Sante-Fe Ontario and Western

Timetables and Train Orders

From the time the layout was built it was intended to operate like a real railroad. This meant that it would have to accommodate peddler freights that switched cars, express passenger trains, local passenger trains operated by doodlebugs, express block mineral trains and mixed freight /passenger trains. Most of the operations are designed around trains that have already been made up but there are four loco service areas which can be used if desired in the future to allow another more complex type of operation.

The layout is based on the old New York Ontario and Western Railroad which was taken over by Sante-Fe in a parallel universe. The areas on the layout are named after the prototype and operations follow loosely what happened on the prototype. The layout is a folded version of part of the map of the prototype. The layout operates a timetable system loosely based on the NSWGR, NO&W and Sante-Fe practice with the addition of extras. The Sante-Fe ran many non-timetable trains as extras to maximise track usage. In some regions only express passenger trains were run on a timetable and everything else was an extra. This allows the dispatcher to run more trains in a given time as extras by squeezing them in between scheduled trains. NO&W had a lot of dark territory and relied heavily on timetabling,stop watches and prayers to keep trains apart so I do not worry about signals.

There are North and South timetables and each timetable has train numbers starting from 1 which will be the first train to run in each direction. Operations generally start with two operators so one takes the first south train and the other takes the first north train. There is always an empty siding at Hudson River for the first South train and one at Middletown for the first North train. The train order shows the train number, type of train, direction of travel, the loco number, starting point, destination, stopping points and instructions on switching moves.

The system is based on a timetable and each train has a train order which is given to the driver. This was worked out by timing the trains and then multiplying the times by 5 so that at any time it could be run using a 5 to 1 fast clock. The timetable determines the sequence that trains run so that they do not get trapped behind one another in storage sidings.

On some running nights some of the coal trains and doodlebugs are run as extras so they are not sequenced and the dispatcher holds the train order so that it can be used when there is nothing running on the mainline. Most switching is done off the main line so there are opportunities during an operating session to run extras.

Train numbering is abbreviated as follows

- S1EP   South Train No 1 Express Passenger
- S3LPD   South Train No 2 Local Passenger Doodlebug
- N6MP   North Train No 6 Mixed Passenger
- N4EF   North Train No 4 Express Freight
- S5LF   South Train No 5 Local Freight

All the mainline passenger trains run South from Hudson River to Middletown or North from Middleton to Hudson River.

Doodlebugs start at Carbondale and run to Hudson River or start at Hudson River and run to Carbondale.

Local freights start at Cornwall, Quinces Landing, Middletown and Hudson River and terminate at any of these locations determined on which industries they are switching.

Express freights are generally two coal trains which go from Scranton Mine to the ore loader at Cornwall and from Bluesky mine at Cornwall to the Offanon Power Station at Middletown.

The freight trains have identical cars to those they are switching so that they have the same number and types of cars when they reach their destination. After an operating session all trains are simply backed up to where they came from ready for another session. This eliminates the need for cards and any sorting after an operating session. It also makes it easy for visitors who do not understand card operation to participate in an operating session. I like cards and have a partially built card system but at this point in time I have chosen not to use it.