Tanner Declaration Exhibit C
WinLock 2.0 Brings New Functionality to DCC

by Larry Puckett

Exhibits this year (March 1995) we took a look at WinLock Version 1.5 and promised an update as soon as the new version was released, so here it is. For those of you who missed the March issue, WinLock is a Windows-compatible program that allows you to interface your computer with many Digital Command Control (DCC) systems to control locomotives, switches and potentially, whole layouts. All of this can be accomplished using the on-screen components, giving you full control of your locomotives and automatic train operation on your layout. Basically, all you need are programs that you write using a PASCAL-based programming language. Once a timetable is developed, it can be used to drive a throtte for execution by the locomotive(s) assigned to that throtte. The automation includes monitoring of switches, block occupancy and locomotive signal and speed direction. More importantly, both automated trains on a single track and manually controlled trains can be operated at the same time. This means that you could be operating a local switcher while passenger and freight trains run past you on their timetables.

WinLock 2.0 is impressive, but there are still a lot of new features that I would like to see added. Although WinLock can create and control a DCC200 throttle, you cannot create and dispatch consits to the system; only individual locomotives. Also at this time WinLock cannot act as the master controller, you have to have a DCC200 running the system, and the computer acts just like another BT2 "Buddy" throttle. Having this capability would allow users to combine the computer with a booster and BT2s to create a system without having to purchase the DCC200 or the soon-to-be-released DCS100 command stations. Both of these features may be included in the next release of WinLock.

Another limitation of WinLock 2.0 is the rudimentary programming capabilities - you can't even create or modify speed tables. Hamidreza Numiri, the developer of WinLock, has produced a program for Digitrax that will be released with their PRI program. This will allow advanced programming; a similar feature will be added to WinLock. As usual, time or the lack of it is the reason all of these features didn't make it into the latest release. Hamidreza recently finished his doctorate, and it's amazing he had time to add what he did.

WinLock 2.0 requires a 386 or better processor, serial and/or parallel port, Windows 3.x, a mouse and about 4 MB hard disk space. The setup utility does all the work for you, even creating the working directory and program group. Documentation is extensive (182-page manual). A new tutorial comes you step-by-step through the basic setup and operations. The software will retail for $115.95 and upgrades from Version 1.5 are $75.95 from Digit RR Enterprises, 10595 Seminole Blvd, PH, Seminole, FL 34678. They are also a Digitrax dealer and offer several economical package deals.

Now for the rating (1-5, 5 is best):

- Documentation: 4.0
- User Friendly: 4.0
- Technical: 5.0
- Application: 4.0
- Value: 4.0
- Level: 2.5

That's all for this session. Until next time, stay on the right track and don't run out of steam. Send your comments, questions and programs to: Larry Puckett, 5618 Dublin Dr, Manassas, VA 22110. For those of you on CompuServe, my user ID is 71050,422 - feel free to leave me a message. If you submit a public domain or shareware program for review in this column please indicate whether or not you are willing to provide copies for interested readers and the conditions for that exchange.