

July 2004 Working Group Meeting Public Minutes

As a reminder, this meeting was just a place for discussion and communication. Decisions are only made after discussion on the Working Group's email list.

These minutes are just a brief description of what was discussed, and do not cover all points made. For background information on many of the items mentioned below, please see the Working Group Active Topics page: <http://dcc.info/WGpublic/active-topics.html>

Attendees

Stan Ames
Bill Ataras (Signaling Solutions)
Armin Bacher
Brian Barnt
Peter Ely
Rutger Friberg
Gil Fuchs
Carl Harcourt
AJ Ireland (Digitrax)
Bob Jacobsen
Matt Katzer (KAM)
Karl Kobel (Wangrow)
Bernd Lenz (Lenz Elektronik)
Lori Massey
Reinhard Muller (FREMO)
Walter Naumann
Gerry Pruss
Fred Severson (QSI)
Fred Weissinger
Ken West

Introductions

A sign-in sheet was handed around, along with a copy of the manufacturers' info for corrections. Two corrections and an addition were received.

Rutger Friberg made the following points:

- Fleischmann has confirmed hosting a European meeting in mid April, in addition to the meeting at Roco in September. Jan Abbink is organizing these. It is important to build activity on both sides of the Atlantic
- The Board of Trustees has asked him to develop ways to better fund the conformance and inspection operations, and to investigate with manufacturers their use of the conformance terminology. The goal is to strengthen the position of the user, and hence the position of the NMRA.

Working Group Operations

Bob Jacobsen introduced the goals of reorganizing the Working Group. Peter Ely lead the discussion. He started with a short description of the draft Technical Note describing the new organization

The discussion was wide ranging, with many points made. It was strongly felt that there needed to be a way to appeal a decision of the Working Group, and that several aspects of the procedures needed to be clarified. The draft Technical Note will be revised to take these points into account.

Brief review of existing list of topics

This part of the discussion focused on the current status of each item, whether it should be considered inactive or moved forward, and who would be responsible for moving it forward.

Topic 9910241 - Analog Output Instruction

Consensus: Should move this forward, and somebody will be found to move it forward.

Topic 0107122 - User Defaults

Topic 0104191 - CV Table Structure Proposal

The above two topics may be inactive. After an additional check with the original proponent, these may be moved to inactive status.

Topic 0304231 - Additional Manufacturer CVs for Accessory Decoders

This is a matter of cleaning up the CV allocation so that locomotive and accessory decoders match. The consensus was that it should move forward.

Topic 0305001 - Medium Plug Enhancement

Reinhard Muller is working on similar questions. Several manufacturers may want to discuss this at the Fall meeting.

Topic 0307121 - New Decoder Register Matrix

Reinhard Muller is managing this. See later on in the agenda.

Topic 0305051 - Decoder Lock Proposal

Bob Jacobsen is managing this. See later on in the agenda.

Topic 0307122 - Service Mode Decoder Lock Proposal

Stan Ames is managing this. See later on in the agenda.

Topic 0307161 - Clarification of Sequence of Multiple Protocols

This was discussed. There is still some interest in it, but it's complicated. It seems the correct people will be at the Fall meeting, so we will bring it up again then.

Topic 0307162 - Transition Sequence for Multiple Protocols

This may be beyond the scope of the NMRA. After an additional check with the Working Group, this will be moved to inactive status.

Topic 0307163 - Glossary

General consensus to make the existing draft glossary available, although nobody had read it recently, and if OK, publish it.

Topic 0307165 - Clarification / Rewording of RP-9.2.1 and RP-9.2.2

This involves some rewording and clarification. Stan Ames will coordinate.

Topic 0309301 - RP-9.3.1 Revision

Topic 0309302 - RP-9.3.2 Revision

Stan Ames is actively handling these two, see below in the agenda

Topic 0403131 - Working Group Organization and Operation

Bob Jacobsen and Peter Ely are actively handling this. See earlier in the agenda.

Summary of Active Topic discussion:

In most cases, we can identify who's managing the topic. In a couple cases we still have to do that. If we can't, then consider moving to a new category of "inactive" topics.

In addition to following up as above, the information on the DCC.info web page needs to be updated.

Streaming Mode Programming (Topic 0405221) - Gil Fuchs

Gil Fuchs is working on a sound decoder, which needed large downloads. He wants to create a more general method for firmware updates, large configuration loads, etc. People want a common format and transfer technology, e.g. Intel hex format, ASCII serial, so any PC can handle the operation.

There was a detailed discuss of this, including a number of technical issues.

New Decoder Register Matrix (Topic 0307121) - Reinhard Muller

Reinhard introduced this. It is a topic from last year (Toronto) which needs to be pushed, but Reinhard doesn't know how. Some manufacturers are already using reserved CVs due to their growing needs. The Working Group needs to find both short term solutions and long term solutions. Short term: start assigning consistently! Can we get a summary from the manufacturers of their short term needs, so we can reserve space? Longer term solution: move intelligence outside so user doesn't have to deal with CV numbers. E.g. Create a standard decoder description as a file that can be downloaded to a decoder programmer.

During the resulting discussion, there were a number of points made about short term and long term solutions. Both seem to be needed, but it is very hard to make progress on either. This is one of those problems that is "important", but not "urgent", so we will have to find a way to get it to progress.

Mechanical Interface - Reinhard Muller

Reinhard introduced the discussion: From the user side, it's frustrating to have a decoder not fit in a "DCC ready" loco. Two connectors are in use in Europe. The 6 pin was used lots with a 9mmx14mm Trix decoder which became a standard size for the opening. So he requests boxes be labeled with "needs more than the standard space" or "needs to be wired in". Modelers keep locos around for 20 years. We should be able to tell in the hobby shop if the decoder will fit in that old loco.

This is a young topic, and the discussion reflected that. Should the topic include heat limits in addition to size? Wiring of lamps? How much of this is a mechanical (e.g. not DCC) issue? There was general interest in further discussions to clarify a useful approach.

Introduction of the New NMRA Officers

Rutger introduced John Roberts, the new NMRA President, and Mike Brestel, the Executive Vice President.

John Roberts made a short statement supportive of DCC efforts, He considers them important to them future, and that they have kept NMRA relevant. He noted that DCC now available at the entry level and we have to keep ahead of the curve. Both of them are DCC Users.

Wiring of the Small Connector - Reinhard Muller

Reinhard started the discussion: This is more a point to locomotive manufacturers, in that the recommended wiring allows lights to work in DC mode. It might be hard to implement in some locos and we don't want to prevent them from adding small plug because this wiring is required. Some discussion of how to present "optional" information/ Maybe this should be our first 1st application note?

Revisions of RP-9.3.1 and RP-9.3.2 (Topics 0309301, 0309302) - Stan Ames

Stan introduced the discussion by saying that the new drafts seem to cover all comments, ready to move forward to a manufacturer vote. This was followed by a discussion of testing to date, and prospects for additional information.

Decoder Lock Proposal (Topic 0305051) - Bob Jacobsen

Since the original introduction of this topic, people have requested three changes:

- Desire to have a 'turn on everyone' master key rather than the algorithm to unlock an unknown
- Ability to unlock decoder with a basic command station
- Ability to write CV's with basic command station

These were discussed, and a number of points made; there were arguments both for and against all of these. The next step is to find a common group and write a draft RP.

Service Mode Decoder Lock (Topic 0307122) - Stan Ames

Stan introduced the discussion: The goal of this feature is to eliminate programming track for low end product, while allowing programming of loco address on main track. He stressed that this was for very low-end devices! The protocol only works if all locomotives on the track have decoders with the feature. There was some concern about labeling, so that the user would know that he was buying a locomotive that had this feature.

Any other business

Matt Katzer passed out a handout on intellectual property. He will be making a press release next week. KAM is driving toward an interface standard, has invested a lot in that, have lots of intellectual property, wants to build standardization at multiple levels: Talk to command station. Talk to applications, etc or hobby won't grow. Stan Ames pointed out that Allen Pollack is NMRA industry Liaison, he's the one to talk to about intellectual property issues.

Reinhard Muller sad that we should put signal-influence-stop back into RPs. Important to ensure compatibility! Single method, want clear feature definition.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10PM.

Bob Jacobsen & Peter Ely
22 July 04