

# OPS 101 on The NoWhere Line

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## **Model Railroading Operations:**

A fun and interesting role-playing game in which the players (operators) use model trains to simulate the movements of real trains and the actions of real railroad employees.

Can easily be considered a multi-player game of linear chess.

Car forwarding is the purposeful movement of rail cars from one location to another based on (model) customer needs.

## **3 Basics of Operations:**

- A. Distribution of rail cars carrying materials to and from industries.
- B. Transportation of rail cars from place to place in trains.
- C. Control and communication of car-forwarding scheme.

## **How-to steps:**

1. Start simple; have fun; add complexity; stop when it is no longer fun.  
*NoWhere Line has used several schemes during its years of existence; still being modified.*
2. Linearize your railroad so that it has at least one begin - end route (i.e. it goes somewhere).  
*NoWhere Line has continuous-run connection at Loop but it is used only by passenger service beginning and ending at Branch.*
3. Create / adapt / reuse car-forwarding scheme. (Basic A above)  
*NoWhere Line currently uses car cards and waybills; others still in reserve.*
4. Determine service routes on the railroad, e.g. "string of pearls", "hubs and spokes". (Basic B above)  
*NoWhere Line currently hosts 20+ routes to serve its customers and to support operators.*
5. Establish sequence of trains to be run. A timetable is such a sequence. (Basic C above)  
Planning for train meets and interference with local switching makes task interesting.  
*NoWhere Line Timetable is basis for all subsequent operational documentation.*
6. Write documentation for operations scheme and distribute to operators. (Basic C above)  
*NoWhere Line uses Clearance Forms handed to train crews. Traffic Manager makes assignments.*

## **Miscellaneous Stuff**

- There are many documented car-forwarding schemes. Choose and experiment. First one probably will not be final choice.
- Layout design for operations can be an art achieved after several tries. When you are satisfied, stop.
- Basic types of trains are: Locals (pickups and setouts), Through freights (yard to yard), Passengers. Start local and then expand to traverse whole railroad.
- Start at informal communication level and let crews do their work. See what develops to make scheme more complex and easier to manage. Use crew feedback.
- Real railroads need complex rules to protect lives and property. Model railroads should be fun.

**Personal Notes:**

1. Run session with no clock; use OS checklists for sequence.
2. Use 2-person crews.
3. Some trains start on-line, out of yards.
4. First Bigburg yard stop is group activity.
5. Allow job changes.
6. Discuss uncoupling techniques and tools.
7. Discuss car blocks in trains.
8. Explain waybills.
9. Explain Clearance Forms.