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AUGUST 2026 | FREE

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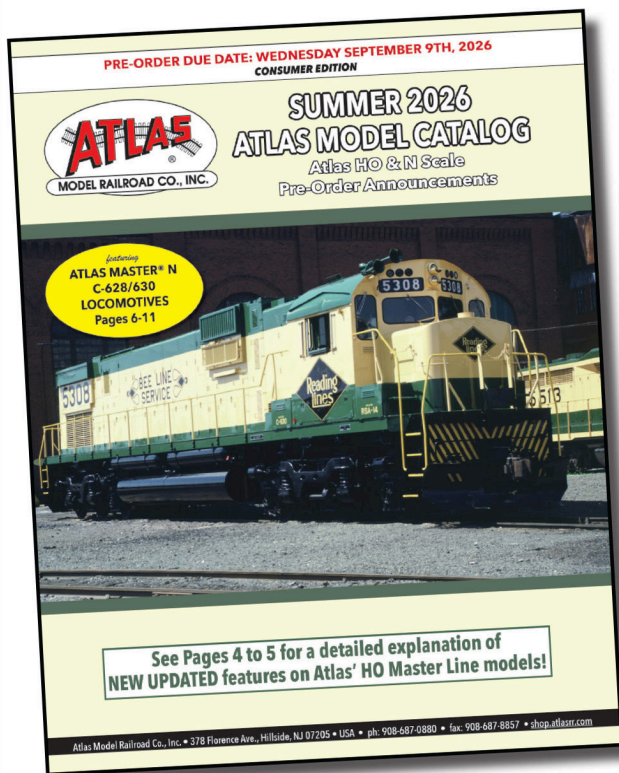
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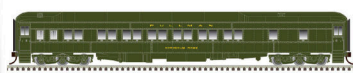
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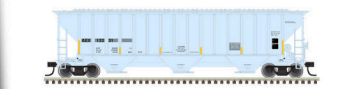
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Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026 | #198

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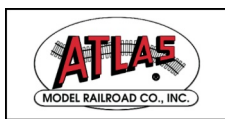


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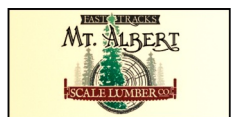
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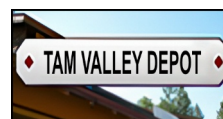
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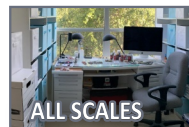
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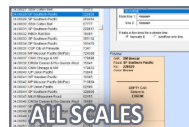
August 2026



Publisher's Musings: The hobbyist was always the point
JOE FUGATE



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Compiled by JOE FUGATE



Let's talk ops: Next steps with car cards for ops
JOE FUGATE



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Electrical Impulses: How benchwork can affect wiring
JOE FUGATE



Updating USRA heavy 2-8-2 locomotives
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My layout operations journey
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PUBLISHER'S MUSINGS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026

JOE FUGATE: THE HOBBYIST WAS ALWAYS
THE POINT ...



THERE'S A NAME I KEEP COMING BACK TO WHENEVER I THINK ABOUT WHY I DO WHAT I DO WITH MRH.

Al Kalmbach never met me. I never got to shake his hand. But he's one of my heroes, plain and simple.

Long before hobby publishing learned fancy words like "audience segmentation" and "affluent consumer targeting," Al Kalmbach figured out something that still holds up: the most interesting thing about this hobby was never the stuff on the shelf.

It was the guy standing in front of his layout at 11pm, soldering iron in one hand, coffee gone cold in the other, completely lost in a world he built himself.

That's the image I built *MRH* around.

When I picked the name *Model Railroad Hobbyist*, I wasn't just being clever. I wanted the hobbyist – the person – to be what the magazine is actually about, not just who buys it.

Al did the same thing decades earlier when he named his magazine *THE MODEL RAILROADER* instead of something like "Model Trains Monthly." Maybe that sounds like a small thing. But I don't think it is.


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When you name your publication after the person, you're making a promise to serve that person – to treat them like a fellow hobbyist, not a line item on a spreadsheet somewhere. Alternatively, name it after the product category instead, and you've made a very different promise, whether you meant to or not.

Al could have named his magazine after the trains, but he didn't. He named it after *us* instead.

That tells you where his head was at. He wasn't *selling* a hobby. He was *welcoming* you into one.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about what made those early years of hobby publishing feel so alive. There is one word I keep landing on and that's *family*.

There was a folksy, slightly campy warmth to the whole thing. The photos weren't always great. The writing sometimes rambled. Some projects were masterpieces and some were... let's say "endearing."

None of that mattered, because the message underneath came through loud and clear: *you belong here*.

You didn't need a mansion-sized basement or an engineering degree or deep pockets. You needed curiosity, a little patience, and a willingness to mess something up and then try again.

That publishing culture said, over and over, in a hundred small ways: anyone can do this.

That beginner-friendly spirit wasn't a marketing gimmick. It came from actually caring about the hobby and the people in it.

Think about what that actually looks like on the ground. A kid gets a train set for Christmas, and three months later he's flipping through a magazine his uncle handed him, and there's an article on building simple plywood-and-pine benchwork with hand tools he already owns.

No fancy shop. No expensive layout room. Just a kitchen table, some track, and a little patience.

That article is the door. Somebody has to keep it open.

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Do ALL your model railroading friends know about MRH?

WE CONTINUE TO BE SURPRISED BY HOW MANY
MODELERS STILL HAVE NEVER HEARD OF US - SO
SPREAD THE GOOD WORD ABOUT MRH!

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I think that matters more than people realize, because the folks who need an encouraging word most are usually the ones who haven't found their footing yet – the teenager with a starter set, the retiree finally getting around to the layout he's dreamed about for thirty years, the parent who built the thing for the kids and ended up more hooked than they were. Those are the people you want to hold the door open for.

Here's what worries me: when publishing decisions start coming from people who see readers mainly as entries on a balance sheet, something shifts – and not for the better.

Now, I want to be fair here. Running a magazine costs money. You can't serve anybody if you can't pay the bills, and I have real respect for the business side of this work.

But there's a difference between running things responsibly and letting the spreadsheet quietly decide who the hobby is *for*.

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When a publisher starts thinking about readers mainly in terms of purchasing power – when the question shifts from “how do we reach more hobbyists” to “how do we reach more affluent consumers” – something important changes. I get why thinking of their pocket book makes sense for hobbies like private aircraft or big boats. Those hobbies have a built-in price of entry.

But I don't believe model railroading was ever that.

It has grown up in garages and spare bedrooms, built by working people who loved trains and loved making things with their hands, usually on a shoestring budget and a lot of ingenuity.

A beginner today – especially a younger one – might not have much money. What they have got is enthusiasm.

And that enthusiasm has a lot to do with future of this hobby, whether we acknowledge it or not.

Most gray-haired modelers at a train show started out as somebody's broke kid with a cardboard box of secondhand track. If we forget that, we're pulling the ladder up right behind us.

It's not that affordability is the only thing that matters. It's that a hobby which quietly signals “this is for people with money” is a hobby that's slowly starving itself of the next generation.

If the way we talk about this hobby quietly suggests it's a rich person's pastime only, even without meaning to, we lose most beginners. And losing beginners is exactly how a hobby dies.

This is where Al's instincts line up nicely with something happening across a lot of hobbies right now – the maker movement. Woodworking, leatherwork, electronics, ceramics – people everywhere are pushing back against just buying everything completely finished.

They want to build something with their own hands. They want the satisfaction that comes from messing it up twice and finally getting it right the third time.

There's a reason maker spaces and hackerspaces have popped up in cities all over the country. People are hungry to make things again, not just to consume them.

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Model railroading was doing that decades before “maker movement” was a phrase anybody used. We just called it a Tuesday night working on the club or round-robin layout.

Model railroading has always been a maker hobby at its core. That’s especially true if you care about prototype accuracy, which remains one of the biggest draws in the hobby.

If you want your layout to look like a real railroad in a real place and time, you can’t just buy your way there.

Manufacturers do great work, but they can’t produce every locomotive, freight car, or structure a serious prototype modeler needs.

That’s doubly true if you model outside HO scale, where the ready-made selection available thins out fast.

Say you model in On3 or Sn3, chasing a narrow-gauge Colorado shortline. Good luck finding a ready-to-run version of most rolling stock.

You’re building it, probably from a resin shell, some styrene, and a lot of reference photos spread across the bench.

Or maybe you’re in N scale trying to capture a regional

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branch line, and the one structure kit that exists doesn't quite match the signature depot that's still standing in a small town on the line. So you kitbash two kits together, shave down a roofline, scratch a new porch out of styrene, and now it looks right.

That's not a compromise. That's the hobby working exactly the way it's supposed to.

So you buy what you can, then build, kitbash, and scratchbuild the rest. You study prototype photos, measure things, improvise, and solve problems at the bench.

This hobby isn't anti-commerce – it just treats buying as one tool, not the whole toolbox.

Now, somebody's going to say, "Hold on, Joe. Have you seen locomotive prices lately?"

Fair point. A \$300 locomotive is real. So is a \$60 freight car.

But that's not the whole hobby, and it never was.

Head over to eBay on any given evening, or walk a train show, or dig through a swap meet table, and you'll still find older locomotives in the \$50-\$75 range. Freight cars for \$15-\$20 aren't hard to find either. Buy a small estate collection and you can cut these per unit prices in half or more.

Sure, that used Blue Box Athearn or Roundhouse loco might need new wheels, a good cleaning, and maybe a drivetrain rebuild or upgrade. That freight car might need trucks, couplers, paint, and some weathering to look right.

Here's the thing, though – that's not settling for less. That's the maker side of this hobby doing exactly what it's always done.

You take something rough, put in some bench time, and turn it into something you're proud of.

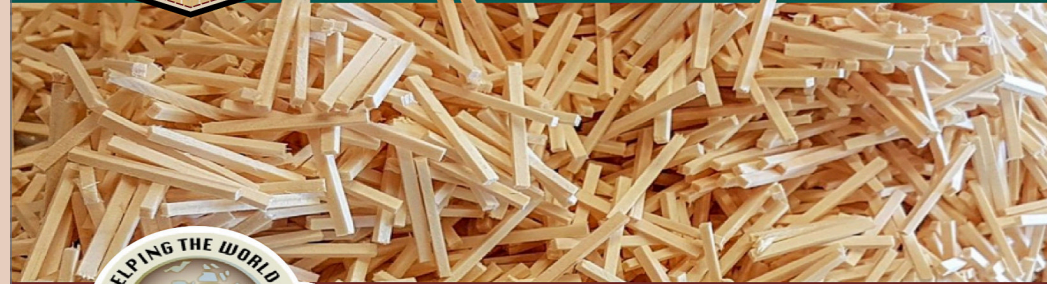
Nobody handed that engine to you looking sharp. You yourself *made* it that way.

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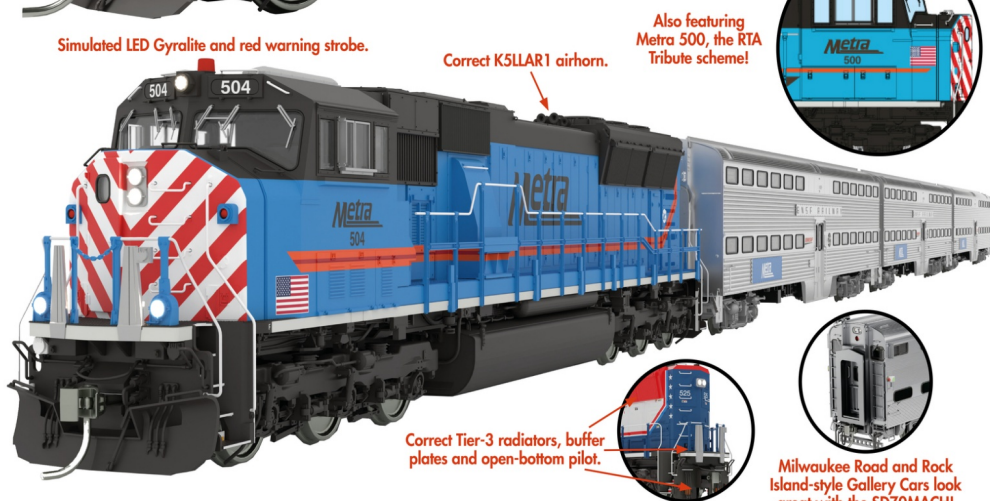
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I'm not promising every bargain works out, and I'm not pretending prices haven't climbed. But accessible and expensive can both be true, depending on how we choose to talk about this hobby.

That's the community I want *MRH* to serve. Not a market sorted by income bracket, but makers, dreamers, and tinkerers who happen to love railroads.

Al Kalmbach understood that. He built something generous and lasting because he kept the person at the center.

My hope has always been to do the same.

The hobbyist has always been the point of hobby publishing. And at *Model Railroad Hobbyist*, we remind ourselves of this daily. ☑

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Most liked articles in [June 2026 issue](#) of *MRH* are:

- 1st** Upgrade older cheap model railcars
- 2nd** Let's talk ops: Start realistic ops the easy way
- 3rd** Publisher's Musings: Finishing what we started, ...

Most liked articles in [June 2026 issue](#) of *Running Extra* ...

- 1st** Publisher's Welcome: Perfect micro drill cross-slide vise
- 2nd** Ah-Hah moment: LED headlight lenses from Bondic
- 3rd** Justin Jankauskas' Delaware and Hudson

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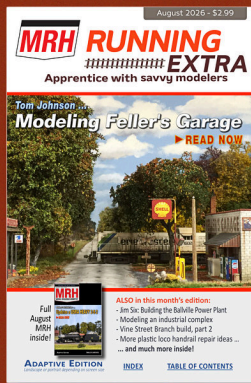
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Publisher's Welcome: Modeling with printable labels
JOE FUGATE



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JIM SIX



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Best of the

MRH FORUM

Forum
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THIS MONTH

Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026

Compiled by **JOE FUGATE**



Let's see your workbench space

MRH forum member **missabe406** started a forum thread asking for folks to show their workbench space.

Members posted their workbench spaces and you can see all kinds from pristine to "where's the workbench in all that" images. One of the most impressive was the image posted above by **Joe Circus**. Talk about inviting and well organized ...

To see all the posted examples so far, visit the thread!



View the full thread on the MRH website

► **MRH'S MONTHLY GREAT MODELER POSTS**

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1. MRH forum member **Mark Pruitt** is posting the progress on his upgrade to a photo backdrop for his layout town of Thermopolis.

CB&Q in Wyoming photo backdrop

MRH forum member **Mark Pruitt** recently posted his photo backdrop project for Thermopolis on his layout:

"I took my panorama photo file I had stitched together to FedEx Office, where I print all my backdrops, and got it later that day. There was a bit of consternation on my part about the fee structure, so in the future, I'll be taking my backdrops to a locally-owned print shop. A few days later I had the sky removed and it was permanently in place. The photos for the backdrop were taken in 2022, so some elements (modern vehicles and houses) were horribly anachronistic. I will be covering them with scenery."

We think the photo backdrop upgrade is breathtakingly realistic. To follow Mark's progress, visit this thread on the MRH forum.

[View the full thread on the MRH website](#)

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2. *MRH* forum member **Craig Hart** has a layout blog and he posted recently about detailing one of his GP diesels.

N scale diesel detailing

MRH forum member **Craig Hart** recently posted to his shelf switching layout blog about this loco detailing project. He says,

“Some of my Atlas units look a bit sad, so I decided to try detailing them to improve the look. Last time I did this was kit bashed Blue Box models in the 80’s in HO scale and now it’s N and my eyesight is not what it used to be. This is a work in progress but once paint is patched and weathered it should blend in well..”

Follow Craig’s progress on his loco detailing project.

[View the full thread on the *MRH* website](#)

Recent photo fun thread

These images posted on recent *MRH* forum Photo Fun threads show some great model locomotive pictures.

[View list of recent Photo Fun threads](#)



3. This Gorre & Daphetid 2-8-2 steamer #42 recently caught our eye. It’s by **thewizard1** (Charles D.) and it shows his usual great modeling work along with some nice photo skills. It’s weathered just enough to have that “hard working” look but not like it’s on its last legs.

4. *MRH* forum member **Mark Mathu** took this stunning photo of Sean McGrath’s detailed and weathered F-units on the North American Prototype Modelers’ layout in Milwaukee. Mark used 39 different photo-stacked images to get this totally in-focus image from front to back.



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Let's get into the details of car cards

TO OPERATE YOUR LAYOUT WITH REALISTIC CAR MOVEMENTS, you need to record each car's details and where it needs to go.

Many modelers use switch lists, but they're paperwork-intensive. Every time a car moves, you update the list. Miss one update during a busy session, and your paperwork no longer matches reality.

Car cards

With car cards, you essentially do all the paperwork ahead of time. During the session, the car cards and waybills always reflect reality because they move with the cars they represent.

Each freight car gets its own car card with car type (boxcar, hopper, gondola, flatcar), reporting marks and number (SP 85703, C&O 1534, Railbox 65490), and basic color. The card has a pocket holding a *four-cycle waybill* – a routing document based on Doug Smith's classic design. Each cycle lists the car's contents, routing, destination and origin towns with their industries and spotting locations.

Shenware

Model Railroad Hobbyist provides free Shenware software in MRH Media's [Bonus Downloads section](#) for this issue. Shenware allows cataloging your car roster and lets you print out car cards on light cardstock – I use manila-colored stock myself.

LET'S TALK ABOUT OPS | 2

1. MRH's free Shenware program (Windows only) lets you create a roster of your cars and then print out car cards for them. The example shown here is from my own Siskiyou Line car roster and it shows my car card format including where empties go.

Print	34.00032	RBOX Rail Box	10001
Print	34.00033	SP Southern Pacific	355132
Print	34.00034	SP Southern Pacific	355470
Print	34.00035	COP City of Prineville	7341
Print	34.00036	MP Missouri Pacific (MoPac)	724399
Print	34.00037	CNW Chicago & NW	178688
Print	34.00038	DRGW Denver & Rio Grande West	15641
Print	34.00039	CNW Chicago & NW	178633
Print	34.00040	UP Union Pacific	73849
Print	34.00041	WP Western Pacific	12005
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Print	34.00044	SP Southern Pacific	328000
Print	34.00045	MILW Milwaukee Road	62155
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Print	34.00047	SP Southern Pacific	400897
Print	34.00048	BCIT British Columbia Rail	600608
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Print	34.00050	RI Rock Island	27205
Print	34.00051	SSW Cotton Belt	67768
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Preview:

AAR: XM Boxcar
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The software includes a database of real-world, rail-served industries across North America and lets you add custom on-layout industries.

On my Siskiyou Line layout, I added my own industries to this database, letting me route loads and empties to both my modeled locations and authentic off-layout destinations. Shenware builds four-cycle waybills automatically and prints them on white cardstock, making them stand out against the manila cards.

During the session

The conductor pulls out the card packet for his train, sorts through it, and plans the most efficient switching sequence. No paperwork to fill out – just cards telling you exactly what needs to happen.

Between sessions, I rotate the waybills to advance cars through their routing cycles and restage trains as needed. If a train stops mid-transit when a session ends, everything gets captured automatically because each train has its card packet attached. When you resume operations, the crew picks up right where they left off.

Next time, I'll walk you through how the four cycles work and show you the basic routing pattern that keeps cars moving realistically around your layout. ☑

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WHAT'S NEAT

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Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026

KEN PATTERSON COVERS THIS MONTH:



- BACHMANN'S NEW PRODUCTS REVIEW
- BROADWAY LIMITED'S NEW ARA 70-TON FOUR-BAY HOPPER
- STEVE GOARING'S ILLINOIS TERMINAL RAILROAD



click to play video

PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF SUPERB MODELS

BACHMANN'S MATT STERN JOINS KEN IN THE BASEMENT TO DISCUSS some of Bachmann's recent product announcements and Ken also discusses the new ARA 70-ton four-bay hoppers from BLI. In the next segment, Ken visits Steve Goaring in Illinois, where he records Steve's Illinois Terminal Railroad while Joshua Barton runs a train. Ken and Steve discuss the scenery and operating techniques that duplicate the prototype railroad's procedures in the era being modeled.

Bachmann's New Products Review



1. Matt Stern joins Ken in the basement to introduce Bachmann's product announcements.



2. Matt brought Ken the new 1900s-era 68' passenger car. A wood-side car, the design is based on the cars on the Strausburg RR. They began life on the Boston & Maine. Road names include New York Central & Hudson River, Strausburg, Pennsylvania Railroad, and Southern Pacific. MSRP is \$76.00. Additional products announced include the Siemens Airo in the Cascades service paint scheme and an N scale 4-6-0 which will be available in Baltimore & Ohio, Central Pacific, Pennsylvania Railroad, and Sierra Railway #3. The N scale locomotives will be equipped with the correct wood or coal tenders. Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com

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Broadway Limited New Hopper



3. Broadway Limited sent Ken a six-pack set of ARA 70-ton four-bay hoppers to photograph this month. Equipped with removable coal loads the cars feature interior rivet detail. The cars are available decorated in B&O, C&O, Milwaukee, ATSF, UP, a mixed variety pack, and unlettered painted black. The MSRP for the six-pack is \$159.99. Info: broadway-limited.com

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Steve Goaring's Illinois Terminal Railroad



4. Steve Goaring and his wife have blended the background into the foreground scenery, feathering the colors and matching the roads to the point a visitor must look carefully to see where they meet.

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5. Steve added the white haze from the horizon up a few inches, blending it into the blue sky for a more realistic look.



6. Ken noticed that when a train that Joshua Barton was running came to a certain location, Joshua had to remove a key from the fascia and unlock a box mounted there.



7. Steve explained that this replicated a procedure where the B&O crossed the Illinois Terminal (IT). The IT conductor had to enter the B&O cabin (signal hut) and press a button that would check three blocks out on the B&O to ensure no trains were coming and drop those signals to red. Pushing the button also locked the door to the cabin, locking the conductor inside until the system cleared the signals, the IT crossed in the clear, and the conductor pressed the button again to reset the signals. This system was put in place after an IT crew in the 1940s did not reset the signals, blocking the B&O mainline for several hours until they determined what happened.





8. Ken asked how Steve got such good-looking scenery, and Steve started by explaining woods have bushes on the edges that need to be modeled too.



9. Another thing that Steve has done is hand-painting the rails, and putting a wash on the ties, adding greasy black in locations where locomotives would be sitting. Sidings also show the lower level of care they receive, compared to mainline tracks.

Click the link at the beginning of this article to see the video, which features more views of the new Bachmann 1900s passenger cars, the BLI hoppers, and video of Steve Goaring's beautiful layout, complete with descriptions of how he and some family members created the scenery and backdrops. ☑



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How benchwork methods can lead to wiring issues



Electrical Impulses

Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026

JOE FUGATE DISCUSSES WIRING
AND BENCHWORK BEST PRACTICES ...



I'VE BEEN PUBLISHING MODEL RAILROAD CONTENT FOR DECADES, and I've read stories on forums about layouts plagued by expansion issues – benchwork swelling, track buckling, and wiring failures. I've had my own problems too. My Siskiyou Line layout suffered from insufficient expansion gaps, which I'll detail later.

Not every layout has these issues, and you may be one of the lucky ones. I wasn't so lucky. If you would like to avoid these issues entirely, let's talk about some preventative measures.

TWO TYPES OF GAPS

Model railroad track has two completely different types of gaps: Insulating gaps and expansion gaps. They serve different purposes, go in different locations, and require different installation techniques. Confuse them, and you'll get random shorts or intermittent stalling.

Insulating gaps

Insulating gaps create electrical breaks in track to isolate sections of opposite polarity or separate power districts. The gaps between the rail ends must always be filled with an insulating material like styrene to block the rail ends from making contact.

You need them at reverse loop entry and exit points, block boundaries (cab control layouts), power district borders (DCC layouts), wye track entry points, turntable approach tracks, and turnouts and crossings where the rails cross.



1. One easy way to make insulated rail gaps that will never change is to use plastic insulating rail joiners with a tab in the middle (it makes sure the gaps never close). However, these rail joiners are bulky and unrealistic.



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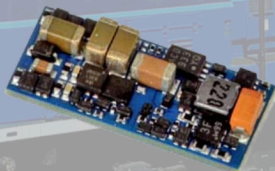


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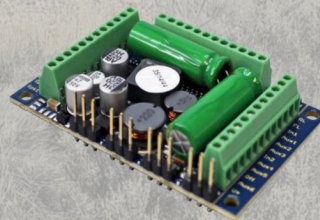
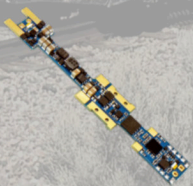
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2. If you want much better-looking insulated gaps, fill them with black styrene glued with CA or UV-cure glue.

The two rails on opposite sides of an insulating gap carry opposite polarity or belong to different electrical circuits. If those rails touch, you get a dead short. At the very least, they will bridge two blocks or districts, giving a false occupancy detection.

Insulating gaps must be filled completely with styrene and CA glue. Don't leave them as air spaces. Don't rely on plastic rail joiners alone. Fill them solid.

If you don't, a reverse loop can work perfectly for months, then one humid summer day, the auto-reverser detects an over-current condition. The gap has closed – wood movement compressed the rails together.

The auto-reverser tries to clear the short by flipping polarity, but it can't because the rails are touching. The reverser cycles trying to recover, or the booster's over-current protection kicks-in and shuts down the zone. Either way, your reverse loop is dead.

The fix is to fill that gap with styrene and CA. Problem solved. It never comes back.

How to install insulating gaps correctly:

1. Cut both rails at the same location, directly across from each other. Use a razor saw or motor tool with a cutoff wheel.
2. Insert a styrene strip into the gap (I recommend black styrene because it's harder to see). Cut it slightly longer than the rail width.
3. Apply thin CA glue to both rail ends where they touch the styrene. Hold steady for 10-15 seconds. Let cure for at least two hours.
4. Once cured, cut the styrene flush with the rail profile, using a sharp hobby knife.
5. Test with a multimeter in continuity mode. You should get no continuity (no beep, infinite resistance).

Alternatively, you can use UV-cure glue instead of CA. The process is the same, but UV glue doesn't cure without UV exposure. Hit it for a few seconds with a UV flashlight to cure it, and you can then trim the styrene.

EXPANSION GAPS

Expansion gaps accommodate movement from changes in temperature and humidity.

Temperature changes expand and contract the metal rails. A 12-foot section of nickel-silver rail can expand roughly 1mm (1/32") with a 20°F temperature swing. If you solder every rail joint solid with no expansion relief, that expansion has nowhere to go. The track buckles.

Humidity changes the moisture content and dimensions of the wood roadbed and benchwork, so it swells or shrinks. This movement can compress, distort, or shift the track structure supporting the rails.

Both stress your trackwork. Expansion gaps provide mechanical relief.

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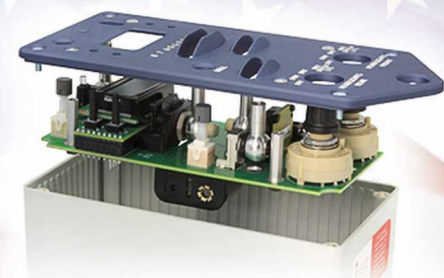
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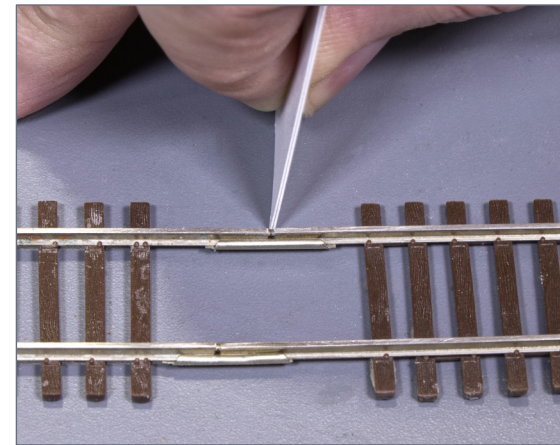


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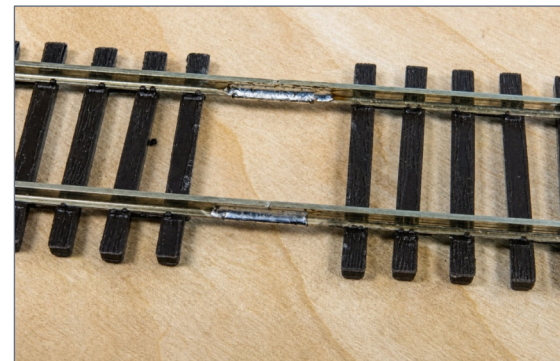


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BENCHWORK METHODS CAN LEAD TO WIRING ISSUES | 5



3. Leave expansion gaps of 0.020" (thickness of two business cards) every six feet. Do not solder these joints, allow them to move.



4. For all the remaining joints between these expansion gaps (and that are not insulated gaps), solder those rail joiners. Do not trust them to conduct power reliably unless you solder them.

Now, I know some of you are thinking: "My basement is climate-controlled. This won't happen to me." I used to think the same thing.

Then I had a four-day power outage from a storm. No heat, no AC, nothing.

The temperature in my basement climbed to over 100°F that summer. I walked downstairs and found track popped up in several places – the extreme temperature rise had expanded the rails so much they buckled right off the roadbed.

That's when I learned: never say never. Even the best-laid plans can get upended by circumstances you can't control.

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Expansion gaps consist of a metal rail joiner holding the two rail ends in alignment, but with a small, deliberate air gap between the two ends. The gap must remain unfilled, and the rail joiner left unsoldered so the rails can slide freely. A gap width of 0.020" (two business cards), spaced every six feet, will accommodate typical rail expansion in most layout environments without creating excessive mechanical weakness.

Place the gaps mid-block on straight mainline sections, between turnouts on yard tracks, along sidings where both rails remain the same polarity. Never place them at the entry to reverse loops, block boundaries, or power district borders – those locations need insulating gaps (filled).

Stagger the gaps – even a half-inch of offset is enough. If both rails have expansion gaps at the same location, wheels hitting two gaps directly across from each other can cause a slight bounce.

Make sure you're clear on which kind of gap you're installing.

THE PHYSICS OF WOOD MOVEMENT

Wood is hygroscopic – it absorbs and releases moisture from the air as humidity changes. Wood absorbs moisture in high humidity, and releases it in low humidity.

Moisture content (MC) measures the weight of water in wood as a percentage of the wood's dry weight. Dimensional lumber typically arrives at 15-19% MC, but it doesn't stay there. It adjusts to match the relative humidity of its environment.

As RH changes seasonally, the wood's moisture content shifts:

- **Humid (60-70% RH):** Lumber may reach 12-16% MC
- **Moderate (40-50% RH):** Lumber typically stabilizes around 8-10% MC
- **Dry (20-30% RH):** Lumber may drop to 6-8% MC

Text continues on [page 8](#) ...

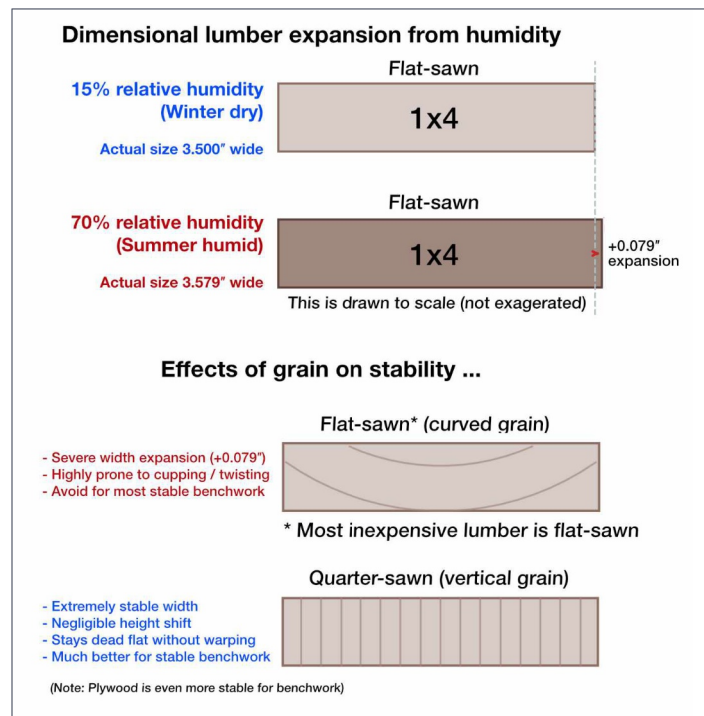
Feature	Insulating gap	Expansion gap
Primary purpose	Electrical isolation	Mechanical relief for rail expansion
Where it belongs	Reverse loops, block boundaries, power districts, wyes, turntable approaches, and selected turnouts or crossings	Mid-block track, straight mainline sections, and other locations where closure cannot create a short
Gap condition	Permanently blocked	Deliberately left open
Recommended width	A narrow cut filled with styrene and CA or UV glue	0.020" – approximately two business cards
Rail joiner	Plastic insulating joiner or styrene-and-glue filler	Un-soldered metal joiner
Gap alignment	Both rails cut directly across from each other	Gaps in the two rails offset slightly
May the rails slide?	No	Yes
Electrical test	Must show no continuity	Add feeders to each rail section - don't rely on joiners for conductivity
Main failure if installed incorrectly	Short circuit or loss of electrical isolation	Track buckling, kinking, or rail movement

5. Types of gaps.

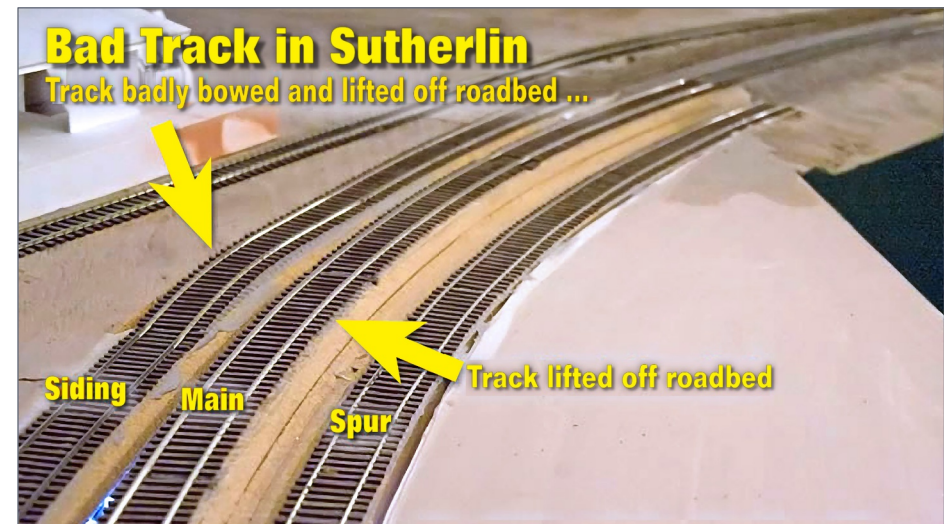
Wood movement happens primarily *across the grain* – perpendicular to the growth rings. A 2x4 joist (actual dimensions 1.5" x 3.5") swells and shrinks along its 3.5" width, not its length.

The amount of movement varies by wood species, grain orientation, and how the board was cut, but dimensional lumber can expand 1-3mm (roughly 1/32" to 1/8") across a 3.5" width when moving from dry winter conditions to humid summer conditions.

This is *benchwork and roadbed movement*, not rail expansion. The metal rails themselves respond primarily to temperature changes, not humidity.



6. This diagram illustrates how much wood can move due to variations in humidity.



7. I did not leave sufficient expansion gaps in the Sutherlin track on my Siskiyou Line layout, and when we had an extended power outage in the summer, the temperature rose and the track bowed in one spot, and it popped off the roadbed in another.

Failure examples

Here are four specific failures I've either experienced personally or seen reported on forums. All are problems with improper installation technique, not material failure.

Scenario 1: The unfilled insulating gap short

A modeler built a reverse loop using Atlas code 100 track with open air insulating gaps. He assumed the gap alone would provide sufficient electrical isolation.

Six months later, humid summer weather arrived. The dimensional lumber benchwork swelled, and the rail ends at the reverse loop made contact.

Result: Dead short across the reverse loop. His auto-reverser failed and the DCC system shut down track power.

He found the closed gaps and filled them with styrene and CA. Problem solved.

The lesson: Always fill insulating gaps completely with styrene.

Scenario 2: Gap type confusion at a block boundary

A modeler designing a cab control layout needed to isolate blocks. At a block boundary, he cut both rails and left a 0.020" gap (two business cards). He'd read that "gaps need room to move."

He didn't realize this was an **insulating gap** (for electrical isolation), not an expansion gap (for mechanical relief). As the rails expanded with seasonal temperature changes, the 0.020" gap closed completely, bridging both blocks electrically.

Result: Both blocks became electrically connected. When he tried to run two trains independently, both responded to the same throttle.

The lesson: Know which gap type you need at each location. Fill insulating gaps at electrical isolation points. Leave expansion gaps unfilled at mid-block locations.

Scenario 3: Missing expansion gaps cause track buckling

I laid flex track in the Sutherlin area of my Siskiyou Line. I soldered every rail joint solid for maximum electrical conductivity and forgot to install expansion gaps.

During a hot summer we had an extended electrical outage, and the layout room temperature rose to over 100 degrees.

Result: The track buckled. A visible kink appeared mid-run and a second track popped off the roadbed (the caulk glue joint failed).

The lesson: Rails expand with temperature changes. Give them somewhere to go with expansion gaps every six feet.

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BENCHWORK METHODS CAN LEAD TO WIRING ISSUES | 11



8. Model Railroad Benchwork (mrbenchwork.com) makes plywood benchwork kits. The material is all pre-cut and pre-drilled, simplifying the process of building highly stable wood benchwork.

Scenario 4: Feeder wire damage from poor installation

A modeler routed feeder wires alongside dimensional lumber joists, securing them with staples every 12 inches.

As his layout room humidity increased, the joists swelled 2mm (1/16") across their width. The feeder wires, stapled tight against the joist sides, stretched and cracked the solder joint where the feeder connected to the rail, causing intermittent stalls.

Result: Intermittent power loss in that track section. Trains stalled randomly.

The lesson: Give feeder wires room to move. Route them through oversize holes in joists, and use cable clamps that aren't anchored or, if anchored, can shift position.

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BEST PRACTICES

All four failure scenarios share a common truth: The failure was caused by poor technique, not poor materials.

Material choice affects how much movement occurs, but proper technique prevents movement from causing failures.

Material selection

Good materials reduce the movement you need to accommodate, but they don't eliminate the need for proper gap techniques. A layout built with dimensional lumber and correct gap technique will be more reliable than one built with premium plywood and sloppy gaps.

Virtues of plywood

That said, material choice matters. Some materials are more dimensionally stable than others. Plywood is the smarter choice.

Plywood works because it is cross-laminated, meaning that the run of each consecutive ply alternates 90 degrees. Cross-laminated construction means wood movement in one ply is constrained by perpendicular grain in adjacent plies. As a result, plywood swells and shrinks 60-70% less than solid dimensional lumber of the same species.

A four-foot-wide plywood sheet might swell 1-2mm (1/32"–1/8") across its width with an eight-percentage-point moisture content change. Compare that to a 3.5"-wide 2x4 that swells 1.75-4.4mm (1/16"–3/16") under the same conditions.

The trade-off is cost. A 4x8 sheet of 3/4" BC-grade plywood costs \$45-65. That's \$10-15 more than a comparable amount of dimensional lumber decking. For a 4x8 layout, you're looking at a \$10-15 material premium for significantly better stability.

Use it on any horizontal surface that directly supports track, including layout decking, sub-roadbed, and benchwork tops.

Use BC-grade or better, but you don't need cabinet-grade plywood. Cabinet-grade plywood runs \$80-120 per sheet, but it offers no performance advantage.

Buy full sheets and cut them yourself. Most lumber yards will make one rip cut down the length for free or \$1-2 per cut.

Dimensional lumber: Acceptable with mitigation

Dimensional lumber makes sense for vertical members – legs, corner posts, vertical supports – which experience far less moisture-related stress than horizontal surfaces. A 2x4 leg that swells 2mm across its width won't affect your track geometry. One major mitigation strategy, then, is to use dimensional lumber for the vertical structural frame, not the horizontal.

For other uses, moisture-related stress can be mitigated by applying primer-sealer to all surfaces. This cuts moisture absorption by 40-50%. A quart costs \$20-25, and covers roughly 100 square feet. Budget \$40-\$50 for a typical 4x8 layout.



9. For the ultimate in high humidity layout room control, you can get a smart dehumidifier for your layout space for about \$200.

OSB is not recommended

OSB is made from wood chips and strands bonded with resin, so it's cheaper than plywood (\$35-45 per 4x8 sheet). For a 4x8 layout, you'd be saving \$10-15 total vs. plywood.

However, OSB is far more hydroscopic than plywood, and can swell 3-4mm (1/8"-5/32") across its width with the same moisture content change that causes plywood to swell just 1-2mm. Worse, OSB is prone to edge swelling and delamination when exposed to moisture.

So, for the savings, you're accepting 50-100% more dimensional movement, weaker structural performance, and material that won't last nearly as long. It's false economy.

The budget-smart strategy

1. **Use plywood for horizontal surfaces** that support track.
Budget \$45-65 per 4x8 sheet.
2. **Use dimensional lumber for vertical members.** Budget \$2-4 per linear foot for 2x4s, \$1-2 per linear foot for 1x4s.
3. **Seal everything with primer-sealer.** Budget \$40-50 for a 4x8 layout.
4. **Use plywood scraps for critical areas.** They're free material with good stability.

Total cost for a 4x8 layout:

- One 4x8 sheet of 3/4" plywood: \$50
- 40 linear feet of 2x4 for frame: \$80
- Primer-sealer (2 quarts): \$50
- Screws and hardware: \$20
- **Total: \$200**

The plywood version costs slightly more than all dimensional lumber, but it's 60-70% more stable.

BEST PRACTICE: ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Good environmental control reduces the temperature-related expansion and contraction of metal rails and the humidity-driven movement in the benchwork and roadbed. It doesn't replace proper gap technique – you'll still need insulating and expansion gaps – but it reduces how much movement the gaps must accommodate.

Just as maintaining a consistent temperature reduces heat-related rail expansion, maintaining constant humidity will minimize humidity-driven movement in the wood. A layout room maintained at 45% relative humidity (RH) year-round reduces wood movement by 40-50% compared to an uncontrolled environment.



10. Use a digital hydrometer + thermometer to monitor humidity and temperature in the layout room.

The sweet spot is about 40-50% RH. Below 30% RH, wood shrinks excessively and can crack. Above 60%, wood can swell significantly and mold becomes a concern.

Continuous humidity and temperature monitoring is a good idea. A digital hygrometer for your layout room costs \$10-25. Check it regularly, and take action if it consistently stays above 55% or drops below 35%.

Dehumidifiers

If your layout room is in a basement or a region with high summer humidity (60-70% RH or higher), a dehumidifier is essential. There are smart dehumidifiers that will only run when the humidity exceeds a set level.

A 50-pint unit costs \$150-300, and can maintain 45% RH in a 1000-1500 square-foot space. Energy costs run \$20-40 per month during peak season.

Ventilation

During spring and fall when outdoor humidity is moderate (40-50% RH), open windows and use fans to exchange indoor air with outdoor air.

Cork or foam roadbed allows for expansion

Don't rigidly attach track to the benchwork surface. Use cork or foam roadbed under it. Cork compresses 1-2mm under load; foam compresses 2-3mm. This cushion absorbs benchwork movement.

Glue cork or foam roadbed to the plywood decking with latex caulk or foam-compatible adhesive. Then glue the track to the roadbed using the same adhesive.

HELIX EXPANSION GAP STRATEGIES

A helix presents unique challenges. The track follows a curved path, so rail expansion occurs along that curve.

If the rails are constrained and cannot move freely, expansion forces can push the track outward or cause kinks.

Expansion gap spacing depends on your helix design. Space helix expansion points according to rail length between relief points and expected temperature movement.

Consider these factors:

- **Rail length between relief points** – longer runs need more frequent gaps or wider gaps
- **Expected temperature range** – larger swings create more expansion
- **Helix radius** – affects total rail length per turn
- **Rail code and stiffness** – heavier rail may resist movement differently
- **Fastening method** – how firmly is the track secured?
- **Track freedom to move** – can the rails slide, or are they locked down?

Calculate the actual rail length along your helix curve and design your expansion strategy accordingly.

A practical example

For the helix design described here, I recommend a 0.020" expansion gap (two business cards) approximately every six feet of rail length.

Other helix designs may require different spacing based on radius, rail length, construction method, and expected temperature range.



The helix mechanical strategy

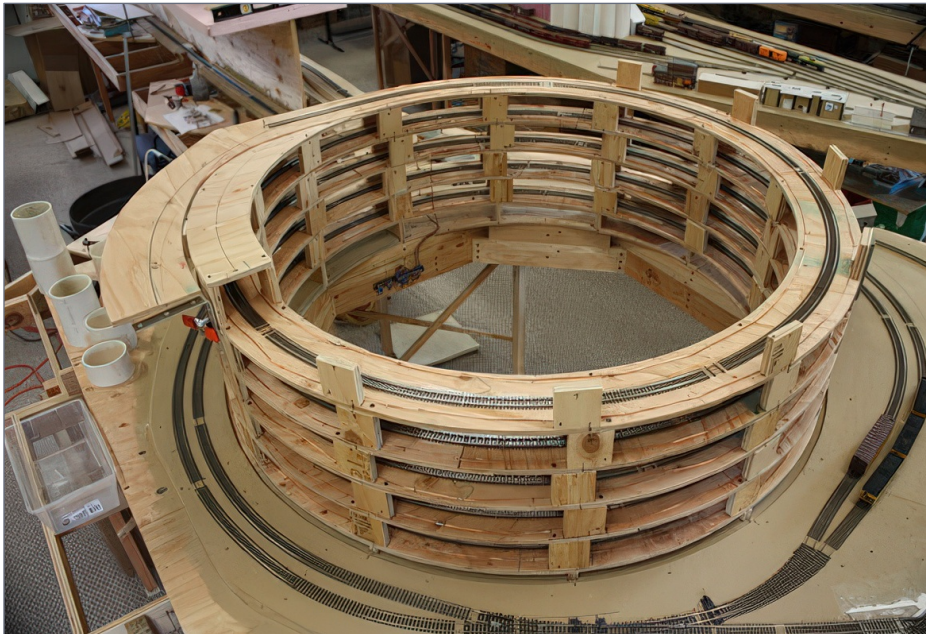
The continuous soldering rule:

Solder all curve joints inside the helix except at your designated expansion intervals.

This prevents individual rail pieces from kinking or popping out of the plastic tie spikes. Solid soldering creates structural integrity; the expansion gaps provide controlled relief points.

The non-soldered metal joiner mandate:

Don't use plastic or insulated joiners with center tabs at expansion gap locations. The rigid tabs block the rails from expanding, causing track buckling.



11. A helix can expand outward in all directions with room temperature and humidity variations, so special considerations should be taken to minimize problems due to benchwork changes. See the text for details. *George Booth photo*

Use non-soldered metal rail joiners only at the expansion points. These act as a sleeve, keeping the curved rail heads aligned while letting the rails slide freely.

The anchor-and-float method:

Secure the track firmly at the center of your soldered sections with spikes or track nails. This is your anchor point.

Leave the trackwork near the non-soldered joints floating or lightly secured with flexible adhesive. This allows the rails to slide smoothly along the curve without fighting the sub-roadbed.

Electrical reliability & safety protocol

Non-soldered joiners are mechanically necessary for expansion gaps, but they're electrically unreliable.

You can't trust non-soldered joiners to carry DCC current reliably – and in a helix, where access is limited, electrical failures are a nightmare to fix.

Direct feeder isolation:

Add separate power bus feeder wires to every electrically separate track segment between your expansion gaps.

Never rely on power to pass through a non-soldered expansion joint.

Helix track creep

The friction of climbing trains will naturally try to shift or "creep" the rails down the helix grade over time.

Securing the midpoint anchors as described ensures that each segment's expansion remains isolated, predictable, and structurally stable.



TESTING AND DOCUMENTATION

The pre-scenery phase is your only opportunity to catch problems while they're still accessible. Once scenery is down, you lose access to the gaps.

Before scenery goes down, test every insulating gap with a multimeter in continuity mode. Touch one probe to each side of the gap. You should get no continuity. If you get continuity, the gap isn't isolated – fix it now.

Optional but recommended: Run trains through at least one full seasonal cycle. If you've followed the gapping practices in this article correctly, you shouldn't encounter issues.

Running trains through several seasons before adding scenery – cycling through different humidity conditions – validates your gap placement and expansion strategy. It confirms everything's working as designed.

Watch for two specific problems:

- An expansion gap that's too tight (track buckling during a heat wave)
- An insulating gap that wasn't properly filled (a short when benchwork movement closes the gap)

If you spot one, you'll catch it while the gaps are still accessible.

This test cycle gives you confidence before permanent scenery goes down.

Document electrical problems to identify patterns. Keep a notebook. When you get a short or power loss, write down the date, location, weather conditions, and what you did to fix it.

Over time, patterns will emerge. Shorts appearing consistently in summer suggest material swelling. Problems in the same location across all seasons point to a wiring or gap design issue.



CONCLUSION: TECHNIQUE BEATS MATERIALS EVERY TIME

Proper gap technique, with filled insulation gaps as needed, and unfilled, unsoldered expansion gaps every six feet, is far more important than perfect benchwork materials. This proper technique will make your trackwork much more forgiving of any expansion issues.

Choose stable materials as budget allows, ideally with dimensional lumber for the vertical members and plywood for horizontal structures and anything directly supporting track. Coat your benchwork with primer-sealer to further mitigate the effects of humidity.

Test and document everything from your rails to the relative humidity of your layout space before moving on to scenery. Make adjustments, and invest in humidity control equipment as needed.

That's it. Do it right once, and you shouldn't have to worry about it again. Now go build something! ☑



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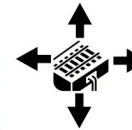
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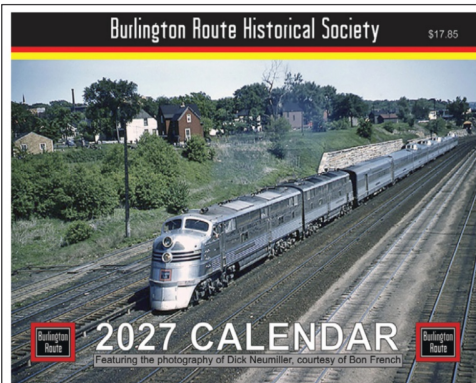
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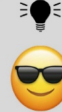
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Updating USRA heavy 2-8-2 locomotives

ROBERT SCHLEICHER UPDATES USRA HEAVY
MIKADOS TO MATCH BURLINGTON ROUTE'S
POST-REBUILD SPECS ...

Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026



THE USRA HEAVY MIKADO (2-8-2) HAS BEEN A very popular model over the years, and many manufacturers have produced it in HO scale, from the AHM/Rivarossi offerings of the 1960s to the more recent and better-detailed offerings

from Broadway Limited Imports starting about 2024. Almost all factory-produced models reflect the locomotives' standardized USRA design as delivered between 1917 and 1919.

As the emergency of World War I subsided and the federal government relinquished control in 1920, the railroads began to rebuild their USRA-issued locomotives to better suit their needs. Many gave them new feedwater heaters and other appliances, and some converted them to burn oil, with visible oil tanks on top of the tenders [1, 1A].



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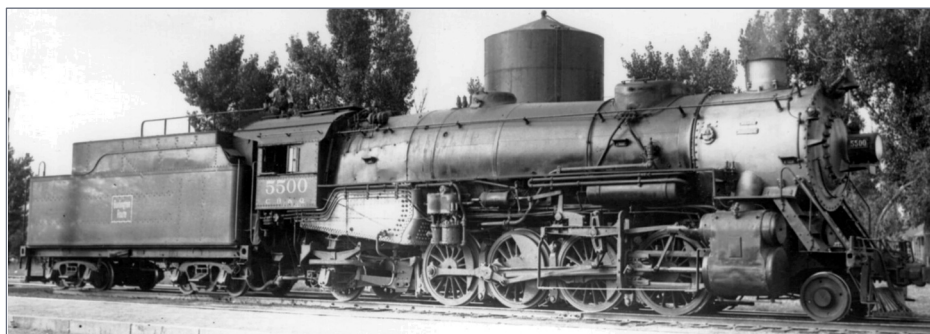
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By about 1927, most USRA Heavy Mikados had been rebuilt, and those changes lasted until the end of steam. Fortunately, those details are relatively simple to add to HO models.



1. Burlington 5507, photographed near Faulkner, TX in November 1956, was a USRA Heavy Mikado modified with a Worthington feedwater heater on the right side of the boiler, just in front of the firebox. The original coal tender was converted to oil by 1926. *Harold K. Vollrath collection*



1a. Engineer's-side view of Burlington 5500, the prototype for my build, captured in Scoots Bluff, Nebraska in August 1958. In a few months, its CB&Q lettering would be replaced with C&S for Colorado & Southern, where it would be assigned the number 804. *Harold K. Vollrath collection*

USRA BACKGROUND

As the United States was preparing for entry into the Great War in 1917, the government realized that a well-coordinated railroad system would be essential to the effort. The United States Railroad Administration (USRA) was formed as an agency to coordinate railroad management and to standardize locomotive and rolling stock designs for rapid production and distribution to dozens of railroads.

The USRA designed 12 standard steam locomotives during World War I, one of which was the Heavy Mikado. Between 1918 and 1919, the American Locomotive Company (ALCO), Baldwin, and Lima built 233 of these locomotives that were distributed to 23 railroads.

ON THE BURLINGTON

The Burlington received 15 USRA heavy Mikados from Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1919, which it numbered 5500 through 5514. All USRA Mikados were built to burn coal, but by 1921 Burlington had begun converting its locomotives to burn oil, and fitting them with feedwater heaters.

By 1926, these changes were complete. The locomotives had long careers on the Burlington until 1957, when all were scheduled to be scrapped. However, six (nos. 5550, 5556-5559, and 5513) were assigned to the Burlington Route's subsidiary Colorado & Southern, where they were numbered 804-809 and served several more years.

FEEDWATER HEATERS

By the mid-1920s, most railroads had equipped their steam locomotives with feedwater heaters. These appliances improved locomotives' thermal efficiency by pre-heating water from the tender, using exhaust steam from the cylinders before



2. Broadway Limited has produced several examples of the USRA Heavy Mikados, each run with upgraded versions of the optional DCC and sound. This Burlington version was offered in 2004.

injecting it into the boiler. This meant less wasted energy from heating the water.

Feedwater heater systems could be open or closed.

Open systems, such as those built by Worthington allowed steam and water to mix. This required two pumps to circulate the water in and out of the system [3]. The exhaust steam often contained valve lubricant particulates, which had to be removed before the heated water entered the boiler.

Closed systems such as those from Elesco (characterized by a cylindrical tank on the top of the firebox) and Coffin (characterized by a box-shaped tank on top of the firebox) worked by circulating boiler water through pipes in the smokebox. Since the steam and water never mixed, these systems avoided lubricant contamination, but the small piping involved could leak.

Several vendors offer detail parts representing feedwater heater systems from the three major manufacturers.

Roughly half of Burlington's USRA Heavy Mikados were fitted with Elesco feedwater heaters. The rest were fitted with Worthington feedwater heaters. All were upgraded by 1926.



3. Fireman's side view of the modernized BLI USRA Heavy Mikado with a Worthington feedwater heater. The tender's coal bunker has been replaced with an oil bunker.

MODIFYING THE FIREMAN'S SIDE WITH A WORTHINGTON FEEDWATER HEATER

The following steps are specific to the BLI Mikado. The process would be similar for other manufacturers' models of the USRA heavy Mikado, since they are the same locomotive, though the disassembly will vary with how the parts are attached.

The Worthington feedwater heater conversion involves modifications to both sides of the boiler. I removed the boiler from the chassis. Next, I pried the flexible plastic pipe coils and the air pump from left side of the boiler to leave room for the new feedwater heater [4, 5, 6].

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4. The plastic pipe coils were pried away from their press-mounted pegs with gentle pressure from a hobby knife.



5. The air pump was removed using the same method, gently prying it from its mount.



6. The air pump and piping have been removed intact. Both were reused.

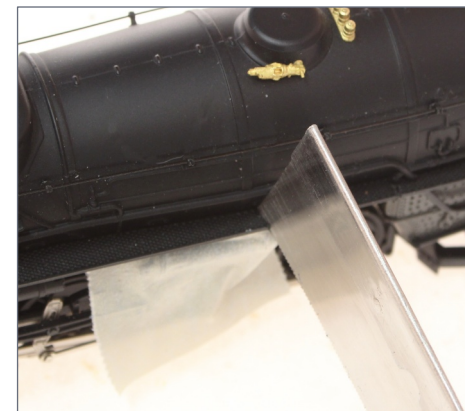
Once the components were removed, the next step was to modify the running board to accommodate the Worthington feedwater heater pumps. A 3/4-inch piece of the running board on the fireman's side had to be carefully sliced from the boiler, then repositioned about 1/8-inch higher to clear the new feedwater heater.

The first cut went into the running board just in front of the firebox [7]. The second cut went in 3/4-inch forward on the running board, about 1/8-inches forward from the rear of the air tank [8].



7. I masked-off the drivers to avoid getting dust into the gears, then cut through the running board with a razor saw. The first cut went in directly above the front of the firebox. I took care to avoid

marring the firebox or the boiler.



8. The second cut went in 3/4" forward from the first one.



With the cuts made to the running board, I used a sharp hobby knife to score along the top and bottom of the running board, with the blade snug against the boiler [9]. After about a half dozen scores to each side, I covered the top of the running board section with a piece of scrap styrene to protect the molded-on tread, gripped it with pliers, and rocked it back and forth with pliers to snap it off [10, 11].



9. Scoring the running board section with the hobby knife created a break line.



10. I used pliers to break the plastic running board away from the boiler. I covered the top with a scrap of tyrene to protect the molded-on anti-slip grid.



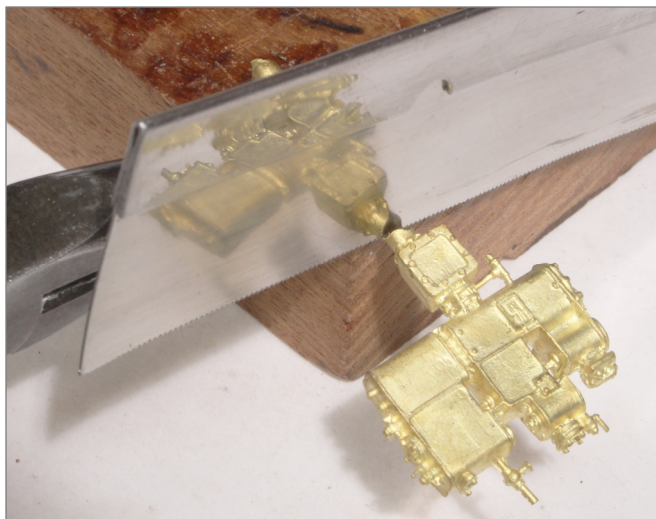
11. With the running board scored, I used pliers to gently flex the cut area of the running board up and down to snap it off the boiler. Then I filed everything smooth.



12. The Worthington BL feedwater heater from Cary parts.

For this locomotive, I needed a Worthington BL feedwater heater with oil trap, like that on Burlington 5508 (C&S number 807). I used a lost-wax brass casting from Cary, part 13-207.

The part had a long molding sprue extending from the square manifold box on the bottom of the feedwater heater [12]. I used a razor saw to cut it down to a stub [13].



13. Removing the casting sprue from the manifold box.



14. The air tank had to be carved away, one sliver at a time, to just under where the knife blade is resting.



The feedwater heater assembly is longer than the air pumps that previously occupied the mounting area, so about 1/8" of the rear portion of the air tank on the left side must be shortened to accommodate it. Since the tank is made of soft plastic, this was accomplished by shaving off slivers with a hobby knife [14]. When it reached the size I wanted, I filed the end of the air tank smooth [15].

The air pump had to be remounted to the engineer's side of the locomotive. The next step was to remove one of the air pump mount's posts from the fireman's side of the locomotive so that it can be re-attached to the engineer's side to accept the air pump. A sharp hobby knife cut easily through the soft plastic [16].

The Worthington feedwater heater molding has a mounting peg on the back, though it does not align with any of the mounts from the air pump. Hold the pump in place (the stub left from the mounting sprue should be in alignment with the air tank), mark where the mounting peg contacts the boiler, and drill a 1/16" mounting hole [17].

Install the feedwater heater, using five-minute epoxy to hold it in place. Then the coil pipes can be put back in place. With the



15. Filing the end of the air tank smooth.



16. Slicing off one of the air pump mounts.



17. Drilling-out the mounting hole for the Worthington feedwater heater.

feedwater heater in proper alignment, there is just enough clearance for the pipes above the heater's square manifold box [18]. Secure everything with thick ACC.

The next step is to reroute the feedwater pipe to connect it with the feedwater heater [19]. The feedwater pipe is made from plastic that is flexible enough to bend with gentle pressure. Hold the pipe in place and secure it with five-minute epoxy.



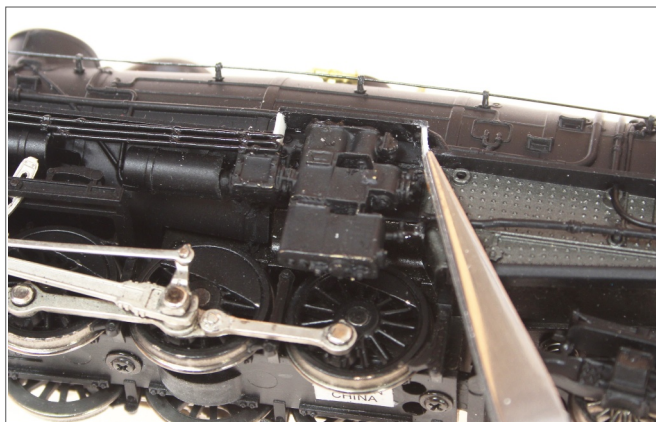
18. Putting the coil pipes back in place.



19. Prying the feedwater pipe loose so that it can be bent to align with the feedwater heater.



Re-install the running board on top of the feedwater heater, tread-side-up, and secure with five-minute epoxy. Once the epoxy has set, cut two small squares of H0 scale 2x12 styrene strip for the vertical pieces of the running board, and secure them with five-minute epoxy [20].



20. The running board is back in place, complete with the vertical styrene strips.



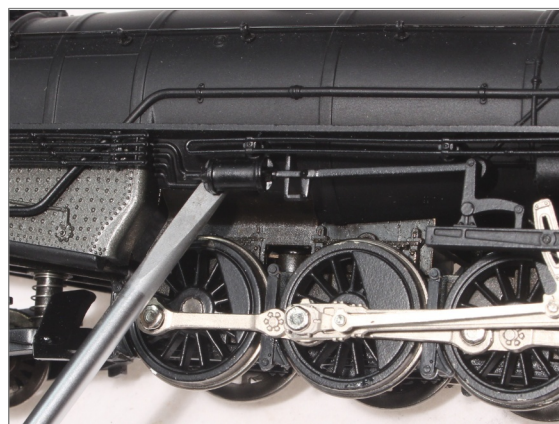
21. The fireman's side modifications are complete, and the Worthington feedwater heater is in place.

REINSTALLING THE AIR PUMP ON THE ENGINEER'S SIDE

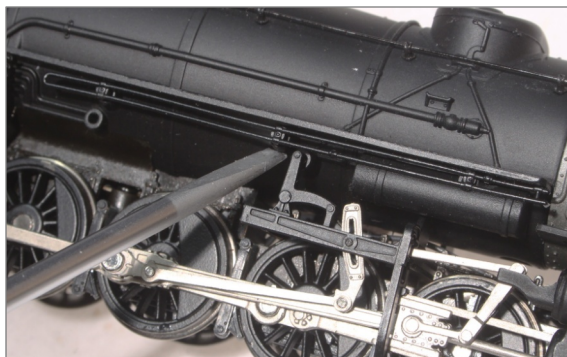
With that, the updates to the fireman's side of the locomotive are complete. The other steps in the conversion are reinstalling the stock air pump on the engineer's side, and moving the reverse cylinder forward to make room for it. This process follows in photos [23-26].



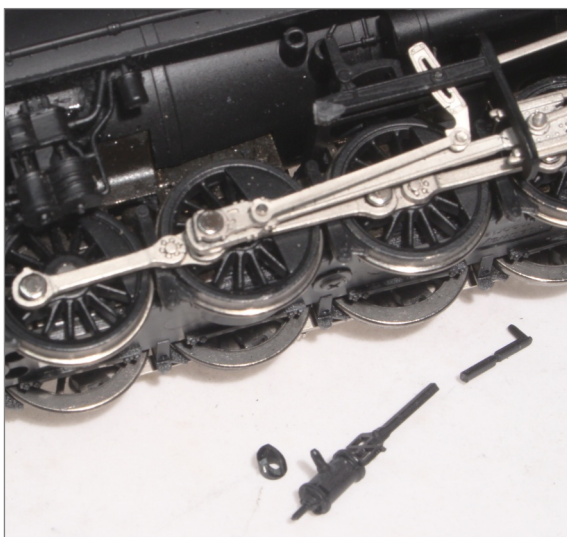
22. An engineer's-side view of the USRA Heavy Mikado from Broadway Limited. Out-of-the-box, it is accurate for the locomotive as built in 1919.



23. The first step was to pry the reverse cylinder from its mount.



24. Pry the pipe coils from the right side of the boiler.



25. Reinstall the air pump mount and the air pump directly in front of the firebox. Shorten the thin rectangular link to the valve gear to fit just behind valve gear hanger. Reassemble the valve gear and linkage, and reinstall it and the piping.



26. The engineer's side is complete, with the air pump and brake cylinder in place.

CAB SUNSHADES

Many western railroads equipped their steam locomotives with canvas sunshades above the cab windows. These can be simulated with pieces of 0.005"-thick aluminum sheet – I got mine from a disposable cooking pan.

Cut two pieces of aluminum about 1/4-inch wide and long enough to extend from the front to the back of the cab windows. Use a steel ruler and a hobby knife to score the aluminum along its length, about 1/16" from one edge, then bend it to a 90-degree angle. I used Aleene's Super Thick Tacky Glue along the bent edge of each sunshade to attach it to the edge of the roof [27].



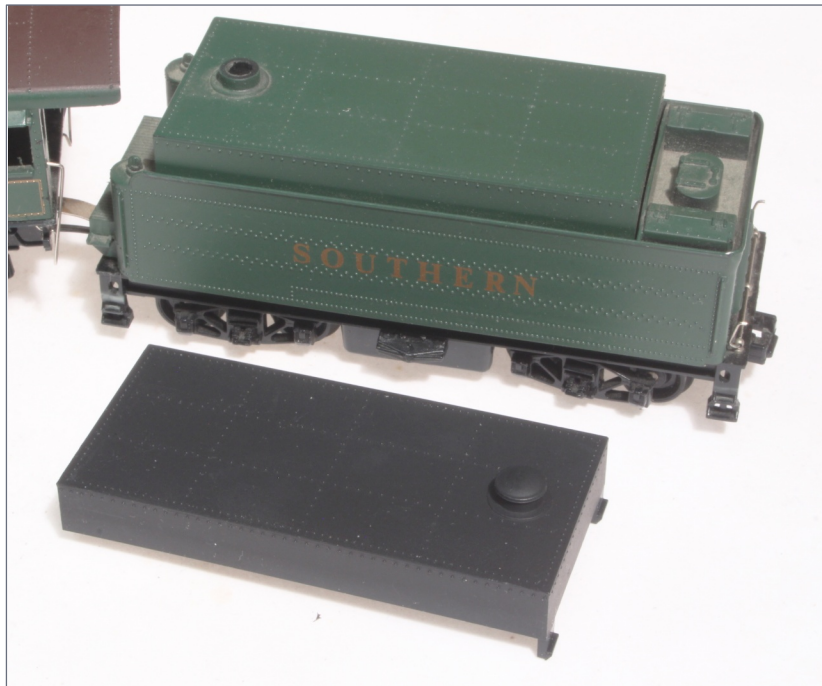
27. Installing the sun shades. The aluminum has been painted gray to represent canvas.



TENDER OIL TANK CONVERSION

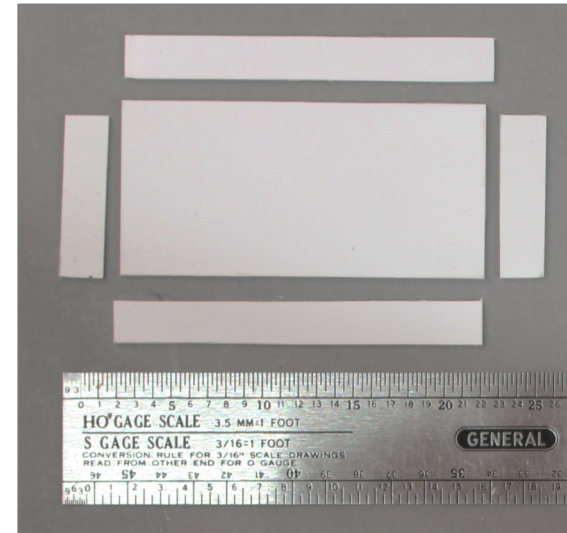
Several railroads, including the Burlington Route, converted their steam locomotives to burn oil instead of coal. This involved internal modifications to the firebox and fitting the tender with a drop-in oil tank or bunker that filled the former coal bunker.

Since all the USRA Heavy Mikado models were produced with coal bunkers, the tender will need to be upgraded as well. IHC and Pemco produced some of their 2-6-0 and 4-4-0 locomotives with snap-out oil bunkers in their tenders [28]. This would make a simple option for the bunker, and they are still frequently available on eBay.



28. An IHC or Pemco tender with snap-out oil bunker would make a simple upgrade solution.

Oil bunkers are also easy to assemble from Evergreen 0.040-inch-thick sheet styrene sheet (part 9040). The oil bunker should extend from the forward bulkhead of the coal bunker to just in front of the water fill hatch. On the Broadway Limited tender, this equates to is 2-11/16" long, 1-3/8" wide, and 5/16" high. The process for creating the oil bunker follows in photos [29-31].



29. The top and sides of the oil bunker are cut from 0.040" sheet styrene.



30. I used steel blocks to keep the bunker assembly square and plumb.



31. I sanded smooth the bunker box joints.



32. Drilling a rear corner for the coal bunker.



33. I used a file to remove all traces of "coal" from the inside of the coal bunker.

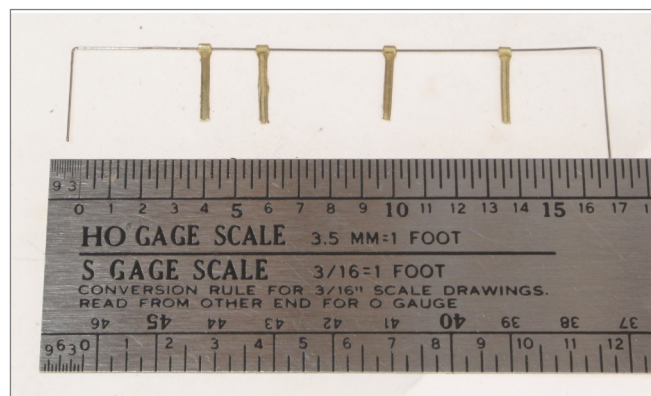
Whether installing a snap-in bunker or fabricating your own, the original coal load and the rear bulkhead of the coal bunker must be removed. I drilled 1/8" holes in the front and rear corners [32]. Then, I used a jeweler's saw to cut along the edges of the coal load and across the rear deck, and filed the sides smooth [33].

THE TENDER HANDRAILS

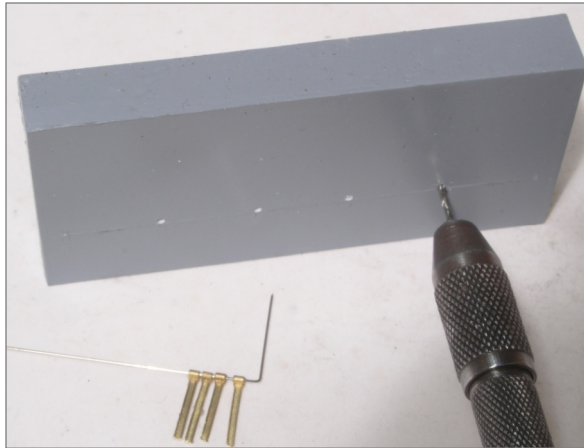
The oil bunker had a handrail at its center. I made this with four Precision Scale handrail stanchions (part 39073) and 0.012"-diameter wire. I threaded the four posts, and bent the wire to shape, with 1/2" legs.

On the bunker, I marked a line down the center, and marked the ends of the hand rail so that it was centered front-to-back. I then made marks for the four stanchions so they would be evenly spaced. I drilled no. 78 holes for the stanchions and no. 80 holes for the ends of the handrail [35].

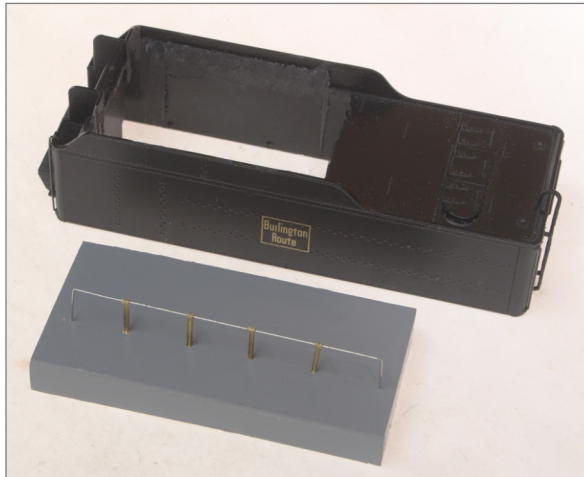
With the holes drilled, I was ready for assembly. I first mounted the handrail into the oil bunker, securing it with thick ACC [36]. Once that set, the bunker was mounted into the tender using thick ACC [37]. I then added a type-2 oil filler hatch (Precision Scale part 32373) [38].



34. The stanchions and wire are assembled.



35. Drilling holes for the handrail.



36. The handrails are in place.



37. The bunker is in place.



38. The tender with the oil hatch complete, with paint and decals added.



39. An engineer's-side view of the completed USRA Heavy Mikado with its 1920s upgrades. It's a good match to the prototype [1A].



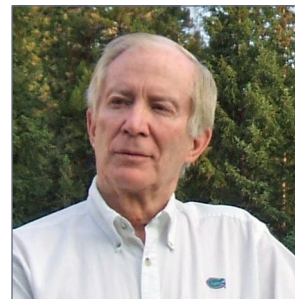
PAINT AND DECALS

Paint and decal the tender to match your railroad. I used Floquil Engine Black (now discontinued) and Microscale decal sets 87-42 and 87-1358 for the Burlington Route.

CONCLUSION

The completed model represents a Burlington USRA Heavy Mikado as it appeared from about 1927 through the 1950s. As with many railroads, the Burlington did some experimentation with their upgrades, using different feedwater heaters and configurations [40]. Following the prototype photos and using techniques described, you can create your own modernized Mike. ☑

ROBERT SCHLEICHER



Robert was editor of *Railmodel Journal* for 19 years and, prior to that, editor of *Model Railroading* magazine. He has also authored over a dozen model railroad books including the *Tyco Model Railroad Big Book Of Model Railroad Track Plans* and three books for Lionel. Bob has been a consultant to several manufacturers and

helped to kick-start the Railroad Prototype Modelers concept. He is modeling the standard gauge Colorado & Southern in northern Colorado circa 1959 in HO scale. ■



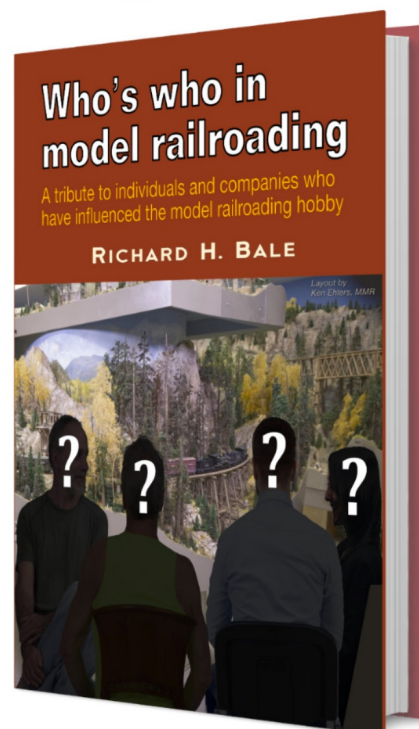
40. The “modernized” Broadway Limited USRA Heavy Mikado with a Worthington feedwater heater and oil tender leads a Rivarossi Heavy Mikado with an Elesco feedwater heater, and an oil tender.



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My layout operations journey



1. Jeff's layout is set in the contemporary era in southern California.



Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026

JEFF LEE MMR TRANSFORMS HIS LAYOUT OPS WITH SOME STRATEGIC REDESIGN ...

MODEL RAILROADING IS MY OBSESSION. I received my first train, a Märklin HO set, at age seven or eight, and that gift sparked a lifelong passion. My father built me a dedicated train room, and I spent countless hours expanding and running my layout.

As a teenager, I switched to Australian prototype modeling in HO scale. Through early marriage and several moves, I built multiple layouts, including an extensive basement railroad.

In the early 1980s, a move to New York forced me to leave most of my trains behind. Within weeks, I'd decided to start fresh with N scale, and build the Clinchfield layout featured in *Model Railroader* magazine. Rather than hunting-down specific Clinchfield equipment, I bought locomotives and rolling stock that I actually enjoyed – Santa Fe and other favorites.

After returning to Australia and moving several more times, I built new layouts in each home.

I've lived in my current house for the past 14 years. It features a dedicated 6.5 x 6-meter train room with the rest of the house built around it. I'm currently constructing my third layout in this space, hopefully my best yet.

SO WHERE DID THE OPERATIONS INTEREST START?

My NMRA membership and magazine subscriptions kept me current with hobby developments. I regularly attended local

NMRA meetings and traveled to NMRA and N scale conventions in the United States.

By the early 2000s, I was discussing operations with other modelers, but hadn't implemented anything on my own layout.

After attending several operating sessions on other layouts, I began inviting colleagues to mine. This motivated me to create operating plans for my guests. Initially, these were simple instructions: "Run this train from point A to point B, and drop off two cars."

I purchased a set of Micro Mark train cards and car boxes, then documented all my freight and passenger cars. I accepted that in N scale, car numbers are tough to read.

Despite this, I stayed interested in operations, attended operating sessions around the world, and joined the NMRA Operations Special Interest Group (OPSIG). I also earned my



2. Part of Jeff's layout in January 2026.

Operations Achievement Program certificate on my path to Master Model Railroader.

WHAT WAS MISSING?

My previous layouts focused on long mainlines for running lengthy trains. I included passing tracks where trains could “park” or wait, and built extensive visible staging areas for trains not on the mainline.

Operations meant simply running trains. There was minimal industry and very little switching. I had industrial structures, but they were decorative rather than functional – buildings I liked, rather than purposeful operational destinations. These layouts were designed for watching trains run, not for realistic operation [3].



3. This extensive industry had no rail service whatsoever. I later realized this was a waste of valuable layout space.

When I designed my current layout, I could already see the same flaws repeating themselves. It featured a mainline with passing sidings and visible staging. The only significant switching operation was the ethanol plant [4].

THE LIGHT-BULB MOMENT

My “light-bulb moment” happened during a Layout Design Special Interest Group (LDSIG) session at an NMRA convention a few years ago. I’d been an LDSIG member for over 10 years, and had helped with layout planning and consulting for others, but since I was planning my current layout, I asked to participate as a student.

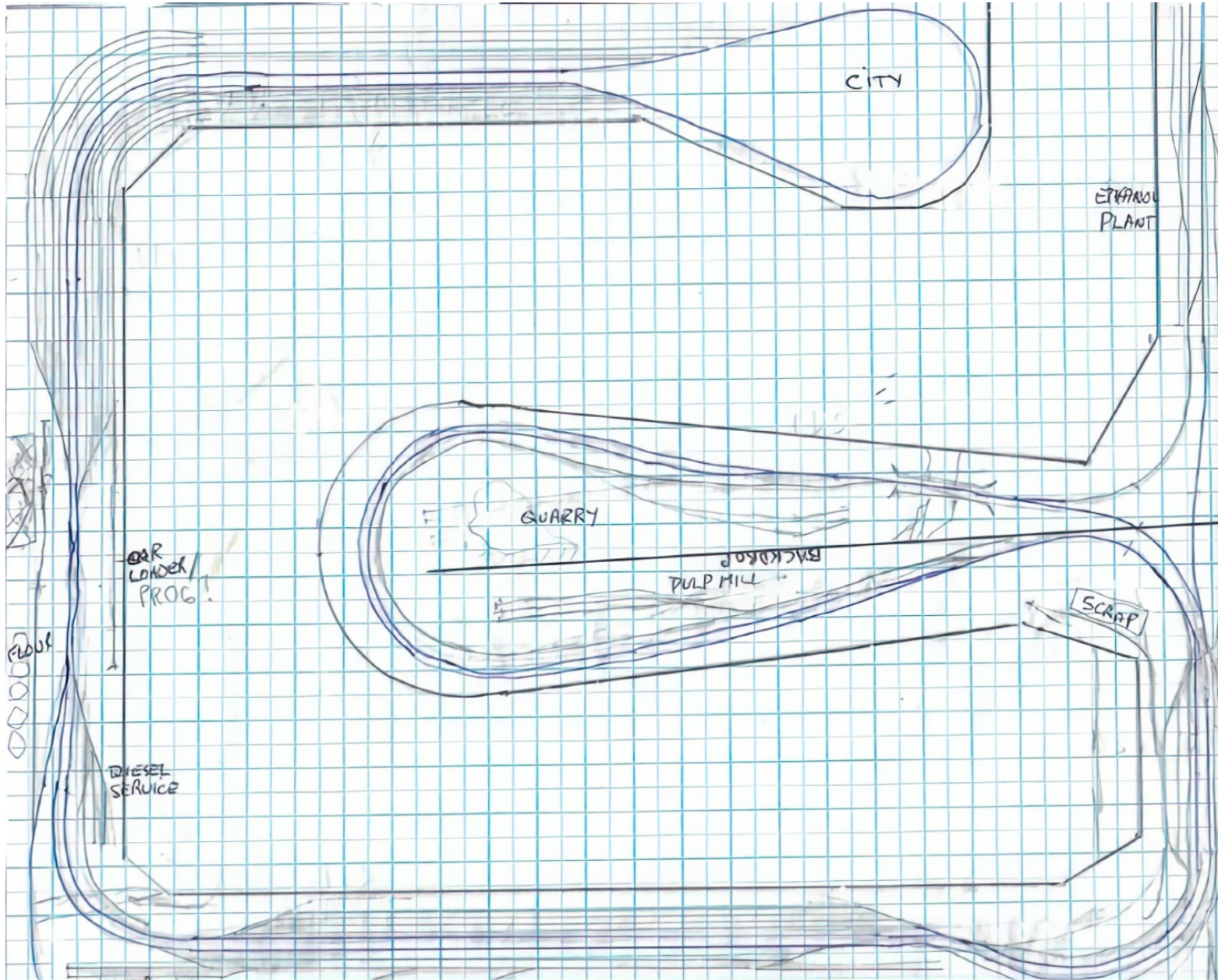
I brought my new layout plan to the convention along with my list of priorities and wish-list features. One of the LDSIG leaders listened carefully to my plans. As he asked questions, I almost spotted the gaps in my thinking myself. But his key questions crystallized the issues:

- Will your layout depict a specific geographic area and era?
- What types of industries exist in the area you’re modeling?
- What will a train actually do at each industrial site?
- What is the economic purpose of your model railroad?

These questions revealed my plan repeated my previous design mistakes. It had too many staging tracks and too little industrial area. The layout needed more scenery representing the specific region I was modeling.

Instead of staging yards, I needed functional industries and industrial sidings for car storage, which could effectively substitute for staging.

I needed to design industries with clear operational purpose. For example, if I owned several modern high-cube boxcars, what industries or warehouses would require them?



4. Original layout design – running trains, not operations.

Or conversely: given the era and industries I was modeling, what types of cars would those industries need? If there is a gravel pit, where would the loaded cars go?

Reducing staging and creating working industries would simplify the layout, and make it look less like a collection of trains and tracks. The industries also had to authentically represent the geographic area I was modeling.

This was my transformative moment. I immediately began revising my plan to give it operational purpose.

I also realized I owned too many cars and locomotives. I decided to keep only the rolling stock and locomotives that suited my new layout's era and location. I sold or gave away the rest.

I chose Southern California as my location, with a contemporary era (2000 and later). Most of my existing industrial buildings didn't fit this theme. I even had hundreds of pine trees from previous layouts to give away.

The original plan lacked purpose. Each train movement needed a "business reason" – a realistic operational justification.

These realizations fundamentally changed my layout plan. The revised design kept a similar mainline route, but added numerous industries along the way, with industry spurs and lead tracks enabling switching operations off the mainline.

SO, WHAT WERE THE STEPS?

Once I had that light-bulb moment (which seemed so obvious I wondered why it had taken me so long), I revisited magazines and books – primarily online resources – to get the fundamentals right. I reviewed and revised my priorities based on what I had learned.

1. I established a specific location and era for my layout. I chose contemporary (approximately 2000 and later) southern California.

2. I defined the scenery. The landscape would reflect the hillsides south and north of Los Angeles. The layout would feature dry hills and brown terrain – southern California has abundant industrial buildings, and rain is rare.

3. I chose a single-level design. The layout would sit at 135cm (approximately 53 inches) high with minimal or no hidden tracks. I settled on a rough figure-eight with the mainline moving through the scenery.

4. I identified towns and industries. I listed potential locations and placed them on the map, leaving track arrangements and specific buildings for later.

I sketched the mainline, then built the benchwork modules using lightweight box frames with high-density foam tops. After sealing the foam, I sketched the mainline route, potential industry areas, and basic scenery elements like roads and hills.

Once satisfied, I finalized the mainline placement. I designed passing sidings and some visible staging, but didn't complete the detailed town layouts and industry spurs then.

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I identified the industries I wanted, then determined whether the layout could physically accommodate them. I created a list of possible industries:

- **Engineering works:** requires boxcars and specialized cars for transporting pipes and equipment
- **Scrap yard:** requires gondolas and possibly supply deliveries
- **Auto-loading facility:** spurs for vehicle loading
- **Container transfer facility:** double-stack transfer area
- **Industrial warehouses:** receive boxcars and specialized equipment
- **Ethanol plant:** grain cars, tank cars, and supply cars
- **Gravel pit:** hopper cars plus supplies like fuel and heavy machinery
- **Grain silos:** grain hoppers and an ethanol plant
- **Furniture factory:** boxcars, and timber on bulkhead flatcars
- **Modern diesel engine servicing facility and storage**



5. GJL Transfer – a new industrial area where staging tracks once stood.

- **Small seaside facility for a tourist train**
- **Maintenance-of-way depot for track maintenance equipment**

Could I include all of these without making the layout too crowded?

I realized I had too many industries for the available space. The auto-loading facility was the first to go, which meant all my Atlas auto-loaders – some weathered and covered in graffiti – had to be sold or given away.

Leaving space for industries, and having a clean base allowed me to place mockups of buildings and sketch track arrangements in pencil. I could test-fit buildings and figure out how many tracks I needed and how long they should be.

This process also helped me identify where hills and terrain features would go. I began laying cork roadbed for the mainline, then the mainline track itself, including turnouts for industry access.

I laid all the mainline track and associated lines, testing reliability thoroughly before tackling the industries. Mocking-up the industries and service tracks took months.

Once I completed the layout and industry spurs, I worked on how I would build trains and switch cars for pickup and delivery. I realized I needed more operators to properly test the layout's operational design.

DEFINING THE NETWORK GEOGRAPHY

Before I could run meaningful operations, I needed to name all the towns, industries, and key locations so operators could understand their journey.

Using my experience and some southern California maps, I selected names for towns and areas, taking some poetic license

by also incorporating names of family and friends. With locations named, I could describe the route for each operation, and create meaningful train orders.

OPERATIONS

With the track layout “finished,” I needed to test it properly.

Running trains by myself revealed only so much. Real operations require multiple people working simultaneously, creating traffic conflicts and coordination challenges that expose design flaws. I scheduled an operating session with eight guests, and spent weeks preparing train orders, car cards, and schedules to serve the industries.

The morning of the session, I was both excited and nervous. I’d created what I thought was more than enough work to keep eight people busy for hours. I assigned roles: some would run mainline freights, others would handle local switching, and a few would manage yard operations at key locations like San Gabriel and Leeville.

For the first hour, things went well. Trains moved, cars got switched, and everyone appeared engaged.



6. Santa Susanna Freight at San Gabriel was built from cardstock using Gary Rummings' methods.

As operations continued, problems surfaced. One operator needed to pick up loaded gondolas at DigmeUp Quarry and deliver them to JL Engineering. Simple enough, except his train had to switch cars at San Gabriel first.

Without proper lead tracks, he had to do all his switching on the mainline, blocking through traffic. Another mainline freight sat waiting, unable to pass. This same problem kept repeating.

At San Gabriel, trains couldn't pull off the mainline to do their work. Every switching move blocked other traffic. What should have been smooth, coordinated operations turned into a traffic jam. Operators apologized to each other, waited for clearance, and watched the clock tick by while their trains sat idle.

After about two hours, we broke for lunch. That's when the real conversation started. Several guests were diplomatic at first, praising the scenery and track quality.

One experienced operator I deeply respected got to the heart of it: “Jeff, your yards don't have proper arrival and departure tracks. Everything has to happen on the mainline, and that kills operations.”

San Gabriel was the worst offender. It was supposed to be a major operational hub, but the yard tracks were too short, and they were double-ended without leads. Trains couldn't pull in, do their work, and pull out without fouling the main.

This wasn't just inconvenient – it made realistic operations impossible. If San Gabriel couldn't function properly, the entire layout's operational flow broke down.

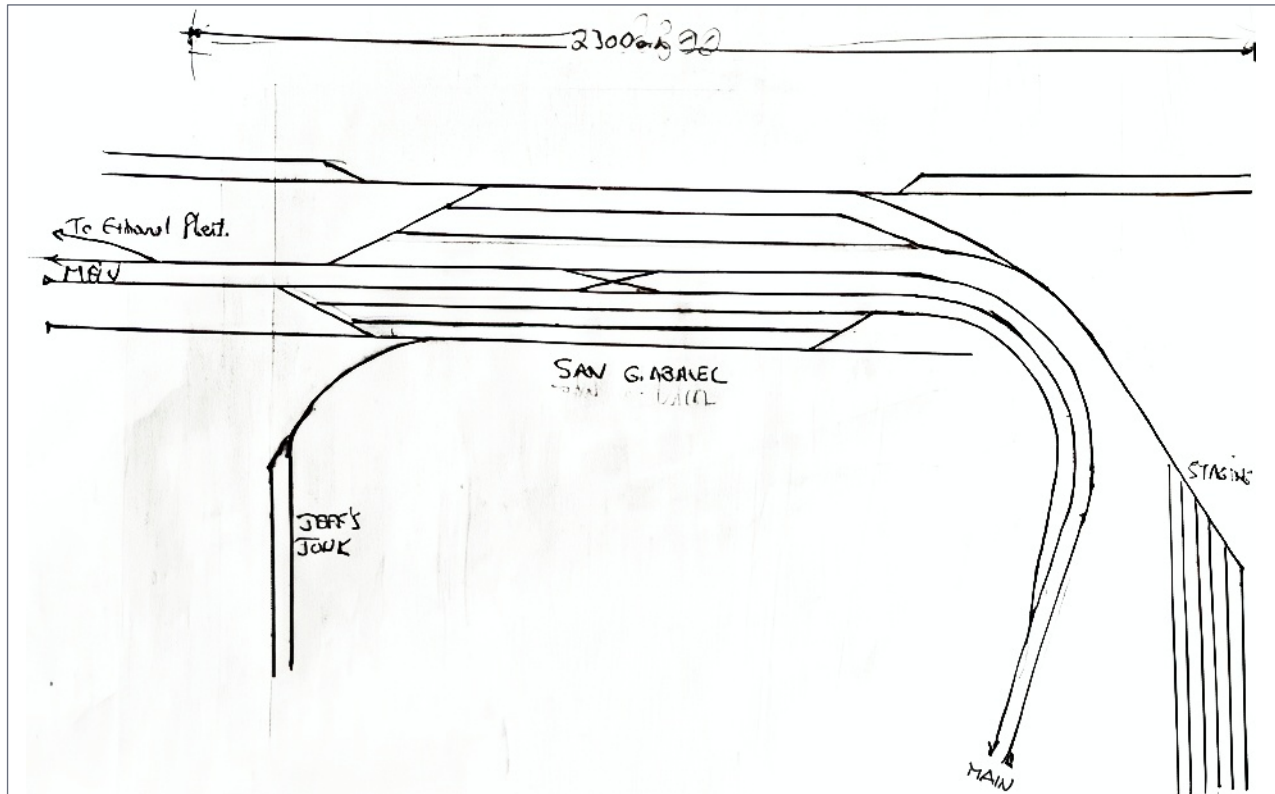
After lunch, we tried to continue, but the enthusiasm had deflated. Everyone could see the fundamental problem.

Later that week, I received detailed written feedback from several guests. They were kind but clear: the layout needed significant redesign, particularly at San Gabriel. Without proper leads and longer yard tracks, operations would always feel forced and frustrating.

I took the advice seriously. This wasn't about ego – it was about building something that worked. The good news was I hadn't ballasted the track or built detailed scenery yet, so I could still make major changes without destroying months of work.

I committed to a significant redesign, starting with San Gabriel [7, 8]. I'd add long passing sidings with leads at both ends, letting trains leave the mainline and switch properly. These changes would give me more industries and better staging. Most importantly, they'd make operations enjoyable instead of frustrating.

I felt confident about the new design. The next operating session would be different.



7. Original San Gabriel design.

WHERE ARE OPERATIONS TODAY?

The redesign transformed everything. Train crews have meaningful work to do. Trains move with purpose, switching happens smoothly, and sessions flow like real railroad operations.

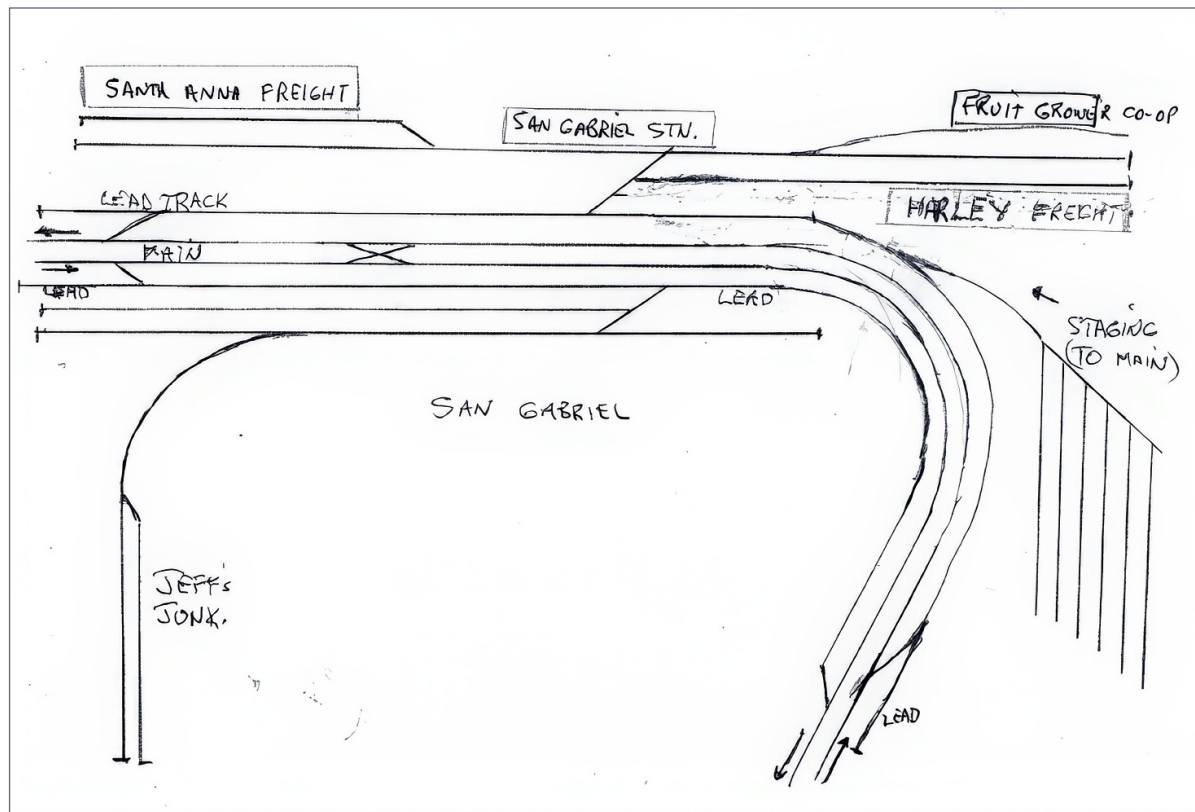
To manage this, I created laminated operating cards for each train. Since N Scale cars are too small to read individual numbers, the cards identify pickups and setouts by car type instead.

Here's what an operating card looks like:

Text continues on [page 18](#) ...



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8. San Gabriel after redesign – now with long passing sidings and switching leads at both ends.



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9. Fruit Growers and Harley Freight at San Gabriel – now an operational hub with proper yard leads.

Mixed Freight BNSF #5622

Starting Point

Leave Leeville yards.

First Leg: Head West

Pick up 3 railbox cars at San Gabriel, then enter the main line when clear and proceed via Santa Susanna and DigmeUp Quarry to Los Alamitos. Take the passing siding.

Second Leg: Head East to GJL

When clear, proceed to Leeville and GJL industries. Drop off 6 boxcars and pick up 4.

Third Leg: Back to Los Alamitos

Head east to Los Alamitos and take the passing siding.

Fourth Leg: Furniture Factory

Pick up 3 cars from Layback Furniture and drop off 2 center beam cars.

Fifth Leg: Engineering Pickup

Pick up 2 boxcars from Honest John Engineering.



10. Jeff's Junk holds has siding space for up to 18 gondolas, and fits naturally into the Southern California landscape.

Return to Base

Proceed east to Leeville yards.

The reverse side covers the return route.

Here are the trains that run on this layout:

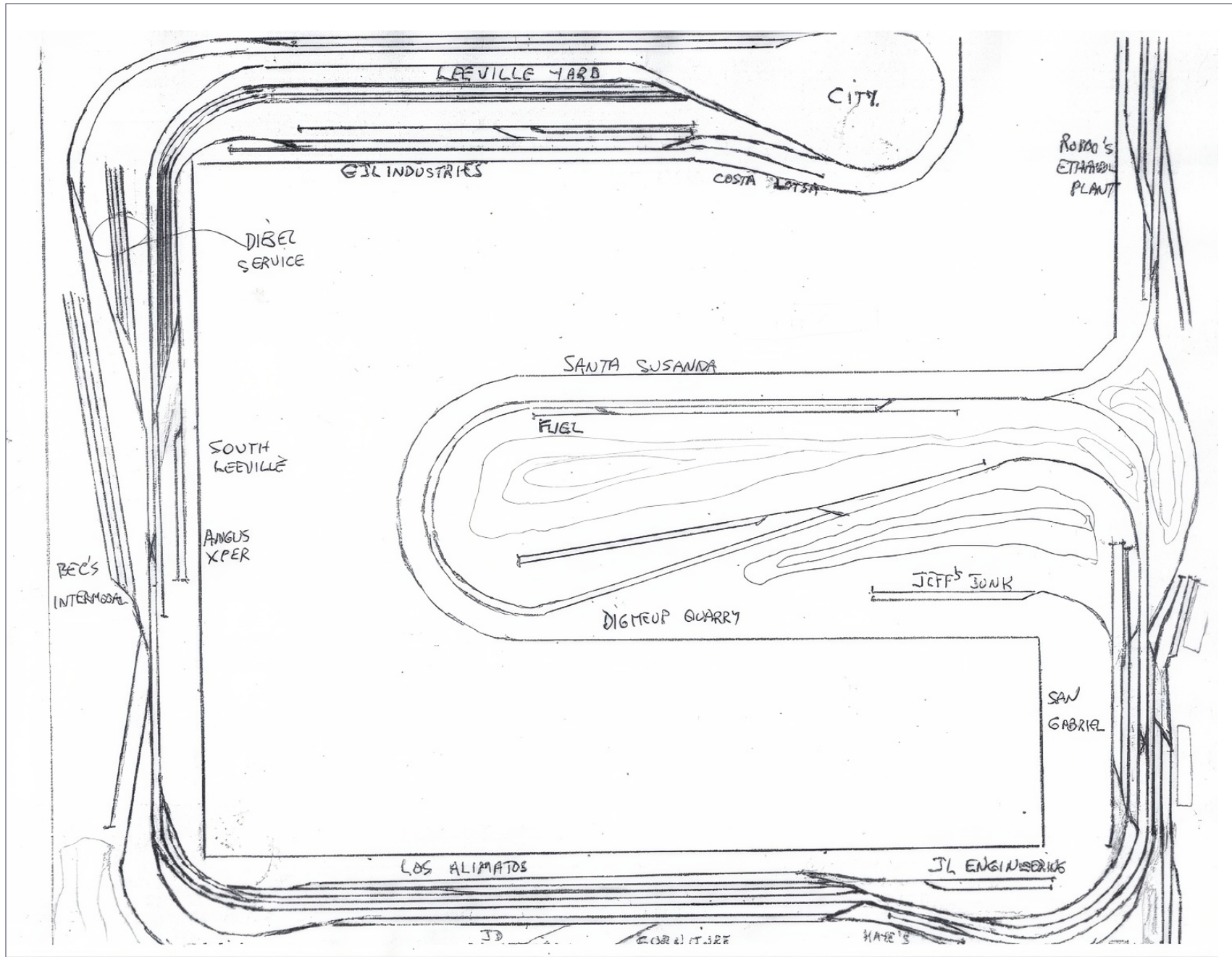
- Amtrak Surfliner
- Excursion tourist train
- Double-stack unit train
- Gravel train
- Grain hopper train

TYPES OF INDUSTRIES TO SERVICE

I've packed the layout with a mix of industries that work together to keep things realistic and engaging.

Each requires different car types and generates plenty of switching work, keeping operators busy and giving them real purpose.

- **Ethanol plant** – full stub-end terminal: Robbo's Ethanol and Grain
- **Gravel pit** – several tracks for switching and storage: DigmeUp Quarry
- **Grain depot/silos**: Kaye's Flour
- **Intermodal yard** – four tracks with runaround and yard lead: Bec's Intermodal
- **Industrial warehouse district** – several warehouses: GJL Transfer, Santa Susanna Warehouse, plus a fishing co-op and restaurant
- **JL Engineering industrial area** – large engineering facility
- **Local oil depot** – small Southern California terminal: Santa Susanna



11. Current layout plan showing the network of industries that support meaningful operations.



- **Furniture factory** – single spur for two to three cars
- **Maintenance shop/small engineering business** – single spur for two to three cars
- **Engine servicing area** – four tracks, one with service pit – capacity for 20+ locomotives
- **San Gabriel:** Jeff's Junk, Fruit Packers, plus two large industrial warehouse transfers

SO WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

Looking back on this journey, I've learned a lot.

I went from a guy who just wanted to run trains to someone who thinks about operations. That shift changed how I design layouts.

The lessons below came from trial and error, listening to my



12. Santa Susanna Oil: passing tracks, storage, and lead tracks keep operators busy.

guests, and being honest about what works versus what just looks good on a shelf.

- **Name all towns** – operators need to know where they're going
- **Identify directions** – establish east/west (or north/south) so everyone stays oriented
- **Yard leads on all yard tracks** – enable switching without blocking the mainline
- **Set an era and stick to it** – consistency makes the railroad believable
- **Minimize trains and cars** – use only what fits your theme and works operationally
- **Name all industries** – place visible signs so operators know what they're switching

- **Don't reuse buildings that don't fit** – sell or give them away, instead of forcing them in

- **Provide a notepad** – let operators document track issues, car problems, or design concerns

- **Most important** – industries create interesting operations and valuable staging

That's the real lesson: build the layout around operations from day-one, not the other way around.

When you do that, everything changes.

My guests want to come back because they're solving real switching problems

instead of railfanning. The layout works better, the operations make sense, and everyone has more fun. ☑

JEFF LEE MMR



Jeff has been interested in model railroading since he received his first train-set (Marklin) at age seven. He modeled in HO scale until the early 1980s (when he moved to New York to live), and then he saw N scale.

He didn't bring his trains from Australia, so it was easy to start again in N scale. First he built the Clinchfield which was featured in Model Railroader. Several layouts later he is now rebuilding again, using the latest technologies and approaches to simplify future maintenance (if that is possible).

He is married with two children - one in Sydney, and another living in New Jersey. This gives him added reason to visit the USA, and attend conventions. ■

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Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2026



Modeling realistic track

Model railroaders can make track look far more realistic with some surprisingly simple techniques and materials.

In his YouTube video on modeling realistic track, Craig of **Craig's Modeling Corner** begins with dark-brown camo paint, then dry-brushes varied earth and stone colors before adding oil washes and scenic materials. The process is simple, but the results realistically bring out model track's texture and details, transforming "toy track" with breathtaking realism. ☑



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AUGUST NEWS

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JEFF SHULTZ AND RICHARD BALE
REPORT THE LATEST HOBBY
INDUSTRY NEWS ...



INDUSTRY NEWS



miniprints, a maker of 3D-printed detail parts, has established miniprints University, a new educational e-learning platform. Launched in July 2026 with its first course, *Why Do We Model?* Owner Bernard Hellen presented it as a clinic at the 2026 NMRA National Convention in Chattanooga, TN. *Why Do We Model?*

presented peer-reviewed research in psychology, neuroscience and behavioral medicine to explain the positive health benefits, both physical and mental, to participating in the hobby. The course consists of nine lessons and approximately 90 minutes of video content. Enrollment is complimentary for a limited time. A second course, *Layout Alive: See Like an Artist, Think Like a Storyteller*, is in development.

Info: miniprints.com/pages/miniu

THE LATEST MODEL RAILROAD PRODUCTS, NEWS & EVENTS

NEW TRACKS MODELING MENTORING SCHOLARSHIP

organization established in 2023, has awarded four \$2,500 New Tracks Modeling Mentoring Scholarships to young model railroaders pursuing STEAM studies at the college or technical school level for the 2026-2027 academic year.

This year's recipients are Brooke Christy – Bucknell University, Dean Deis – California State University Fullerton, Conner Profrock – Purdue University, and Nathaniel Pham - University of California Davis.

Info: newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship

G SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

Bachmann's Mid-year 2026 product announcements include an EMD E8 in 1:29 scale, shipping in late 2027. The model will include a non-proprietary plug-and-play printed circuit board to accommodate the power and control system of the hobbyist's choice: DC, DCC, or RC/Battery power. A factory installed speaker will be available for aftermarket sound systems. Each 3-axle truck will have its own low-amperage draw motor. Road names will be Baltimore & Ohio, Chicago Burlington & Quincy, Pennsylvania Railroad, Santa Fe, and Union Pacific.

Bachmann's Mid-year 2026 product announcements also include an offset cupola caboose in 1:29 scale. Road names are Denver & Rio Grande Western, Pennsylvania Railroad, Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and Painted Unlettered – Red. The caboose models are expected to ship in late 2027.

Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com

O SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

Bachmann's mid-year 2026 product catalog included a new run of the On30 Davenport 0-4-0 gas mechanical "critter." Equipped

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with a DCC/Sound decoder, the model will be available decorated as Sumpter Valley Railway #101, Bethlehem Steel, painted unlettered black with orange warning stripes, and painted unlettered red & black. They are expected to ship in 2027.



Also in the mid-year 2026 product catalog is an On30 wood side boxcar. Modeled after a narrow-gauge prototype, the model will feature opening side and end-car doors. Road names in this run are Denver & Rio Grande Western, East Broad Top, Florence & Cripple Creek, and Painted unlettered gray with black roof.

Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com

HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



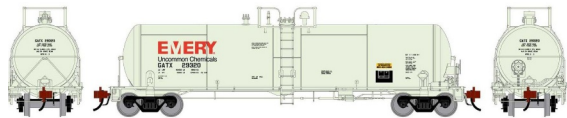
A new run of **Athearn** Genesis SD70 series locomotives are

available for preorder. Included in this run are Union Pacific #1616 "Abraham Lincoln," #1979 "We are ONE," and #4292 in the new corporate scheme. There are also five UP road numbers in Primed for Grime weathering, three Electro-Motive demonstrators, two BNSF in Primed for Grime and two in new "H4" paint, and the Lake State Railway in both 250th Anniversary and Pere Marquette heritage paint schemes. In the Legendary Liveries line, the Detroit, Toledo and Ironton and Duluth Missabe and Iron Range Railways are both represented with two road numbers each. MSRP is \$249.99 without sound and \$349.99 with Tsunami2 sound. Estimated arrival date is November 2027.

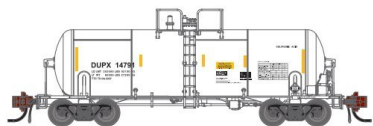


Also in the Genesis line is a series of modified GP7/9 locomotives. The

Santa Fe has four GP7u road numbers in the yellowbonnet scheme and two in Kodachrome. BNSF has four patched yellow bonnet Primed for Grime units and four numbers newly painted in the "H1" scheme. There are two Chicago and North Western GP7R and two GP9R locomotives in this release. A single ex-Santa Fe GP7u decorated for the Morristown & Erie is also in the run. MSRP is \$229.99 (Primed for Grime: \$239.99) without sound and \$329.99 (Primed for Grime: \$339.99) with Tsunami2 sound.



Appropriate for the 1960s through the 2000s, Athearn is taking preorders for a General American Tank Car (GATC) 20,000-gallon non-insulated, welded, tank car. Road names in this run are Emery/GATX, Quality Liquid Feed/GATX, white (red band)/GATX, and white (black band)/GATX. Cargill/GATX, black/GATX, and Occidental Chemicals/UCLX are part of the Primed for Grime line and a commemorative 250th anniversary car is decorated for Athearn/Horizon. MSRP is \$61.99 (\$66.99 Primed for Grime) individually and \$154.99 (Primed for Grime: \$169.99) for three-packs.



Athearn has announced preorders for HO scale UTC 13K Acid Tank Cars. Appropriate for the era from 1979 to the 2000s, the cars will be available as single cars and in three-packs. Reporting marks for this run are Compass Capital/CMTX, DuPont/DUPX, Kennecott Copper/KCCX, Grupo Mexico/MDCX, Union Tank Car (white)/UTLX, and Union Tank Car (Mint Stripe)/UTLX. MSRP for the single cars is \$61.99 and \$154.99 for the three-packs.



A run of the Athearn HO scale FMC 5077 offset double door box cars includes two Legendary Liveries cars for the Spirit of '76/ATH (three-pack and separate single) and Athearn's 80th anniversary/ATH, two standard cars for Union Pacific/UP and Sierra Railroad/SERA, and seven Primed for Grime cars for City of

Appropriate for the 1960s through the 2000s, Athearn is taking preorders for a

Prineville/COP, Texas, Oklahoma & Eastern/TOE; Union Pacific/UP, McCloud Railway(ex-CPTL)/MR, McCloud Railway(ex-COP)/MR, Buffalo & Pittsburg (ex-MR exx-CPLT) and Buffalo & Pittsburg (ex-MR exx-COP). MSRP is \$44.99 (\$49.99 Primed for Grime) individually and \$109.99 for three-packs.



In the Roundhouse line, Athearn is making a run of 50' gondolas decorated for Burlington Northern/BN, Conrail/CR, CSX, Delaware & Hudson/D&H, Lehigh Valley/LV, Penn Central/PC, Norfolk Southern/NS, Southern Pacific/SP, Union Pacific/UP, and Santa Fe/ATSF. MSRP is \$37.99 for individual models.

Preorders for all products are due August 31, 2026, with an estimated arrival date of November 2027.

Info: athearn.com

Atlas has released the Summer 2026 Atlas Model Catalog, containing the Summer pre-order announcements. **All pre-orders are due September 9th, 2026.** Atlas Silver products are DCC/Sound ready with a speaker installed; Atlas Gold models are equipped with ESU LokSound DCC.



Road names for the Atlas Master HO scale GE U30C locomotive are Chesapeake & Ohio, Conrail (ex-Reading patch), CSXT, Delaware & Hudson, NdeM, Penn Central, and Seaboard Coast Line. Silver MSRP: \$199.95, Gold MSRP: \$319.95. The locomotives are estimated to arrive 2nd Quarter 2027.



The Atlas Master-series HO scale EMD SD35 locomotive is available for preorder decorated for Conrail (ex-Jersey Central patch), Great Lakes Central (two schemes), Jersey Central, Western Maryland, Wisconsin Central, and Left Fork

Processing (high nose). Silver MSRP: \$199.95 Gold MSRP: \$319.95. Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.



Road names for the Master HO scale Fairbanks-Morse H15-44 locomotive are Jersey Central, Monon, Rio Grande, Kansas

City Southern, and FM Demonstrator. The H16-44 locomotive road names are Akron Canton and Youngstown, Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe, Chihuahua al Pacifico, Delaware Lackawanna and Western, and New Haven. Silver MSRP: \$189.95, Gold MSRP: \$309.95. Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.



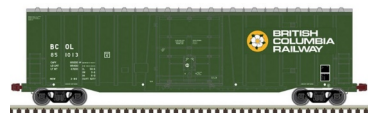
The Master HO GE U33B locomotive road names are Delaware & Hudson (ex-Conrail), Reading & Northern,

and Rock Island. The U36B road names are CSX, Seaboard Coast Line Bicentennial, and Seaboard System. Limited-edition collectors series paint scheme U36Bs are Nashville & Eastern and Rock Island. Silver MSRP: \$199.95, Gold MSRP: \$319.95. Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.



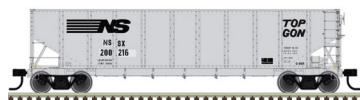
Road names for the Master 20,700-gallon Tank Car in HO scale are American Beef Packers/GATX, Big 4/GATX,

ChemCell Chemicals/CGTX, Cotton Belt/SSW, Publishers Paper/GATX, TransGo/TGOX, and Wyandotte/GATX. A limited-edition collectors series paint scheme is Litvak Packing Company/GATX. MSRP is \$59.95. Estimated arrival is 4th Quarter 2026.



Master series NSC 50' 5277 cu. ft. Plug Door Boxcar road names are British Columbia Railway, Canadian National/CNIS, Canadian National/CNIS transitional, Canadian Pacific, Ontario Northland, and Quebec

Central. A limited-edition collectors series paint scheme is "CN North America" in gray/white/black. MSRP is \$49.95 with an estimated arrival of 1st Quarter 2027.



The Master-series HO scale Norfolk Southern Topgon has been announced with the National Salvage & Service

Corp/NSSX patch on a Norfolk Southern paint scheme as well as the G-86R with and without conspicuity stripes and the G-90R, both in Norfolk Southern. A limited-edition collectors scheme consisting of color plaques on G-90R 30270 is also available. MSRP for single cars is \$46.95 with G-86R and G-90R cars available in three-packs for \$140.85. The estimated arrival is 1st Quarter 2027.



A new model from Atlas, road names and cars for the HO scale Master

series Pullman 12-1 Sleeper are Alaska (Lake Minchumina), GN/University of Minnesota (Heart Research), Illinois Central/Panama Limited (Groseillers), Louisville & Nashville (Orange Bend, Orange Dale, Orange Grove), NdeM (Guasave, Isla de Sacrificios), PRR/Fleet of Modernism (John Jay, John Morton, Richard Dale), Pullman (Gorgeous Rose, Radiance Rose, Ideal Rose), Southern (Brentwood, Dahlonga, Puritan), Union Pacific (Pipestone, Pelham, Pembina), and unlettered. MSRP is \$109.95 with an estimated arrival of 1st Quarter 2027.



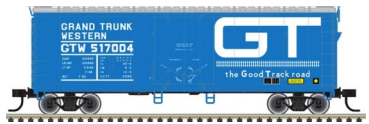
Road names for the next run of the Master series 36' Wood Reefer are Armour Packing Co. Kansas City, Arnold Brothers, Cudahy Rex Script/CRL, Hygrade Food Products/HFPX, Indianapolis Abattoir "Sally Lee"/IAX, Morris Refrigerator Line "Supreme", Sioux City Dressed Beef/URTX. MSRP is \$56.95 with an estimated arrival of 1st Quarter 2027.



The Trainman Thrall 4750 Covered Hopper will be available for Alaska RR (w/conspicuity stripes), Ann Arbor RR, BNSF, CIT Group (grey), CSX (w/conspicuity stripes), First Union Rail/GROX (w/conspicuity stripes), SOO, and The Andersons/AEX (w/conspicuity stripes). MSRP is \$39.95 with an estimated arrival of 1st Quarter 2027.



Road names for this run of the Trainman Two-Bay Offset Side Hopper are Cambria & Indiana, Central Railroad of New Jersey, Clinchfield, Conrail, Great Northern, and Hojalata Y Lamina S. A. Two-packs of limited-edition collectors series paint schemes for Clinchfield Ballast Service and Cambria & Indiana Bicentennial are also available. MSRP is \$29.95 for single cars, \$89.85 for three-packs, and \$66.95 for the limited edition two-packs. They are estimated to arrive in 4th Quarter 2026.



The road names for this run of the Trainman 40' Plug Door Boxcar are British Columbia Railway, Burlington Northern, Central Soya, Eastern States (Merchants Despatch), Grand Trunk Western, Weldwood of Canada, Ford Vintage Mustang, Ford Western "Built Wild," National Bohemian, and Pabst Blue Ribbon. MSRP for the two Ford cars, National Bohemian, and Pabst is \$34.95. MSRP for the other cars is \$31.95. They are estimated to arrive in 4th Quarter 2026.

Info: shop.atlasrr.com

Bachmann's mid-year announcements for 2026 were timed to coincide with the National Train Show in Chattanooga, TN. The highlighted product announced is the HO scale Siemens Airo Passenger cars with lighted interiors decorated for the Pacific Northwest's Cascades service. Expected to ship in 2027, the Airo trainset will operate in a semi-fixed consist similar to the Talgo articulated trainsets they are replacing. The Bachmann set

will include Business Car #71002, Café Car #73002, Coach #74018, Coach #74004, Coach #74003, and Cab Car #7902 with dual-mode DCC-operated light and sound features.



A new version of the Siemens's Charger, the ALC-42E, will be available in Amtrak Cascades and Phase

VII paint schemes. The ALC-42E has a different rear configuration with a relocated headlight and a socket for use in battery operation with an auxiliary battery coach.



For the pre-20th century hobbyist, Bachmann will be introducing a 19th century 4-6-0

equipped with TCS WOWSound DCC/Sound in late 2027. The four locomotives announced are the Baltimore & Ohio #147 "Thatcher Perkins", Pennsylvania RR #489, and Sierra Railway #3, all equipped with a coal tender. Central Pacific #25 "Yuba" will come with a wood tender.



Transitioning to the modern era, Bachmann will be introducing an HO scale model of the Wabtec ES44AC

locomotive, featuring TCS WOWSound. Road names in the initial run area Canadian National, CSX, CSX #3194 "Spirit of Law Enforcement," CSX #911 "Spirit of our First Responders," and Norfolk Southern. This model will also ship in 2027.

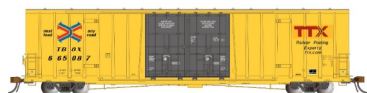


Two Siemens Venture Café Cars with lighted interiors decorated

for Amtrak Midwest are expected to arrive in late 2026. The cars include optional NEM close couplers for use on layouts with broad curves and optional drawbar couplers for prototypical fixed consist operation.



Also part of the announcement is three new American Freedom Train Exhibit Cars with lighted displays. Car #105 contains exhibits from 1856 – 1876, #106 has exhibits from 1876-1896, and #107 covers 1896 – 1916. The cars will ship in late 2026. No MSRP was announced, but previous AFT cars are \$95.00.



The last HO standard rolling stock announcement is for a new car, the National Steel Car 60'-9" Hi-cube boxcar. Shipping in late 2027, the double-plug door car features all-new tooling and will be available in two road numbers each for TTX/TBOX, Canadian Pacific/CP, CSX/CSXT, and Union Pacific/UP.

Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com



Broadway Limited

Imports has announced the DLMX 4219 Auxiliary Water Tender in HO scale. DLMX is the reporting mark used by Friends of

the 4449 and the DLMX 4219 has been behind some of the most iconic steam locomotives currently running, including SP 4449, ATSF 3751, SP 2472, SP&S 700, and most recently CP 2816 on the CPKC "Final Spike Steam Tour" in 2024. BLI's announcement shows the tender in SP Daylight, BNSF "Let's Roll," BNSF pinstripe, Canadian Pacific, Safety Express, Chessie Steam Special, American Freedom Train, Norfolk & Western, the Steam Railroading Institute, and unlettered. A 3D-printed sample of the water tender was on display in the BLI booth at the 2026 National Train Show. MSRP for this model is \$89.99 **with a preorder deadline of October 29th, 2026**. The model is expected to arrive in Spring 2027.

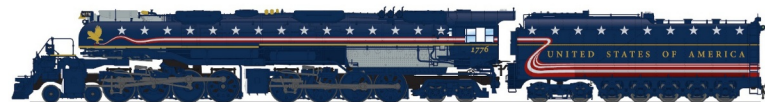


Broadway Limited has announced a new run of F3 and F7 locomotives in HO scale, both in Stealth/No-Sound and Paragon4 Sound/DCC versions. There are a number of combinations announced, with an F3 A/B set where the B-unit is an unpowered dummy (Paragon 4 MSRP: \$429.99, Stealth MSRP: \$329.99), a single A unit (Paragon 4 MSRP: \$329.99, Stealth MSRP: \$229.99), and a single powered B-unit (Paragon 4 MSRP: \$309.99, Stealth MSRP: \$209.99). Road names in this run are ATSF Warbonnet, Central of New Jersey, CSX/YN2, and SP&S.



The F7 has the same combinations as the F3, with a powered A-Unit and unpowered dummy B-unit, a single powered A unit, and a single powered B for some road names. MSRP is the same as the F3s. Road names in this run are C&O, Norfolk Southern Tuxedo, Rock Island, and Western Maryland.

The order deadline for both F3s and F7s is September 24th, 2026, with an estimated arrival of Spring 2027.



Finally, BLI has announced that the current run of HO scale Big Boys will include the AFT 250 and Ornate 1800s paint schemes. **Order deadline is September 17, 2026**, with an estimated arrival of early 2027.

Info: broadway-limited.com



ClassOneModelWorks.com has announced that the arrival date for the HO scale PS 3000CD two-bay covered hoppers has been updated to

August 2026 with the models currently shipping to the USA.
Info: classonemodelworks.com



Home Shops is now shipping a new four-car drawbar connected ore car block decorated

for Andy Dorsch's Mascoutin Valley Railroad. Consisting of MV 335, MV 354, MV 379, and MV 392, the Scale Trains/Fox Valley cars are a limited run of 48 sets. The limited-run model is priced at \$155.99 per 4-car set.

Info: homeshops.net



Kadee's car of the month for April 2026 is a PS-2 2-bay covered hopper decorated for Frisco. With a new date of 12-58, the car is equipped with plain bearing trucks. MSRP is \$46.99.



Kadee has also announced the release of the Kadee 2026 80th Anniversary Car. The 50' PS-1 boxcar features a 9'-6" Superior door.

Info: www.kadee.com



Oak Hill Model Railroad Track Supply has announced new products in the

Roadmaster Detail Series. Now available are HO scale Code 70

resin rail joiners, Code 100 Resin Rail Joiners, Code 100 Heel Blocks, and Turnout Detail Kits. MSRP for 24 Joint Bars is \$4.99, 2 Heel Blocks is \$4.99, and \$14.99 for the Turnout Detail Kit.
Info: ohrtracksupply.com



Rapido is introducing a new run of Budd RDCs, including the RDC-1 in Boston & Maine, CN, MBTA, Metro North, New Haven, New Jersey Transit, Susquehanna, Reading, and VIA, RDC-9s in Boston & Maine, MBTA, CN, and VIA, and four modern RDC-1 and RDC-2 still in use on VIA. MSRP is US\$359.95 for DC/DCC/Sound and US\$249.95 for the DC/silent version.



West Coast RDC's in this release include the

post-collision rebuilt Southern Pacific/Northwestern Pacific SP-10 with only one cab end, the SP-10 in service with the Yreka Western as YW #100, and ATSF RDCs DC-191 and DC-192 in their pre-collision appearance (Rapido released a post-collision version of these two RDCs previously).

MSRP is US\$359.95 for DC/DCC/Sound and US\$249.95 for the DC/silent version of the SP/YW RDC and US\$719.95 for DC/DCC/Sound and US\$499.95 for DC/Silent for the pair of ATSF RDCs.



A CN RDC-1 was rebuilt as track evaluation or rail geometry vehicle #1501. The former RDC-1 has been leased out to other railroads, such as the Iowa Interstate, and used on CN subsidiaries Illinois Central, Wisconsin Central, Elgin, Joliet & Eastern, Grand Trunk, Duluth Winnipeg & Pacific, and the Duluth Missabe and Iron Range. MSRP is US\$379.95 for DC/

DCC/Sound and US\$269.95 for DC/Silent. **The order deadline for all the RDCs is October 16, 2026.**



Rapido has announced that they will be re-releasing the Rio Grande Ski Train as well as releasing some new models that have been part of the Ski Train or the Rio Grande previously. F40PH locomotives 242, 283, and 289 were painted in Rio Grande colors and lettered A, B, and C on the battery boxes. The models feature the new Cannon & Company licensed fan designs. The MSRP for the DC/DCC Ready version is US\$269.95 and the DC/DCC/Sound equipped version is US\$359.95. **Preorders for the F40PHs end January 15, 2027.**



Also announced are former Alco PB-1 steam generator cars #252 and #253, with #253 also available in it's post-1980 appearance with EMD Blomberg-B trucks and post-1987 appearance as a HEP power car. Post Ski-Train the #253 was sold to Algoma Central as AC #78, which was also announced. MSRP for the Steam Generator and HEP cars is \$159.95. **Preorders for the Steam Generator and HEP cars end January 15, 2027.**



Prior to purchasing the F40PHs, among other freight power the Ski Train used Rio Grande GP40 freight locomotives to power the train. Rapido has announced two Rio Grande GP40s #3085 and #3135 to represent the motive power during the 1980s. MSRP for the DC/DCC/Sound units is \$359.95 and DC/Silent is \$249.95. Preorders are being taken through **September 15th, 2026** (note the different date).

Rapido's Tempo Cars have been updated with MoPower capacitor stay-alive circuits. The following railroads are



included in this run: CN (Coach), VIA (Coach, Snack Coach), Ski Train (Coach, Snack Coach, Club Car), Algoma Central (Coach, Snack Coach, Club Car, Café/Bar/Lounge), and Quebec Iron Titanium (Coach). The related Hawker Siddeley RT-85 Mexico Coach has been announced for Nacionales De Mexico in eight road numbers as well as four road numbers for Ferronales. The Ski Train, VIA, and CN Tempo cars are available as singles and three-car sets. MSRP for the three car sets is US\$374.95 and single cars US\$129.95. **Preorders close on January 15, 2027**, with the FNM, NdeM, Algoma Central, and QIT production being conditional on the number of preorders received.



A second run of the HO scale 1937 40' AAR boxcar includes multiple end, roof, and door variations depending on the road name. Railroads in this run are Atlantic Coast Line, Atlantic & East Carolina, Atlanta & West Point RR, Chicago & Eastern Illinois, Canadian National, Central of Georgia, Canadian Pacific (two schemes), Erie, Erie Lackawanna, Louisville & Nashville, Maine Central, Nashville Chattanooga & St Louis (NC&StL), New Haven, Southern Pacific, Texas & Pacific, Union Pacific, and two car styles painted but unlettered. MSRP for single cars is \$54.95 with six-packs priced at \$329.70. **Preorders for the 1937 40' AAR boxcar go through November 16, 2026.**



Rapido has announced a new release of H21 four-bay hoppers, with multiple road names, schemes and versions. H21A is in Norfolk & Western and Pennsylvania. H21E is in Pennsylvania (two colors) and painted/unlettered. The H21G is in Pennsylvania, Penn

Central, Penn Central MOW (black and yellow), and painted/unlettered in red and black. The H5, a rebuild of the H21, comes in Penn Central. MSRP for single cars is \$59.95 with six-packs priced at US\$359.70. **Preorders for the H21 close on November 16th, 2026.**

Rapido has changed the road numbers on two previously announced GP40 locomotives to better match the details on them. SKU#1078021/1078521 is now Milwaukee Road #2014 and 1078038/1078538 is now Wheeling and Lake Erie #303.

Info: www.rapidotrains.com

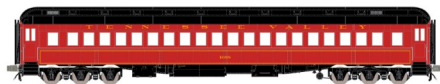
All artwork and graphics are courtesy of Rapido Trains



A new locomotive model in HO scale from **Scale Trains** is the General Electric Dash 8.

Featuring locomotive specific

details such as dynamic brake grids, cab shape, and radiator configurations, the Dash 8 will be available decorated for Chicago & North Western (3 paint schemes), Canadian National (3 versions), CSX (3 paint variations), Rock Island Rail, Ferromex (two versions), Norfolk Southern (with and without roof HVAC), and Union Pacific (3 versions). **Preorders are due by August 31st, 2026** with an estimated arrival date of May 2027. ESU LokSound 5 equipped models are \$329.99 with DC/DCC-ready models priced at \$219.99.



A new run of Fox Valley Models Heavyweight Passenger Cars in HO scale is coming from

ScaleTrains. Designed for modern excursion service, the cars are modeled after classic Pullman coaches of the late 1920s. Now available for preorder are a Southern coach, a Southern coach with CNO&TP sub-lettering, a Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum coach in Colonial Red, and a Southern observation car. Preorders are due by August 31st, 2026, with an estimated arrival date of February 2027. Scale Trains' price is \$92.99 per car.



Also announced by Scale Trains is the next run of Rivet Counter HO scale GE ET44 diesel locomotives. Paint

schemes for this run include BNSF/Heritage III, Canadian National/Aboriginal Affairs, CPKC, CPKC/America's 250th, CPKC/Lord Strathcona, CSX/YN3, Norfolk Southern, and Union Pacific/Building America. Preorders are due by August 31st, 2026, with an estimated arrival date of February 2027. ESU LokSound 5 equipped models are \$314.99 with DC/DCC-ready models priced at \$204.99.

Info: scaletrains.com



New from **Tangent Scale Models** is the HO scale NACC 1979+ Jacketed 33,000-gallon Dual

Diameter Flammable Gas Tank Car. Built by North American Car Corporation between 1963 and 1965. After a series of tank car incidents, the US DOT mandated that the cars must be equipped with either a head shield or external insulated jacket between 1979 and 1980. These DOT-112-J-340-W cars received an external insulated jacket, metal boxes around the bolsters, and shelf couplers. The models are equipped with Kadее scale shelf couplers. Models in this run are the NATX "Black Lease 1981", CITX "Black Restencil" 1987+, AREX "Black Lease Repaint" 1991+, and an unlettered RTR black body and underframe car.

Info: www.tangentscalemodels.com





Walthers has announced a run of three types of WalthersProto

heavyweight passenger cars in HO scale. Based on Pullman and AC&F car designs, the models are equipped with Pullman trucks with 36" RP-25 contour metal wheels and factory installed LED lighting. Two of the cars available for preorder are the 82' 3-2 lounge observation car and the 82' 12-1 sleeper. They are available decorated for Chesapeake & Ohio in both the Green and Blue, Yellow, and Gray schemes, the Milwaukee Road, New York Central, Pennsylvania, Pullman, Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and painted green but unlettered. Current MSRP is \$129.98 each.



The 70' baggage car is equipped with either a clerestory roof or an arched roof and will be

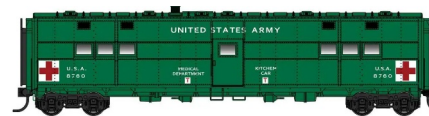
available decorated for Chicago Burlington & Quincy, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Milwaukee Road, Pennsylvania, Santa Fe, Wabash, and painted unlettered in both roof styles. The baggage cars are unlighted. Current MSRP is \$109.98 each.



Also recently announced in the WalthersProto line is a run of 50' Pullman-Standard Troop Sleeper and Bunk Cars, available in both lighted and unlighted versions. Equipped with Allied full-cushion trucks and working diaphragms, they come with detailed interiors. Road names in this run are Pullman U.S. Army, Chesapeake & Ohio, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Detroit & Toledo Shore Line, Erie Lackawanna, Western Maryland, and painted unlettered. Current MSRP for the lighted version is \$79.98, and the unlighted version is \$64.98.



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Finishing up the passenger cars is a Troop Kitchen version of the troop and bunk cars, with cars decorated for Pullman-U.S.

Army, Pullman U.S. Army Transportation Corps, Pullman U.S. Army Hospital, Southern Pacific (MOW), and unlettered, painted green with black roof and trucks. Current MSRP for the lighted version is \$79.98, and the unlighted version is \$64.98.



An HO WalthersProto scale 34' War Emergency Hopper has been announced in two versions, one with wood sides and the other with steel

sides. The wood sided two-bay hopper will be available for Ann Arbor, Chicago Burlington & Quincy, Illinois Central, and Louisville & Nashville. Steel sided hoppers will be available decorated for Santa Fe and Southern. Multiple road numbers are available for each road name. Current MSRP is \$54.98.



Announced in WalthersMainline is a 66' heavy-duty 4-truck flat car. Road names in this run are Conrail, CSX, Norfolk & Western, Denver & Rio Grande Western, TTX, Union Pacific, and Undecorated. Current MSRP is \$49.98



Also in WalthersMainline is the 37' Greenville 100-ton 2-bay hopper. Featuring a die-cast metal underframe, the model is equipped with separate factory applied door and brake details. Road names in this run are Cementos Anahuac, Dolese Bros., Golden West, Granite Rock, Southern, Southern Pacific, Trumix/TCCX, Western Pacific, and Undecorated. Current MSRP is \$39.98.





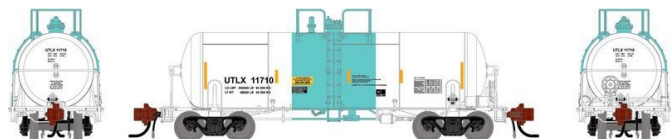
x2

In the Walther'sTrack line, several new foam turnout and crossing roadbed pads have been announced. Included are two-packs of #4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 right- and left-hand turnouts and single 90-, 45-, 30-, and 60-degree crossings. It is compatible with most HO scale cork roadbed profiles. See the Walther's website for current pricing.

All Walther's products in this announcement are expected to arrive in Winter 2027.

Info: www.walthers.com

N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



Athearn has announced preorders for N scale UTC 13K Acid Tank Cars. Appropriate for the era from 1979 to the 2000s, the cars will be available as single cars and in three-packs. Reporting marks for this run are Compass Capital/CMTX, DuPont/DUPX, Kennecott Copper/KCCX, Grupo Mexico/MDCX, Union Tank Car (white)/UTLX and Union Tank Car (Mint Stripe)/UTLX MSRP for the single cars is \$49.99 and \$139.99 for the three-packs.

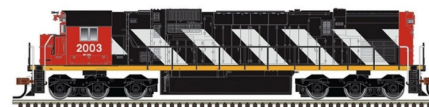
Preorders are due August 31, 2026 with an expected arrival date of November 2027.

Info: athearn.com

Atlas has released the Summer 2026 Atlas Model Catalog, containing the Summer pre-order announcements. **All pre-orders are due September 9th, 2026.** Atlas Silver products are DCC/Sound ready with a speaker installed; Atlas Gold models are equipped with ESU LokSound DCC.



Atlas has announced the Master N scale Alco C-628 locomotive decorated for Chihuahua al Pacifico, Conrail (ex-LV patch), Delaware & Hudson (two schemes), Lehigh Valley, and Monon. Silver MSRP: \$159.95, Gold MSRP: \$279.95. Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.



The Master N scale Alco C-630 locomotive will be available decorated for Conrail (two ex-Reading patches), Canadian National, Reading, Southern Pacific, and Chesapeake & Ohio. Silver MSRP: 159.95, Gold MSRP: \$279.95 Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.



The Atlas Master-series N scale EMD SD35 locomotive is available for preorder decorated for Conrail (ex-Jersey Central patch), Great Lakes Central (two schemes), Jersey Central, Western Maryland, Wisconsin Central, and Left Fork Processing (high nose). Silver MSRP: \$149.95 Gold MSRP: \$269.95. Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.



Road names for the Master N scale Fairbanks-Morse H15-44 locomotive are Jersey Central, Monon, Rio Grande, Kansas City Southern, and FM Demonstrator. The H16-44 locomotive road names are Akron Canton and Youngstown, Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe, Chihuahua al Pacifico, Delaware Lackawanna and Western, and New Haven. Silver MSRP: \$149.95, Gold MSRP: \$269.95. Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.

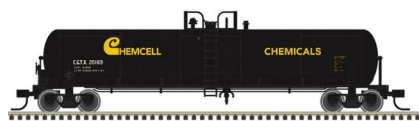


Master N scale General Electric U33B locomotive road names are Conrail, Guilford(B&M), Reading and Northern, and Rock Island. Road names for the GE U36B are CSX (YN2 & MCVX safety

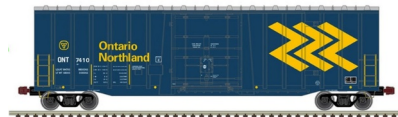
train) and D&H (ex-Conrail). Silver MSRP: \$159.95, Gold MSRP \$279.95. Estimated arrival is 2nd Quarter 2027.



Some road names for the N scale Master Thrall 2743 Gondola come with a cover: David J. Joseph (NUCOR), CEFX, and JTLX. Road names for the Thrall 2743 Gondola without a cover are Atlantic & Western, GE Rail Services/DLRX, NOKL/Gondola Connection, Reading & Northern/CSMX, and Union Pacific. A limited-edition collectors series paint scheme is JLTx with a cover and graffiti weathering. MSRP is \$29.95. Estimated arrival is 1st Quarter 2027.



Road names for the Master 20,700-gallon Tank Car in N scale are American Beef Packers/GATX, Big 4/GATX, ChemCell Chemicals/CGTX, Cotton Belt/SSW, Publishers Paper/GATX, TransGo/TGOX, and Wyandotte/GATX. A limited-edition collectors series paint scheme is Litvak Packing Company/GATX. MSRP is \$39.95. Estimated arrival is 4th Quarter 2026.



Master series NSC 50' 5277 cu. ft. Plug Door Boxcar road names are British Columbia Railway, Canadian National/CNIS, Canadian National/CNIS transitional, Canadian Pacific, Ontario Northland, and Quebec Central. A limited-edition collectors series paint scheme is "CN North America" in gray/white/black. MSRP is \$32.95 with an estimated arrival of 1st Quarter 2027.



The Master-series N scale Norfolk Southern Topgon has been announced with the National Salvage & Service Corp/NSSX patch on a Norfolk Southern paint scheme as well as the G-86R with and without conspicuity stripes and the G-90R, both in Norfolk Southern. A

limited-edition collectors scheme consisting of color plaques on G-90R 30270 is also available. MSRP for single cars is \$31.95 with G-86R and G-90R cars available in three-packs for \$95.85. The estimated arrival is 1st Quarter 2027.



Road names for the Master USRA Double-Sheathed Boxcar in N scale are Burlington Northern (ex-NP patch), Lancaster & Chester, Piedmont & Northern, Northern Pacific, Toronto Hamilton & Buffalo, and Wellsville Addison & Galetton. Limited-edition collectors series paint schemes are for Reading (fire car) and Strasburg Railroads. MSRP is \$35.95 for the standard cars and \$37.95 for the two limited edition schemes. Estimated arrival is 1st Quarter 2027.



The N scale Master 50' SIECO Pulpwood Flatcar road names are Atlanta & West Point, Belfast & Moosehead Lake, Burlington Northern, Chihuahua-Pacific Railway, Maine Central, Seaboard Coast Line, and Trailer Train. MSRP for the Pulpwood cars is \$32.95. Estimated arrival is 1st Quarter 2027.



The Trainman Thrall 4750 Covered Hopper will be available for Alaska RR (w/ conspicuity stripes), Ann Arbor RR, BNSF, CIT Group (grey), CSX (w/ conspicuity stripes), First Union Rail/GROX (w/ conspicuity stripes), SOO, and The Andersons/AEX (w/ conspicuity stripes). MSRP is \$27.95 with an estimated arrival of 1st Quarter 2027.



The Trainman 70-ton Ore Car road names are Akron Canton & Youngstown, Becker Sand & Gravel, Canadian Pacific (Multi-Mark), Chicago & Northwestern, Lake Superior & Ispeming (w/ conspicuity stripes), Missabe (Quad w/ conspicuity stripes), and Omaha Lincoln & Beatrice.

As well as singles, the Lake Superior & Ishpeming, Missabe, and Canadian Pacific ore cars are available in six-packs. MSRP for singles is \$20.95 with the six-packs priced at \$125.70. They are estimated to arrive 1st Quarter 2027.

Info: shop.atlasrr.com



On display at the **Bachmann** booth in the National Train Show were two samples of an N scale 19th Century 4-6-0, one with a

wood tender the other with a coal tender. Roadnames in this run will be B&O #174 "Thatcher Perkins," Pennsylvania #417, and Union Pacific #1010 equipped with coal tenders and Central Pacific #57 "Bison" with a wood tender. Equipped with Tsunami2 DCC Sound, MSRP will be \$439.00. The arrival date was not specified.



Announced at the show was an N scale Alco 2-6-0, modeled after locomotives developed in the 1920s.

DCC ready with a NEXT18 socket, the road names in this release are Delaware Lackawanna & Western, Pennsylvania Railroad, Southern Railway, and Union Pacific. They will be shipping in 2027.



Also in N scale is an EMD GP9, equipped with a SoundTraxx Econami DCC/sound decoder.

Road names in this run will be Canadian National, Norfolk & Western, Pennsylvania Railroad, and Santa Fe. Shipping in 2027, no MSRP has been specified yet.



The final announcement in the 2026 Mid-Year catalog in standard N scale rolling stock is a short body bay window transfer

caboose. Road names in this new product release are Missouri Pacific, CSX, Southern Pacific #1, and Union Pacific. The Missouri Pacific pioneered this design as a full-service road caboose, but several railroads have used the design or a similar one for their transfer cabooses and shoving platforms. The models will ship in late 2027.



Bachmann has available an N scale streamlined Pennsylvania K4

Pacific with Econami DCC/Sound. The 4-6-2 streamlining was designed by C. Louis Otto, an associate of Raymond Loewy. Four road numbers are available with an MSRP of \$527.00.



Also available are Fleet of Modernism passenger cars in N scale, including Coach Cars #4264,

4269, and 4296, and the Metropolitan View observation car with an MSRP of \$69 each.

Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com



Broadway Limited has announced that it will be producing the Union Pacific observation car Kenefick and the track inspection/theater car Fox River in N scale. The

Kenefick is being released in six different versions, with the UP shield on the rear, the Big Boy Tour drumhead, the George

Bush Funeral Train drumhead, the Spirit of Union Pacific drumhead, the Missouri Bicentennial drumhead, and in primer gray. MSRP for the Kenefick is \$79.99. **The order deadline for this car is November 20th, 2026**, with an estimated arrival of Spring 2027.



The Track Inspection Car Fox River is being released in three versions, the Chicago & North Western prior to the merger, Union Pacific from 1995-2006, and 2006 to present appearance. MSRP for the Fox River is \$89.99. **The order deadline for this car is December 17th, 2026**, with an estimated arrival of Summer 2027.



Multiple versions of the UP 4-8-8-4 Big

Boy will be in a new run of the N scale version of this locomotive. Available with either No-Sound/DCC ready with Next-18 socket or Paragon4 Sound/DC/DCC/Smoke installed, the Big Boy versions included the 250th Celebration West Coast Tour appearance, the 250th Celebration East Coast Tour appearance, the 2025 appearance with smoke deflectors, two road numbers in the 1941 appearance with as-delivered aftercooler and 25-C-100 coal tender, and two different road numbers in the 1944 appearance with a Wilson aftercooler and 25-C-400 coal tender. Two fantasy schemes, an AFT 250 appearance and an ornate 1800s fantasy paint will also be part of the run. MSRP is \$599.99 with Paragon4 and \$499.99 for the No-Sound/DCC ready version. **The order deadline for the Big Boy is November 20th, 2026** with an estimated arrival of Summer 2027.

Info: broadway-limited.com

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Kato USA has announced a new model of the Black Beetle jet powered Budd

RDC in N scale. Modified with jet engines off a B-36 Peacemaker bomber mounted to its roof and a streamlined nose, the New York Central Railroad's M-497, reached a speed of 183mph on July 23, 1966. Most versions are scheduled for release in February 2027 with DCC and sound scheduled for March 2027. Depending on the features included, the MSRP is between \$130.00 and \$345.00.



Kato USA has added to new N scale ES44AC paint schemes to their lineup, the CN #1776

"Screaming Eagle" and CN #2026 "Air Force One" paint schemes. MSRP for each is \$160 DC/only, \$260 DCC, and \$360 DCC/Sound.



Also announced by Kato USA is the California Zephyr, a shared effort train between the CB&Q, D&RGW, and Western Pacific Railroads running between San Francisco,

California and Chicago, Illinois. Kato has announced an N scale starter set consisting of a CB&Q E8A #9940A, 10-6 Sleeper Car D&RGW #1133 "Silver Creek," Dome Coach Car CB&Q #4722 "Silver Stirrup," and Dome Observation Car WP #882 "Silver Planet." MSRP depends on what features the E8A and cars are equipped with. The DC-only version is \$190.00, with preinstalled lights is \$235.00, With preinstalled DCC is \$290.00, Preinstalled DCC and lights is \$335.00, preinstalled sound is \$390.00, and preinstalled sound and lights is \$435.00. DCC is included with sound.



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A CB&Q California Zephyr 8-car add-on set will also be available, including the Baggage Car CB&Q #904 "Silver Buffalo," Dome Coach Car WP #813 "Silver Palace," 10-6 Sleeper Car CB&Q #425 "Silver Butte," Diner WP #841 "Silver Plate," Dome Coach Car WP #815 "Silver Schooner," Dome Buffett Lounge Car WP #832 "Silver Hostel," 10-6

Sleeper Car WP #841 "Silver Arroyo," and 16-section sleeper car WP #871 "Silver Palm." MSRP for the standard cars is \$250.00, with preinstalled lights \$370.00.



A second CB&Q E8A is available separately, #9942B. The base model MSRP is \$120.00, with preinstalled DCC it is \$220.00, and with preinstalled DCC/Sound it is \$320.



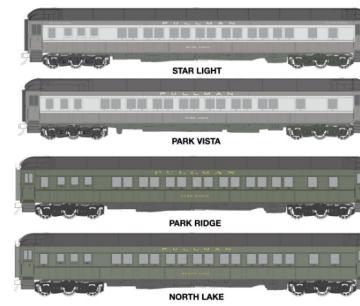
To model the D&RGW portion of the California Zephyr, a PA-1/PB-1 two locomotive set is decorated in the 4-stripe D&RGW scheme. PA-1 is #6001, the PB-1 is unnumbered. MSRP is \$200.00 for the base models, \$400.00 with preinstalled DCC, and \$600.00 with preinstalled DCC/sound. D&RGW PA-1 #6003 is also available separately

with the base model MSRP \$110.00, with preinstalled DCC \$210.00, and with preinstalled DCC/sound \$310.00.

For the Western Pacific portion, an F3A/F3B two locomotive set with WP #801 and 801B will be available. MSRP for the



base locomotives will be \$190.00, with preinstalled DCC \$390.00, and with preinstalled DCC/sound \$590.00. A separate unnumbered WP F3B will also be available with a base MSRP of \$99.00, preinstalled DCC \$199.00, and preinstalled DCC/sound \$299.00. Info: katousa.com



Railsmith has announced a series of Pullman Pool sleeping and parlor cars in N scale. The first cars available are the sleepers Park Vista, Park Ridge, North Lake and Star Light. As pool cars maintained by Pullman, they could appear on any train depending on need. Additional information on the Pullman Pool can

be found at lowellsmith.net/pullman-pool-a-concise-story. Info: lowellsmith.net



Scale Trains has added three new paint schemes to its upcoming run of N scale GE ES44 GEVO

locomotives (*July 2026 MRH News*). The three new paint schemes are the Florida East Coast #250 in an America 250 paint scheme and two Norfolk Southern Landmark Series locomotives, the Chicago and Altoona. Scale Trains price is \$149.99 for DC/DCC-Ready and \$254.99 for DCC/Sound equipped.

Info: scaletrains.com

STRUCTURES & SCENIC SUPPLIES



ABR Model Works has introduced several new products recently, including the reintroduction of Slim's Warehouse in HO scale. The warehouse is a background building flat

that can be expanded with optional panels to make it taller, longer, and wider. Measuring 12" wide and 0.827" deep, the two-story building includes 62 3D-printed detail parts. The warehouse is priced at \$89.99.



A lighted burn barrel kit uses a 9V battery for a realistic glow in HO and N scales. The kit contains a painted illuminated 55-gallon style burn barrel, flickering orange LED, 9V battery connection with on/off button, and small sections of heat shrink tubing. The wiring is not DCC track power compatible. Both scales are \$16.99.



A variety pack of wooden crates is available in either HO or N scale. Included are 12 small crates, 10 medium crates, 8 large crates, and 4 extra large crates. HO scale is \$26.99, N scale is \$17.99. abrmodelworks.com



Artitec has announced a new set of HO scale figures, "Miners at the end of the shift." Consisting of four 3D-printed figures, the figures are hand-painted in subdued tones. MSRP is €18.90.



A similar set of three "Miners in the shaft 80s-90s" is available for €19.90.



A Farmall C row crop tractor is now available. Constructed of hand painted resin and photo etchings, it is priced at €36.10. Info: www.artitecshop.com/en

Atlas has released the Summer 2026 Atlas Model Catalog, containing the Summer pre-order announcements. **All pre-orders are due September 9th, 2026.**



A Mobile office container in both N and HO scales is available in paint

schemes for BNSF, Canadian Pacific, Conrail(CSAO), RJ Corman, Sperry Rail Services, Sentag, Eagle Leasing, and Union Pacific. MSRP for the N scale model is \$24.95 and the HO scale is \$29.95. Estimated arrival is 1st Quarter 2027.



A new run of the N scale Ford F-250/F-350 Trucks will be available as a two-

vehicle F-250 club cab pickup/F-350 dually utility bed set in the following colors and paint schemes: White, Red, Burlington Northern, Canadian Pacific Rail Systems, Norfolk Southern, Providence & Worcester, Santa Fe, and Union Pacific. With an estimated arrival of 1st Quarter 2027 the MSRP for the two-vehicle set is \$39.95.

Info: shop.atlasrr.com

New from **Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains** is the HO scale Block Station and outhouse kit, part of the Just the Basics line. Modeled after a structure in Gainesville, NY, the Block Station



and outhouse are constructed of laser-cut wood with injection molded windows and chimney. The Block Station measures 2 3/4" x 1 3/4" and the outhouse measures 5/8" x 5/8". The kit is priced at \$24.95.

Info: besttrains.com



DigCom Designs has released an America 250 Commemorative Trailer in N and HO scales.

Downloaded as a PDF file to the modeler's computer, the design is printed on heavy paper, cut out, folded, and assembled into the model. MSRP is \$6.95 for the download.



Also released by DigCom is a Large Industrial Crate Load in N and HO scales. Representing oversized machinery and equipment flatcar loads, it includes eight individually designed shipping crates. MSRP for both scales is \$5.95. www.digcomdesigns.net

SierraWest has released a new craftsman kit, Crawford & Ernst at the Riverfront, in HO and O scales. A water adjacent structure, the kit consists of a laser-cut wall base to which stripwood is applied and both laser-cut and 3D-printed components and details are added. When ordering the modeler selects if they want the kit to include a 1920s Mack AB utility truck with canoe or a 1930s Chevy tow truck. The vehicles are also available separately. The O scale diorama measures approximately 16 x 19" with a price of \$425, and the HO scale diorama measures approximately 9 x 11" with a price of \$365. A separate seven figure set designed to go with the kit is available for \$50 in both HO and O scales.

Info: sierrawestscalemodels.com



Trainworx has released a craftsman kit of an N scale Yellow Freight System Kenworth K100 63" BBC day cab cab-over-engine semi-truck. The kit is limited to one per purchaser and requires some advanced modeling skills. It is priced at \$39.95.

Info: train-worx.com



Walthers has announced an HO scale gazebo kit. Molded in gray plastic with wood grain detail, the finished model measures 3-14/25 x 2-1/4 x 2-13/16". See Walthers' website for current pricing.

Info: walthers.com



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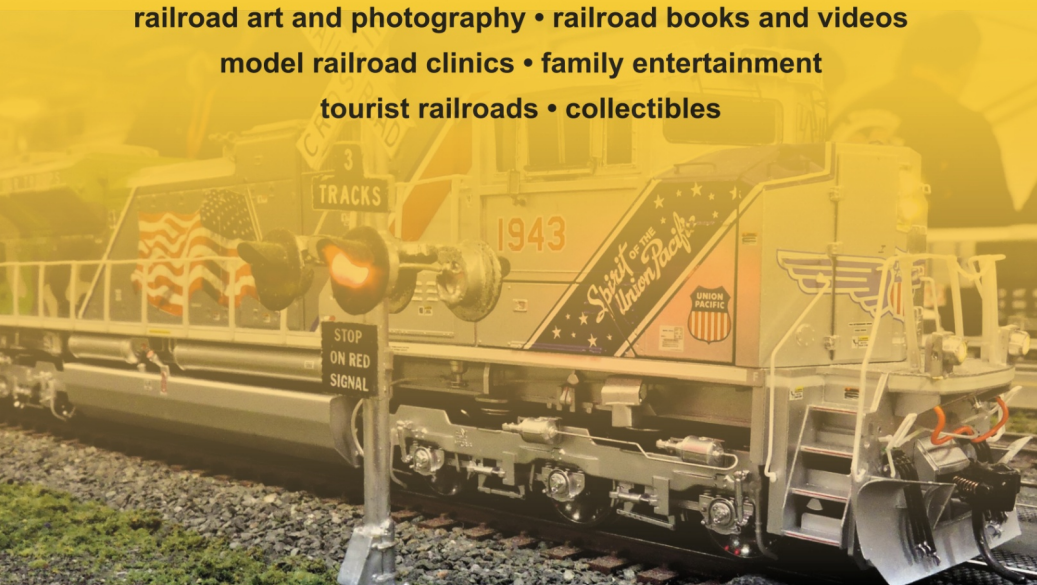
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ONLINE, Zoom & YouTube, Wednesdays at 7pm Eastern. New Tracks Modeling Live Weekly

Info: newtracksmodeling.com

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCMAVhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA

ONLINE, Zoom, Second Tuesdays, 8pm Eastern. "Off the Beaten Track" featuring Narrow Gauge layouts, clinics, and manufacturers.

Info: groups.io/g/NNG

ILLINOIS, CALEDONIA, Monthly Meetings of the Rock River Valley Division, Midwest Region. Paulson's Agriculture Museum of Argyle, 6950 Belvidere Rd. See Events page on website for dates.

Info: rrvd-nmra.com



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August – September 2026

CANADA, ALBERTA, CALGARY, September 19-20, 2026. Heritage Park 40th Anniversary Railway Days. 1900 Heritage Dr. S.W.
Info: heritagepark.ca

CANADA, ONTARIO, WATERLOO, August 29-30, 2026. Waterloo Railway Exposition, Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton Waterloo St. Jacobs, 55 Benjamin Rd.
Info: waterloorailexpo.ca

CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO, September 9-13, 2026. Pacific Southwest Region "All Aboard for 2026" Model Train Convention. Doubletree by Hilton Hotel San Diego-Mission Valley, 7450 Hazard Center Dr.
Info: www.sandiegodivision.org/index.php/convention-2026

IDAHO, CALDWELL, September 19-20, 2026. Southwest Idaho Train Show, sponsored by the Caldwell Model Railroad Club & Historical Society. O'Connor Field House, 2207 Blaine Street.
Info: sites.google.com/view/caldwell-model-railroad-club/train-show

IOWA, BOONE, September 19-20, 2026. 2026 Boone Pufferbilly Days Train Show. Boone County Fairgrounds Community Building, 1601 Industrial Park Rd.
Info: boonecountychamber.com/pufferbilly-days

MASSACHUSETTS, TAUNTON, September 20, 2026. 26th Annual Model Train Show, sponsored by the Old Colony Model Railroad Club. Taunton Inn & Conference Center, 700 Myles Standish Blvd, Route 495 Exit 25.
Info: trainshows.net/event/1767/old-colony-railroad-club-annual-model-train-show

MISSOURI, INDEPENDENCE, September 17-19, 2026. 2026 Brass Train Show. Missouri Model Railroad Museum, 312 W. Pacific Avenue.
Info: showmerails.org/2026-train-shows/2026-brass-train-show

MISSOURI, ST LOUIS, August 29, 2026. Railroad Swap Meet, sponsored by the Boeing Employees' Railroad Club – St. Louis. Greensfelder Recreation Complex at Queeny Park, 550 Wiedman Rd.
Info: www.berrc-stl.com/V3.0p/index.html

MISSOURI, SPRINGFIELD, September 11-12, 2026. Ozarks Model Railroad Association Train Show, Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, E-Plex West Hall, 3001 North Grant Ave.
Info: omraspringfield.org/train-show

NEW JERSEY, MAGNOLIA, September 26, 2026. Magnolia Train Show. Magnolia Community Center, 425 W. Brooke Ave.
Info: www.facebook.com/StrasburgModelRailroadNJ

OHIO, PLAIN CITY, September 12, 2026. Plain City Train Show, sponsored by the Buckeye TTOS Train Club. Der Dutchman, 445 S Jefferson Ave.
Info: ttos-buckeye.org

PENNSYLVANIA, ALLENWOOD, August 30, 2026. 50th Annual Train Show & Sale, Sponsored by Central PA Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. Warrior Run Fire Department Social Hall, Second St.
Info: www.centralpanrhs.org

PENNSYLVANIA, HAMBURG, September 18-20, 2026. Anthracite Railroad Modelers and Model Railroad Meet XIV. Reading Railroad Heritage Museum, 500 South 3rd St.
Info: www.facebook.com/groups/624611144335704

PENNSYLVANIA, KUTZTOWN, September 12, 2026. Flash Train Meets. Renninger's Farmers, Flea, and Antique Market, 740 Noble St.
Info: renningers.net/event-category/kutz-events

SOUTH CAROLINA, ROCK HILL, September 26, 2026. Carolina Train Shows. Student Activity Center, 611 Myrtle Drive.
Info: carolinatrainshow.com/#shows

WASHINGTON, BATTLE GROUND, September 26, 2026. Southwest Washington Model Railroaders Train Club Swap Meet. Battle Ground High School Gymnasium, 250 N Parkway. Exit 11 Battle Ground Highway/SR502 east 8 miles to BGHS – don't let GPS fool you.

Info: www.facebook.com/groups/346730165469/posts/10164546463490470

Future 2026 by location

CANADA, ALBERTA, EDMONTON, October 3-4, 2026. 2026 Greater Edmonton Model Train Show. Edmonton Expo Centre, 7515 – 118 Avenue.

Info: www.mmrf.ab.ca/greater-edmonton-model-train-show

CANADA, ALBERTA, EDMONTON, October 24, 2026. Mainline Model Railroaders Fellowship Fall Swap Meet. Central Lions Seniors Recreation Centre, Atrium & Auditorium, 11113 – 113 Street.

Info: mmrf.ab.ca/node/15

CANADA, ONTARIO, MARYHILL, October 17, 2026. Waterloo Region Model Railway Club fall open house. 1589 Maryhill Road (Woolwich Township Road #56).

Info: www.waterlooregionmodelrailwayclub.ca/open-house

CANADA, ONTARIO, MISSISSAUGA, October 3-4, 2026. Credit Valley Free-mo Club autumn run weekend (open to the public). Malta Band Club, 5745 Coopers Avenue.

Info: cvrfreemo.wixsite.com/creditvalleyfreemo/fall-operating-weekend

CANADA, ONTARIO, ST CATHARINES, October 25, 2026. Fall Niagara Model Railway Show. Merritton Community Centre, 7 Park Avenue.

Info: nfrm.ca/events.php

CANADA, SASKATCHEWAN, MOOSE JAW, November 7-8, 2026. Moose Jaw Thunder Creek Model Railroad Show. Moose Jaw Convention Center, 250 Thatcher Dr E.

Info: www.facebook.com/groups/562094199802859

CALIFORNIA, CENTRAL COAST, October 2-4, 2026. 16th Annual Central Coast Railroad Festival. Multiple Locations, San Luis Obispo and Norther Santa Barbara Counties.

Info: www.ccrf.com

CALIFORNIA, VISALIA, October 7-10, 2026. 2026 Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society Convention. Wynham Visalia, 9000 W Airport Dr.

Info: sphts.org/convention

COLORADO, LONGMONT, December 11-13, 2026. Boulder Model Railroad Club 49th Annual Model Train EXPO 2026. Boulder County Fairgrounds, 9595 Nelson Rd.

Info: www.bmrconline.org

COLORADO, GREELEY, October 16-18, 2026. Colorado Rail Proto Meet. Island Grove Event Center, 421 N 15th Ave.

Info: corpm.org

FLORIDA, OCALA, October 15-18, 2026. Iron Horse, the 2026 Sunshine Region Convention. Ocala Hilton, 3600 SW 36th Ave.

Info: www.nmrasunshineregion.org

INDIANA, FORT WAYNE, November 21, 2026. Three Rivers Division of the NMRA Train Show and Swap Meet. Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, 4000 Parnell Ave.

Info: 3riverstrainshow@gmail.com

IOWA, IOWA CITY, October 18, 2026. Iowa City Train Show, sponsored by the Hawkeye Model Railroad Club. Johnson County Fairgrounds, 4261 Oak Crest Hill Rd S (old Hwy 218).

Info: www.hawkeyemodelrrclub.com



MARYLAND, LINTHICUM, October 1-4, 2026. Mid-Atlantic RPM. Doubletree by Hilton at BWI.

Info: www.marpm.org

MARYLAND, TIMONIUM, October 31-November 1, 2026. The Great Scale Model Train Show. Maryland State Fairgrounds, 2200 York Rd.

Info: gsmts.com

MASSACHUSETTS, SOUTHBRIDGE, October 15-18, 2026. Eyes on the NER, Northeastern Regional Convention. Wellsworth Hotel, 14 Mechanic St.

Info: conventions.nernmra.org/home/home-2026

MICHIGAN, BELLEVILLE, November 22, 2026. Southeast Michigan Model Railroad Show and Sale presented by Belleville Rails on Wheels and Division 6 NCR, NMRA. Wayne County Community College's Ted Scott Campus, 9555 Haggerty Rd.

Info: www.railsonwheels.com/index.shtml#trainshow

MICHIGAN, TAYLOR, October 11, 2026. Taylor Town Train Show and Sale. 22525 Ecorse Rd.

Info: www.facebook.com/james.leland.355111/posts/taylor-town-train-show-and-sale-sunday-february-15th-march-15th-april-12th-octob/841310192235074

MICHIGAN, ZEELAND, October 8-10, 2026. Grand Rails 2026. North Central Regional Convention. Howard Miller Community Center, 14 South Church St.

Info: grandrailsdiv4.com

MISSOURI, KIRKWOOD, October 3, 2026. 35th Annual Greater St. Louis Metro Area Train Show, sponsored by the Mississippi Valley N Scalers. Kirkwood Community Center, 111 S. Geyer Road.

Info: mvns.railfan.net

NORTH CAROLINA, CONCORD, October 24, 2026. Carolina Train Shows. Hilton Garden Inn, 7831 Gateway Lane.

Info: carolinatrainshows.com/#shows

OHIO, CAMBRIDGE, October 25, 2026. Eighth Annual NMRA Buckeye Division Train Show. Pritchard Laughlin Center, 7033 Glenn Hwy.

Info: www.nmrabuckeyedivision.org/train-show

OHIO, COSHOCTON, October 17, 2026. Inaugural Coshocton Train Show 2026. Coshocton County Career Center, 23640 Airport Road.

Info: www.coshoctontrainshow.com

OHIO, DAYTON, November 7-8, 2026. 50th Original Dayton Train Show. Montgomery County Fairgrounds and Events Center, 645 Infirmary Road.

Info: www.daytontrainshow.com

OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA CITY, November 14-16, 2026. 49th Annual OKC Train Show. Bennett Event Center, Oklahoma State Fairgrounds, 3101 Gordon Cooper Blvd.

Info: okctrainshow.com

PENNSYLVANIA, DUNMORE, October 18, 2026. The Great Northeast Model Train Show. Holiday Inn Scranton East, 200 Tigue St.

Info: bernies-model-railroad-shop.square.site

SOUTH CAROLINA, COLUMBIA, October 17, 2026. Carolina Train Shows. Seven Oaks Park, 200 Leisure Lane.

Info: carolinatrainshows.com/#shows

VIRGINIA, VIRGINIA BEACH, October 15-18, 2026. Tracks to Tidewater, 2026 Mid-Eastern Regional Convention. Holiday Inn, Virginia Beach, 5655 Greenwich Rd.

Info: mer-nmra.com/savethedate/index.html

WISCONSIN, MILWAUKEE, November 7-8, 2026. Milwaukee Trainfest. Baird Center, 400 W Wisconsin Ave.

Info: www.eventcreate.com/e/trainfest-2026-reg ■





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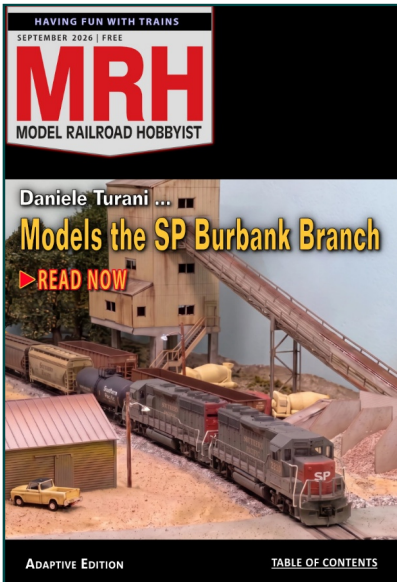
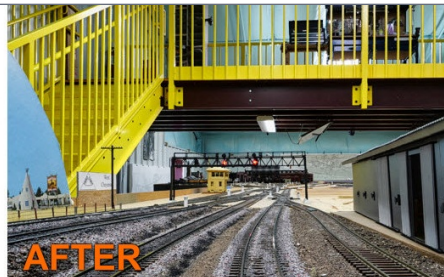
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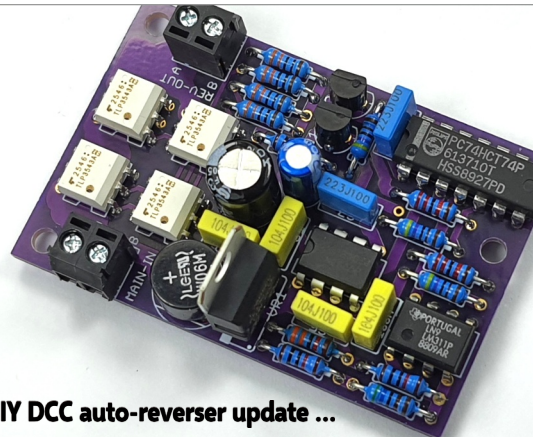
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