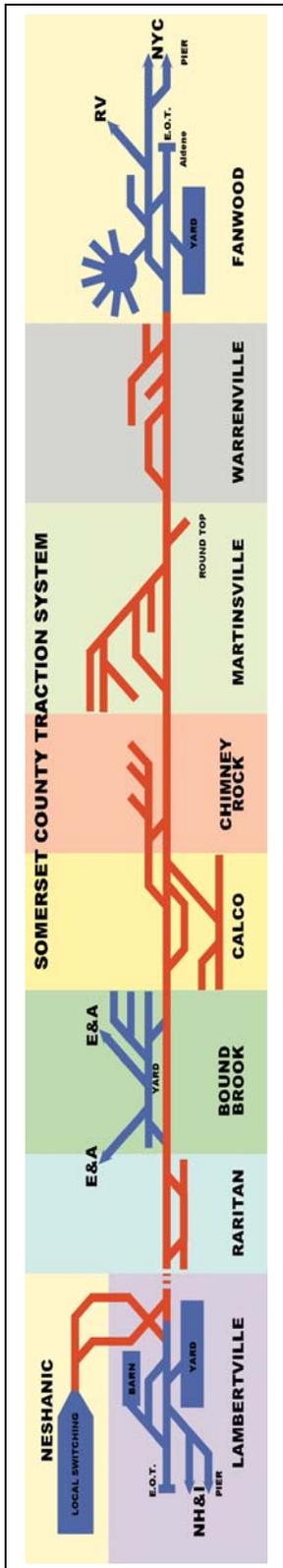


Welcome to the Somerset County Traction System!

*I hope your visit will be relaxing and enjoyable.
Let's start our day with an explanation of the railroad.*



The Somerset County Traction System is a model of a “could-have-been” mostly-freight hauling railroad. The line traverses north-central New Jersey from the eastern boundary’s edge water in Newark Bay to the western boundary’s edge water on the Delaware River and represents a distance of about 49 miles. The time period is late-summer 1957, and trains are powered by an overhead wire system delivering 600v DC via pantographs mounted atop the locomotives (called “motors” on our railroad and on many other traction lines).

Traffic arrives and leaves the main line at five points...two by car float at the waters’ edge, one by interchange with the Easton & Amboy Railroad (the Lehigh Valley Railroad’s line through New Jersey) in the mid-point of the railroad at Bound Brook, a connection with the Rahway Valley Railroad in Aldene, and one from the branch line to Neshanic, which emanates from Lambertville.

Even though our line operates at an uneven pace (typical of other short lines in the area, such as the Rahway Valley and the Morristown & Erie), our service is first rate. Equipment can be described as anything from brand new to rebuilt cast-offs from other lines, but all is in fine shape, even if appearing a little grubby at times.

There are a few scheduled passenger trains; all freight trains are “extras.” Freight train conductors must keep a sharp eye on the clock to make sure their trains don’t interfere with passenger operations (if you can’t clear the line in time, be sure to send out your flag man!). Check the schedule for detailed rules pertaining to this facet of operation. Passenger trains may consist of only a single interurban-type car, or may include several cars and a locomotive. In either case, the passenger train must be turned at each end of the line to get the consist in order and/or to turn the diner, if so equipped, in the correct direction of travel (so the roof vents operate correctly). In Fanwood on the east end, use the turntable. In Lambertville on the west end, use the wye (there’s one there, but you have to look for it...hint: one leg is in a tunnel).

Between passenger trains, local freights make their way east and west, picking up and setting out cars as directed by the waybills. Train crews perform their own local switching, except in Bound Brook, where the local operator takes charge. *Note: Bill boxes on our railroad already have the waybills/car cards sorted by their required direction of travel. No flipping of waybills is required. Pick up cars that are in the front of the bill box. Leave the car cards for set outs in the rear of the middle box. Due to restrictions of the physical plant, maximum train length is motor plus 6 cars plus a caboose. The caboose may be placed anywhere in the train, but at the rear is preferred.*

Note to yardmasters: Trains are built in blocking order based on agent priority; that is, front waybills first. All deliveries are local; do not classify trains by destination.

Each conductor must remember to stop his train and call the dispatcher from every telephone on the railroad to report his location, even if he has received authorization in advance to travel to distant towns. In addition, if local switching exceeds 5 minutes (real time), the conductor must call the dispatcher to check for updated instructions.

Track switches are all manually set by hand-operated “ground throws.” Note that the normal position of the switch is indicated by a green indication on the handle, and red indicates reverse. All switches must be returned to the normal position before leaving a section of track; otherwise following crews and/or passenger trains are at risk of accident. *Note: Please leave the little handle in the horizontal position (do not push it all the way down) so that the next crew can actuate it easily.*

When approaching the terminal yards (Fanwood and Lambertville), pay attention to the signal at the yard limit. The yardmaster sets this signal to either allow or prohibit entry to his yard. When you have left the main line, be sure to call the dispatcher and advise him that you are off the railroad.

Other operational instructions are listed on the schedule.

To operate an NCE cab, first check the gray locomotive card that accompanies your motor for the DCC address. For best results, press "SELECT LOCO" on the cab, enter the address, and then press enter. Press and hold each button for about one second to make good contact.

Please do not unplug your cab while the motor is moving. If you have a runaway, simply push the pantograph down a little to break contact with the overhead wire and call for assistance.

The clock will be set at a speed that is 4 times normal, so a sminute (scale minute) takes about 15 seconds real time.

If your train derails, do not attempt to rerail it yourself. Many motors have pick-up wipers installed on their trucks, and the master mechanic is the only one who should put it back on the track. Many cars have delicate details and powdered weathering, so the master mechanic will put them back on the track also.

Special Instructions for Interchange Tracks...

The interchanges in Fanwood and Bound Brook (between the overhead-powered SCTS and the two-rail powered E&A and RV) require special wiring and electrical switches. To allow the operation of two-rail equipment under the overhead wire, no motor must occupy the track when the track is set to operate two-rail equipment; otherwise, the railroad will short out. When running a train through the rail gaps, the tracks being bridged must be set to the same type of operation; otherwise a metal truck will short out at the gap.

Car float operation...

The car float makes its appearance when traffic requires it to do so. The master mechanic is also the skipper of the vessel. Yard masters typically load/unload the float, and they must remember to avoid an unbalance of more than one car when doing so; otherwise, the car float may capsize.

The Harter-Felsen Quarry train makes its way back-and-forth from crusher to transfer station automatically.

Train speed:

Yards: 10 mph max

Freight: 25 mph max

Passenger: 40 mph max

Trestle: All trains 10 mph

And remember:

If you make a mistake, it'll cost you nothing more than being on the receiving end of a bit of teasing.

So relax, and have a great time!

Tom Piccirillo
General Manager
Somerset County Traction System