



# Southern Pacific Exeter Branch

*11 Years and 250 Operating Sessions Later  
...What I Have Learned*

**Rick Watson**

*November 2020*

# Agenda

- About the Exeter Branch
- Layout Changes for Ops
- Back-dating
- Ops Schema Changes
- Questions



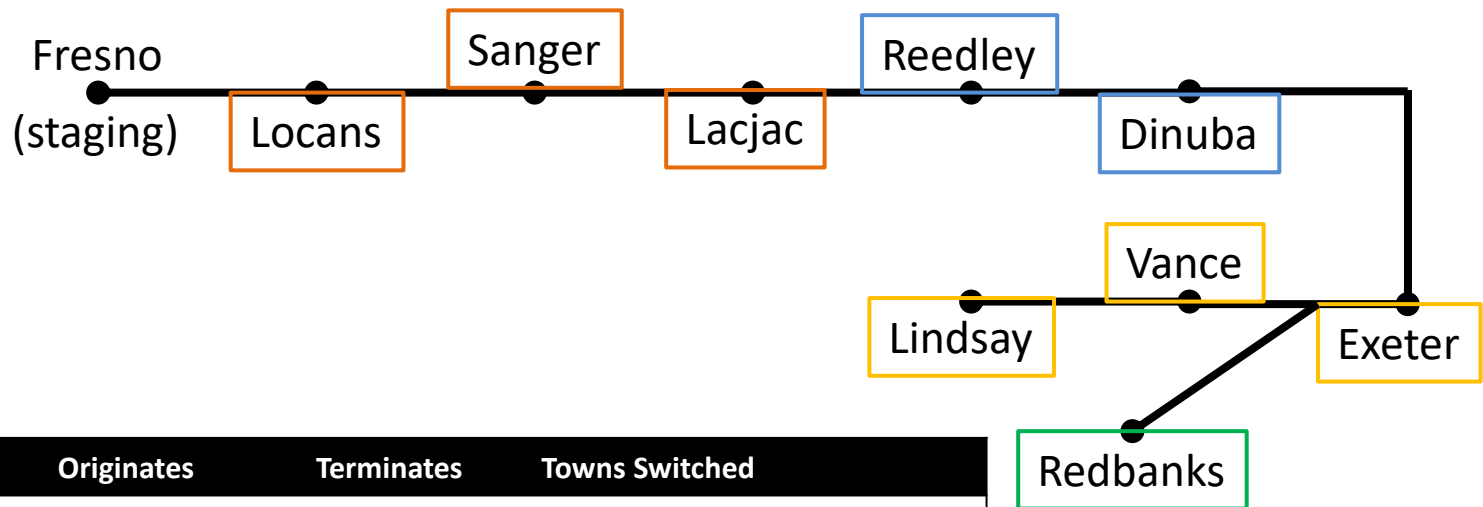
# A Bit About Rick

- Been a model railroader since I was 5
- First set was Lionel
- Grew up in Southern California, now in Tempe, AZ
- Worked at a hobby shop and custom painted brass as a teenager
- Was introduced to operations in 2001
- Other hobbies
  - Motorcycles
  - Car restoration
  - Home remodeling



# About the SP Exeter Branch

- Built in 2009 – 11 months from concept to first ops
- Era: 1980 in the San Joaquin Valley in California
- Designed for switching using SP SPINS diagrams
- 4 jobs created



Job	Originates	Terminates	Towns Switched
Sanger Switcher	Sanger	Sanger	Sanger, Locans, Lacjac
Reedley Runner	Reedley	Reedley	Reedley, Dinuba
Exeter Local	Fresno	Fresno	Exeter, Vance, Lindsay
Redbanks Turn	Redbanks	Redbanks	Redbanks



# Key Decisions

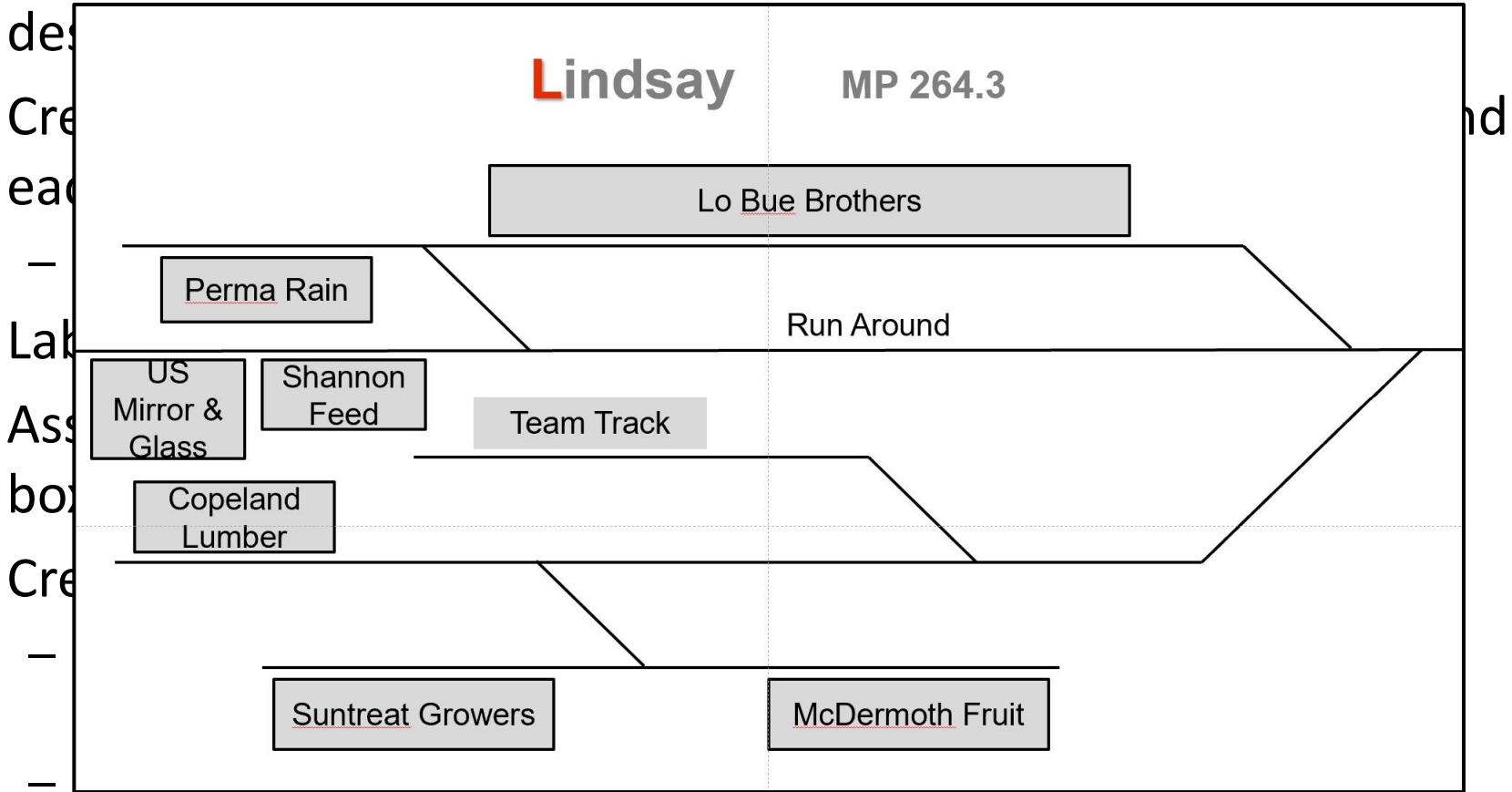
- Benchwork
  - Height: 46”, depth: 30”
- Design with MS Visio
- Trackwork
  - Atlas code 83 track and turnouts
  - Main track on Homabed
  - DAP Alex Plus caulk for track and Homabed
- Manual ground throws
  - Caboose 202S
  - Powered turnouts where not reachable (staging)
- 4 Cycle Waybills
  - Excel spreadsheet to plan car movements
- Electrical
  - Track bus 14 gauge wire
  - Feeders for EVERY piece of track
  - Separate power district per job
- Control system – NCE DCC
  - Wired throttles – now radio
- Manual uncoupling
  - Bamboo skewers
- Car Card box location
  - By industry
- 5 staging tracks
- 13 car train lengths
- 4 axle motive power



# Preparing for the First Op Session

- Create jobs and job

- Create 'tents' for each



- Create

- Create

- Create

- Create

- Create

- Create

Pick Ups per industry?

- What is the balance?

- Invite operators...

- Better to have experienced operators to shakedown the railroad



# Paperwork



- 4 cycle waybills
- Sorting for staging / reset



# Paperwork



## Southern Pacific Exeter Branch



### Exeter Local

- Go on duty in Exeter.
- Switch the industries in Exeter, Lindsay, and Vance.
- Once all industries and cars have been switched, make up the outbound bound Exeter Local of 13 cars.
- Loaded reefers have priority and must be on the head end of the train.
- Run to Fresno.
- Pick up the eastbound Exeter Local..
- Set out the cars in Exeter, Lindsay, and Vance.
- Make up a westbound train with all remaining outbound cars.
- Tie the train up clear of the main track.
- Go off duty.

- Job instructions should address
  - What vs How
- Consistent verbiage and format
- Branch line and yard limits

OFF SPOT



EXETER  
LOCAL



FRESNO



TO SWITCH



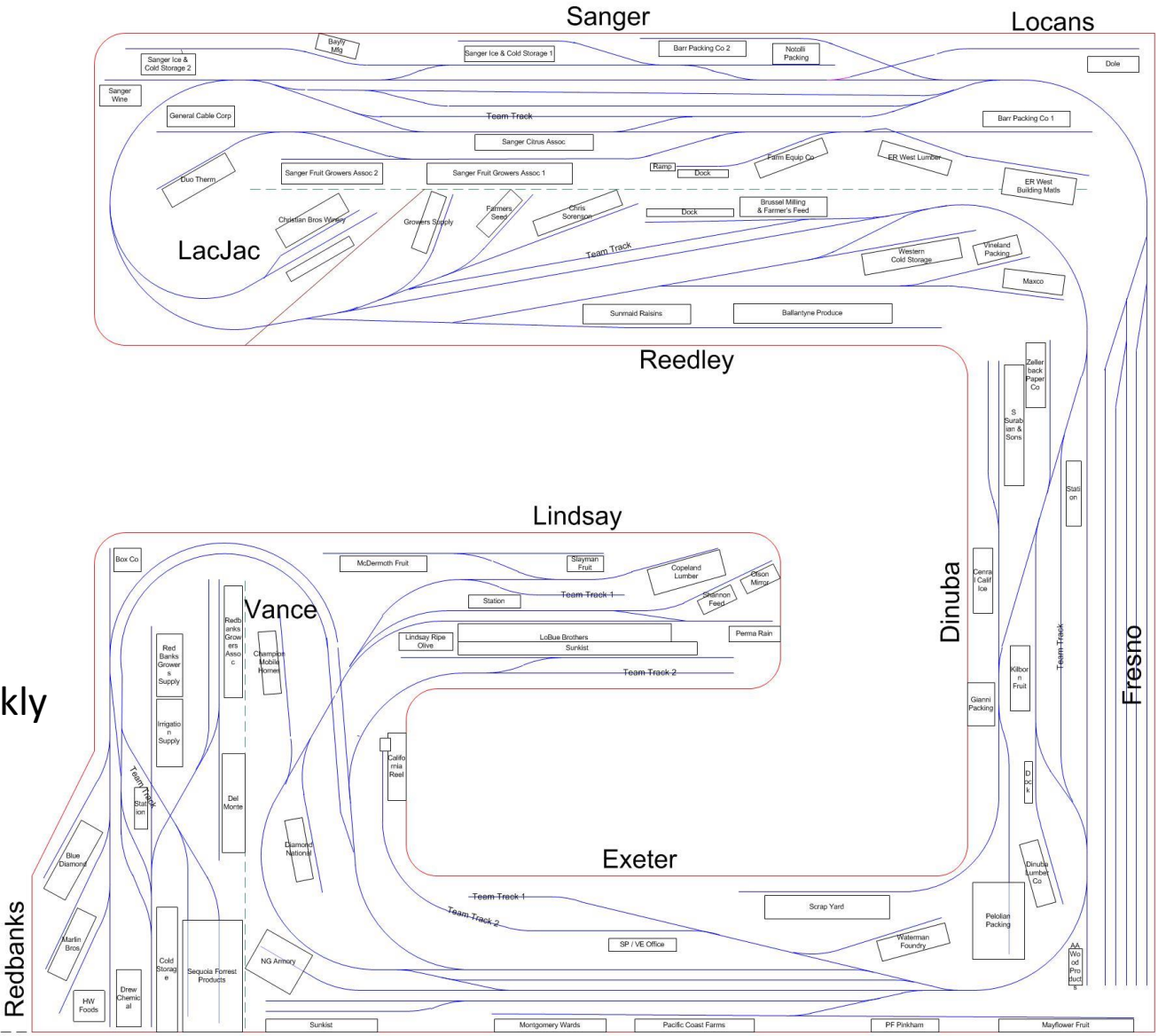


# Conducting the First Op Session

- Invite experienced operators
- Do not participate
  - Be available for questions
  - Be available to troubleshoot and fix issues
- Have extras on hand
  - Locomotives & rolling stock
  - Throttles & throttle cables
  - Coupler picks
- Get feedback from the operators
  - What went well?
  - What didn't go well?
  - What would they suggest you change?
  - Was the job too complex?
  - Was the job too simple?



# First Session

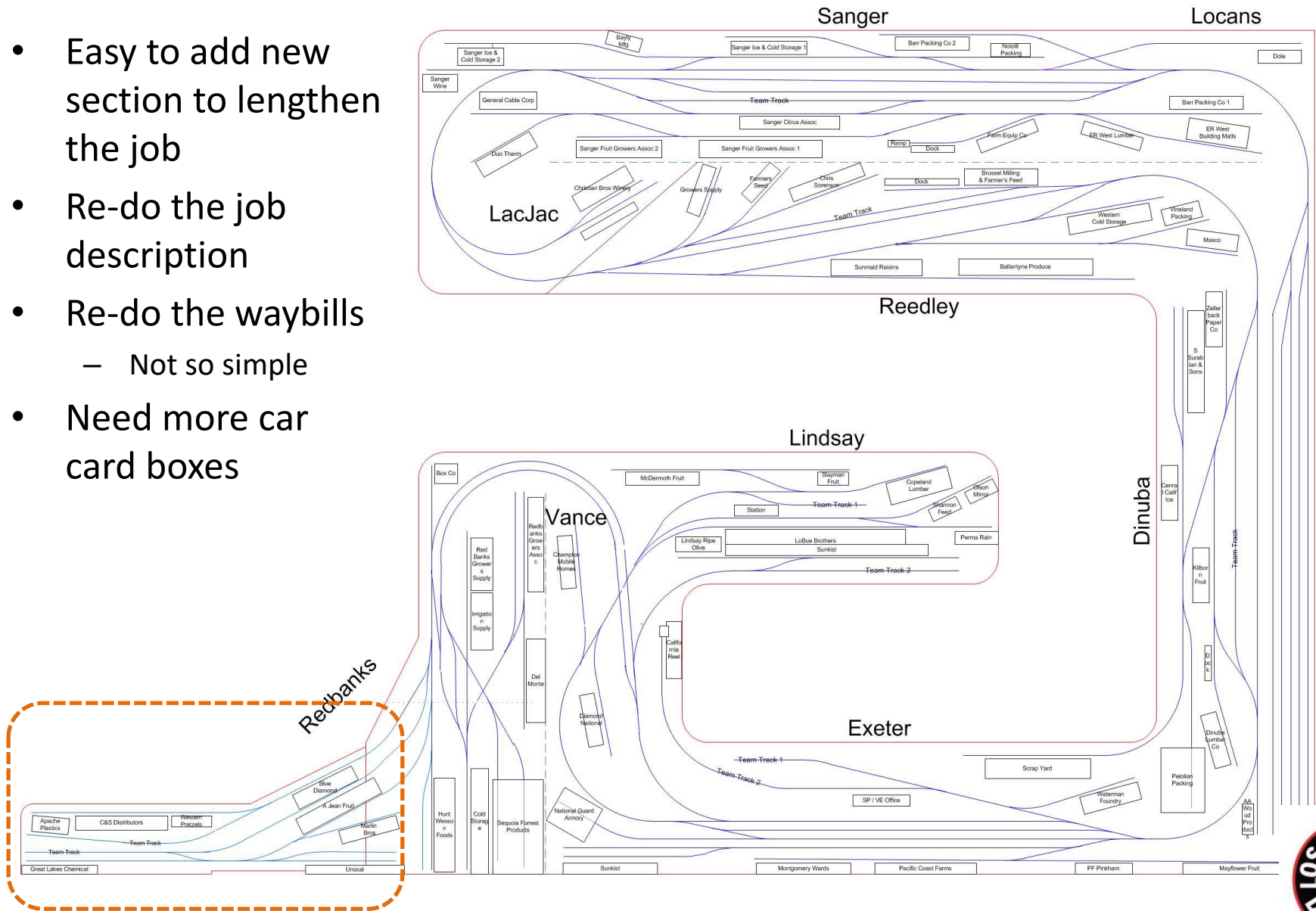


Redbanks Turn finished too quickly



# Layout Change 1: Expand Redbanks

- Easy to add new section to lengthen the job
- Re-do the job description
- Re-do the waybills
  - Not so simple
- Need more car card boxes

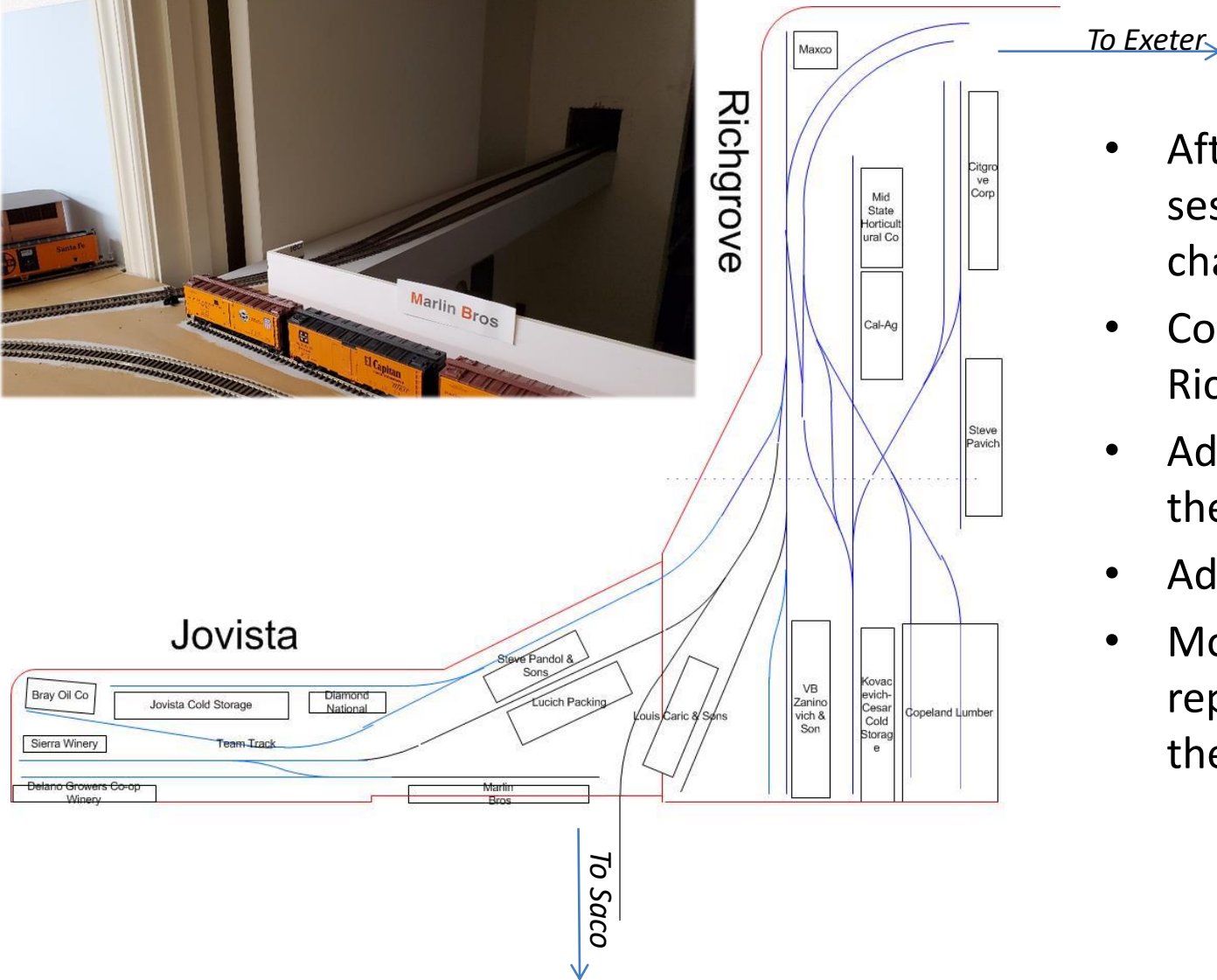


# Preparing for Desert Ops 2012

- Organize the event
- Build a website
- Determine sign up method
- 4<sup>th</sup> Weekend of October – even years
- ...and change the Exeter Branch?



# Layout Change 2: Replace Redbanks

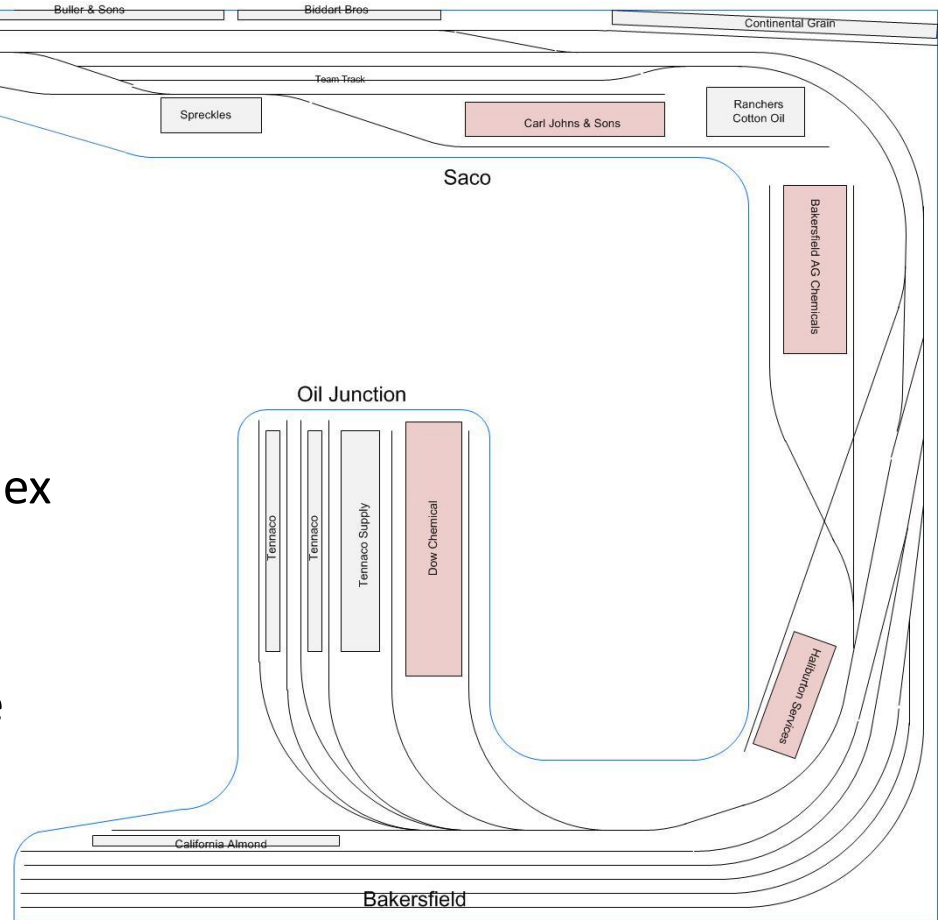


- After 2 years and 62 sessions – time for change
- Convert Redbanks to Richgrove and Jovista
- Add a 5<sup>th</sup> operator into the mix
- Add Santa Fe traffic
- More accurately represent a portion of the railroad



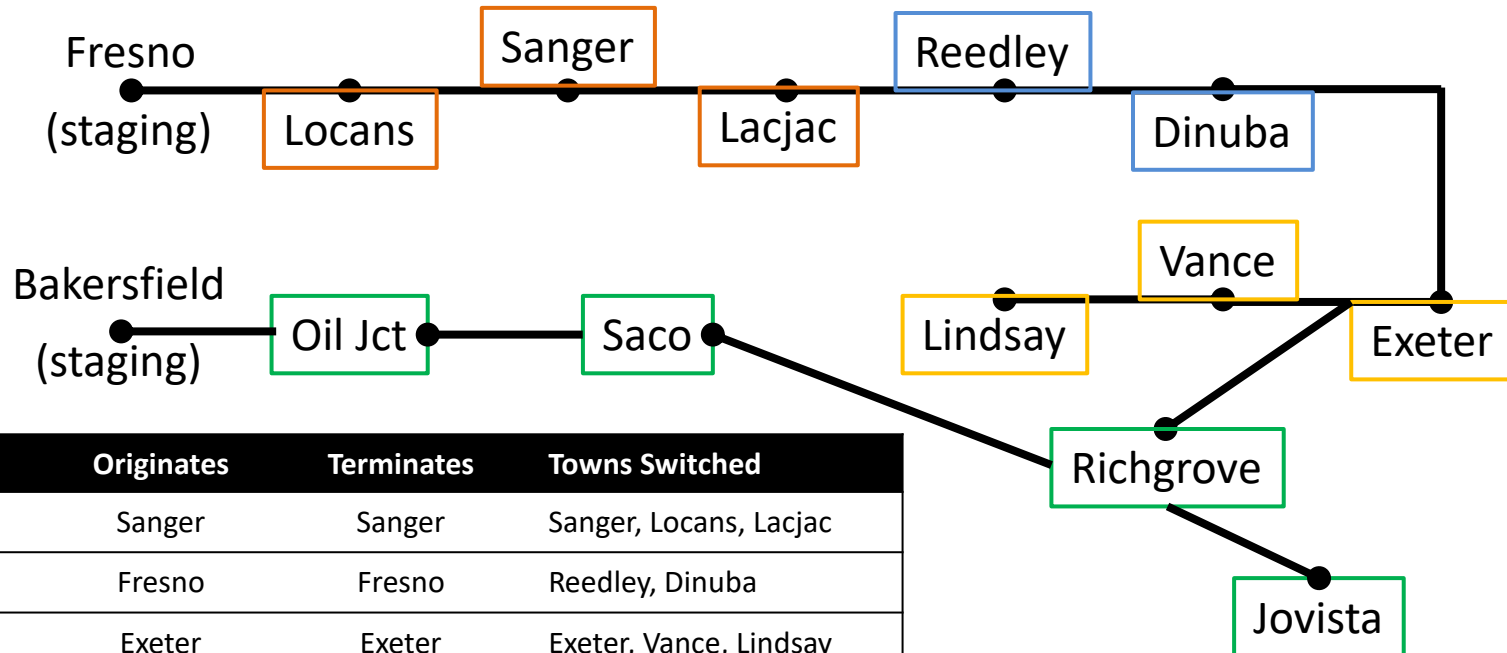
# Layout Change 2: Expansion

- Bakersfield Staging
- Tank Car facility
- Shared industries resulting in more complex switching jobs
- New job descriptions
- New waybills across the entire railroad



# The 'new' SP Exeter Branch

- Era: 1980
- Bakersfield Staging added
- 5<sup>th</sup> operator added – 4 new jobs created



Job	Originates	Terminates	Towns Switched
Sanger Switcher	Sanger	Sanger	Sanger, Locans, Lacjac
Reedley Runner	Fresno	Fresno	Reedley, Dinuba
Exeter Local	Exeter	Exeter	Exeter, Vance, Lindsay
Richgrove Turn (SP)	Bakersfield	Bakersfield	Richgrove, Jovista
Richgrove Local (ATSF)	Bakersfield	Bakersfield	Richgrove, Jovista
Saco Local (SP)	Bakersfield	Bakersfield	Saco, Oil Junction
Saco Turn (ATSF)	Bakersfield	Bakersfield	Saco, Oil Junction



# Switching Eras

- Needed to harvest equipment for the new railroad
- Back-date to 1964-ish
- Train length is 15 cars
- Acquire rolling stock and locos that are era specific
- New Car Cards
- New Waybills
- After a few sessions, waybill adjustment for balance
- Later, waybill simplification





# Train/Job Changes

- Reefer blocking
- Sanger
  - Hauler vs haulers
- Reedley/Dinuba
  - Mixing to reefer block
- Exeter
  - Origination point
- PITA train
- Oil Cans vs oil block



# Balancing Crews

- 5 vs 4
- Self selecting
- Dropping operators
- Inviting new operators
- Crew Calls & Assignments
  - Quarterly
- Session logging
  - Session attendees
  - Job assignments
  - other

	A	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM
	Q3 Sessions - 6										Q4 Sessions - 9									
Date	REG 07/07/20	REG 07/21/20	REG 07/25/20	REG 08/04/20	REG 08/15/20	REG 08/25/20	REG 09/08/20	REG 09/22/20	Q3 Totals	REG 10/06/20	REG 10/20/20	REG 10/31/20	REG 11/10/20	REG 11/17/20	REG 12/05/20	ANV 12/15/20	Q4 Totals		Totals	
Session Type	REG	REG	REG	REG	REG	REG	REG	REG		REG	REG	REG	REG	REG	REG	ANV				
Chris Abend									0					1			1		1	
Bailey, Bram									0								0		1	
Bartlow, Walt	R	R	1	R		R	R	1	2		1	1			R3		2		6	
Borkowski, Frank			1		R				1			1			R		1		5	
Brendecke, Roger	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0					1		C	1		5	
Caldwell, Kev							1	1	1				1			R3	2		3	
Callaway, Chris	1	R		R		1	1	R	3	1	R	1	R		R		2		8	
Chapman, Steve		C				C		R	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0		2	
Doiron, David		1		R3		1			2	1	R4			R2		1	2		9	
Fritz, Bruce		1				1			2							1	1		5	
Hall, Eric	1			1			R	R	2	R	1		1			R	2		7	
Hawkins, James					C	R		1	1					1	1	R3	2		4	
Johnson, Carey	1			R		1		R	2	1			C			R3	1		7	
Kelley, Ken	R		1		R			1	2	1		1		R4	R3	R5	2		8	
Kulinski, Tim			1		C				1			1			1		2		4	
Martin, Brad			R		1				1				R		1		1		5	
Middleton, Jim					C				0	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0		0	
Morey, Bob				R3		R2		C		0							0		0	
Parlova, Randy		1			R3		R2		1		1			R3		R1	1		4	
Petrarca, Bruce	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0			R			1		1		2	
Rempel, Jason	1			1			R3		2		1			1		R1	2		6	
Shafer, Doc				1		R	1	R	2	R			1		R	1	2		8	
Sommerfield, Bill					1				1			C			1		1		2	
Thompson, Dan	R	R		C	1	R	1	R	2		R3		1			1	2		8	
Vogler, Dick	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0		0	
Varley, Kyle											C						0		0	
Watson, Jennifer								1	1					1			1		4	
Watson, Rick		1	1	1	1				4		1	1				1	3		12	
Wixon, Ron			C		R				0										0	
Guests																				126
Completed Sessions	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	8	5	5	5	6	4	5	5			102	
O = Observe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4		20	
Totals									243								247			



# Job Selection

- Cutting Cards
- Point System



	A	ES	ET	EU	EV	EW	EX	EY	EZ	FA	FB	FC	FD	FE	FF	FG	FH	FI	FJ
1		2020																	
2	Name	6/20	7/7	7/21	7/25	8/4	8/15	8/25	9/8	9/22	10/6	10/20	10/31	11/10	11/17	12/5	12/16		AVG
3	Watson, Jennifer									5					1				47692
4	Brendecke, Roger														3				48462
5	Rempel, Jason		5			1					7				5				47647
6	Hawkins, James									1					7				47778
12	Watson, Rick	7		7	9	7	7												65556
13	Bannister, Kim																		53333
14	Hall, Eric		1			7					1			9					49000
15	Dorsett, Terry																		48667
16	Butler, Bob																		48333
17	Shafer, Doc					5			3						7				48095
18	Borkowski, Frank	3			3								5						48095
19	Vogler, Dick																		48065
20	Fisch, Ernie																		48049
21	Petrarca, Bruce																		47931
25	Callaway, Chris		7					1	7		3			5					47917
26	Chapman, Steve																		47895
27	Bartlow, Walt				5					7		3	3						47714
29	Sommerfield, Bill						1												47561
30	Doiron, David			1				5				5							47500
31	Parlova, Randy			5								5							47333
32	Fritz, Bruce			3				7											47333
33	Thompson, Dan						5		5					1					47143
35	Johnson, Carey		3					3			1								46744
41	Kulinski, Tim				1								7						46667
42	Morey, Bob																		46667
43	Kelley, Ken	5			7					3	7		1						45556
44	Bailery, Bram																		44000
45	Caldwell, Kev								1		9			3					43333



# Lessons Learned

- Jobs will be refined over time
  - You may need to change jobs after a few sessions
  - Your local crews will get to know the railroad and the jobs over time
- Equipment will break or be broken
  - Stirrups, ladders, handrails, grab irons, coupler pockets
  - Some operators are very **heavy** handed
- Wheels will need to be cleaned
- Each operator is different
- Cabs and cables will fail
- The tape used on car cards will fail
- An ongoing maintenance program is critical to problem free operation
- Don't fix or change the railroad the day before a session



# Lessons Learned

- Coupler springs will go missing
  - Free the springs!
- Operators may take car cards and/or packets home with them\*\*
- Foam core buildings work well as stand-ins
- Don't start off too complicated
  - Evolve over time
- Feedback is a gift
  - Lengthening spurs?
- Time spent focusing on operational reliability will pay off time and again
- Pick a day host and keep it



# What would I have done differently?

- Radio throttles
- Refined my operator pool sooner
- Spent time working on the equipment sitting in boxes
- Spent more time on ‘finishing’ the railroad
  - Skirting
  - Fillers
  - Working on scenery
- Next up: Scenery?



# Cab Savers

## Cab Savers

**for NCE Cab06P & Cab04P standard and radio**

- Ever have to replace the 'pot' on a Cab06 or Cab04?
- Eliminate excess free play/rocking on the throttle knob.
- Adjust the resistance required to turn the throttle knob.
- You can identify different throttles by color.

We have the simple and effective solution:  
the **Cab Saver!!**



**\$3.75 each or 3 for \$11.00** includes US shipping  
International shipping available, contact: [TheCabSaver@gmail.com](mailto:TheCabSaver@gmail.com)

Contact us via email: [TheCabSaver@gmail.com](mailto:TheCabSaver@gmail.com)

Purchase via PayPal: [TheCabSaver@gmail.com](mailto:TheCabSaver@gmail.com)

Link directly to PayPal: <https://www.paypal.me/CabSaver>

Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cabsaver1/>

 Eliminate potentiometer failures from knob rocking

- For NCE Cab06P and Cab04P throttles
- Reduces the chance of 'pot' failures due to the lateral rocking of the potentiometer
- Different colors available
- Works on EasyDCC throttles too!



# Questions?



Email: [SPLADivision@gmail.com](mailto:SPLADivision@gmail.com)

Blog: <https://spladivision.blogspot.com>