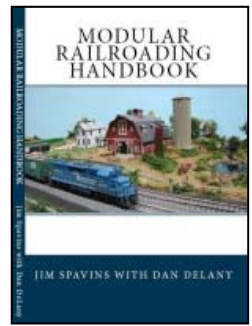




# Modular Railroading with a Minivan





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By Charlie Crawford

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Traveling with a modular layout in a minivan can be quite satisfying. I've exhibited my layout in states from Alabama to Connecticut and also exhibit with the Atlanta Interlocking Model Railroader modular club. My Adirondack Division is now a 14' X 16' layout that includes backdrop, legs & curtains. All of this equipment fits neatly in a Toyota Sienna minivan.

A minivan has many positive features for traveling with a layout. First is fuel economy; even under load, it gets 24+ MPG. That's important if you're going a long distance.

With the second and third row of seats removed, the minivan has a 6'6" x 4" x 3'6" of open space for loading. The space is weather proof, no tarps needed and a vehicle that's easier to handle than a towed trailer.

My layout now consists of six straight sections and four curves. To travel, the straight & curved modules are clamped face to face. The four pairs of six foot modules are loaded into the van, cardboard is placed on top of the modules to protect their faces, two 2 foot modules are placed on top and plastic totes containing everything necessary for the layout are loaded on top. A foam mountain is even added to the load.

Loading usually takes about an hour. The layout can be set up in 2-3 hours. Digitrax DCC provides power for the layout. I travel with a command station & booster. Either can run the layout. I'd hate to be hundreds of miles from home and have the operating system crash. Six prong RV plugs connect the power bus between the modules. They're practically indestructible and three circuits are connected at once. As long as the modules are wired properly at home they'll go together correctly at the show.



Speaking of scenery, ground cover and figures are glued on the modules, but everything else: buildings, vehicles and trees come off and travel in the totes. It adds to the work at set-up, but the modules can be clamped closer together to make the most of the space in the minivan.

The layout has been exhibited at the 2008 NMRA Southeast Region and 2006 NMRA Northeast Region Conventions. In the summer of 2009 the layout was at the NMRA National Train Show.