

## Early Entry Modeler Program 2026

Greetings from the team at the St. Louis Railroad Prototype Modeler's Meet! We are announcing our 2026 "Early Entry Modeler" program that is an important part of our annual event held in Collinsville at the Gateway Center each year.

Starting in 2022, we increased our event floor space by 50% and the number of FREE model display tables available has grown from around 75 tables to about 100 tables. During the past four years that extra space and commitment worked very well. Now that we have committed to serve you and our other attendees, we need your help to fill those tables with models of all kinds. To do that, we have created a "Early Entry Modeler" program to help you get in the Model Display Area ahead of the crowd on opening morning, and set up your display of models in advance of the event beginning that Friday morning, July 24th.

This offer is being extended to:

1. Those that bring a large number of models to display; generally, 25 or more models
2. Those with large dioramas to set up
3. Those with large scale and heavy models that require a hand-truck, dolly or cart to transport

**Note:** We understand that many modelers travel together to STL RPM and not all carpoolers may qualify for the above requirements and would be stuck outside until 9:00 AM. Those carpooling modelers will also be allowed to get an "Early Entry" badge and come in the rear door until 8:50 am on Friday only.

How this will work:

**When:** 8:00 to 8:50 AM Friday morning, July 24th.

NOTE that due to conflicting use of both the floor space, and entrance Dock C, the model display tables will not even be out, set up, and covered with white plastic covers, until 8:00 am Friday morning, **PLEASE do not show up before 8:00 expecting to get in.** We cannot handle the crowds or the security issues. And honestly, we all get in the way of the vendors trying to set up a lot of stuff and earn a living.

**Where:** Proceed to the rear of the Gateway Center and enter through Loading Dock C, and go in the model Display Area, behind the folding doors / temporary wall. The exhibit hall area will be totally closed off from the model area until 9:00 am.

**What:** When you arrive you will get an Early Entry temporary badge from the RPM Staff that allows you into the STL RPM event until 8:50 am on FRIDAY. After that you will be required to go to the Registration Desk in the main area of the Gateway Center and pay your admission to the RPM and exchange the temporary badge for a regular RPM ID badge **at any time before Noon.** The 2026, admission to the events remains \$35.00 for Friday and Saturday, is \$25.00 Saturday only. There is a limit of 200 of these Early Entry badges, if they are all given out the process will end at that point in time.

**NEW AND IMPROVED:** How about filling out your model information form IN ADVANCE!! Now you can go to our STLRPM website < <https://www.stlrpm.com/> > and click on the RESOURCES tab, and locate / click on the model forms and use / download / print as many forms to pre-populate the information about YOU and your models. It is more legible, easy and professional looking and ALL free !

### Help us Please:

1. Do not attempt to purchase items from the vendors before 9:00 – they need this time to set up their displays and get into the right frame of mind too.
2. Once inside, stay away from the Front Doors of the Gateway Center, letting others in before 9:00 AM will make you exempt from this program in the future.
3. Do not congregate at the rear dock doors where the RPM Staff is trying to get people in the Center for the meet. There are Gateway Convention Center security rules that we must follow or lose our privilege of leasing the facility.

4. When you are all set up, remember that you will be asked to get registered earlier than the crowd at the front door, by simply going up to our registration area **before Noon** and exchange your Early Entry lanyard for a secure ID badge for the 2026 meet.

As a relatively new STL RPM event, and one designed to focus on YOUR models, we moved the model display area to the South end of the main showroom. This year, the entrance to the main room will return to the doorways behind the registration table. The model display area will fill the entire new space and will be what the attendees see FIRST, as they enter the room.

Further, and even better, is that we can shut off that end of the large room, by moving the huge floor-to-ceiling wall partitions and will close down the vendor / exhibit area at 5:00, so that the vendors can relax for the evening and enjoy the rest of the RPM programs too. Meanwhile, we will open the model room to our RPM attendees, for exclusive viewing of the models only, from shortly after 5:00 p.m. until about 6:30 that evening, when the entire room will be closed for security reasons.

In closing, we hope that you will not only participate in this fun event, but that you will share this invitation with those who fit the requirements listed above. We don't know how to reach all of the great modelers that are kind enough to display their work at STL RPM and hope that you will help us spread the word. IF you can, send this to as many modelers that you think can bring that many models.

So, call me with questions or reach out to others on this list that you know. And on Game Day look for all of us in the orange RPM shirts! On behalf of the entire STLRPM team, we thank you for your support of the hobby, the RPM community in general, and your STLRPM event.

#### **WHAT'S NEW for 2026?**

\* In addition to adding home layout tours on Thursday night last year THIS year, we are adding separate operating sessions on that Thursday night. ONE of those sessions, features Tony and Joe Pelligrino's layout, that will serve as a clinic on operating 101 for beginners and other ops sessions that are typical that operators are accustomed to. The op sessions must be registered in advance, so see the [STLRPM.com website](http://STLRPM.com) for more information. Registration for the ops sessions started on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

\* The RPM Round Up WILL continue this year on Friday night at the Double Tree at 8:30 pm.

\* We will be featuring Tony Koester for Friday night's Keynote Speaker program on "Enhancing Realistic Operations", which fits perfectly with our 2026 theme of "Operation - The Key To Modeling YOUR Prototype".

\* We will be at Bandanas and at the Double Tree lounge area – and hotel front desk with maps and flyers of the Thursday night home layout tours and directions to those layouts.

In closing, we humbly ask that you and all modelers you know, bring as many models as you can. We work hard all year to make the STL RPM a great experience for all. Please help make it even better by bringing your models and sharing them with your peers.

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