



# The Beltline

On the Web at [www.nattrackers.org](http://www.nattrackers.org)

**Official Newsletter of the National Capital Trackers**

**2022, no. 6, issued June 2022**

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## NCT Club News

Monthly Membership Meetings are every month on the Third Thursday. Members may attend in person at Green Acres Center in Fairfax or on Zoom.

Jun 16, 2022 07:00 PM

~~Jul 21, 2022 07:00 PM~~ **No July Meeting**

Aug 18, 2022 07:00 PM

Sep 15, 2022 07:00 PM

Oct 20, 2022 07:00 PM

Nov 17, 2022 07:00 PM

## Upcoming Shows:

Greenberg Train Show, Dulles Expo Center, Aug 20-21

## NCT Website Update

The National Capital Trackers website is in the process of being updated as discussed at the May meeting. We are finalizing the details with the designer and coordinating the effort with Chris Herndon, the current webmaster. We expect the project to be completed in time for our fall shows.

The requirements for the new website include the following: The new website should be User friendly from both the general public and the membership perspective. The website should have a welcoming attractive appearance while being very *User* friendly for everyone who accesses it. Minimal navigation should be the basic mantra for all information and designs.

The website should have *Links* to social media platforms. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and others. All platforms should be in Sync with consistent naming conventions.

Information Categories should be readily displayed and the contents shown on dropdown screens. All uploads of pictures and documents should be Password Protected. (User must have a website sign-on)

An Operational Webmaster Committee will be formed with several members responsible for *updating* the information on the website, this includes but not limited to show pictures and videos, our current show schedules and any other

pertinent information. Included with the web design is a training session for selected members. Ongoing website technical support will also be available for an hourly fee as needed. The goal is to add security, consistency and continuity to the NCT website for the foreseeable future.

## Operational Reminders



Measure your module height at every show, don't depend on whatever the adjustment may have been at your last show. The height of all modules, including all corners, is measured at the ***Top of the Track***. The standard height is **40-inches**. A 48-inch metal ruler/yardstick is best tool to use.

Check your module harness prior to the show. Simply plug both cable connectors into the Power Cabinet, turn on the Z4000's and look for a Green-light. Once again, the green light is a continuity check that indicates all harnesses are actually plugged in. Too many times we all forget to plug in the module harnesses during setup. It's much easier to check harness connections before skirting is added. By assuring proper harness connections operational issues such a degradation of digital signals or voltage losses are minimized.

One final reminder: Assure your harness connectors (both the male and female) are plugged into adjacent modules, not each other.

**Amtrak to Expand Roanoke Service**, from the Roanoke Time via Google News

Ride Amtrak without getting up at dawn?

Yes, starting in July, a second Amtrak passenger train will begin to operate from Roanoke, departing at 4:35 p.m. bound for Washington, D.C., with an expected arrival time of 9:35 p.m.

The early train will continue to depart at 6:32 a.m. and reach Washington at about 11:30 a.m.

The service expansion will add another arrival to the timetable as well — 12:56 p.m. That train will leave D.C. shortly after 8 in the morning. The updates were released Monday by the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority.

Officials have been telling Roanoke it would get a second train for about two and a half years. Amtrak launched the service in 2017, bringing back rail passenger service for the first time since the 1970s.

Roanoke-area residents are big fans of Amtrak, data shows. Ridership recently exceeded levels set before the pandemic, with April trips totaling 19,605 compared to 18,984 trips in April 2019. Statewide Amtrak ridership has yet to recover.

Riders board and disembark on a platform on Norfolk Avenue downtown. Tickets for the second train are not yet on sale.

Meanwhile, the New River Valley will be added to Amtrak service by 2026.

A location for a passenger rail station—with an estimated cost of between \$50 million and \$60 million—is now narrowed to one of two sites, each of which are in proximity to the Uptown Christiansburg mall and the Huckleberry Trail, based on work performed by the rail authority.

The authority began a feasibility study this past fall to look at potential station locations in the New River Valley and then conducted a survey that ran from Dec. 22 to Jan. 31. The meeting briefly addressed the survey, with the hosts highlighting respondents' general preference for the two Christiansburg mall sites.

More than \$250 million in investment is expected to cover the return of passenger rail to the New River Valley and the addition of the second Amtrak train from Roanoke to Washington. The investment includes the acquisition of right of way and track from Norfolk Southern Railway for just under 29 miles of the Virginian Line from the Salem Crossovers to Merrimac in Montgomery County.

Discussions continue, too, to extend Amtrak service from the New River Valley to Bristol, which once had a passenger rail station at State Street, where the Virginia and Tennessee borders meet in that city.





“There Ain’t No Such Thing As A Free Lunch” is an established economic principle— but it’s also a pretty well established principle in physics, too. Basically, you can’t get something for nothing, and there’s no such thing as free **lunch** energy. Or ... is there? NBC News recently reported on an electric train that *never* needs to be plugged in to keep running.

How does it work? The TL;DR version is: regenerative braking, gravity, and some clever planning.

If you’re unfamiliar with regenerative braking, it’s pretty neat tech. A heavy object— like a car or truck— moving at high speeds carries a lot of energy, and using some of that energy to charge up a battery while it’s slowing down is a great way to improve efficiency. If you’ve ever driven a hybrid or EV you already know all that. But imagine that same idea put to use in a train. But not just any train— a train that’s hauling millions of pounds of heavy rocks!

That's a lot of energy, and that's what's being captured by Fortescue Williams, a "hard rock" mining company and advanced EV engineering firm that operates 54 locomotives in Western Australia, to power up one of its electric locomotives. One of their locomotives is harnessing enough energy using regenerative braking that they're able to run it continuously, without ever charging it.

It works like this: the train powers itself up a mountain to the top of a mine, where it gets loaded up with rocks, ore, coal, etc., then it just "rolls" down the mountain powered by gravity, with the engineer riding the regenerative brakes the whole way down.

That's right— gravity! By harnessing that same elemental force that got Trevor Milton booted from the big chair at Nikola, Fortescue was able to develop their "Infinity Train" that runs on 100% electrical power, yet never needs charging ... and, if that sounds familiar, that's because it is.

The EDumper, a positively massive all-electric mining truck developed by eMining AG a few years back, operates on precisely the same principles. It rolls down fully loaded, riding the brakes, then powers itself (empty) back up to the top of the mine on the energy it gained from the regen. system ... with loads to spare (get it?). "When you have a descent of 10 percent, from top to bottom, you never need to recharge," explains Roger Miauton, the chief executive of the Swiss electric vehicle firm eMining AG. "You generate enough energy going downhill as it takes to get back up.

(Ironic that the "clean train" is hauling a load of coal.—ED)

### **This Train Ride from NYC to New Orleans Is One of America's Most Underrated Routes**, by Lydia Mansell, Travel & Leisure

Amtrak's Crescent Route allows you to go from eating a slice of pizza in Manhattan to enjoying jazz music and beignets in New Orleans — with plenty of exciting stops along the way.



The popularity of "slow travel" continues to increase as the tourism industry rebounds and adjusts COVID-19 protocols and restrictions. Travelers want to immerse themselves in their experiences and take their time going from place to place — and a great way to do so is traveling by train.

Amtrak's [Crescent Route](#) runs daily between New York City and New Orleans, servicing 32 stations across the southeastern United States. While you can buy a ticket that will take you the entire length of the route (a 30-hour journey with plenty of amenities), travelers looking to get off and explore different destinations should purchase stop-specific tickets. Whether you're looking to go from Philadelphia to Atlanta, or Charlotte, North Carolina, to Wilmington, Delaware, the Crescent Route brings you from Point A to Point B with ease.

Here are some of the key stops along Amtrak's Crescent route, but you can view the full route [here](#).

### **New York City - Moynihan Train Hall (NYP)**

The journey begins (or ends, depending on the direction of service) in the heart of Manhattan. Take at least a day to see as much of [New York City](#) as you can. Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the High Line, and the Empire State Building should all be on first-time visitors' lists. Expect all of that walking to

work up an appetite: Grab an NYC bagel for breakfast and a slice of pizza for lunch or dinner.

### **Washington, D.C. - Union Station (WAS)**

As the train pulls into Union Station, you'll begin to feel the thrum of the country's political epicenter. While you could spend weeks exploring [Washington, DC's](#) cultural elements, a few hours walking around the National Mall means you'll get to see the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, and many other significant sites. If you time it right, the [cherry blossoms](#) may be in bloom.

### **Charlottesville, VA - Charlottesville Union Station (CVS)**



Virginia's bucolic hills come into view as you near Charlottesville, home to the prestigious University of Virginia, award-winning wine, and a range of culinary destinations that benefit from the city's farm-to-table culture. There's something for every traveler exploring Charlottesville — from meandering along the brick-paved Historic Downtown Mall to cheering on the 'Hoos at Scott Stadium to traversing the area's hiking paths and loops.

### **Atlanta, GA - Atlanta Peachtree Station (ATL)**



It would take months to experience everything in the bustling city of [Atlanta](#), including its iconic green spaces, local cuisine, and top-tier museums. If you only have a few days, though, be sure to stretch your legs along the BeltLine, get tickets to the Georgia Aquarium, and sample the unlimited flavors at Ponce City Market.

**New Orleans, LA - Union Passenger Terminal (NOL)**



The final stop on the Crescent Route is [New Orleans, Louisiana](#), where jazz music, cajun and creole food, and amazing architecture come together to create a one-of-a-kind city. New Orleans may be known for Mardi Gras, but visitors can come any time of the year to partake in the celebratory nature of the Big Easy.

### **Space Coast Train Show, June 4, 2022**

Your editor joined in the action at the Space Coast Train Show, a quarterly local event in Melbourne, FL. Shown here is my TOFC piggy-back consist running on the South Brevard Hi-Rail Modular Club layout. This is a two-track, GarGraves layout, running almost exclusively Lionel equipment with LionChief as the preferred operating system. This show marked the first appearance of the Club's new geezer gate, similar in design to several of the NCT's gates.





The **Beltline** needs your articles **in MS Word format**, photos **as JPEG image files**, and links about trains and railroading, prototypical or scale, new or old. Send them to [GilBaldwin3@gmail.com](mailto:GilBaldwin3@gmail.com)