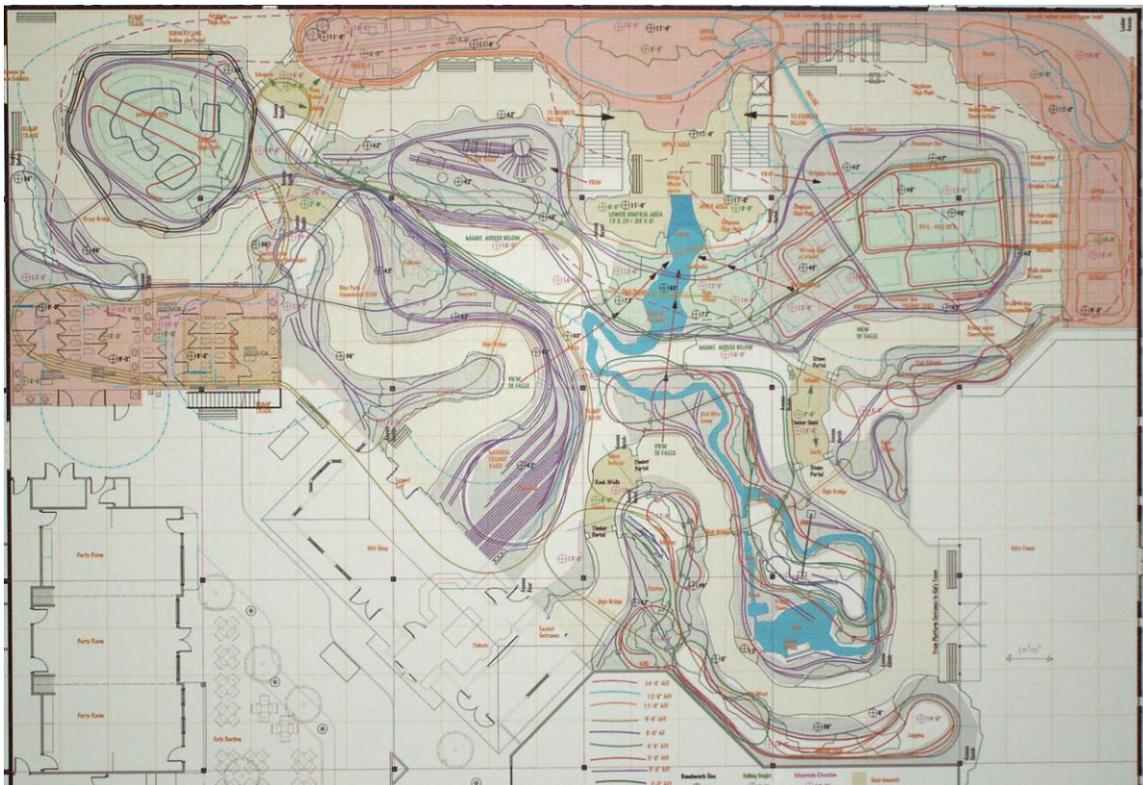


The Big Train Project Status Report (Part 4)

Great News! The local government entities responsible for zoning at the Westchester Big Train Project site have given their unanimous approval for the Big Train Project concept, showing substantial support and a refreshing willingness to be flexible in interpreting some of the zoning rules in the project's favor. The official name for this planned public amusement is now EnterTRAINment Junction (ETJ).

With approvals in hand, the next challenge is to get the proper definition of the basic layout requirements to be understood by the architects who are responsible for designing the basic layout substructure and the various “rooms” that house the hobby shop, gift shop, administrative offices, food concession, meeting rooms, rest rooms, etc. along with providing all the proper utilities to the right places. All of that will be constructed by professional builders, and the request for bids for construction of what the architects’ plan covers are expected to go out in early December.

The concept is for the professionals to provide a structure for most of the low-level track with sufficient access to all of the layout areas from underneath the main support structure. The layout structural levels range in height from 30 inches above the floor in some areas to as high as eleven feet above the floor in others (that’s just nine feet from the bottoms of the roof beams of the building). This basic structure will be strong enough to walk on and to support the rest of the layout structure and scenery. Above the basic structure, everything will be built by the volunteer workers. A recent version of the layout plan (which continues to evolve) is shown in the figure.



With the detailed plan taking shape, it will soon be time to energize the “section gangs” to get organized and get to work. They cover the basic areas of expertise (and the interests of the volunteers) needed to accomplish the work. The section gangs identified so far are as follows:

Design -- design of the layout

Infrastructure -- the supporting structure or “benchwork”

Basic Scenery -- the earth’s crust if you will

Roadbed & Track

Bridges and Buildings -- including other such structures

Scenic Details -- all that appears on the surface of the earth that is not a bridge, building or other such structure

Live Water -- waterfall, stream, lake and related plumbing

Low Voltage Electrical -- train control, train monitoring, on-layout lighting power supply for all on-layout special effects, etc.

Locomotives and Rolling Stock

Animation -- things that move other than trains

Special Effects -- sound, smell, smoke, feel, special lighting, etc.

In the near term, they will have to define the ground rules for the work to be done: standards for quality of construction; standardized materials; standardized electrical and electronic components; etc. This may seem overly bureaucratic, but it will be essential if the layout is to be consistently constructed and sufficiently maintainable to be a viable, profitable, and long-running public display. Once standards are set, detailed planning, approval, and building of some of the items that can be built off site can start (which could occur even before the substructure construction begins).

One of the major recent tasks for the planning group has been to identify the amount of track and the numbers and kinds of switches (turnouts), locomotives, and rolling stock items needed for the layout. In the one-third of the layout that MVGRS has designed, we’ve estimated a need for over 4,000 feet of track, 100 switches, and 20 operating trains. Once this inventory has been completed for the entire layout, Don Oeters, ETJ’s owner, will then take this list to manufacturers and suppliers and ask for contributions of money, hardware, or services in exchange for specific levels of recognition via signs and displays at the site.

To ease communication and the sharing of ideas, Dan Stenger of the GCGRS has created a Yahoo group for the Big Train Project. You can subscribe at the following website:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bigtp>.

Registration with Yahoo Groups is required, and membership is restricted. Dan has to approve everyone who wishes to join, but that should be no problem. Just indicated in the sign-up that you are interested in being a volunteer from MVGRS. One of the useful settings that you can implement in Yahoo, for this group, is to have an email sent to you if there is new content added to the site.

As you can see, there has been considerable progress. And, as advertised at the display at the NMRA train show, “The dream is becoming a reality.”

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