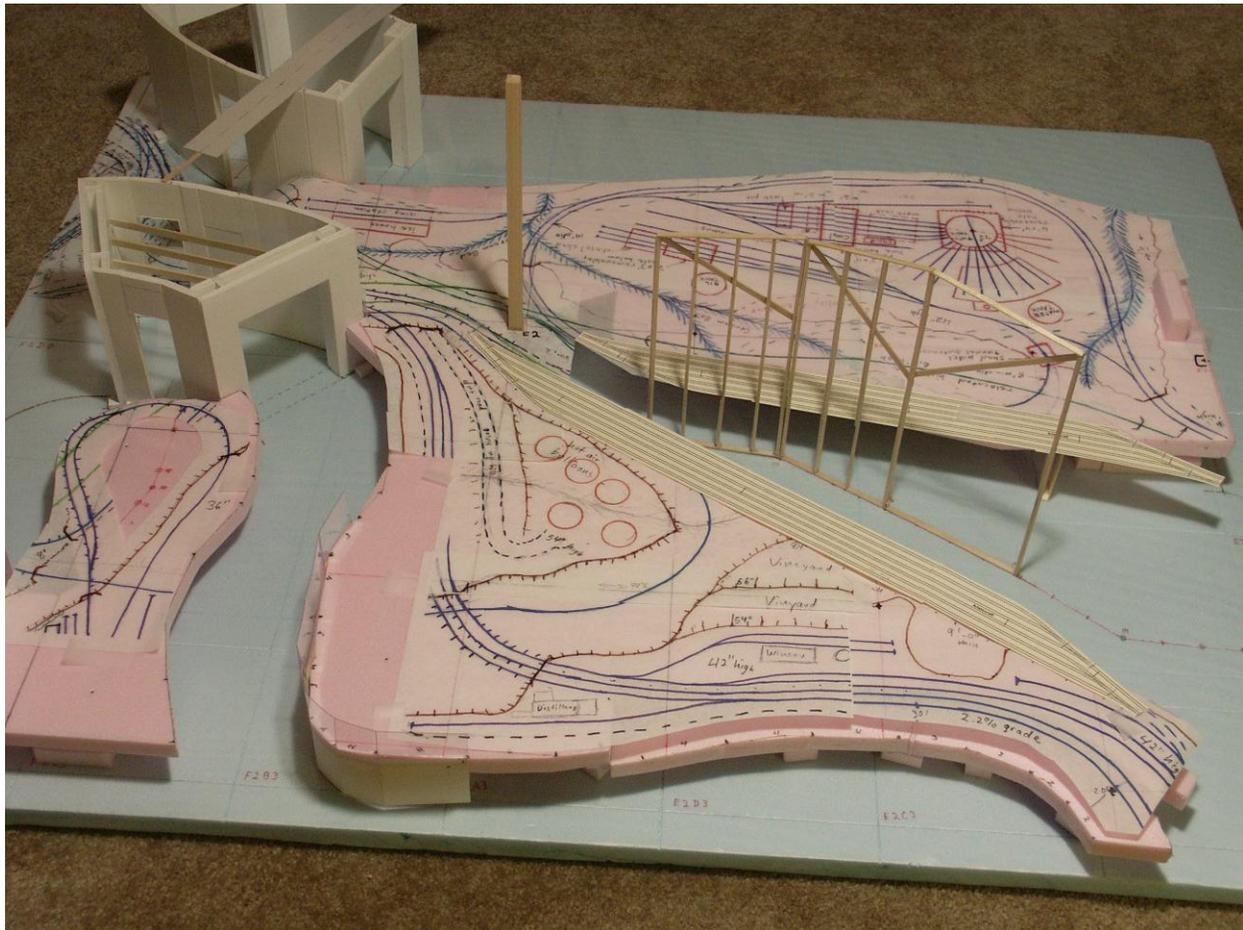


The Big Train Project Status Report (Part 8)

The contract for the construction of the basic structure in the EnterTRAINment Junction facility has been let, and the contractor is expected to begin work in the very near future. The first order of business will be preparation of the utilities, mostly electrical and water, in the layout area and painting of the “ceiling.” Construction of the layout tables will start when that’s finished, beginning with the Early Era section adjacent to the hobby shop wall. This section of the layout will get some detailed attention in the near future, with careful review of the plans and drawings, to make sure access and structure meet the design intent. Focus on this other area gives us MVGRS planners a bit more time to work on some of the more challenging aspects of the areas we’ve designed.

One of those challenges is shoehorning a lot of track into a small space in one of the proposed hidden track access rooms, where trains will be “loaded” onto the tracks out of sight of the visiting public. This area is between the Middle Era engine servicing facility and the Balloon and Vineyard areas. In this access room there will be loading tracks for eight mainline tracks and two service areas at five different heights, ranging from 30 inches to 11.5 feet. To assist with visualizing both the track plan and the structural details, a new model of this area is being built in 1/2-inch scale (See the following Figure). Models of the other areas will follow to suit opportunity and need.



One of the major accomplishments has been for the Basic Scenery Section Gang to identify and test basic scenery material. The accepted candidate is a spray-on insulating foam, not unlike the expanding foam you can get at your neighborhood home center. This, of course, will be the “industrial” variety that comes in much large containers. It’s fairly easy to apply to a “poultry wire” backing, it’s light in weight, it’s easy to carve, and it’s fire resistant. The plan is to apply it in about a 3-inch thickness and carve, paint, and “decorate” it as necessary to simulate rocks, trees, and other landscape features. Where needed, it will be applied to removable sections and moved to the installation location. In other places, it will be sprayed directly onto the wire attached to the layout structure. Mike Crone worked up a quick 1 x 3 foot sample, carved it in places, left it lumpy in other places (to simulate treetops), and painted it. It looks pretty good. So, scenery carvers, get out your machetes (just kidding).

The Roadbed and Track Section Gang has determined that the structure to support tracks above the basic tables will include the use of appropriately cut steel 2x6s laid flat for track that is hidden and 14-16-inch wide ¾-inch plywood, shaped to fit the track curvature cookie-cutter style, where track is exposed. Double-track sections would be seven inches wider. The extra width is wanted to allow for attachment of the basic scenery material, and in most locations the base for the exposed track will be supported by structure strong enough to allow it to be walked on, if necessary, for layout construction and maintenance.

All this means that layout construction is likely to start in matter of weeks and the volunteer activity will shift into high gear. So, stay tuned. You should be hearing from the leaders of the section gangs you signed up for soon to begin formal meetings to arrange for work schedules and to pass out assignments.

As always, stay tuned to the Big Train Project Yahoo group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bigtp> for the latest news.

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