

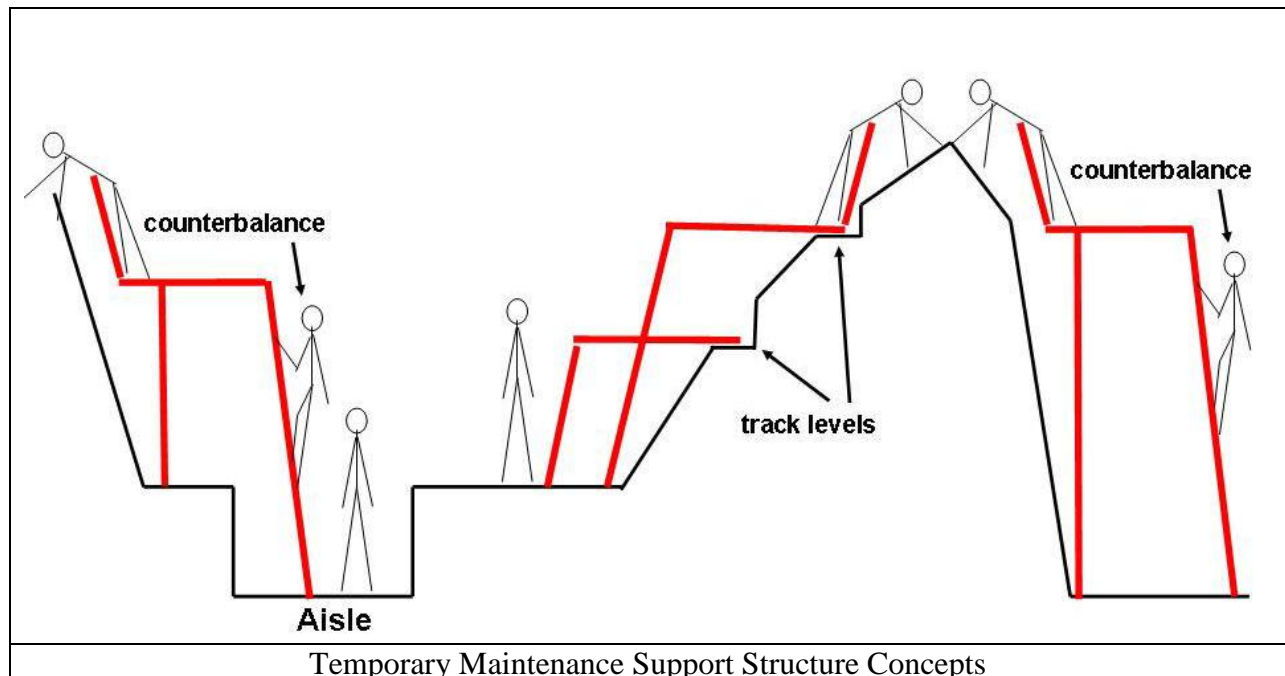
## The Big Train Project Status Report (Part 17)

Progress continues at EnterTRAINment Junction. The parking lot has been completed and striped. The climbing structure in the children's play area has been built. The wainscoting has been applied to the layout table edges. The main entrance to the building has received a face-lift with a facade that looks like entrance to an old-time railroad station.

Layout construction also continues. Track has been laid in the modern city, in the industrial area, in the balloon area, and in the vineyard area. A volunteer has started to build the lift bridge between the modern city and the industrial area, with the concept arising again to make it functional on special occasions. It can't be lowered and operated when the layout is open to the public because it would block the aisle. However, when the public is not there, we might be able to see the span lowered and a train to actually cross it.

As in all big projects, new challenges continue to arise. The latest concern is how to get sufficient access to mountainside tracks and scenery to do maintenance. The foam-covered mountainsides are not capable of supporting ladders. The track has adequate support to walk on, but the width does not make a very wide pathway, and getting up onto the track will be a challenge in itself. We'll need to find one or more effective methods of getting workers up to the high-level track and the scenery where and when needed. Workers will need to have sufficient reach to repair and replace track, fix scenery elements, and do general cleaning and upgrading of the scenery. Unfortunately, the aisles are not wide enough to adequately support standard cherry-picker type lift trucks with enough reach beyond the aisle to accomplish what's needed.

Some concepts which will need some further exploration are shown in the figure. Ladders with locking pivots may be the basis for these concepts. Also, there may be some situations in which a counterbalancing weight will be needed to deal with a cantilevered support for a worker. Also, there will need to be sufficiently sturdy places on the layout tables and track levels to adequately support the temporary maintenance structures.



If any of you have any experience or ideas on how we can do this better, I'd be pleased to hear from you.

As the work continues, there will be calls for section gang meetings, work sessions, and training opportunities. Stay tuned and, please, respond with participation when called on in your area of interest.

© 2007 Tom Bartsch  
MVGRS Big Train Project Coordinator