

MONTANA RAIL LINK

Welcome to the MRL in Ohio! You'll know you've arrived when you've found the CTC signal outside our main entrance. Also note the UP flag flying in our backyard. To the south of our building is the NS mainline connecting Fort Wayne, IN with Bellevue, OH (This is also the former Nickel Plate's Chicago to Buffalo line).

Our 2500 sq. ft. room features a double deck model railroad with point to point operation. A double track helix divides the layout approximately in half. The railroad is fully detected (with Logic Rail hardware), powered Digitrax radio DCC, and is completely signaled. The CTC signal system is connected to a fully functioning dispatcher's panel located in its own room downstairs. The layout is located on the second floor. A crew lounge and rest room also occupy the ground floor.

For a typical operating session, up to 50 trains will be staged, with as many as another 10 added/assembled and operated during the session. Regular sessions are usually on the first Saturday each month, beginning at 9 am, and last about 4 to 5 hours, including a break for lunch. Most trains originate at one of four staging yards at Logan, Terry, Sheridan & Greybull, Wyoming. Each of these yards represents a location on the MRL (or BNSF) in the real world – see the map above Sheridan Yard. Each train has a symbol in BN nomenclature. A pack of waybills accompanies each train.

While most trains are run throughs (the MRL is mainly a bridge line), a number of locals are operated, with switching at over 20 on-line industries. Trains with work are identified with a Train Order slip in the packet of waybills. The destinations for the freight are indicated by a tab inserted in the waybill. Many are real world destinations – See the MRL Gateway document.

The signal aspects are per those on the BNSF and governed by the rules found in their Employee Time Table. The TT description of each type of aspect is posted at the end of Logan Yard, above the Digitrax holding bins. To avoid running a red signal, stop your train well in advance of the signal, before the fouling points. See Bulletin #1 for additional information.

Each operator should bring a FRS (Family Radio System) radio for communications. Up to 3 different frequencies may be in use. Radio use is necessary for contacting the Crew Caller – to obtain your next assignment, and the Dispatcher – for arranging departure. Other communications are for special situations, back up moves, or running around your train.

When not running trains, operators can relax in the crew lounge, or sit in the upstairs bay window and rail fan the NS traffic that races by. Or, you can rail fan on the MRL, following the action from one end of the railroad to the other.