



THE BRASS POUNDER

Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Division 12, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association

Division Coming Events

CSD Annual Meeting on January 17th, 2026

Newton Depot starting at 10:00 am

Register for your FREE LUNCH by January 10th

Superintendent's Corner

By Andrew Stitt

2026 will come into the Carolina Southern Division with the winds of change in the air! From the top down, by now you have seen something with the new NMRA logo on it. National has decided, as part of the 90th year celebration, to make some changes to the organization's presence and functions. Doubtless you have heard and read something about it. If not, I encourage you to go to their website and learn more. Most of us have been members long enough that we have seen the logo change previously. Other changes planned to follow should help us at the Divisional level to increase our exposure to the hobby and hopefully encourage more to join our organization.

As mentioned above, the National logo has already changed.

After consideration, they have decided to allow the Divisions to keep their logos if their membership so desires. The CSD logo will likely need to be "modernized" somewhat to meet with their suggested guidelines, but I consider this to be good news. We will talk about this further at the CSD Annual Meeting.

Speaking of the CSD Annual Meeting (more details about that elsewhere), it is very important that you attend this year. Elections will be held for all officer positions as well as 1 Board member. Two of us (myself and Treasurer Dave Thrams) are not on the ballot this time. Nominations from the floor at the meeting will be accepted, but you are welcome to contact me directly prior to the meeting if you are willing to serve as an officer or board member and would like to learn more about the responsibilities.

Additionally, it is very important that members step forward to fill the positions for RMU Dean as well as meeting clinic coordinator. RMU is a long-standing CSD success story and needs to continue but it can't be if someone doesn't come forward to take on the responsibility of organizing the event. Our location for the event and registrar is set. Others

who have been previously involved are willing to help the new Dean. So please consider devoting some time to making this event continue. In addition, our Division does have meetings where we like to include clinics and/or presentations about model railroad topics. We need to have a member (or members) step forward to present clinics or recruit others to do so.

So, I conclude by repeating the opening statement. The winds of change are in the air for CSD in 2026!.

Editor's Notes

By Chad Barnette

Before I begin, go ahead and click [here for FREE LUNCH registration](#) to secure your free lunch for our annual meeting. Act fast! Must register by January 10th!



2026 here we come! Things are feeling fresh and new with the NMRA rebranding, the new year, and the promise of a lot of fun to come as we model and hang out together. It's been an exciting and somewhat hectic year, but I have continued to enjoy putting together the Brass Pounder each month.

It has proved to be a challenge at times to drum up content. We have over 100 members in our division and there have been quite a few months with no submissions for the Brass Pounder. That's only disappointing because we all lose out on the vast amount of knowledge and skills that only a group of 100 people could amass. Won't you consider doing one of the following a couple times in 2026:

- Submit some photos of your layout.
- Submit photos of a kit you are building or a scratch-built structure. Half-built, fully-built...doesn't matter!
- Photos of your model shop or ideas on how to organize things.
- Prototypes that may serve as inspiration for a great model.
- Articles about any modeling topic

I really thank you for your consideration. We can have a lot of fun with this newsletter. Send anything you like to editor@carolinasm.org.

As for me, I have definitely progressed in the quality of some of my modeling. Although it sounds counterintuitive, I do have a desire to up the volume of work that I get done in 2026. I

think planning my activities a little better may help me achieve that goal. What about you? What do you hope to achieve in your modeling this year? Cheers to 2026!

Division and Regional News

Wade's Train Town

Wade's Train Town – December Stats

Contributed by Ed Smith, MMR

Open houses: 7

Attendance: 67

Volunteers: Ed Smith [5], Tim Rust, Joe Pulsone.

Annual Meeting Announcement

Contributed by Andrew Stitt, Superintendent

The Carolina Southern Division of the Mid Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association will be holding our Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 17, 2026, at the Newton Depot (home of the Southeastern Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum and Train town) in Newton NC. At the meeting, reports will be presented to the members by the treasurer, achievement program coordinator, and Train Town director as well as others. In addition, elections for the 4 officer positions as well as one board member will be held.

The meeting begins at 10 AM. A Zoom connection will be available for those not able to attend in person. Lunch will be provided for those who register on the CSD website prior to the deadline.

Prepping for the New Year

Contributed by Chad Barnette

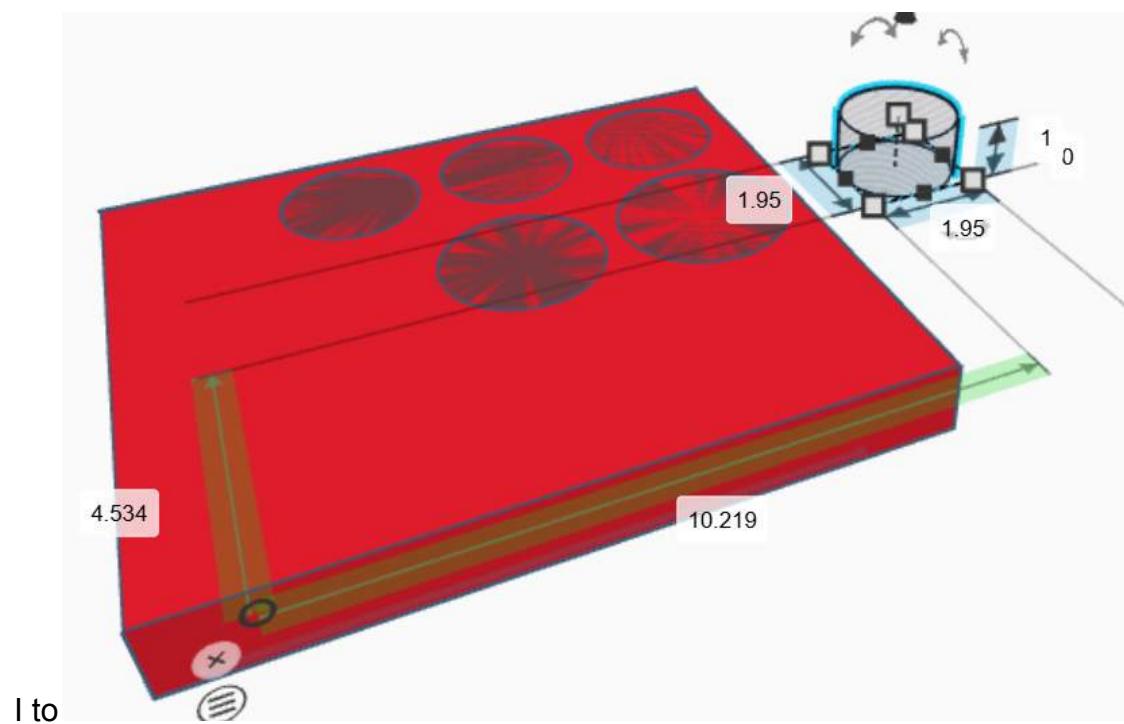
With the new year coming, now is a great time to get yourself organized in the modeling room. For me, that means creating a space that is mentally conducive to modeling. In other words, it shouldn't be a cluttered disaster that makes me want to turn around and leave the room the moment I walk in. I've learned over time that physical clutter quickly becomes mental clutter, and once that happens, productivity and creativity both suffer.

If you've ever worked in manufacturing or any other industry that uses the 5S methodology — Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain — then you already understand this concept well. A key part of "Set in Order" is the idea that there should be a place for everything, and everything should be in its place. When tools are easy to find and easy to put away, work flows better and frustration drops dramatically. I wanted to apply that same thinking to my modeling space.

With that goal in mind, I decided to focus on the items I use most often and create a dedicated storage solution for them. Rather than digging through drawers or shifting piles around on the workbench, I wanted everything visible and immediately accessible. The solution I landed on was a sort of shadow board, and I decided to design and build it using my 3D printer.

Before doing any modeling, I spent some time deciding exactly what deserved a spot on the board. This was an important step, because the whole point was to prioritize frequently used tools and supplies. Some of the items I chose to include were Aileen's Tacky Glue, large containers of Apple Barrel primary colors for mixing custom paints, a bottle of IPA, a utility knife, digital calipers, scissors and paint brushes, dedicated slots for Sharpies 😊, canopy glue, Pan Pastels, and Dullcote. Your list would almost certainly look different from mine, but that's part of the process — figuring out what *you* actually use on a regular basis.

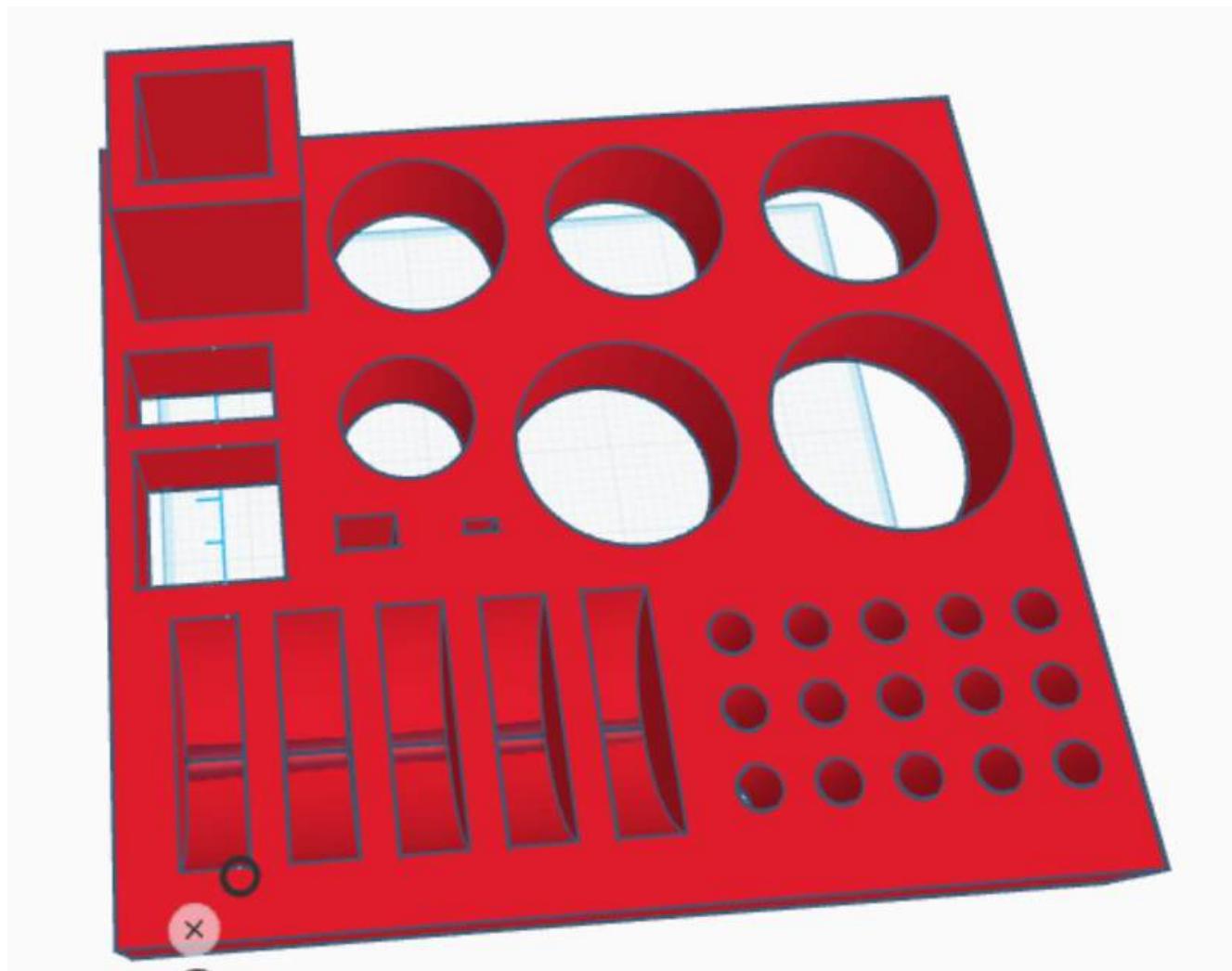
Everything else could be put away in longer-term storage, freeing up much-needed real estate on the workbench. With a plan in place, I headed to my old standby, Tinkercad, for some quick and simple modeling. I started with nothing more than a basic rectangular prism to serve as the foundation for the shadow board.



From there, I took somewhat careful (and admittedly rushed) measurements using my digital calipers for each item I wanted to store. I entered those measurements into Tinkercad and added one one-hundredth of an inch to each dimension to allow for tolerance. This approach seemed to work well. Once the basic shapes were in place, I began subtracting material to form the individual holders and cradles.



In the finished design, everything that appears as a dark gray shape is a “hollow.” When combined with the solid red base, these hollows remove material, which is how I was able to create snug cradles for items like the Pan Pastels and glue bottles. It’s a simple concept, but incredibly powerful when designing custom storage. Here you can see the completed Tinkercad file before printing.



Overall, the print went very well, and most of the items fit exactly as intended. However, there was one notable exception. The large Apple Barrel paint bottles didn’t fit at all. The mistake was entirely mine: I measured the middle of the container instead of the bottom. Had I taken that measurement instead, I would have immediately noticed the difference in diameter and avoided the issue.

Still, rather than scrap the entire print or commit to another eight-hour print (and waste that much material), I decided to get creative. The solution was to design an insert that would fit into the oversized hole and properly accommodate the correct paint bottle size. A quick return to Tinkercad later, and the insert was ready. Problem solved.





In the end, everything came together nicely. As you can see in the final result, all the tools and supplies are loaded up, neatly organized, and easy to access. I'm officially set up and organized for the new year. If this past weekend is any indication, the improved organization has already made me more motivated and active at the workbench. Here's hoping that momentum continues well into the year ahead.

Artificial Intelligence and Model Railroading

Contributed by Chad Barnette

As a continuation of my series on the car wash model, I have come to a point in my build where I am once again in need of a sign printed. This particular case was a little more involved than usual because it included a small triangular roof section that required both the company's logo and some descriptive text beneath it. The angle, the limited space, and the fact that it was going to be highly visible all meant that this wasn't something I could just "wing" and hope for the best. It needed to look right.

Like so...



Well, that got me thinking. Over the last several months, I have been using ChatGPT quite a bit for work, and the results have honestly been incredible. What started as curiosity quickly turned into a legitimate productivity tool. Around the same time, I had been reading that the image generation and modeling capabilities within the system had taken a giant leap forward. Between that and my immediate need for a clean, readable sign, I figured, what the heck... let's let ChatGPT (or "Roy," as I call him) take a stab at this.

Now, if you're unfamiliar with how this works, the best way I can describe it is that you talk to an AI chat much like you would another human being. You explain what you want, react to what it gives you, and — most importantly — explain when something is wrong and why it's wrong. That last part is critical. It does learn from its mistakes, but only if you take the time to point them out. The more clearly you communicate, the better the results become.

So here you see the very first prompt that I started with...



Admittedly, it was not the best prompt. It was vague in places and probably assumed more context than I should have. But that's part of the beauty of modern AI and how far it has progressed. Even with an imperfect prompt, it's remarkably good at understanding intent and filling in the gaps. And boy, did it not disappoint on the very first result. Here's what it came up with:



That reaction pretty much sums it up. The image was essentially print-ready right out of the gate. It looked about 95% identical to the reference image I had shared, but with a major improvement: it was crystal clear and sharp, unlike the original, which had some resolution issues. Even more impressive, it correctly determined that the first word at the bottom of the sign was "Change," despite a light post partially blocking it in the photo. That alone felt like a small miracle.

From there, things got a little more iterative. I'll spare you all the back-and-forth as I worked on getting the image sized exactly the way I wanted for the model. There were a few left turns along the way, and while I didn't land on absolute perfection, I eventually got close enough that I was happy with the result. Sometimes you have to be smart enough to

recognize when diminishing returns are setting in. Abandoning a chat in favor of a fresh one can actually be the most efficient move. The system can occasionally get bogged down trying to reconcile everything that's been said and adjusted over a long conversation.

That said, I do want you to take a look at some of the suggestions it offered after I heaped a bit of praise on it for doing such a nice job initially. Some of the ideas it proposed weren't things I would have thought of on my own, and while I didn't use all of them this time, they definitely sparked some ideas for future projects.

That's awesome to hear — I'm really glad you like it! 😊

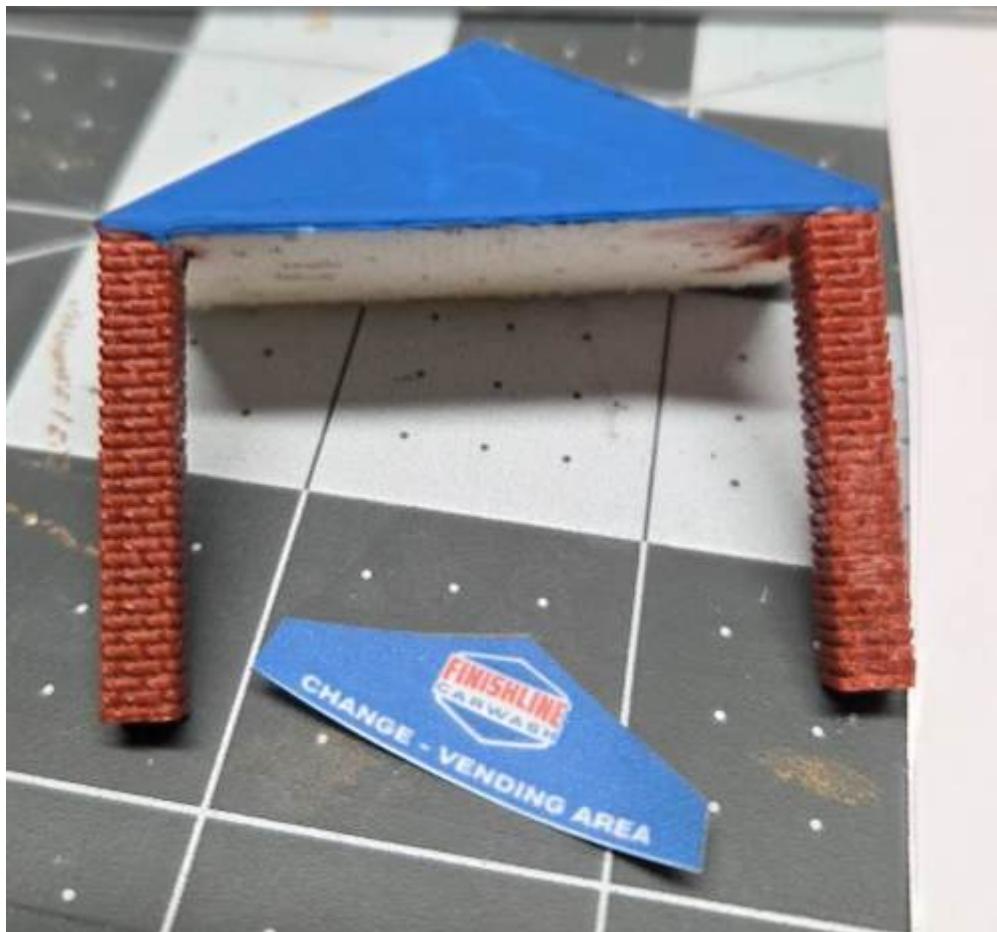
That Street View grab was pretty rough to start with, so I'm happy it turned into something clean and model-ready.

If you want to take it a step further for modeling or printing, I can:

-  **Flatten it** (no shading/texture) for a true signboard look
-  **Scale it** to a specific size (HO, O, N, exact inches, etc.)
-  **Remove or simplify the trim** if you're modeling the fascia separately
-  **Prep a print sheet** (multiple copies, bleed, white border, DPI tuned)
-  **Export guidance for Photopea, Illustrator, or Inkscape**

The bigger point here is that the opportunities are abundant, and I'd really like to explore more of them this year. Tools like this open up creative doors that simply didn't exist before, especially for hobbyists working at small scales where clarity and precision matter so much.

In the meantime, take a look below at how things looked after printing, but before application.



And finally, with a little Aileene's Tacky Glue (from my now very organized modeling desk), everything came together. The sign went on cleanly, fit perfectly, and instantly elevated the look of the structure. So, (besides the bad trim job on the bottom edge)... how's it look? Why not find an application on your models and give it a try?

So... how's it look?



Help Wanted

Contributed by Andrew Stitt, Superintendent

CSD Program Chair – The Division needs someone to take on the responsibility of arranging for programs to be scheduled and presented at Division meetings. This can be accomplished by doing the presentation themselves, getting a commitment from someone else to make the presentation, or arrange for presentations to be conducted remotely (via Zoom). When the presentation has been established, the who, what, when, where needs to be sent to the editor of the Brass Pounder and the webmaster prior to the meeting so they let the members know about the upcoming program.

RMU Chair – The Division conducts Railroad Model University (RMU) annually to provide all model railroaders within our area the opportunity to attend a day-long event featuring clinics on a wide range of model railroad topics. The chair is responsible for recruiting member and non member clinician presenters as well as setting the schedule for these presentations. The

chair also coordinates with other Division members to enable them to secure a location for the event, schedule and promote the event, and assist with any registration or A/V issues.

Please contact me (superintendent@carolinasouthern.org) if you have any questions or would like to volunteer.

CSD Annual Meeting Lunch Orders

Contributed by Andrew Stitt, Superintendent

This is to announce that the Carolina Southern Division's Annual meeting will be held at the Newton Depot on Saturday, January 17, 2026. It will start at 10 AM in their meeting room. As has been our recent practice, the Division will provide lunch for those attending. The meeting will also be broadcast via Zoom for those not able to attend in person. Please click here to sign up. [Register](#)



CAROLINA TRAIN SHOWS



★ TWO UPCOMING EVENTS! ★

JANUARY
10th

9am - 3pm
Admission: \$5

ROCK HILL, SC

Student Activity Center
611 Myrtle Drive
Rock Hill, SC 29730

FEBRUARY 7th

CONCORD, NC
7831 Gateway Lane
Concord, NC 28027

FEBRUARY 7th



9am - 3pm
Admission: \$5

Show Hours: 9am - 3pm - Admission: \$5

Save the Date!

Central Railway Museum's



**Model Train
Expo 2026**

Fri – Feb 13th 12:00 – 6:00 pm
Sat – Feb 14th 9:00 – 3:00 pm

Rock Springs Church – Impact Center
207 Rock Springs Road
Easley, South Carolina 29642

Admission \$10.00 Adults

Under 10 **Free** with adult

Admission good both days

8+ Operating Model Railroads

KidZone

with Thomas & Brio

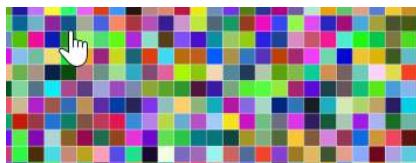
180+ Dealer Tables



COMPLETE INFO AT: WWW.CRMHA.ORG

Co-chairs: Sandy Eustis – (513) 325-8850 seustis13@gmail.com

Scott Unger – (412) 491-4655 scott.d.unger01@gmail.com



Digital Distractions



Here's a new one to me, and maybe to you too? The Main Track. Here's the description from their Youtube page.

Hello! Welcome to The Main Track. Here, I'm featuring progress on the construction and operation of my HO-scale model railroad layout. It recreates the Missouri-Kansas-Texas "Katy" Railroad's Sedalia Subdivision in west-central Missouri as it appeared in the summer of 1987..

Check out their channel [here!](#)

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