next year. Greg thinks that would probably work out for Chuck.

At this time, my recommendation is that we not be in a big rush to accept or decline this donation. But we should not procrastinate for a long time either.

Chuck has at least made two things clear – He is not in a panic to find a new home for his layout. But at the same time, he wants it to end up on display to the public, and not just get stored in a box car.