

HAVING FUN WITH TRAINS

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MRH

MODEL RAILROAD HOBBYIST

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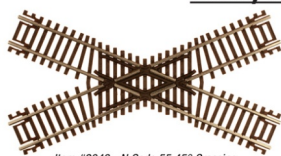
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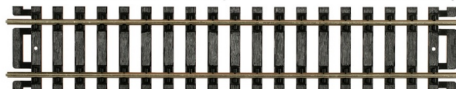
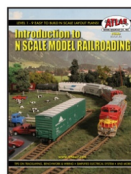
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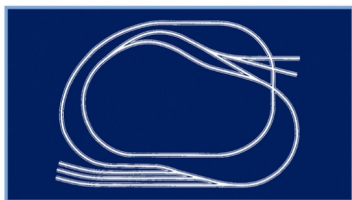


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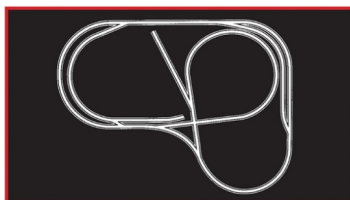
N CODE 80: N-7 TWICE AROUND VIA "UP & OVER"

From Book #6: Introduction to N Scale Model Railroad

Minimum Table Size Required: 32" x 45"

Products Required: Straight sections, radius sections, turnouts, a crossing, bumpers, insulated joiners and terminal joiners, necessary electrical components

If you enjoy watching a long train work its way up and down the grades of a long winding main line, the N7 is the layout for you. On this layout, yard tracks are available for breaking up and storing long trains, and a passing track with two industry spurs is available to provide additional operating diversions.



HO CODE 83/100: HO-7 THE JUNIOR PRETZEL

From Book #9: Beginner's Guide to HO Model Railroad

Minimum Table Size Required: 6' x 8'

Products Required: Straight sections, radius sections, Snap-Switches, reraliers, terminal sections, a crossing, bumpers, rail joiners and the necessary electrical components

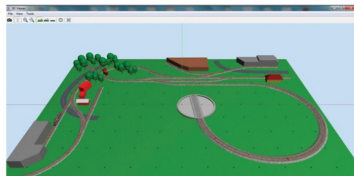
Since it is built on an extended platform, there are many possibilities with the HO-7; such as longer runs, longer trains and more realistic operations.

Atlas Track Planning Software

Atlas is proud to offer Atlas Track Planning Software to help you design your dream layout. This software allows you to create and customize a layout, view it as a 3D model and then generate a shopping list to make your dream layout a reality. Note - this software works on Windows OS only.

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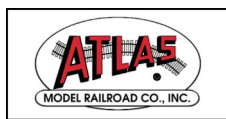


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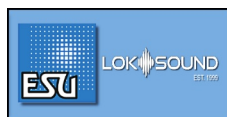
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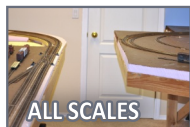
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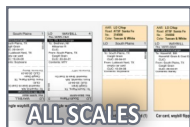
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JOE FUGATE



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Southern Pacific's Burbank Branch

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First Look: Rapido's Santa Fe CF7

JAMES REGIER



Savvy Modeler online: Switching a small shunting layout

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September 2026 news and events

JEFF SHULTZ and RICHARD BALE

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PUBLISHER'S MUSINGS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026

JOE FUGATE: WHAT DOES HAVING FUN
WITH TRAINS LOOK LIKE?



I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY SIMULATION.

That's what drew me to computers – the realization that I could simulate reality inside a machine.

But long before I touched a keyboard, I was watching the real thing unfold on the hillside behind our house in Oregon.

I grew up next to the Southern Pacific Siskiyou line during the 1950s and '60s. Long, heavy lumber trains would grind upgrade behind our place, diesel lashups in Run 8, laboring against gravity and tonnage. The sound was unmistakable – that deep, throaty roar of multiple EMD prime movers working in unison, exhaust stacks belching hot air as the engines strained.

Then they'd come back down the grade, dynamic brakes whining as they fought to keep all that weight under control. The hum of those grids converting momentum into heat was a sound you felt as much as you heard.

I'd stand there for hours, watching those trains snake through the curves, counting cars, memorizing road numbers, absorbing every detail of how real railroads worked.

Rolling the clock back a bit at – at ten, I got a Lionel O-27 three-rail trainset. It was magic – for several years. I'd run those trains in circles on the living room floor, imagining grand adventures and distant destinations. The transformer's hum, the ozone smell from

the track, the way the locomotive headlight cut through the darkness when I'd turn off the lights – it all felt real to a kid.

Then at thirteen, I stumbled into a hobby shop and saw HO scale models for the first time. The fidelity stopped me cold. I was mesmerized: these weren't toy trains. They were models of the actual SP cars and locomotives I'd been watching my whole life – the same paint schemes, the same details down to the grab irons and brake wheels.

I was hooked. Instantly and completely.

By my teens, railroading was in my blood. It wasn't just a passing interest anymore – modeling it was a passion and I went looking for fellow model railroaders.

When I was in high school, the janitor at our school was really into building model trains. Tom the janitor and I struck up a friendship, and it was the first time an adult felt like a peer to me.

Tom loved the modeling – the building, the detailing, the craftsmanship. He had zero interest in operating. Didn't matter to me. I had found a kindred spirit. We'd both take breaks and salivate over the models in the latest issue of *Model Railroader*.

Those were some great times.

For myself, though, I've never been into diorama modeling. I don't want trains sitting around looking pretty on a shelf or under glass. I want them to move, to do something, to perform a purpose. I want them to switch cars, make up trains, transport people and freight, to operate with purpose – just like the real thing.

Once I learned how real trains operated – I started railfanning in earnest, watching real railroaders at work. I watched them puzzle out how to switch an industry. I watched them fight sticky couplers and set car brakes. What I saw, I wanted to replicate as realistically as possible on my own layout.

That led me straight into prototype operation – the ultimate simulation, as far as I'm concerned. It's an important pinnacle of the hobby for me.



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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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Everything else in the hobby became a necessary prerequisite to reach that point: something I could operate realistically, with the ambiance of great scenery and realistic weathering to banish the plastic toy-train look. The benchwork, the track, the wiring, the structures, the scenery – all of it serves operation for me.

First came momentum and transistor throttles, which gave the trains a feeling of mass. You weren't just rotating a knob and watching the train instantly accelerate; you were handling something that behaved like it weighed tons.

The train would slowly build speed, then take time to coast to a stop. It felt real.

Then along came DCC, and suddenly I could run trains without the constant mental overhead of cab control – no more thinking “where is it getting its power now?” or worrying about block boundaries

and toggle switches. No more carefully tracking which cab was controlling which section of track.

DCC freed me to focus on the train itself, on the switching moves, and on *the operation*. It was liberating.

Early DCC sound felt like a sideshow at first, honestly. You had to deliberately make the train perform, constantly thinking, "What sound should it be making next?" Pressing function buttons to trigger horns, bells, and prime mover notches. It became another distraction from running the train realistically, another layer of manual management.

But then things evolved. Technology advanced rapidly. Realistic braking was added to DCC sound decoders. The ProtoThrottle arrived with its intuitive controls that mimicked real locomotive controls.

Sound became responsive rather than manual – the decoder would automatically ramp the prime mover sounds based on your throttle input and load.

Momentum gave me the sense I was handling a locomotive with real mass and inertia. Suddenly the sound was telling me what my throttle settings were making the locomotive do, not the other way around. It became feedback, not a canned performance.

The perfect immersive simulation had arrived. I felt like I was in the cab acting as the engineer.

That's what makes model railroading fun for me. It's a total blast, in fact. There's nothing quite like the satisfaction of running a prototypical switching operation, throwing hand-laid turnouts, spotting cars exactly where they need to go, and feeling the "weight" of the train through a quality throttle.

But it's how the hobby is fun *for me*. I had learned early on that other kinds of modelers exist – and thank goodness they do.

The hobby is big enough for all of us. I've never forgotten Tom, the janitor. I try to keep that memory in mind every month when I assemble *MRH*.

There are modelers who love scenery. Others are drawn to historical research, collecting, electronics, weathering techniques,



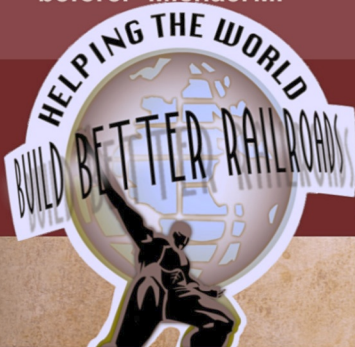
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the social side of operating sessions, the storytelling possibilities of a layout, or simply the meditative pleasure of working with their hands. Some people love all of it. Some love one narrow slice and couldn't care less about the rest.

There's a truth I've come to appreciate: the more you learn about a subject, the more interested you become in it.

That's one reason the *MRH* forum has become such a valuable part of the magazine. It's where modelers broaden their understanding of the hobby's many facets. You find birds of a feather in certain topic threads. You bounce ideas off each other.

The forum helps us become better, more well-rounded modelers. It expands what we see when we look at a layout.

It gives us a vocabulary for appreciating work that isn't aimed at our particular interests.

Which brings me to something I need to say gently: we all (me included) need to manage our rivet-counter impulse.

I'm not talking about accuracy itself. Prototype fidelity is wonderful and rewarding.



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SUMMER
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Dream LOCOMOTIVES

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By Joe Fugate

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Historical research enriches the hobby. Attention to detail produces stunning work.

But there's a line between pursuing your own standards and throwing cold water on someone else's modeling because it doesn't measure up to our own ideals.

When someone dismisses another modeler's work because the paint shade is off, the era is mixed, the track plan is unrealistic, or the detail isn't perfect, they're really saying, "Your fun is wrong." And that's a problem, because it shrinks the hobby instead of expanding it.

Every sincere aspect of model railroading matters to somebody. The person running toy trains on a carpet with their grandkid is having just as valid an experience as the person with a fully signaled CTC dispatcher's panel.

On the *MRH* forum, I see this play out every day. A modeler might jump online to ask about DCC wiring or speed matching, and half an hour later find themselves captivated by a thread on scratch-building wooden trestles, weathering corrugated metal, or painting backdrop clouds.

That's the real power of a shared community. It gives us a place to find kindred spirits – the folks who get excited about the exact same niche we love – while constantly opening windows into areas we might never have explored on our own.

We're all in this together. We're all chasing some version of the same magic – the pleasure of creating a world in miniature and bringing it to life in whatever way speaks to us.

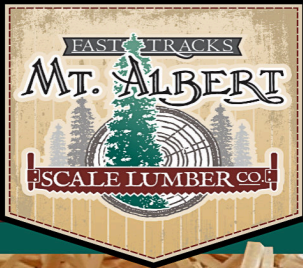
I think about this when I imagine several modelers standing around the same layout.

One person watches a locomotive ease into a siding, absorbed in the realism of the deceleration and the sound of the air brakes.

Another studies the weathering on a boxcar, noticing how the rust streaks follow the panel lines.

A third admires how the carefully selected LED lighting falls across the scenery, creating the sense of a brightly lit warm August day.



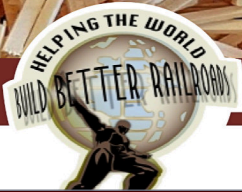
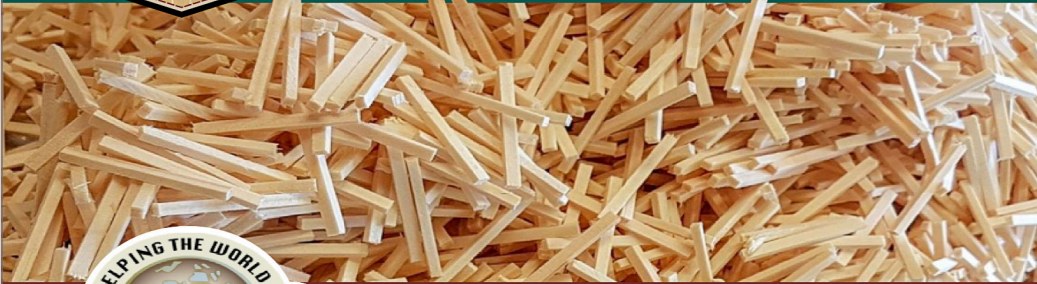


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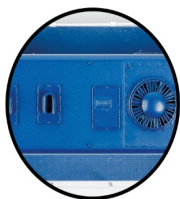
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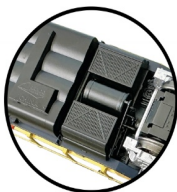


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Someone else thinks about the historical prototype for that industry, remembering a photo from an old railroad magazine.

And another modeler simply enjoys the atmosphere – the comraderie, the satisfaction of seeing it all come together.

They're all looking at the same scene. They're all having fun. And they're all right.

That's the model railroad community at its best. That's what *MRH* tries to celebrate every month.

And that's what I hope you'll take with you, whether you're into operations or structures, prototype accuracy or freelanced fantasy, modern railroading or steam-era nostalgia.

Find your fun. Deepen it. Share it. Learn from others.

And when you see someone enjoying the hobby differently, remember Tom the janitor and me, sitting on a bench during break, eagerly turning magazine pages, each seeing something different in the same models – and both grinning.

That's what *having fun with trains* looks like. ☑

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Best of the

MRH FORUM



Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026

Compiled by **JOE FUGATE**



Best practice: aisle pinch points?

MRH forum member **hbgatsf** (Rick B.) asked when it comes to layout aisle pinch points, what's a best practice recommendation?



Member **BATMAN** (Brent) said the above photo is 17", which works for him since he has a relatively light build. I mentioned that my Siskiyou Line 1 has a 21" pinch point that was about a foot long and it gave no trouble. Folks did have to traverse it single file, however.

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**



1. In this video link posted by **Nick Santo**, Miniprints founder Bernard Hellen shares his figure painting secrets.

Painting figures how-to video

MRH forum member **Nick Santo** recently posted a link to Miniprints founder Bernard Hellen's how to video on painting his 3D printed figures.

Bernard shares his methods of priming and painting these tiny figures and getting realistic coloring and shadows. He also shares his brushes he prefers to use, along with some other tools and materials along the way.

All-in-all, this 1 hour video is a master-class in this kind of detail painting. Very much worth the watch!

Click or tap the link to do a deep dive into expert techniques for getting great looking figures for your layout.

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



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2. MRH forum member **DanSullivan** is looking for some removable scene boards that do not warp. The one above has warped, read below for more.

Removable structure modules: best base material

MRH forum member **DanSullivan** recently asked,

“For making ... small scenes of a foot or two, I like to build them on the bench and make them removable. I've been using either 1 inch foam, or 3/16 foamcore, but neither will stay flat; they always warp despite trying to pre-coat both sides. What's a good material that will hold a flat shape without being permanently mounted to the benchwork?”

Lots of great suggestions given such as Gatorboard, Kerdi board, or 1/8" Baltic Plywood. Read the full thread for details.

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



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Recent photo fun thread

A recent *MRH* forum Photo Fun threads has a great example of how to use AI photo tools to build a custom structure interior photo that rocks!

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

3. MRH forum member **Tim VanMersbergen** built a custom interior image for his cafe structure here (see [4] below). Tim says, "The lighting cuts a lot of the original image detail but it definitely looks like there is something in there now. Going to try a few more."



4. Here is the photo **Tim VanMersbergen** built using AI photo tools for his cafe interior. Using the AI allowed him to custom design precisely the interior photo he needed, making for one of the most realistic looking structure interiors we've ever seen in [3]. Kudos!

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Four-position waybill operation

IN THIS THIRD INSTALLMENT ON CAR CARDS AND WAYBILLS, let's look at the standard evolution of Doug Smith's classic operating concept. This system originally paired a pocketed car card with a two-position waybill that flipped over between moves. Decades ago, the hobby refined that into the four-position waybill: positions 1 and 2 on the front, 3 and 4 on the back, sized so only the active destination shows above the car card pocket.

To see the system in action, follow a covered hopper through a typical cycle. In Position 1, the car begins in staging on a westbound through freight. When the train arrives, the crew sets out the car at the main yard and proceeds westbound.

The yardmaster switches the car into an outbound local, and that crew spots the hopper at the designated on-layout grain facility.

Between sessions, you typically advance the waybill to Position 2. For added realism, you can deliberately leave the waybill unturned for a session, simulating slow unloading so the next crew leaves the car right where it sits.

Once advanced, Position 2 routes the car off-layout to an industry in Massachusetts for reloading. The returning local pulls the empty hopper back to the yard, where the yardmaster blocks it into an eastbound through freight destined for staging.

Between sessions, swap the power and caboose in staging to designate that consist as the next session's westbound through train. Positions 3



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1. Here is a typical four-position waybill. The front of the way bill is on the left and the back of the same waybill is on the right. This is one single waybill insert. See [2] for how it goes into the car card pocket.

2. Here is the same car card shown at two different times as the car proceeds on its journey around the layout. First position 1 is exposed on the waybill. Later, once the waybill is turned, position 2 is exposed.

and 4 handle the remaining legs of the journey in the same logical sequence.

The operational payoff is enormous. A four-position waybill delivers four distinct operating sessions before a car repeats its cycle. When you introduce yard dwell, delayed turns at industry tracks, and the occasional swap of a new waybill, the operational permutations across dozens or hundreds of cars multiply quickly.

The repeating patterns disappear, every session feels fresh and unscripted, and cars move only when prototype logic demands it. ✓

LO	South Plains	1
Via: BN Interchange		
To: South Plains, TX		VA1000
Cargill Grain		
CLIC: 20-04-01		
From: Lubbock Yard, TX		
empty car yard		
CLIC: 10-04-00		
Contents: Soybeans		
Contents: Barley		
CLIC: 20-04-01		
Cargill Grain		
From: South Plains, TX		
CLIC:		
Haverhill Grain & Coal Co		
To: Haverhill, MA		
Via: BN Interchange		
Rte: MIRR-B&M		
LO	WAYBILL	2

Single waybill, front

LO	WAYBILL	4
Rte: MIRR-C&O		
Via: BN Interchange		
To: Brethren, MI		
Hillsamer R		
CLIC:		
From: South Plains, TX		
Cargill Grain		
CLIC: 20-04-01		
Contents: MTY		
Contents: MTY		
From: Haverhill Grain & Coal Co		
To: Haverhill, MA		
CLIC: 20-04-01		
Cargill Grain		
To: South Plains, TX		
Rte: B&M-MIRR		
LO	South Plains	3

Single waybill, back

AAR: LO Chop		
Road: ATSF Santa Fe		
No.: 314590		
Color: Tuscan & White		
LO	South Plains	1
Via: BN Interchange		
To: South Plains, TX		VA1000
Cargill Grain		
CLIC: 20-04-01		
From: Lubbock Yard, TX		
empty car yard		
CLIC: 10-04-00		
Contents: Soybeans		

Car card, waybill inserted (1)

AAR: LO Chop		
Road: ATSF Santa Fe		
No.: 314590		
Color: Tuscan & White		
LO	WAYBILL	2
Rte: MIRR-B&M		
Via: BN Interchange		
To: Haverhill, MA		
Haverhill Grain & Coal Co		
CLIC:		
From: South Plains, TX		
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CLIC: 20-04-01		
Contents: Barley		

Car card, waybill flipped (2)

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WHAT'S NEAT

column



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KEN PATTERSON COVERS THIS MONTH:



- TWO NEW ITEMS FROM BROADWAY LIMITED
- MODELING TREES PATTERSON STYLE
- USING LASERS IN LAYOUT DESIGN
- BACHMANN'S NEW PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENTS



WHAT'S NEAT with Ken Patterson
Making trees – Ken Patterson style!

click to play video

PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF SUPERB MODELS

KEN GOES OUT TO THE BACKYARD TO SHOW OFF AN HO scale Chessie Safety Training car and an N scale version of KCS #4006, the SD70ACe decorated to honor veterans.

In the next segment, Ken discusses tree armatures, the materials that are used, how he stores them, and what's going to happen to some of those that have been outside exposed to the elements since last December.

Moving indoors, Ken shows how he uses lasers to plan the elevations and slopes he's going to need for his double-layer staging tracks on the next version of his basement layout.

Finally, Matt Stern and Tyler Haney drop by via Zoom to discuss the products in Bachmann's recently released mid-year announcements.

resources.bachmanntrains.com/2026Mid-year

Two new items from Broadway Limited



1. Ken takes advantage of the summer weather to photograph this Chessie Safety Center training car CSC-1 in the backyard. Based on the tooling used for the 1947 American Freedom Train models, Broadway Limited has created a series of stand-in Instruction and Exhibit Cars.



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2. In N scale, Ken has Broadway Limited's new model of KCS 4006, the Veteran's Day Salute locomotive. An SD70ACe, it includes Paragon 4 Sound and DCC with Rolling Thunder. Info: broadway-limited.com

Modeling trees



3. Since the fire, many of the trees that were on the layout have been outside exposed to the elements. Despite having natural materials as armatures, they've survived surprisingly well. They were constructed in 1988-89. Most damage to the trees came not from the fire, but from the smoke. If the armatures are to be reused, the foliage will need to be removed.



4. These trees are from Scaletree.com, and survived fire, smoke, and being left outside in pretty good shape. They have wire armatures.



5. This Supertrees-based tree wasn't on the layout, but is one Ken keeps stored for photo shoots.



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6. These trees feature wire armatures, which Ken thinks can make the most realistic trees.



7. 3D-printed and modeling-clay saguaro cactus plants that Ken keeps in case he needs them for a photo shoot involving the desert southwest.



8. These are Grand Central Gem trees that Ken uses on his narrow-gauge modules for photo-shoots. They work well as background trees.

Info: www.grandcentralscenery.com



9. Ken has five HDX totes he picked up at Home Depot to store the trees, and a roller cart to hold them. He keeps the trees sorted by type in separate totes.



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10. Stacked on the roller cart, the totes are easy to store out of the way in a corner of the garage or basement.

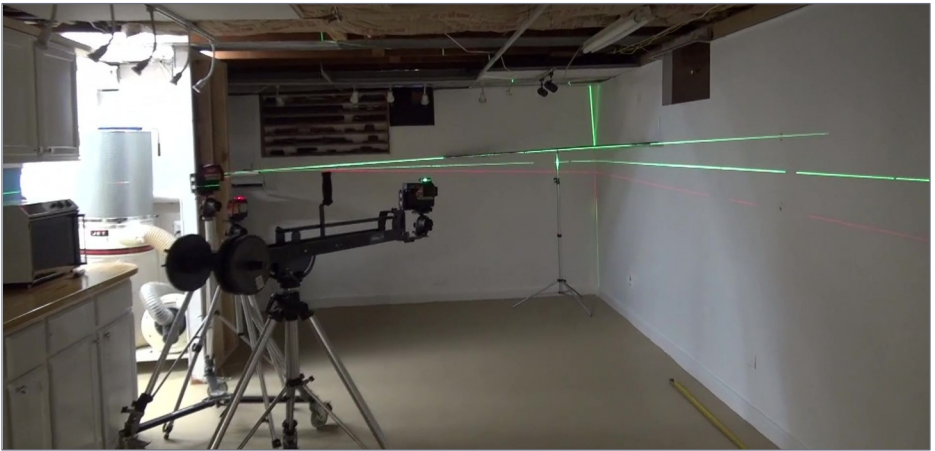
Using lasers in layout design



11. This is the basement before the fire – it started to the right and slightly behind the camera taking this photo.



12. This is that same corner of the basement as it is now, a fresh canvas on which anything can be created. Ken wants the main part of the layout to go down the middle of the room, with access on both sides.



13. Along with the layout down the middle, Ken wants to install two 16" shelves for staging yards along the right side and far wall. He describes how he uses ordinary construction lasers to determine where the shelves will go, based on the grade he wants to use up and down from the main yard. The middle laser is at the mainline rail height.



Bachmann's mid-year product announcements



14. Bachmann's Tyler Haney and Matt Stern join Ken to show him the models that are in the mid-year release announcement.



15. Tyler shows the announcement entry for the upcoming ALC-42E, a modified version of the ALC-42 with an electrical socket that can be attached to an auxiliary battery car. It will be available in Amtrak Cascades and Phase VII paint.



16. Thomas and Percy locomotives are getting refreshed, with redesigned body shells, new faces, and front couplers. The eyes will still move. A new locomotive, Diesel 10 with the pinchy claw, is also in development. They haven't determined how the claw will move, just that it will. Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com

Click the link at the beginning of this article to see the video, which features more information on the trees Ken uses and how they're made, a great deal of information on how to use laser levels in layout design and construction, and many more products coming from Bachmann in several scales and gauges. ☑

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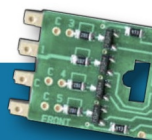
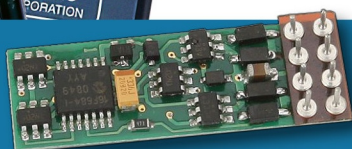
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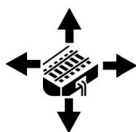
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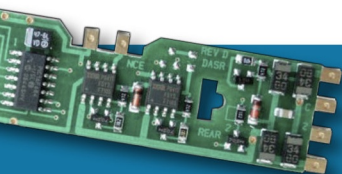
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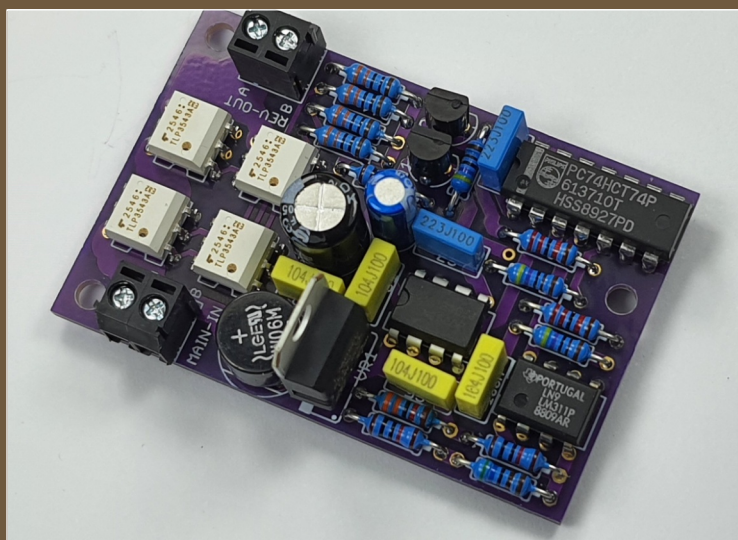


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A simple all-electronic auto-reverser



Electrical
Impulses

1. Assembled Simple Auto-Reverser.



Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026

TERRY CHAMBERLAIN: BUILD YOUR OWN AUTO-REVERSER BOARD ...

IF YOUR DCC LAYOUT INCORPORATES A REVERSING LOOP OR WYE, then you are going to need an auto-reverser unit that automatically changes polarity for those sections of track.

The auto-reverser shown in [1] uses readily available through-hole components, so you should be able to build your own, provided you can use a fine-tip soldering iron to assemble components to a circuit board.

In the interests of long-term reliability, this auto-reverser uses solid-state relays rather than mechanical relays. There is no microcontroller or software programming or operating adjustment involved. You can order the printed-circuit board (PCB) for the unit from several suppliers using the provided design files.

This simple example will make things clear for those unsure how an auto-reverser works.

The two-wire DCC output from your booster does not, technically, have a defined polarity since the booster drives each rail alternately positive and negative several thousand times a second. However, we do have to keep the connections to each section of your track “in phase.”

Let’s label the booster outputs and the rails as A and B. We must ensure that all the A rails go to the booster A output, and all the B rails are connected to the booster B output.

However, when you incorporate a reversing loop in your layout, such as shown in [2], you can see that, as the loop track returns to the diverging exit from the turnout, an A rail (red) will connect with the B rail (blue) if there is no insulation gap. The insulation gaps work until the first wheels of an oncoming train bridge the gap, causing a short [2].

To prevent a short-circuit between the A and B rails (and booster outputs), the track in the reversing loop must be switched to match that of the main as the train’s wheels bridge the gap. An auto reverser does this task automatically within a millisecond. The auto-reverser unit’s “Main” inputs are connected to the layout main track rails, and with its Reverse outputs supply DCC power to the rails of the isolated reversing loop track [3].

With the turnout set to diverging [4], a locomotive approaching the loop from the main causes a short-circuit between A and B rails as soon as its wheels bridge the rail gaps. The auto-reverser unit detects this short-circuit, and swaps the Reverse output





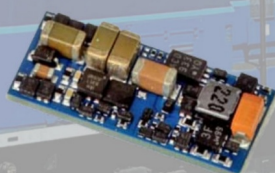
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LokSound 5 Nano



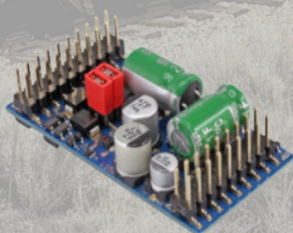
LokSound 5 Micro



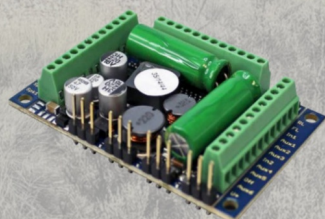
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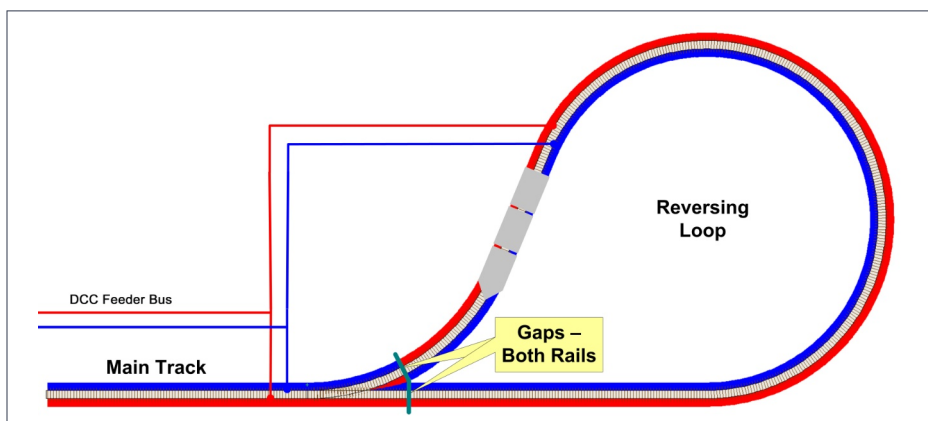
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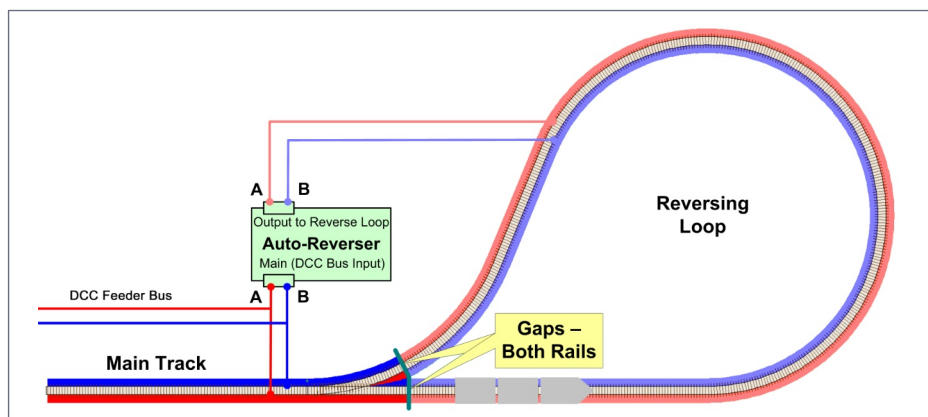
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2. Example of a reversing loop without an auto-reverser. Everything is fed from the main DCC feeder bus. Isolation gaps have been cut on all outgoing rails from the turnout. There was no problem as the train entered the loop. But as it exits, there will be a short as soon as the locomotive's wheels bridge the isolation gap.



3. Here, the DCC feeder bus feeds the reversing loop through an auto-reverser (lighter red and blue). The locomotive has pulled into the loop with its train, with the turnout set to normal. After the train makes its way around the loop, the auto-reverser will detect the short as its front wheels bridge the gap, and reverse polarity instantaneously.

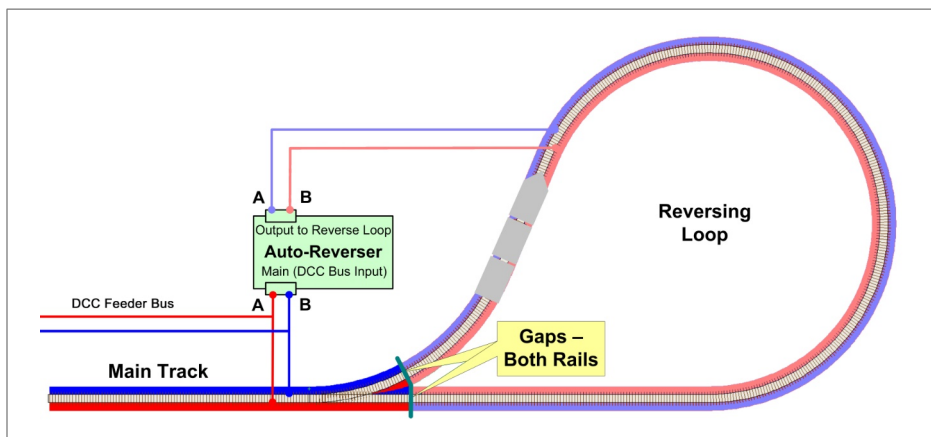
connections within a millisecond. This eliminates the short-circuit, and the locomotive proceeds normally.

After running around the loop – with the turnout reset to normal – the locomotive will create another short-circuit as soon as its wheels bridge the isolated gap. The auto-reverser will again immediately swap the its output phase, eliminating the short.

For further details of the various track configurations where you might use an auto-reverser, have a look at Allan Gartner's "Wiring for DCC" Web pages (wiringfordcc.com/intro2dcc.htm#a26) and (wiringfordcc.com/track 2.htm#reversing).

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Commercial auto-reversers work by sensing the short-circuit current as soon as the locomotive wheels bridge a track gap. The electronics required to sense current magnitude are complex.



4. The train has entered the loop through the diverging track. The auto-reverser has responded, and set the loop's phase to match that of the main track. As the train exits the loop, this time through the turnout set to normal, the auto-reverser will flip polarity to the loop so there will be no short circuit.



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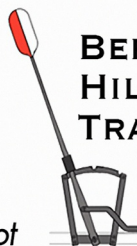
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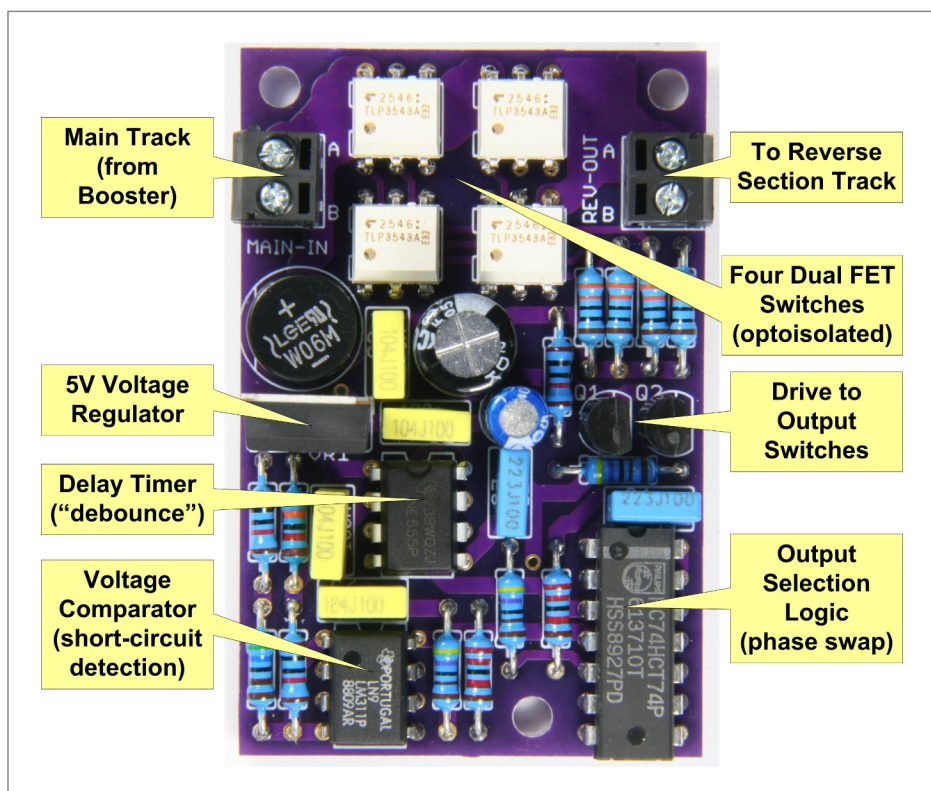
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Measuring a voltage change is much easier; and the commercial auto-reversers generally first convert the current change to an equivalent voltage, then use the detected voltage to operate the auto-reverser.

In addition to generating a current surge, the short-circuit at the track gap causes the voltage to collapse toward zero. The Simple Auto-reverser (SAR) presented here senses this significant dip in track voltage directly, and uses this to change the DCC phase. The unit's structure is outlined in [5].

The voltage comparator detects the dip in track voltage as the locomotive's wheels cross the track gap, immediately triggering

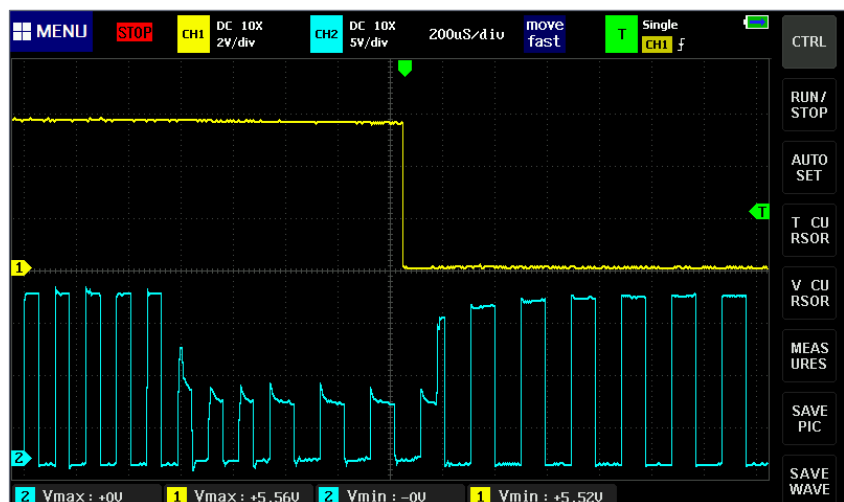


5. Simple auto-reverser – internal structure.

the output selection logic to drive the appropriate pair of dual-FET switch chips and reverse the output DCC phase. The four optically-isolated dual-FET switches replace the double-pole changeover electro-mechanical relay used in older generations of auto-reverser such as the Digitrax AR1 to provide a faster, much more reliable, and longer-lasting implementation of the function.

The oscilloscope traces shown in [6] show the SAR's fast reaction when the locomotive enters the reversing loop. The lower (blue) trace shows the dip in voltage on the mainline DCC input, and the upper (yellow) trace shows the reaction of the output selection logic to swap the DCC phase applied to the reversing section. The phase change occurs in less than a millisecond (ms) and the track DCC voltage then recovers within a further 0.5ms.

When locomotive wheels bridge the track gap, they “bounce” against the rails for several milliseconds. This can cause several dips in track voltage in quick succession. If the SAR acted on these transient voltage changes, it could flip its output state several times and end up leaving the original short-circuit in place. This would then trip your circuit breaker device or cause your DCC booster to shut down.



6. Oscilloscope traces – entry to reversing section.



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The SAR prevents this undesirable behavior with a delay timer to prevent any further triggering of the output selection logic for around 100 milliseconds after the initial switchover. This is long enough for the track voltage to stabilize.

As designed, the SAR can handle up to 24 volts, and load currents of up to five amps. However, for long-term reliability, I would recommend limiting these to 18 volts and three amps. This should be more than adequate for normal HO or N scale layouts and equipment.

Important Note 1: This auto-reverser is **not** a circuit breaker. It does not measure the current drawn by equipment in the reversing section, and cannot react to overloads. You should install an appropriate circuit breaker to protect this part of your layout.

Important Note 2: If you have **two** reversing sections in the same layout power district, and fit a SAR to each, **both** SARs will flip their outputs as soon as **either** is triggered, because they detect voltage dips on the main track.

As long as only one reversing section is being entered at that time, this will not cause a problem. But if trains are entering or leaving both reversing sections at the same time, it is likely that the result will be a total track short circuit as the SARs fight each other to flip track phases.

You can stop this happening by having each reversing section and its respective SAR connected to a separate power district, where each power district is fed from either a separate booster or a separate circuit breaker output. Then, a voltage dip in one power district will not affect the other. The rule is to install only **one** SAR in any of your layout's power districts.

CONNECTIONS

Connections to the SAR are simple [4]. Connect the terminal block labeled MAIN-IN to the mainline track just outside of your

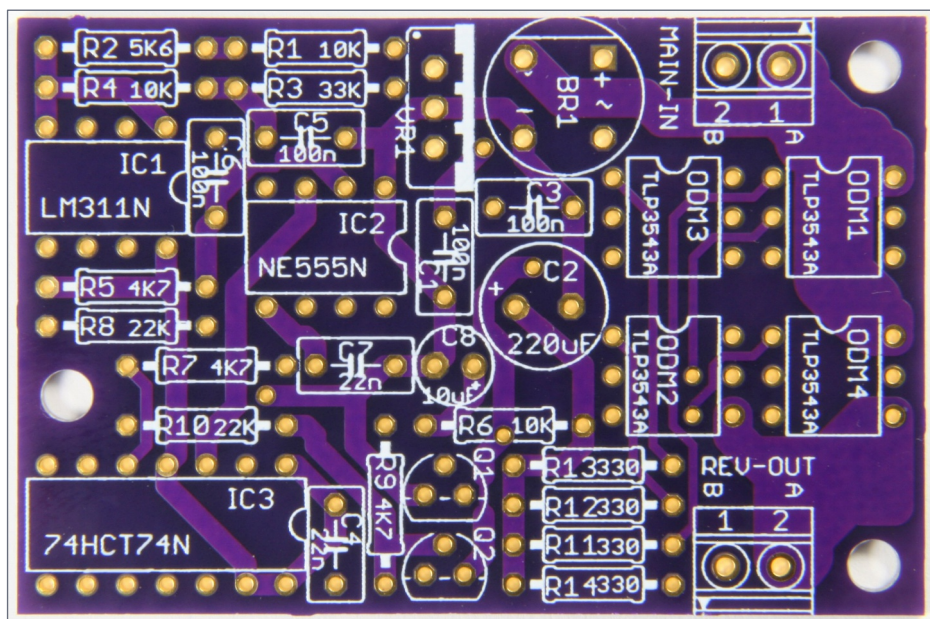
reversing section, and connect the terminal block labeled REV-OUT to the track of your reversing section.

Ensure the wire for these connections is the same gauge as your track feeder wires. The specified terminal blocks can accommodate 16AWG wires.

INTERESTED IN BUILDING YOUR OWN AUTO-REVERSER?

The simplest first step to building an SAR is ordering a printed circuit board. This is a double-sided, through-hole-plated PCB, size 1.50 x 2.28 inches (38.1 x 57.8 mm), as shown in [7].

The PCB is available from OSH Park, a small company in Lake Oswego, Oregon, which supplies PCBs in multiples of three. The cost, including free worldwide shipping, is based solely on the area of the PCB (oshpark.com/shared_projects/Ns06GXCT). Boards are manufactured and delivered within two to three weeks.



7. Bare printed-circuit board.



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Part	Reference	Quantity	Value	Notes
Resistor – Metal Film, ¼ Watt	R11, R12, R13, R14	4	330R	
Resistor – Metal Film, ¼ Watt	R5, R7, R9	3	4.7K	
Resistor – Metal Film, ¼ Watt	R2	1	5.6K	
Resistor – Metal Film, ¼ Watt	R1, R4, R6	3	10K	
Resistor – Metal Film, ¼ Watt	R8, R10	2	22K	
Resistor – Metal Film, ¼ Watt	R3	1	33K	
Capacitor – Polyester Film	C1, C3, C5, C6	4	100nF 63V	5mm pitch
Capacitor – Polyester Film	C4, C7	2	22nF 63V	5mm pitch
Capacitor – Electrolytic	C2	1	220uF 35V	3.5mm pitch, 8mm diameter
Capacitor – Electrolytic	C8	1	10uF 35V	2mm pitch, 5mm diameter
Diode Bridge Rectifier	BR1	1	W01G – W06G	Any voltage rating > 50V acceptable
Transistor NPN	Q1, Q2	2	2N3904	
Voltage Regulator - 5 Volt	VR1	1	L7805CV or LM7805	
Differential Voltage Comparator	IC1	1	LM311P or LM311N	
Precision Timer	IC2	1	NE555P or NE555N	
Dual D-Type Flip-Flop	IC3	1	74HCT74 or 74HC74 (P or N packages)	Either an HCT or HC device can be used
Dual-FET Photo-relay	ODM1, ODM2, ODM3, ODM4	4	TLP3543A or TLP3546A	See notes 6 and 7 (Ordering Components)
Terminal Block, 2-position	Main In, Reverse Out	2	Phoenix-350 Series	3.5mm pitch

8. Table 1 – Simple Auto-Reverser – List of components.



You can also obtain your PCBs from PCBWay, a Chinese company that supplies boards in multiples of five (www.pcbway.com/project/shareproject/Simple_AutoReverser_Version3_f42080b6.html).

Neither A-Train Systems nor I have any connection with OSH Park or PCBWay other than as customers. If you prefer to use another

Reference	RS Cmps	Farnell	Mouser	Digikey
R11, R12, R13, R14	199-7662	3496925	603-MFR25SFT52-330R	13-MFR-25FRF52-330TR-ND
R5, R7, R9	199-1885	3951808	603-MFR-25FBF52-4K7	13-MFR-25FRF52-4K7TR-ND
R2	199-7627	3496939	603-MFR-25FBF52-5K6	13-MFR-25FRF52-5K6TR-ND
R1, R4, R6	199-7658	3496902	603-MFR-25FBF52-10K	13-MFR-25FRF52-10KTR-ND
R8, R10	199-7815	3951799	603-MFR-25FBF52-22K	13-MFR-25FRF52-22KTR-ND
R3	199-7664	3496926	603-MFR-25FBF52-33K	13-MFR-25FRF52-33KTR-ND
C1, C3, C5, C6	241-6571	2763238	80-R82DC3100DQ50J	495-75656-1-ND
C4, C7	312-1447	2763233	R82EC2220SH50J	495-1140-ND
C2	759-040P	4659283	667-ECA-1VM221B	10-ECA-1VM221BCT-ND
C8	759-079P	9451900	667-ECA-1VM100I	732-8937-1-ND
BR1	629-5153	3775028	625-2W04G-E4	4878-B250R-ND
Q1, Q2	843-1575	1574370	512-2N3904TFR	4878-2N3904CT-ND
VR1	298-8514	2849715	863-MC7805CTG	497-1443-5-ND
IC1	428-458	3006909	595-LM311P	296-1389-5-ND
IC2	346-7024	3006909	595-NE555P	296-NE555P-ND
IC3	633-981	3119987	595-CD74HCT74E	296-2132-5-ND
ODM1, ODM2, ODM3, ODM4	NA	3870077	757-TLP3543AF	TLP3543A(F-ND
Terminal Blocks 2-position	897-1332	3810246	651-1984617	277-1721-ND

9. Table 2 – Simple Auto-Reverser – Component supplier references.

supplier, you can download from my website (www.a-train-systems.co.uk/sar-download) the full set of Gerber files that you can send to your preferred supplier.

ORDERING COMPONENTS

The parts required to build a complete SAR, together with sources of supply, are listed in tables [8] and [9].

Suggested suppliers for the parts listed above are RS Components (uk.rs-online.com/web) or Farnell (uk.farnell.com) for users in the UK, or Mouser (www.mouser.com) or Digikey (www.digikey.com) for users in the USA.

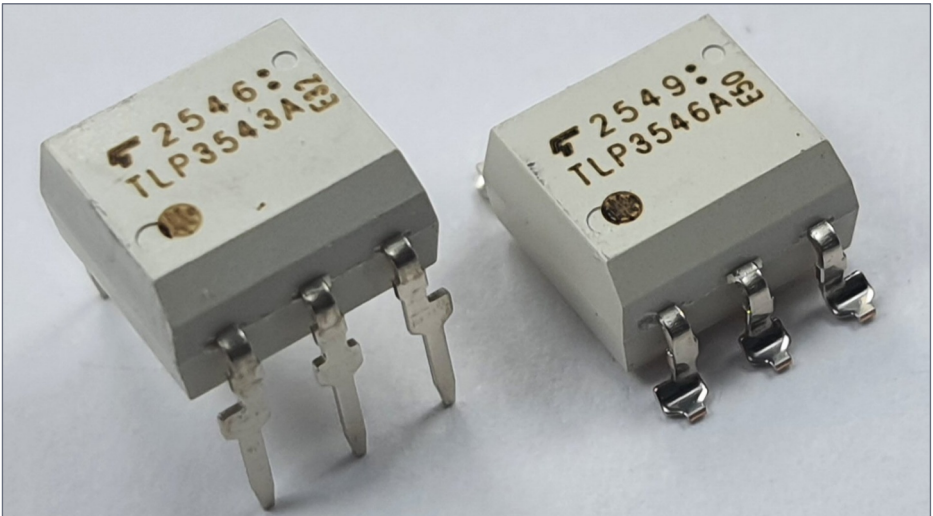
Table 2 [9] gives suggested part numbers for each SAR component from each of the listed suppliers.

Notes:

1. You may be able to source equivalent parts locally at a lower cost, using the details available for each suggested part in the table above – search the supplier’s website using the part number to view the key parameters you are looking to match (assuming you have sufficient electronics knowledge to understand the specifications).
2. The major suppliers have all increased delivery charges in the past year, particularly for small orders. The delivery charge can often exceed the cost of the components.
3. Generally, eBay is a very good source for components, especially for small quantities of passive components, headers, connectors or hardware. Use established suppliers with good feedback ratings, but be wary of very low-cost parts, since these are often of low quality or may be manufacturers’ substandard rejects.
4. The total cost of parts for a single SAR (when this article was written) should be around \$30, including the PCB, but could be much more if all components are ordered in small quantities from the major suppliers.



5. Buying electronics components in small quantities is much more expensive than buying in bulk (quantities of 10 or more), so it is well worth considering carefully at the outset how many SAR units you might build, possibly jointly with friends, and then procure all the components in a single purchase. This will also minimize shipping charges.
6. With regard to the dual-FET photo-relay chips (ODM1-ODM4), the TLP3543A is the preferred device, rated at 24 volts and 5 amps. However, if not obtainable, you can substitute the TLP3546A device, which has a higher voltage rating at 80 volts, but has a current rating of only 3.5 amps. I recommend limiting operation maximums to 18 volts and 3 amps. Either device should be more than adequate for normal HO or N scale layouts and equipment.
7. Although the SAR PCB is designed to take the dual-FET Photo-relay chips (ODM1-ODM4) in 6-pin dual-inline packages you may only be able to obtain them in 6-pin gull-wing packages intended for surface mounting. The two package types are



10. Dual-FET Photo-relay chip packages – dual-inline and gull-wing.

shown in [10], and either can be used. Fitting a gull-wing package (on the right) to the PCB is covered later as part of the recommended assembly instructions.

ASSEMBLING THE SIMPLE AUTO-REVERSER

Putting the auto-reverser together is straightforward, assuming soldering skill. If you do not have any experience soldering electronic components, first look at one or two of the guides available on the Internet (such as at www.makerspaces.com/how-to-solder) and some of the many videos available on YouTube. There is nothing to beat buying copper-clad “perf board” (circuit board with perforated holes and copper strips for soldering), and practicing soldering wires and spare components to it before tackling the real SAR printed circuit board.

Use **resin-cored** solder in wire form only – never use solder with an acid flux (as sold for plumbing purposes) – and use a fine-tip soldering iron with a maximum power rating of 25 watts (50 watts if it is temperature-controlled). All joints should be made as quickly as possible to avoid damaging the PCB and components. The greatest enemy of electronics is heat.

The position and reference number of each component is printed on the top surface of the PCB. All resistors and capacitors also have their value shown, but refer back to the component tables to make sure you fit the correct component in each position.

Fit those components with least height to the SAR PCB first (resistors R1-R14) so that the components don't fall out of the holes when you turn the PCB over and lay it down on your bench to solder the component wires on the underside. It does not matter which way round the resistors are placed on the PCB, although I generally try to fit them so that the color code bands are read from either top to bottom or left to right.

Solder just one wire from each component, then turn the PCB over and check that all components are still flush with the PCB. If



not, make them so by briefly melting the one soldered joint while holding the component flat before soldering the remaining wire(s) of the component. Clip the excess component wires flush with the soldered joints on the underside of the PCB using a small pair of side cutters.

The next step fitting the three integrated circuits (chips) (IC1-IC3) and the four dual-FET photo relays (ODM1-ODM4). Ensure that the notch, dimple or dot at one end of each of IC1-IC3 is toward the top edge of the PCB i.e. toward the terminal block positions (as seen in [4] and [13]), and that all pins are through the PCB holes, with none having been bent under the devices.

The pins of integrated circuits are generally splayed out. To make fitting a little easier, I place the pins on one side of the package in their correct PCB holes then use the end of a steel ruler, held vertically, to gently push all pins on the opposite side of the chip inwards until they can go into the other set of PCB holes with minimal force.

Solder two diagonally-opposite pins on the chips first, then check that the devices are still flat on the PCB. If not, it is easy to melt the solder on the appropriate corner pin while pushing the device down into the correct position, before soldering the remaining pins.

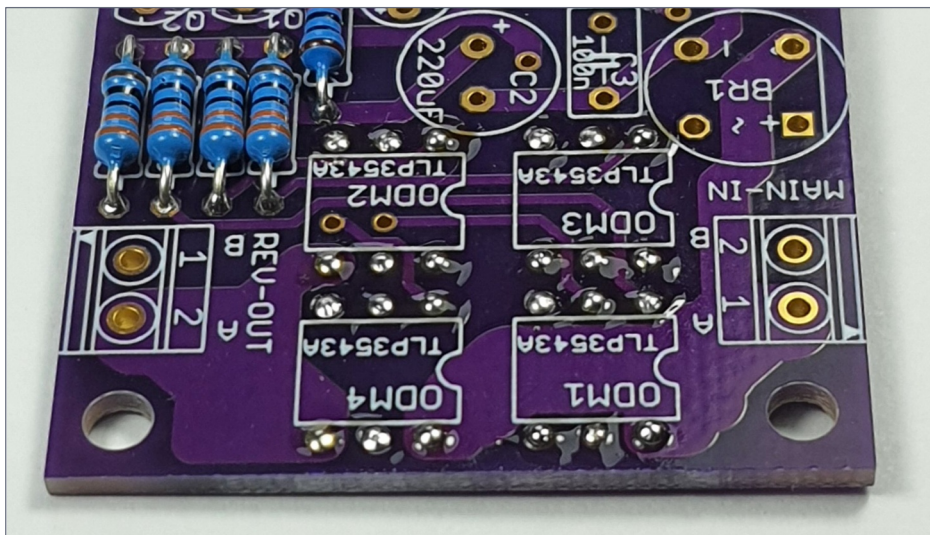
If you have obtained dual-inline versions of the dual-FET Photo-relay chips (ODM1-ODM4) then they are fitted in the same way as IC1-IC3. However, if you have only managed to source the gull-wing versions, then the first step is to fill the relevant 24 holes in the PCB with solder, to leave 24 'solder bumps' ready for the chips to sit on [11].

Use the minimum amount of solder to make the 'bumps' so that subsequently fitting the chips can be done with minimal heat from your soldering iron.

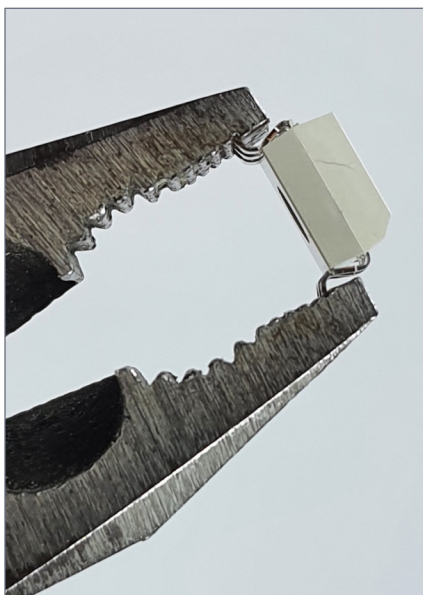
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11. Filling PCB holes with solder ready to fit the ODM1-4 chips.



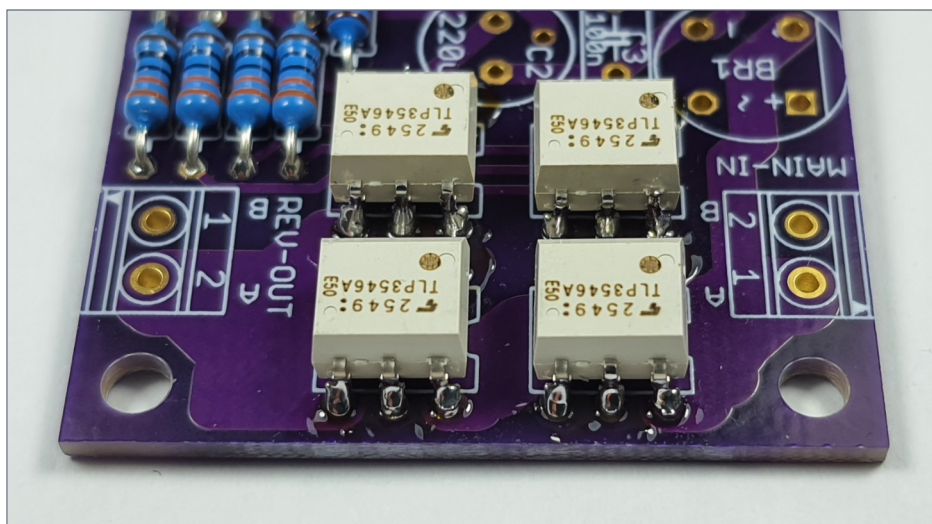
12. Adjust pin spacing of ODM1-4 chips gull-wing packages.



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13. ODM1-4 chips (in gull-wing packages) fitted to PCB.

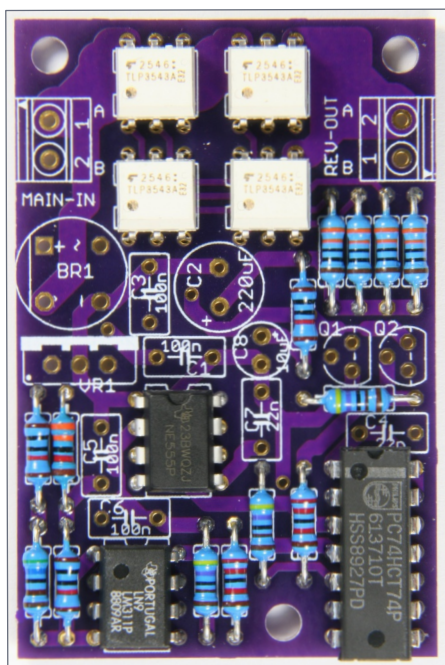
Next, very gently squeeze the pins of each chip inwards so that they lie flush with the package sides using a small pair of combination pliers [12]. Take care not to distort the pins any more than this.

Fit the chips one at a time. Sit each chip carefully on its set of 'bumps,' and then tack a pair of diagonally-opposite corner pins to the board using a well-tinned soldering iron. Once you have the chip sitting squarely in position, carefully use your iron plus solder to connect each of the other chip pins to the PCB.

Finally re-solder the original corner pins so all pins are in good electrical contact with the PCB tracks [13]. Make all joints as quickly as possible, and take care not to leave a solder bridge between adjacent pins, or one which shorts pin 3 of ODM2 to the nearby lead of resistor R6.

The final result should look like [14].

Now fit the six small capacitors (C1 and C3-C7) and the bridge rectifier (BR1), ensuring that the positive pin (+) of BR1 goes into the square pad marked (+) on the PCB. The small capacitors are not polarized, so can be fitted either way. Next, fit the two 2N3904



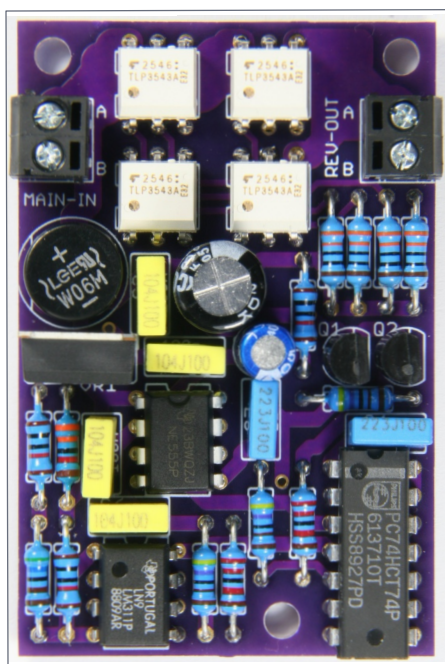
14. First steps completed in assembling the SAR board.

transistors (Q1 and Q2) ensuring that the flat sides of the transistor packages face outwards toward the edge of the PCB, as indicated by the PCB markings, and then the two 2-position terminal blocks.

The two electrolytic capacitors C2 and C8 are fitted next, observing the correct polarity. Take care to install them correctly, since a reverse-biased electrolytic capacitor can potentially explode. The negative (-) side of the larger capacitor C2, normally designated by a stripe down the side of the component, is installed facing toward the top of the PCB and chips ODM1-4. The smaller capacitor C8 is installed in the opposite direction, with the negative stripe toward IC2 and IC3. Finally, install the voltage regulator VR1 with the metal tab toward the top of the PCB, as shown by the broad white marking on the board.

Your PCB should now look like [15].





15. Simple Auto-Reverser board completely assembled.

CHECK YOUR HANDIWORK

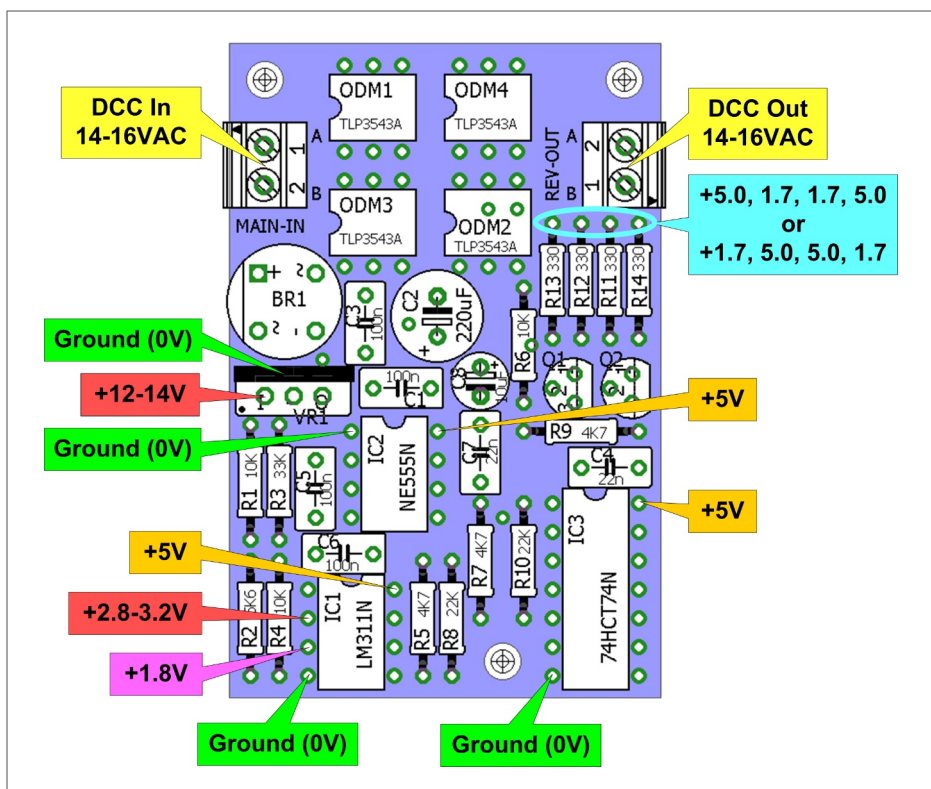
Carefully inspect the completed SAR board to check that all your soldered joints are bright and shiny, and that the solder has wicked through the PCB holes to the component side. Check also that there are no solder bridges between copper pads or component pins anywhere on either side of the PCB. I highly recommend the use of a x5 or x10 hand lens or jeweler's loupe for this inspection.

Next, before you apply power to your completed SAR you should use your multimeter, set to a resistance range of 20K or so, to check for any short circuits. Between the terminals of both the Main-In and Rev-Out terminal blocks you should see an open circuit (infinite resistance). If you use the terminal block screwheads as contacts to touch with your meter probes, make sure the screws are tightened first – loose screws tend to make poor electrical contact and may give you erroneous readings.

Now check the resistance between the metal tab of voltage regulator VRI and the top right pin of any of IC1, IC2 or IC3 (the pins labeled +5V in [16]). The reading should be between 2.5 and 3K. If you see any markedly different value then carefully check your soldered connections, and the fitted component values.

You can now connect the SAR Main-In terminals to the track output of your command station or booster. Using an AC voltage range on your multimeter, check that the voltage at the Rev-Out terminal block is the same as voltage you measure at the Main-In terminal block. For HO and N scale layouts this will generally be in the range of 14 to 16 VAC.

Switching to a DC voltage range on your meter, check that the right supply voltages are reaching the various integrated circuits



16. Check the assembled SAR for correct operating voltages.



on the SAR. The metal tab of voltage regulator VR1 is at ground (0V) so clip one of your multimeter's probes to it as a convenient reference point. Use the other probe to check the voltages on the integrated circuit pins indicated in [16], being very careful not to short any of the pins you are probing to any adjacent pin or to a nearby component.

The measured voltages should be within 0.1 volts of the nominal values. If you see significantly different values, disconnect the SAR from DCC power and carefully check the board for components with the wrong value, or in the wrong place, and recheck your soldered joints.

The voltage on pin 3 of IC1 (+1.8V) is the fixed reference for the LM311 voltage comparator, and that at pin 2 (+2.8 to 3.2V) depends on your DCC input voltage, as does the voltage at the input to voltage regulator VR1 (+12 to +14V).

The voltages at the top ends of the four resistors R11-R14 control which pair of the dual-FET switches ODM1-ODM4 are conducting at any one time. The measured voltages should be either +5.0V or +1.7V, with the voltage at the top of each pair, R11-R12 and R13-R14, being the same, as indicated in [16].

Assuming all is in order, you can now connect your reversing track section to the Rev-Out terminals and check that the SAR operates correctly in practice – just as it does in this short video clip [tinyurl.com/58jyx9ct] of a SRA working on my own small test track.

SIMPLE AUTO-REVERSER TECHNICAL DETAILS

You can download a technical description of the SAR circuitry and that of the phase-indicator boards as seen in the video clip, including full schematics of both, from a special download section of my A-Train Systems website at www.a-train-systems.co.uk/sar-download.

The folder there also includes copies of the Gerber files for both printed-circuit boards described in this article if you prefer to use a different PCB supplier. ☑

DR. TERRY CHAMBERLAIN



Terry got into model railroading almost by accident in the 1990s when he responded to a request from some modelers in California to build a DCC system based around an Atari personal computer – and he had to build a simple layout to prove that it all worked. Eventually the project evolved into A-Track, a Windows application to provide full computer support for the complete range of NCE DCC systems, with facilities similar to JMRI's Decoder Pro and Panel Pro.

Terry is a professional electronics engineer and spent most of his career in the UK defense industry designing, and managing the development of, large computer systems for the Royal Navy. Now that he is fully retired, he has finally managed to build the small logging and mining layout he has been planning for many years, and several visits to Colorado. Terry is in the slow process of adding buildings and scenery, but keeps getting distracted from completing these by new computer and electronics projects for model railroading. ■

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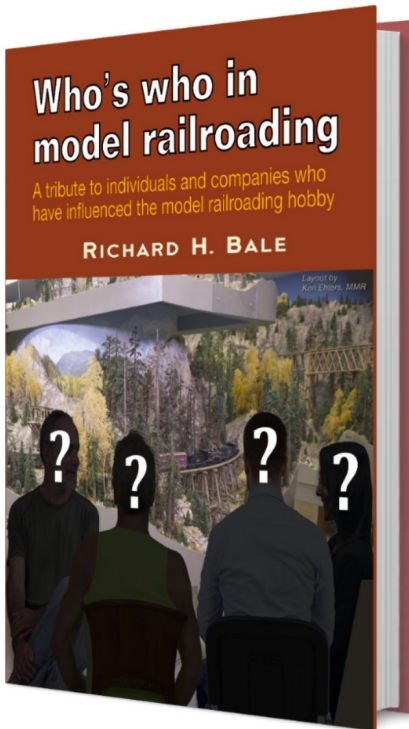
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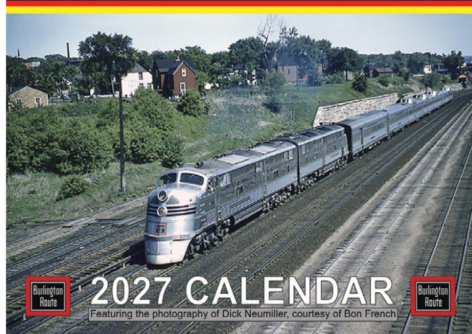
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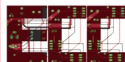
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1. SP GP40-2 7609 and 7240 pull a freight train on Denny Turani's 1970s Burbank Branch shelf layout. The compact layout recreates a realistic Southern Pacific look and operating character in N scale.



I CAME BACK TO MODEL RAILROADING AFTER 15 YEARS AWAY from the hobby. When I finally found a corner of the garage for trains again, several things became clear.

First, I decided on N scale. I wanted realistic operating potential, but didn't have space for anything big. I wanted a shelf layout.

Second, I wanted to model the flat, 1970s-era industrial landscape of Southern Pacific's Burbank Branch in California's San Fernando Valley.

Third, I'm using thoroughly modern methods and materials to build it. This includes today's fine-scale Code 55 track and LED lighting.

CHOOSING AND COMPRESSING THE BURBANK BRANCH

The real Burbank Branch served a scattering of industries along a mostly flat right-of-way, exactly the kind of prototype that translates well into a linear, shelf-style switching layout. I wanted something that would fit along one wall of the garage, that I could finish in a reasonable amount of time, and that would still feel like a real, working branch line.

Before I cut any plywood, I had to decide what to keep and what to leave out. I settled on a design built around seven turnouts [2]. Arranged thoughtfully and backed by the right industries, seven turnouts can keep one or two operators occupied for close to an hour.



The sequence I settled on follows a logical progression mirroring how the real branch would have worked.

Trains originate from a removable three-track staging yard at one end, standing in for the rest of the Southern Pacific system beyond my visible scene.

From there, the line reaches Terry Lumber, then Oroweat Bakery. These two industries call for different car types and switching moves. This mattered to me because I didn't want every spur to feel the same.

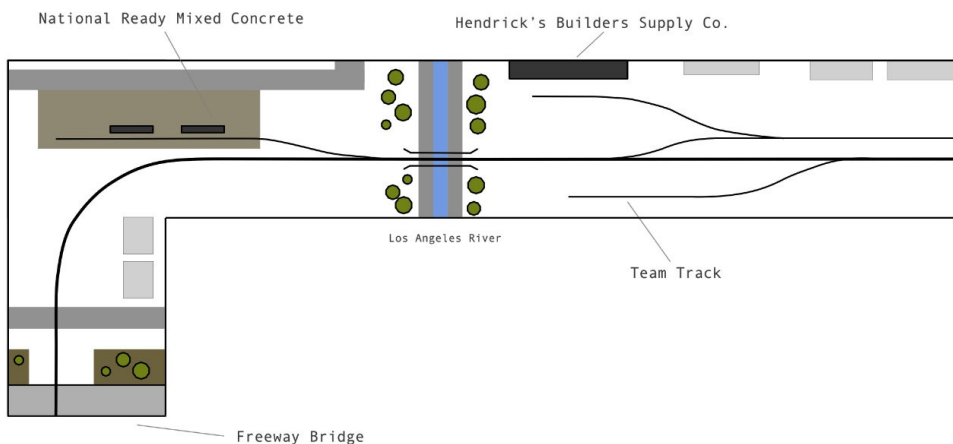
A runaround track with two additional spurs gives the flexibility to reposition cars without fouling the main. A team track, its turnout worked by a small toggle switch on the fascia, adds one more wrinkle to the operating pattern.

Continuing along, the branch reaches Hendrick's Builder Supply before crossing a bridge over the Los Angeles River – a bit of vertical relief in an otherwise-flat right-of-way.

Beyond the bridge sits the Conrock Ready-Mix cement plant. It anchors the far end, and gives me the strongest scenic set piece on the whole railroad.

A scenic divider marks the transition toward a planned freeway overpass, leaving room for later expansion.

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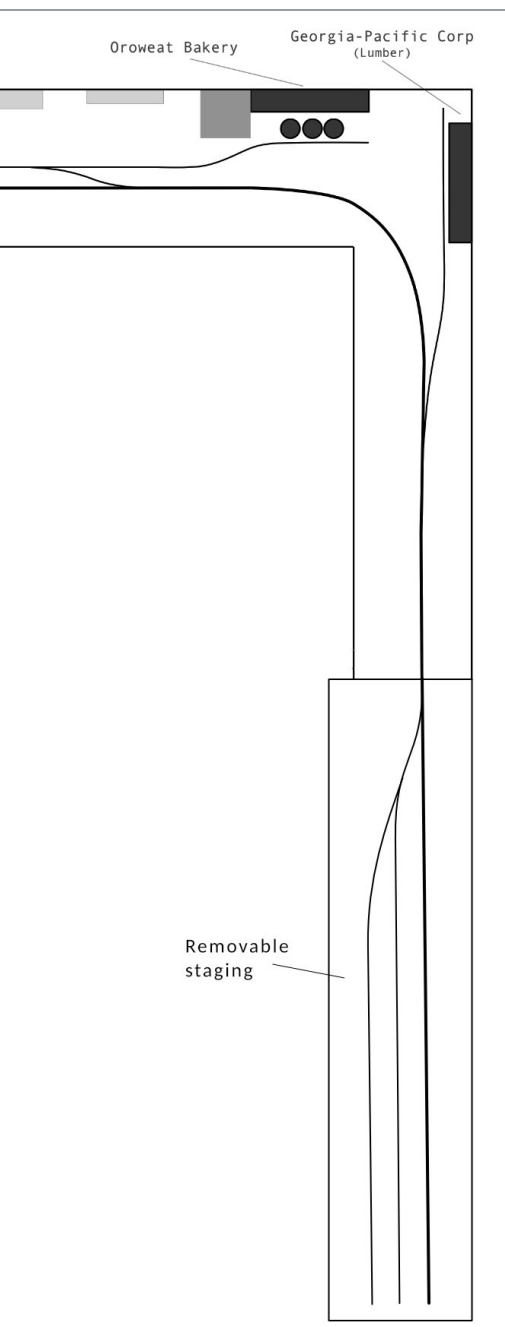
Southern Pacific Burbank Branch in N Scale



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2. Track plan for the SP Burbank Branch.



3. I started with wood supporting brackets on the wall.



4. Once the brackets were in, I added a hardboard backdrop and painted it blue.



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J. Fugate

WHY SEVEN TURNOUTS ARE ENOUGH

Here's a fact that doesn't get enough attention in the hobby: **turnout count**, not layout size, is often the true measure of layout's complexity, cost, construction time, and maintainability.

It's not an absolute rule – layout size still matters – but turnout count frequently reveals more about the engineering and maintenance burden you're taking on.

A large layout with few turnouts can be affordable, quick to build, and straightforward to maintain.

Conversely, a compact layout packed with turnouts becomes expensive, time-consuming to construct, and demanding to service – often without delivering better operation in return.

There's also a hidden risk in adding too many turnouts: you can shoot yourself in the foot.

Every additional turnout increases wiring complexity, adds potential failure points, and multiplies the machines and panel switches to maintain.

More importantly, each turnout creates another opportunity for derailments, electrical problems, and mechanical failures.

Denny's seven turnouts work because they're purposeful. They serve five distinct industries, a runaround track, and a team track, each demanding different car types and switching sequences. The staging yard, track arrangement, and industries create genuine decisions – which cars go where, in what order, and why.

The result is close to an hour of satisfying operation from a modest turnout count – proof that the number itself matters far less than how thoughtfully you deploy them. ■

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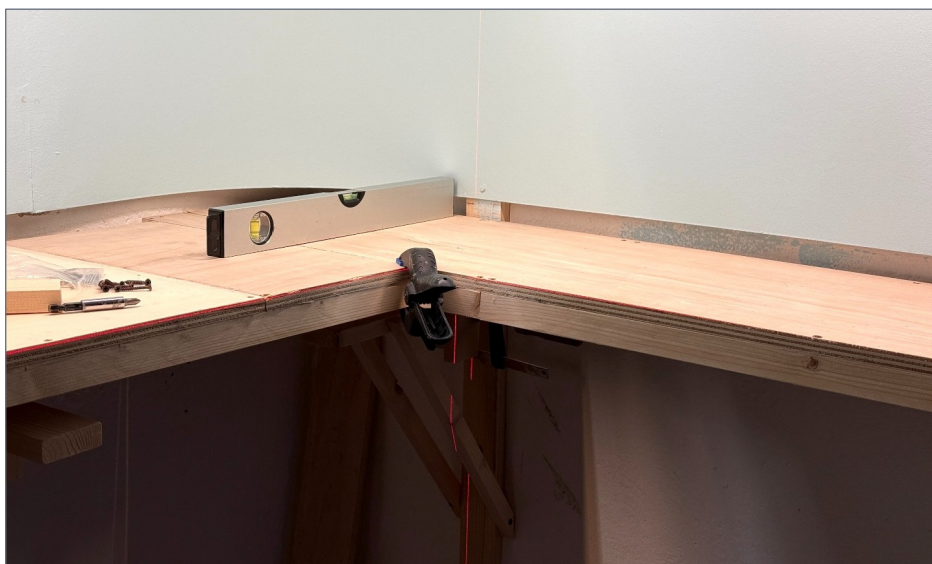
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5. A laser level helped me build the layout benchwork perfectly level.



6. Even with the layout shelf perfectly level, I had not accounted for the garage walls not being perfectly square. I found this caused an ugly gap between the backdrop and the bench.



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7. I bit the bullet and ripped out the old backdrop and installed a new one that was level with the benchwork tabletop.

BUILDING THE BENCHWORK

The layout is built in three plywood sections of 5/8" plywood, reinforced with 1x2 lumber to make it rigid without adding unnecessary weight. The sections sit on risers roughly 4'-7" above the floor, a comfortable height for viewing and operating.

The staging yard at one end folds down, and can be removed entirely when I'm not running trains, which matters in a garage where floor space has other jobs.

I used a laser level to keep the risers and sub-roadbed consistent from section-to-section. I used a bubble level when the laser wasn't practical to set up. Between the two, I was confident the railroad was level and true.

What I wasn't prepared for was discovering that my garage walls aren't square to each other. They weren't off by much,

but enough that the alignment between my first backdrop and valance looked wrong, no matter how I adjusted it.

Rather than accept a compromise I'd regret every time I looked at the layout, I tore down the backdrop and rebuilt it from scratch. I checked the actual wall geometry as I went. I learned to always check my walls before building anything that depends on them being square.

The backdrop is Faesite – a Masonite-type hardboard common here in Italy – painted a sky-blue that fades toward a warm-tan near the horizon. It suggests the hazy distance of the San Fernando Valley without any painted detail.

I built a valance to hide the lighting fixtures and frame the scene, like a diorama or museum display. It sounds small, but it changes how the whole layout looks the moment you step back and see it as one scene rather than separate ones.



8. Painting the replaced backdrop blue finished it properly.





9. Wooden door-stop wedges served as mounting strips for the lighting channel clips to set the lighting source at an angle. See [10].



10. The three LED strips – one warm-white (2700K), one daylight (4000K), and one blue – allow various lighting effects.



11. Here is the control switch box for the three LED light strips. I can turn on or off any combination.

LIGHTING THE SCENE

Lighting turned out to be one of the more satisfying projects on the layout, and one of the more involved.

I built a three-channel system using LED strips mounted in aluminum profiles above the scene, each channel wired to its own dimmer and power supply, and controlled from push-button switches on the fascia. These include a warm 2700 K, a neutral 4000 K daylight, and a blue light. Blended together or switched individually, they let me tune the lighting until the scenery and structures look their best, rather than settling for whatever single-color lights I happened to install.

Getting the angle right mattered as much as the color. I mounted the strips using wooden door wedges to set that angle. This tilted the strips just enough to avoid casting hard



shadows onto the backdrop, a problem that can quietly ruin an otherwise good scene.

If your light source is too vertical, or too close to the backdrop, every building and tree throws a shadow exactly where you don't want one. The wedges cost almost nothing, and solved the problem completely.



12. When the 2700K and 4000K strips are both on, I get bright medium-white lighting shown here.



13. When I turn on just the blue strip, I get a nighttime blue look.



J. Fugate

LIGHTING WITH THREE COLOR TEMPERATURES

Color temperature is a rabbit hole that goes deeper than most modelers realize.

It's tempting to grab a paint chip from the prototype, match it under daylight, and expect it to look right on the layout – but it won't. That chip will look too-dark, too-orange, and just wrong.

Why? Because color isn't fixed. How it looks depends entirely on ambient lighting.

Here's a better approach: Photograph the prototype outdoors in natural light, then view that photo under your layout lights. Match your model colors to the photo, not the chip.

Is it perfect? No – camera white-balance varies, and photos mislead in their own ways. But if you start with a photo that looks visually balanced (not too blue, not too orange), you're already ahead of the game.

Understanding Kelvin temperature helps. Indoor lighting runs warm – lower K temperatures mean more yellow and orange. Outdoor light runs cool – higher K means bluer.

The sun's intensity far exceeds any indoor fixture, and the sky adds considerable blueness to everything outdoors.

This is where Denny's three-channel lighting really excels. Warm-white, daylight, and blue-accent aren't just pretty – they let him mix and match on the fly, dialing in whatever combination of lighting makes the layout look right. Some modelers have even added red light to the mix to capture those dawn and dusk hues.

He can shift the mood, correct a color cast, or simulate different times of day, all without repainting a single model.

The wooden door wedges angling his LED strips? Another reminder that some of the best ideas in this hobby cost almost nothing. ■

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14. I first marked the track routing with masking tape, then put down 2mm black EVA foam roadbed under the main to elevate it.



15. The spurs and yard tracks were installed directly onto the masking tape, making them lower than the main.

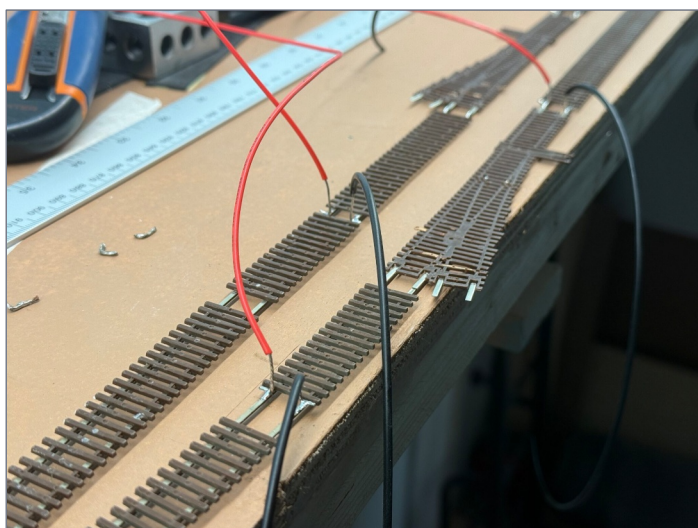
LAYING TRACK AND BUILDING THE WIRING

With the benchwork, backdrop, and lighting sorted out, I turned to trackwork. I transferred the track plan onto the plywood using ordinary masking tape, laying out center-lines and turnout positions directly on the sub-roadbed before committing to anything permanent. This let me stand back, look at the plan in three dimensions, and make small adjustments before any rail went down.

I chose Micro Engineering Code 55 flex track paired with Atlas code 55 turnouts. This delivered a fine, realistic rail profile without sacrificing reliability.

I used 2mm EVA foam roadbed, but only beneath the mainline; the industrial spurs and yard tracks sit closer to grade, which is both easier to build, and truer to how a real branch line like this would have looked.

I glued down the track with acrylic caulk, weighting sections while they cured. I shimmed here and there to keep everything level across the three benchwork sections. A Xuron 2175B rail cutter gave clean, square cuts.

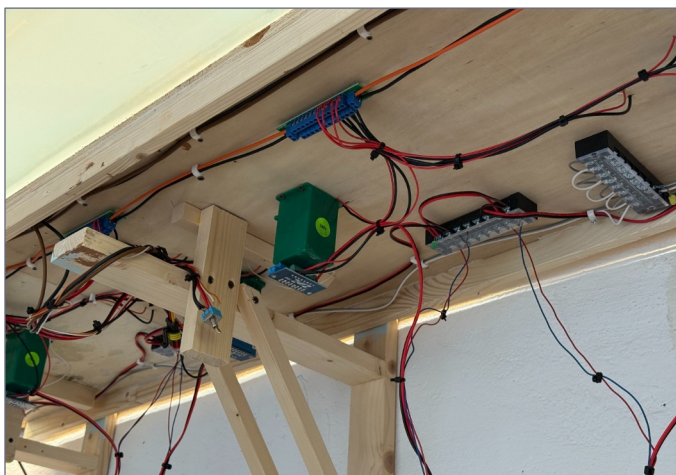


16. Before gluing the track for good, I turned it over and soldered feeders to the base of the rails.

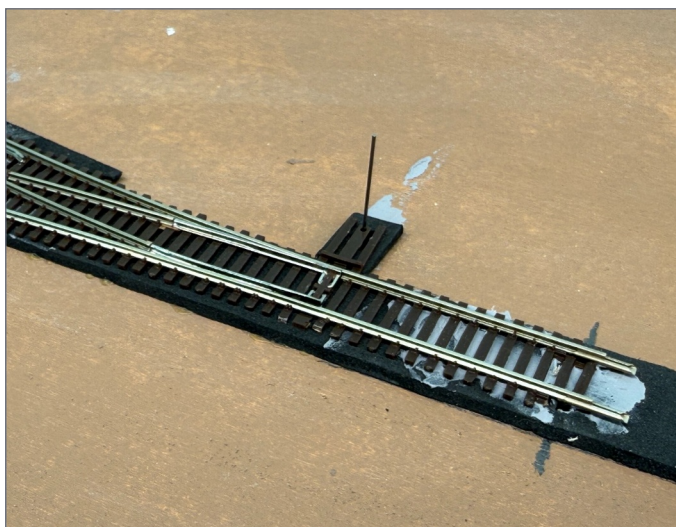


Feeders went to every track section, soldered and tested before ballast went down. There's nothing worse than discovering a dead rail joint after scenery is finished.

I installed Tortoise slow-motion turnout machines throughout, wired to DPDT switches. Most controls sit on the fascia, though a few are recessed to keep the front edge visually clean.



17. Feeder wires were fed down under the layout, and connected to the bus wires with terminals. Tortoises were installed under the turnouts.



18. The tortoise actuator wires were threaded through the holes at the ends of the turnout switch rods.

I also installed an NCE UTP panel, which gives me centralized management of the DCC system without tracing wires across the layout when something needs attention.

I organized the wiring into clearly separated DCC and accessory buses, running them along defined paths, rather than letting wires accumulate wherever convenient. This saved me enormous frustration later.

The railroad is divided into three separate DCC power districts, each protected by an NCE EB-1 circuit breaker with its own reset button and status LED. If a short develops anywhere on the layout, I can tell at a glance which district is affected – troubleshooting goes from “search everywhere” to “check one specific area.” I made a point of keeping the breakers and reset buttons physically accessible.



J. Fugate

DESIGN FOR MAINTENANCE

Maintenance is the least-favorite part of the hobby for most modelers. But if you design for it from the start, your future self will thank you every day.

Think about access before you add scenery. Running wiring along the fascia with access panels is one of my latest maintenance epiphanies – it saves hours of frustration when I need to troubleshoot a wiring issue.

Denny's approach reflects this same thinking:

- Separated DCC and accessory buses
- Three independently protected power districts
- Breakers and reset buttons within easy reach

These aren't fancy touches, but they're the difference between a layout you enjoy maintaining and one that punishes you with every repair.

Take the time to think through maintenance in advance. How will you reach a derailed car? Where will you access your wiring? How will you isolate a problem zone?

That planning is time well-spent, and it pays dividends for years. ■





19. Before going any farther, I test-operated the layout.



20. My young son works the throttle as he checks out the layout by running trains.

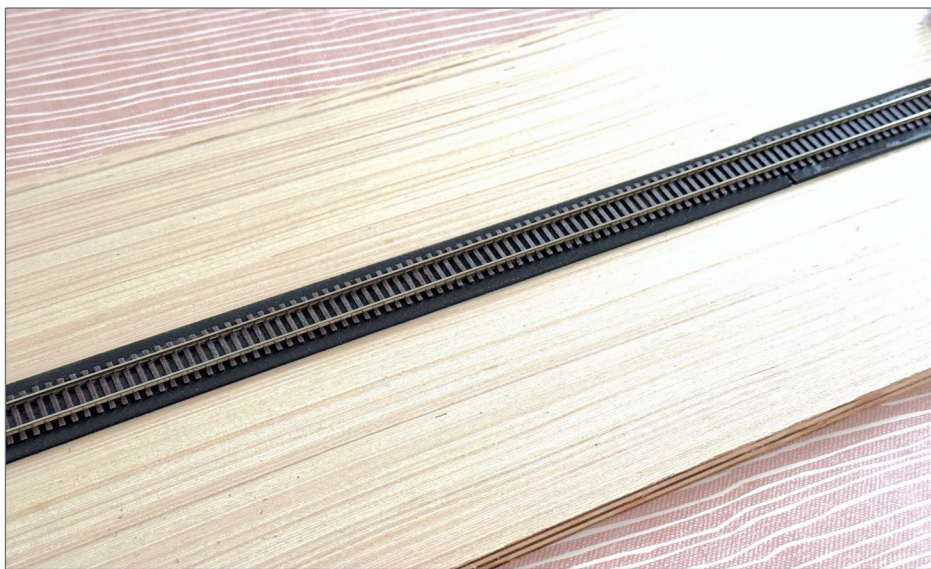
TESTING BEFORE COMMITTING

I forced myself to test everything mechanical before getting excited about scenery. I checked every turnout, locomotive, and car with an NMRA standards gauge, then double-checked wheelsets with a Micro-Trains gauge, since the two don't always agree down to the last thousandth.

This testing turned up two problems. The first was that the Atlas Code 55 turnouts had a flangeway issue that caught certain wheelsets. It wasn't obvious from visual inspection, but running trains repeatedly revealed a pattern.

The second issue was that one of my GP9 locomotives kept derailling at a specific spot. Patient digging traced that back to a wheel gauge problem on the locomotive, not a flaw in the track.

Both issues were small, and easily fixable because I found them before ballasting around that turnout or scenicking the section where the GP9 kept jumping the rail.



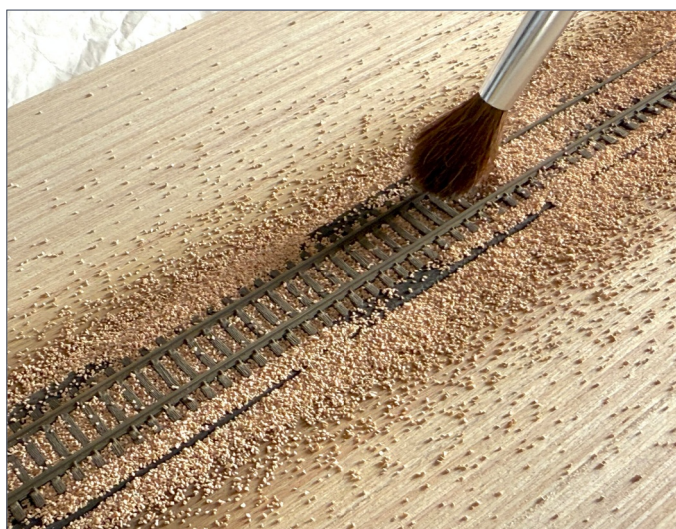
21. A small “diorama” was built to test ballasting and scenicking techniques.



Run trains extensively, check every turnout, gauge every wheelset – do it before you scenic the railroad. It costs nothing but patience, and it will save you hours of frustrating rework later, some of which may not even be possible once ballast and structures are in place.



22. Paint used to weather the track prior to ballasting.



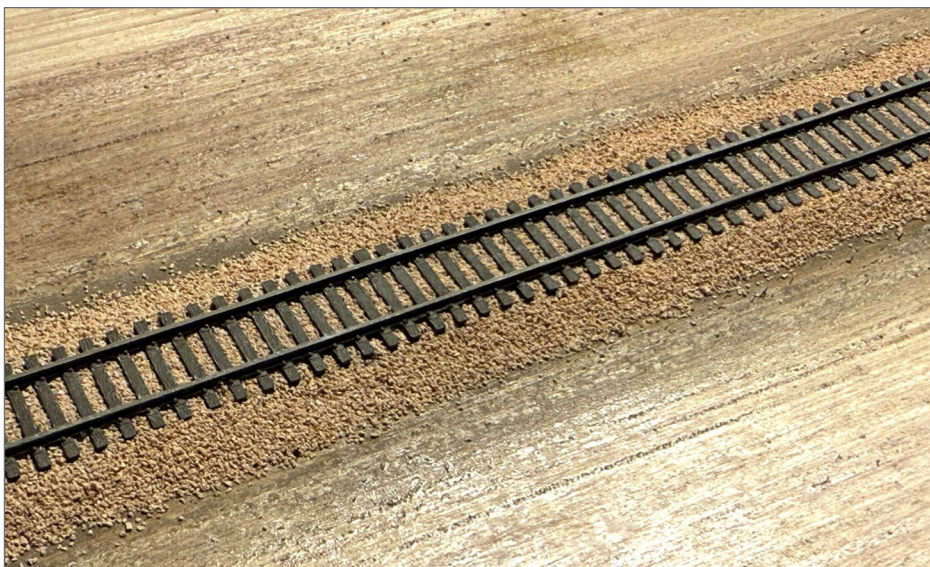
23. Ballasting the track.

LEARNING SCENERY ON A DIORAMA FIRST

I didn't trust myself to get ballast, weathering, and static grass right on the layout with my first attempt, so I built a small test diorama to practice on first. This was one of the better decisions – because my first attempts were terrible.

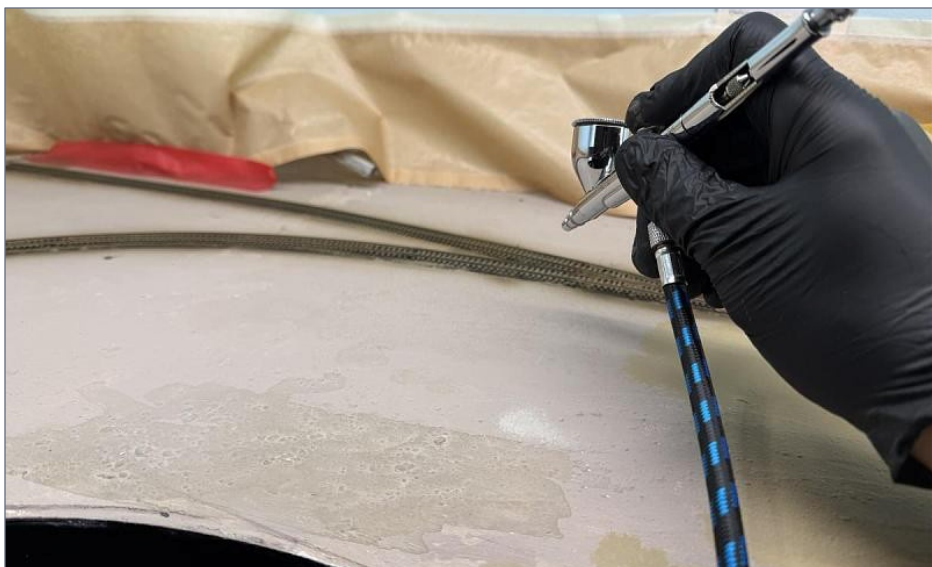
My first pass at ballasting looked uneven and artificial, leaving the ballast sitting too high on the ties with a hard edge where it met the ground cover. The static grass was even worse – clumpy, unnaturally uniform in height, clearly applied rather than grown.

Rather than getting discouraged, I treated the diorama as intended: a place to fail cheaply and learn quickly. I adjusted my ballast technique, thinned my washes for weathering rail and ties, and changed how I applied static grass, working in smaller sections with more variation in height and density. By the time I moved to the layout, I had a technique I trusted.



24. The ballasted track after applying diluted glue.





25. I used an airbrush to do the initial track weathering before ballasting.



J. Fugate

BUILD A TEST DIORAMA FIRST

Building a test diorama might seem wasteful, but it's smart. You get to experiment, learn, and mess-up on something that isn't permanent.

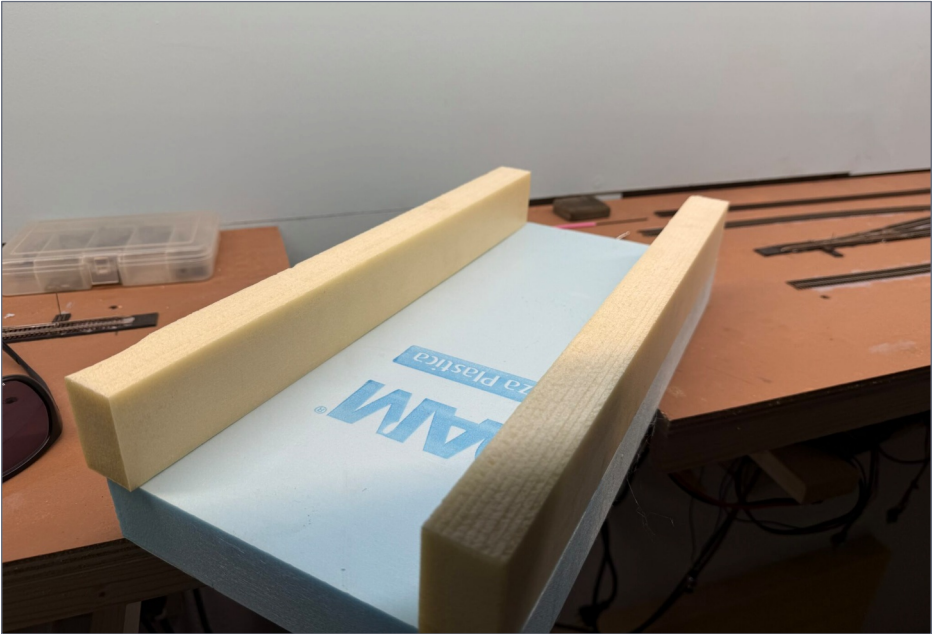
Experience is another word for good judgment. But how do you get experience? Through poor judgment – through mistakes. Why make those mistakes on your actual layout?

Build a small diorama first, try your ballast technique, test your static grass, weather some structures. If it doesn't work, you've lost a small piece of foam and some scenery materials. If it works, you've gained the knowledge to do it right on the layout.

Denny's honest admission that his first ballast and static-grass attempts didn't work is exactly the point. He learned on a test piece, not on the railroad he cared about. That's the smart way to build experience. ■

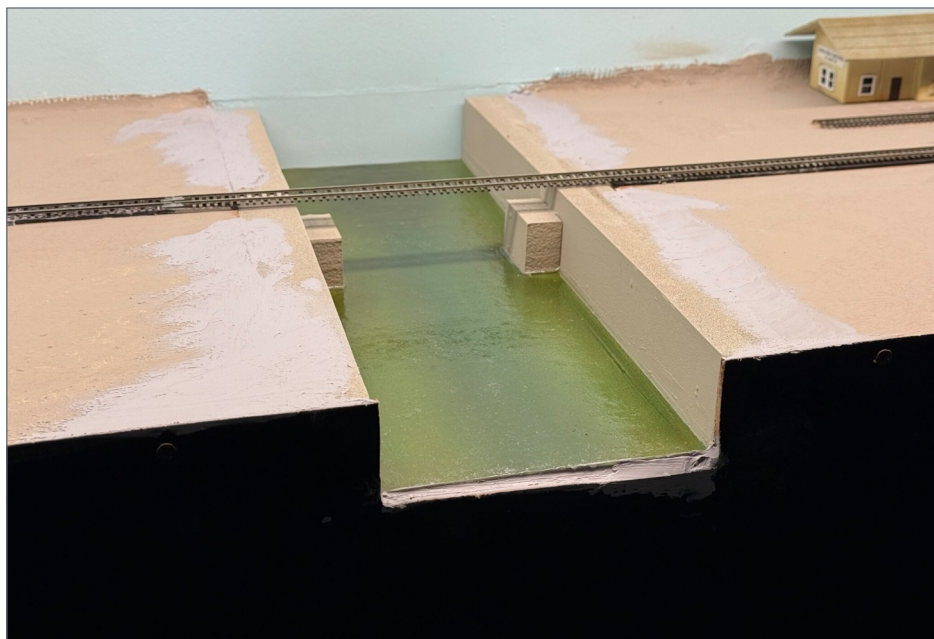


26. A gap in the benchwork will accommodate a bridge over the Los Angeles River.



27. I built this foam tray to put into the gap shown in [26].





28. I glued the foam tray in place, painted it, and added a gloss layer in the river area.

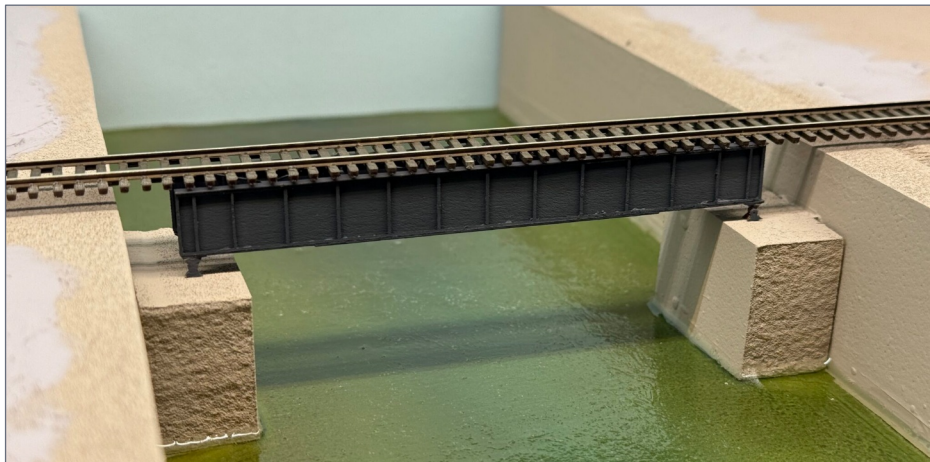
BUILDING THE LOS ANGELES RIVER BRIDGE

The bridge over the Los Angeles River is the biggest departure from the otherwise-flat right-of-way. I wanted it to earn its keep as a scenic feature.

I shaped the riverbed and banks from foam, then carved and painted them to suggest the dry, channelized concrete banks the real Los Angeles River is known for. I finished the water with two-part epoxy resin tinted to add depth and a subtle reflective sheen without making it look like glass.

I used an RSLaserkits girder bridge kit, which gave me a solid, well-detailed foundation. I scratchbuilt the retaining walls on either side of the river channel, since nothing commercial matched the concrete banks I was after.

The bridge track needed extra care to maintain electrical continuity. I tested it thoroughly before locking-in the final scenery around it. Bridges are where hidden gaps turn into intermittent problems that become maddening to diagnose later.



29. A laser-kit deck girder bridge supports the track over the LA River.



30. Retaining wall cribbing and a bit of land fill at the ends complete the crossing of the LA River.



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BRINGING THE CONROCK READY-MIX PLANT TO LIFE

If the bridge is the layout's most dramatic terrain feature, the Conrock Ready-Mix cement plant is its most striking industry. I built it around an Advance 1:150 kit, added a white micro LED inside for an interior glow at night, and positioned streetlights around the yard to extend that lighting into the surrounding scene.

A couple of mixer trucks parked near the plant, a mature tree breaking up the roof-line, and a simple fence around the property line finished the scene. These were enough to make it seem like a working facility rather than an isolated model sitting on a shelf [32].

Surrounding structures came from sources: Several Walthers kits, modified and detailed to fit, plus a few pieces I scratchbuilt where nothing commercial matched what I needed. I added interior and exterior lighting throughout using the same approach I'd worked out for Conrock.



31. I modeled the Conrock Ready-Mix plant, and it's a highlight of my Burbank branch.

I also built a simple styrene grade crossing where the branch crosses a local street. This small detail did more to sell the urban-industrial feel of the San Fernando Valley than almost anything else on the layout.



32. Trees and more structures were added around the cement plant.



33. Static grass and bushes completed the scene.



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RUNNING THE RAILROAD

All of this – the benchwork, the backdrop, the lighting, the track, the wiring, the testing, the scenery – exists for one reason: running trains. My first test session confirmed that worked as intended. Only minor adjustments were needed.

The session that meant the most to me came later, once the railroad was far enough along to operate properly. My seven-year-old son and I ran a session together using a simple switch list.

He worked through pickups and setouts at each industry – starting from staging, moving through Terry Lumber, the Oroweat Bakery, the team track, and Hendrick's Builder Supply, then finishing at Conrock. When we were done, everything went back to staging. It was a full hour of genuine operation, and he stayed engaged the whole time.

We ran it with two of my custom-painted Atlas GP38-2 units. He worked through the switch list, and asked questions about why certain moves had to happen in a certain order.

Seven turnouts, arranged thoughtfully, held a young engineer's attention for a full session. Nothing dramatic – just a small railroad doing what it was designed to do.



34. Here's a shot of the cement plant scene under the bluish "night" lighting. The building's interior lighting and the street lamp stand out nicely.



WHAT I LEARNED, AND WHAT YOU CAN TAKE FROM IT

Looking back, a few lessons stand out clearly enough that they're worth passing on.

Start with the operating pattern, not just the scenery. I built my track plan around a specific sequence of industries and a realistic session length, rather than filling the available space with track. Seven turnouts, arranged with purpose, will outperform twice as many arranged without one.

Check your benchwork against reality, not assumptions. My garage walls weren't square, and I found that out the hard way. A laser level, a bubble level, and a willingness to rebuild a backdrop, rather than live with a bad angle have paid off every time I've looked at the finished scene.

Light your layout with flexibility in mind. Three independently controlled color temperatures, angled carefully with wooden door wedges, did more to make my scenery convincing than any single scenery material.

Test before you commit. My diorama saved me from ballasting and applying static grass badly on the actual layout. Running trains extensively over bare track, and gauging every wheelset and turnout before scenicking around it, caught real problems while they were still easy to diagnose and fix.

Divide your electrical system into manageable pieces. Three DCC power districts, each protected by its own breaker with a visible reset button and status LED, turned troubleshooting from a hunt across the entire railroad into a quick check of a single area.

Small doesn't mean simple, and simple doesn't mean boring. An hour-long operating session with my son, built around a handful of well-chosen industries and one strong scenic centerpiece – the Conrock plant and the Los Angeles River bridge – created a layout that feels complete rather than compressed.

I didn't need a spare room or a basement to build a Southern Pacific branch line I'm proud of. I needed a corner of my garage,



a plan I was willing to compress honestly, and the patience to test things before committing to them permanently.

I hope my Burbank Branch proves a small layout can still deliver genuine, satisfying operation. ☑

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35. I continued to run trains as I added more details.



36. A final shot of a train running over the LA River bridge.



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DENNY TURANI



Denny got started in the hobby at around age 7. His dad built him a small N scale layout that he spent countless hours on. He briefly switched to HO during his early teens, modeling an Italian prototype on a small modular layout. He later returned to N scale and built a mid-sized layout featuring a proto-freelanced Austrian railroad, and focused on realistic operation. He then switched to North American railroads, and built a compressed version of a portion of the SP Coast Line in the mid-1970s. He always built with operating sessions in mind.

After a 15-year hiatus, he got back into the hobby and built an SP Burbank Branch N scale switching layout. While he still loves N scale, he decided to tear down the Burbank Branch layout, and start over with a freelanced HO scale switching layout set in Montana in 1985. This is currently under construction.

Denny has three sons and lives in northern Italy. He has been working in the IT industry for more than 25 years. ■





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LOOK column

Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026



Rapido's CF7



Santa Fe CF7 2538 leads sister 2506 at K-10's Model Trains. Both arrived from Rapido in June 2026. The unit has been modified with the KarTrak barcode plate (included in the box), Kadee 158 Scale Head couplers, and my own 3D-printed spark arrestors.

Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026

JAMES REGIER REVIEWS RAPIDO'S MODEL OF A PROTOTYPICAL KITBASH...

RAPIDO RECENTLY BEGAN DELIVERY OF ITS MUCH-ANTICIPATED CF7s, available in a variety of cab configurations, paint schemes, and number-specific details. They are available for an MSRP of \$259.95 for units that are DCC-ready (including a 21-pin motherboard and speaker) or \$359.95 for units with ESU LokSound 5 installed.

THE PROTOTYPE

By the late 1960s, Santa Fe's venerable F-units – from the oldest F3s of the 1940s to the newest F9s of 1956 – were getting tired. Most had spent decades hauling mainline freight over millions of miles. They needed overhaul, but their horsepower ratings were about half that of new locomotives coming from EMD or GE.

On the passenger front, the railroad had ordered new cowl units from EMD and GE to handle its premier trains. All but five passenger trains were dropped in 1968 after the federal government cut mail contracts. Most of the Santa Fe's pool of warbonnet-clad passenger F-units would be joining the freight pool.

More than 240 F-units needed overhaul and re-purposing, and the Santa Fe estimated it needed more than 200 units for branch-line and switching service. The F-units' 1500-horsepower rating (1750 for F9s) was right, but their full-width car bodies made them unsuitable for switching.

After weighing options, the Santa Fe turned to its Cleburne shops in 1969 to engineer a solution to rebuild the F7s. They needed a GP7-style long hood to replace the car body, steps and walkways for easier cab access, and improved MU capabilities. With new locomotives priced at about \$150,000 per unit at the time, the Santa Fe gave the Cleburne shops a \$60,000 per unit target.



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The F-unit car body was integral to its structure. To prevent the locomotive's frame from sagging and eventually failing without it, engineers in the Topeka shop developed heavy steel side sills for reinforcement. With the new frame design and the salvaged dynamic brake-equipped hood of a wrecked GP7, Cleburne rolled out prototype CF7 (C for Cleburne) number 2649 in 1969 [1].

Where 2649 had a salvaged GP7 hood, subsequent CF7 hoods were fabricated without dynamic brakes. Cleburne also reused the donor F7's rollup and swivel side windows on the 2649 and a few other early units, but refitted them when they proved far less practical than



Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe 2649 at Somerville, TX, Dec 1972

Don Ross Collection

1. CF7 prototype no. 2649 is in Summerville, Texas in 1972, painted in the bookend scheme. It was the only unit equipped with dynamic brakes, an inheritance from its salvaged GP7 hood. The roll-up and triangular swiveling side windows of the donor F7 proved impractical and were short-lived. The unit's open sill style was common among early rebuilds. Don Ross Collection photo, online at (donsdepot.irm.org/dr0703/atsf2649.jpg)

the sliding windows common to hood units. These experimental features were not represented among Rapido's first run of CF7s.

Earlier conversions had open side-sill frame reinforcements [1]. Later units used a lighter grade of steel for the side sills, so sheet metal was added to close off the sills between the ends of the fuel tank and the steps, for added reinforcement.

Cleburne initially left the cabs with their original rounded profile. Though the new windows improved switching ergonomics, the round cabs' headroom proved insufficient for switching crews entering and exiting the cab frequently. Worse, the upgraded, taller electrical cabinet required a rectangular extension above the roof line to fit properly [2].

There were no savings in maintaining the F-unit profile anyway, because the custom doors cost nearly twice as much as standard



2. Santa Fe CF7 2538, in Fullerton, California on December 18, 1974, had a round cab with sliding windows. The rectangular protrusion aft of the horns was for the electrical cabinet. The unit has closed side sills and four-stack exhaust. (rrpicturearchives.net/pictures/2135397829)





3. Santa Fe CF7 2506 leads five CF7 siblings, with an unidentified EMD unit trailing, at Hodgkins, IL on October 17, 1984. All CF7s have been upgraded with Topeka cabs. Mark Malnekoff photo, RR Picture Archives (rrpicturearchives.net/pictures/893482)

doors. The Cleburne shop designed the taller, boxier “Topeka” cab, so-named because the Topeka shops had to approve it [3]. This enhanced crew comfort and allowed for the use of standard doors.

The Topeka cab became standard for CF7s, both for later rebuilds and for existing units, which were eventually retrofitted if they didn’t leave the roster first. Even with the cab standardization, there were still a variety of window configurations.

Initially, the units were built with the same two-stack exhaust that they had from the EMD factory. These proved a fire hazard, especially in the dry conditions of the southwest. Eventually, the railroad settled on a four-stack exhaust solution to mitigate the danger.

By the late 1970s, the Santa Fe was running out of donor F-units, so the CF7 program came to an end with the final F9s in 1978. A total of 243 CF7s were produced at a per-unit cost of about \$40,000, about 2/3 of budget.

CF7s served all over the Santa Fe system for about a decade before the railroad sold or traded them off from 1984-1987. Amtrak received 25, along with 18 rebuilt EMD switchers in exchange for 18 SDP40Fs. Many others were sold to regional, short-line, and industrial railroads. Some continue to earn their keep today.

THE MODEL

Rapido went to great lengths to capture the wide variety of CF7 configurations: Two hood variations (two-stack and four-stack exhaust); two side-sill variations (open or closed); round or Topeka cab. There are even several window configurations available on the Topeka cabs as appropriate to the locomotive number! This is in addition to the now-standard variety of number-specific horns, antennas, and lighting packages.

The first run includes many paint schemes. For Santa Fe, these include the as-rebuilt bookend scheme for the models rebuilt before 1972 (the livery shown on 2649 in [1]), the finalized blue-and-yellow freight warbonnet for later units, and what-if Kodachrome and Bicentennial schemes. There are also a few Amtrak paint schemes, several short-line schemes, and generic schemes suitable for freelanced railroads.

The locomotive has a five-pole can motor with dual flywheels. All wheels pick up track power, and all provide traction. The locomotive weighs 11.2 ounces.

Standard lighting functions for all units include headlights, step lights, ground lights, number boards, cab lighting, control-stand lighting, and classification lights that alternate between white and red. Other lighting functions, including ditch lights, and rotary beacon, depend on road number.

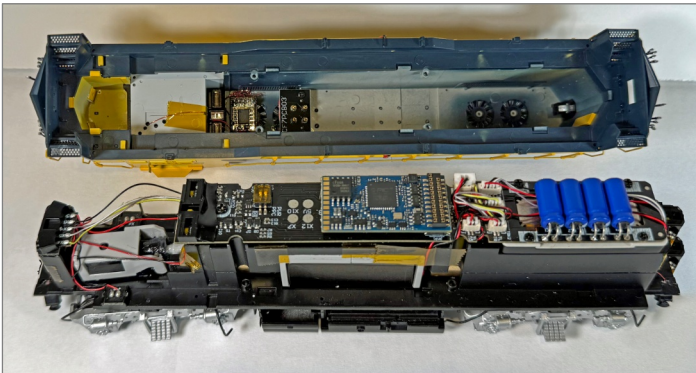
I purchased two units, both Santa Fe. One was the 2538 with round cab, and the other was the 2506 with Topeka cab. Both





4. Rapido's representation of Santa Fe 2538 and 2506. The former has a round cab, the latter a squared "Topeka" cab. From the front, separately applied details include air and MU hoses, MU

cable ports, wire grab irons and cut levers, windshield wipers, wind deflectors, and cab shades. These two have been modified with Kadee no. 158 "scale head" couplers. Out of the box, they have metal couplers matching the size of Kadee no. 5.



5. The shell has been removed to reveal the metal frame, drive system, LokSound motherboard, and MoPower capacitor. Most lighting

functions are frame-mounted, distributed via light tubes. Shell-mounted lighting features such as beacon, cab lighting, and instrument panel light are connected via Rapido's sprung-pin system for a wireless shell-frame connection. Any remaining space is filled with metal, giving the locomotive impressive weight for its size.

units came equipped with ESU LokSound 5 and Rapido's MoPower capacitor.

CLOSER LOOK: 2538



in the package as a user-applied option.

6. Offset view of Santa Fe 2538 from the fireman's side. The unit features excellent louver, panel, and hinge detailing. The model matches the prototype 2538's 1974 appearance as shown in [2], except for the missing KarTrak barcode plates, but they are included



box. See-through photo etch detailing includes Canon and Company-licensed fans, air and radiator filters and accompanying grills, and the steps. The locomotive features a four-stack exhaust.

7. This top view of 2538 reveals a can antenna, S3T horn, vent and blanked-out horn mounts adorn the cab. The rectangular protrusion to the cab's rear accommodated the taller electrical





8. This front-quarter engineer's-side view reveals fine lettering that is legible under magnification. A close look shows the electrical conduit between the headlight and the short hood is represented.



9. This rear-quarter engineer's-side view displays the ratchet hand brake.

CLOSER LOOK: 2506



10. This fireman's-side front-quarter view of 2506 is a good match to the prototype's 1984 appearance as shown in [3]. The unit features a four-LED, Prime Stratolite beacon, a raised K3LA horn, a platform-mounted Sinclair antenna, and a Prime air conditioner.



11. The top view reveals seam lines on the cab roof and fan detail, and tread on the walkways.



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12. The engineer's-side front-quarter view shows the taller rectangular window in front of the engineer's seat.



13. This rear fireman's side quarter view shows the grab-iron ladder. The filters can be seen through the photo-etched grills.

PERFORMANCE AND FINAL THOUGHTS

I used JMRI to set the locomotives' DCC addresses to match the numbers on their sides, set their horns to match the detail parts mounted on their roofs, and to grab a full CV reading. Rapido provides a detailed instruction manual for tweaks to horns, volume, and other settings on a conventional programming track.

I tested the locomotives at K-10's Model Trains in Maryville, Illinois. Rapido chose great sound files, and their speakers captured the throaty growl of the units' 567 prime movers well. Together, the pair had no problems pulling a string of 15 cars.



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The locomotives have outstanding low-speed performance, and Rapido has programmed them with a shallow speed curve, with slow-to-medium speed through the first 70 speed steps of 120. The locomotives have a maximum speed of 70 scale miles per hour, evenly between the prototype's maximum permitted speed of 65 and their governor's auto-shutoff speed of 70.

Rapido's fine detailing, combined with the factory programming has given these locomotives a slow, gritty, hard-working, and utilitarian vibe that captures the prototype well. ☑



14. 2506 shows off its lit step lights, ground lights, and instrument panel while operating at K-10's Model Trains. Were it not for the air conditioner, we could see the unit's four-LED Stratolite beacon.

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Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026



Switching ops on a small shunting layout

Small layouts can be a lot of fun to operate, and this video illustrates that well.

In this video, YouTuber **The South Down Switching Layout** demos how he does a switching session on his layout using his “Grumpy old diesel” loco lashup. He takes a string of three incoming cars and then distributes them into three different industry spots, ending up with three outgoing cars in the process. He shows how to deal with both facing and trailing turnouts by using a strategic runaround move. ☑



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SEPTEMBER NEWS

column



Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026

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

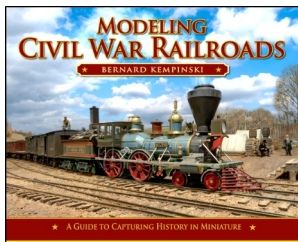


INDUSTRY NEWS

Fast Tracks/Mt Albert Scale Lumber has purchased the **Hunterline** company and will be adding the former Hunterline kits to its line of products. The weathering products were not part of the purchase, but Fast Tracks will pass along what they know about who will have them at the appropriate time. Hunterline kits used Mt. Albert Scale Lumber, and Fast Tracks has stated that the kits will begin showing up on the website in September, consisting of the same drawings, parts, instructions, and quality as they have always been.

Info: handlaidtrack.com/whats-new/?v=0b3b97fa6688

NEW PRODUCTS FOR ALL SCALES

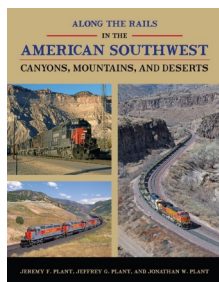


Available for pre-order from **Artisan Rail Media** is *Modeling Civil War Railroads* by Bernard Kempinski. Expected to ship in November 2026, *Modeling Civil War Railroads* illustrates the role railroads played in the American Civil War,

THE LATEST MODEL RAILROAD PRODUCTS, NEWS & EVENTS

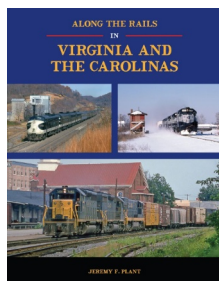
exploring the differences between the rail networks of the North and South and how they affected the course of the American Civil War. The book contains historical details and illustrations of 1860s railroad infrastructure, engineering, and operations; illustrations and models of locomotives and rolling stock; layout and diorama ideas; and inspirational layouts. It is designed to appeal to rail enthusiasts, military historians, wargamers and miniaturists. ~120 pages, full color, the pre-publication price is \$32.95 with a standard price of \$37.95.

Info: www.artisanrailmedia.com



Garbely Publishing is taking preorders for three new books. The first is *Along the Rails in the American Southwest: Canyons, Mountains, and Deserts* by Jeremy F. Plant, Jeffrey G. Plant, and Jonathan W. Plant. **Preorders are due November 6, 2026**, with an expected release date of January 15, 2027. Including over 150 full-color photos from the late 1970s through

early 2000s, it includes information on the Santa Fe, Southern Pacific, Rio Grande, Union Pacific, Apache Railway, Magma Arizona, Utah Railway, Nevada Northern, and the Grand Canyon Railway. 8.5" x 11" softcover, ~80 pages. Price: \$60.00.



Along the Rails in Virginia and the Carolinas by Jeremy F. Plant. **Preorders are due January 8, 2027**, with an expected release date of March 15, 2027. This book covers the Southern Railway, C&O, N&W, RF&P, SCL, Clinchfield and dozens of shortlines between 1967 and 2000. Over 150 photos show the region from the Shenandoah Valley and Blue Ridge Mountains

to Virginia's Tidewater and the Carolinas.

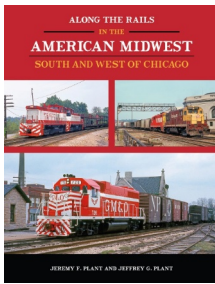
8.5" x 11" softcover, ~80 pages. Price: \$60.00.



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Along the Rails in the American Midwest: South and West of Chicago by Jeremy F. Plant and Jeffrey G. Plant. **Preorders are due March 15, 2027**, with an expected release date of May 15, 2027. Covering the railroads of Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, and neighboring states between 1970 and 1999. Including Class 1 railroads to terminal and short lines, over 150

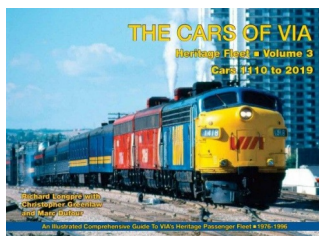
full-color photographs show the Santa Fe, Rock Island, GM&O, CNW, BN, MILW, ICG, MP, Frisco and others. 8.5" x 11" softcover, ~80 pages. Price: \$60.00.

Info: store.garbelypublishing.com

TYPE	MODEL	BUILDER	ROAD / NUMBER	REPORTING NAME	SCALE	MANUFACTURER	LOCATION
Locomotive	Royal Hudson	Montreal Locomotive Works	CP 2860 Canadian Pacific	CP	HO		Steam shed
Locomotive	4-8-4 Northern	Montreal Locomotive Works	CN 4218 ICC Canadian National	CN	HO		On layout
Locomotive	H16-44	CLC (Canadian Locomotive Company)	CN 3377 Canadian National	CN	HO		On layout
Locomotive	RS-3	Alco (American Locomotive Company)	CP 4764 Canadian Pacific	CP	HO		Kit box 1
Locomotive	ALC-42 Charger	Siemens	AMTK 42 Amtrak	AMTK	HO		Display case C
Locomotive	P42DC	GE	VIA 6902 VIA Rail Canada	VIA	HO		On layout
Locomotive	GP38-2	GMED (General Motors Diesel, Canada)	ONT 1733 MC Ontario Northland	ONT	HO		Shed 2
Locomotive	M420	MILW (Montreal Locomotive Works)	BCOL 721 BC Rail	BCOL	HO		Shed 2
Locomotive	Dash V-48CW	GE	BCOL 4651 BC Rail	BCOL	HO		Storage
Locomotive	F59PH	GMED (General Motors Diesel, Canada)	GO 633 GO Transit	GO	HO		Display case B
Locomotive	F59PH	GMED (General Motors Diesel, Canada)	GO 529 GO Transit	GO	HO		On layout
Locomotive	LRC locomotive	Bombardier	VIA 6709 VIA Rail Canada	VIA	HO		On layout
Locomotive	F40PH-2	GMED (General Motors Diesel, Canada)	VIA 6404 VIA Rail Canada	VIA	HO		Display case B

Maple Leaf Trains has released version 1.2.1 of the Manifest model railroad collection organizing software. It allows the modeler to track locomotives, rolling stock, structures, vehicles, books – anything related to the railroad – in one place. Entries can include values and conditions, photos, and any details desired. Both Free and Pro versions are available, Pro is priced at \$34.90.

Info: mapleleaftrains.com

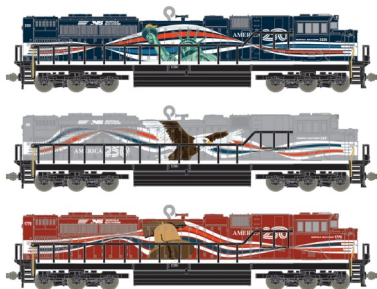


Available for preorder from **Rapido** is *The Cars of VIA: Heritage Fleet, Volume 3, Cars 1110 to 2019* by Richard Longpré with Christopher Greenlaw and Marc Dufour. This volume covers the early years of VIA with a comprehensive walkthrough of each type of car

including interior and action photos. From Sleepers to Diners and Roomettes, the book includes the history and disposition of the cars as well as a detailed specification sheet. 9.5" x 12.5" hardcover. Price: US\$124.95. Arrives in October 2026.

Info: rapidotrains.com

All artwork and graphics are courtesy of Rapido Trains



Scale Trains is taking preorders for limited edition commemorative boxed sets of 1:180 scale Christmas ornaments of the BNSF, Canadian National, CPKC, and Norfolk Southern America250 locomotives. Each locomotive has a hook eye in the roof for hanging. These

ornaments are only available directly from the Scale Trains website. The BNSF set contains 3x ES44 locomotives, the CN set contains 2x ES44s, the CPKC set contains 3x ET44s, and the first Norfolk Southern set contains 3x SD70ACE with the second set containing 3x ES44s. Only 1776 of each set will be produced. Delivery is estimated to be mid-December 2026.

Info: scaletrains.com

O and S SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

Lines West Products has announced three new S and O scale Nickel Plate 40' Double Sheathed, Single Door boxcar kits. The first kit includes Murphy ends, the second Hutchins ends and a



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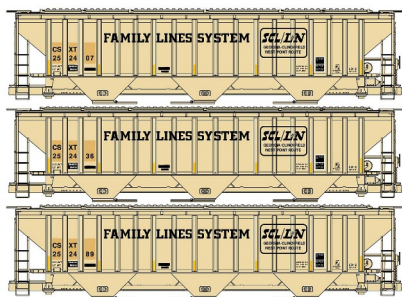


Murphy XLA roof, and the third Hutchins ends and roof. The kits feature pre-drilled grab iron holes, coupler draft gear, a fishbelly

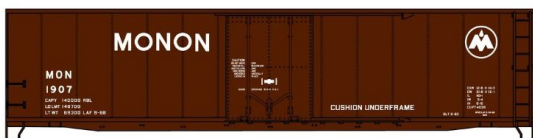
underframe with KC brakes and brake piping, and threaded brass inserts for mounting the body, couplers, and trucks. Couplers, trucks, and grab irons are not included.

Info: lineswestproducts.com

HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

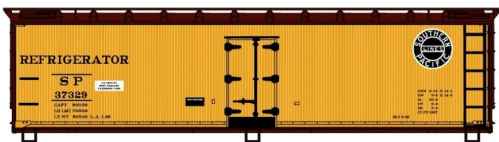


Accurail's anticipated November 2026 production run will include an SCL/L&N Family Lines Pullman Standard 4750 cu. ft. PS-2 three-bay covered hopper kit patched for CSXT. Built dates for the hoppers is May 1977 in the illustration. The three-car set will retail for \$73.98 with single cars retailing for \$24.98 each.



Also part of the November run is a Monon 50' Insulated Plug Door Steel Boxcar kit. Featuring a built date of 8-63, the 70-

ton 4638 cu. ft. boxcar also has a LAF date of 9-68. The car features high ladders and brake wheel and is equipped with Bettendorf trucks. MSRP for the kit is \$22.98.



A 40' wood refrigerator car with hinged doors decorated for Southern Pacific Lines is in the November run. The car has

a built date of June 1922, an L.A. date of January 1939, and is

marked for Ice Service in the West Oakland passenger yard. MSRP is \$23.98.



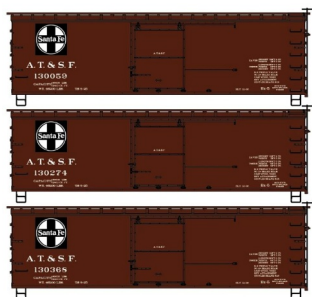
A Pere Marquette 36' double-sheathed wood boxcar is marked for Vehicle service. Marked with a built date of June 1903 and "United States Safety

Appliances Standard," the kit features a straight underframe and simulated wood ends. The MSRP is \$22.98.



Ending the November run is a Missouri Kansas Texas 4650 cu. ft. PS-2 three-bay covered hopper with a New date of

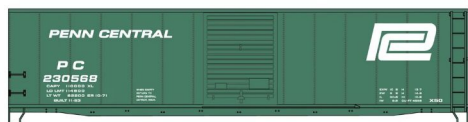
December 1979. MSRP for this kit is \$24.98.



The December 2026 production run from Accurail begins with a limited run of AT&SF (Santa Fe) 36' double-sheathed wood boxcars in class BX-5. They feature metal ends and a fishbelly underframe. The cars are available in a three-car kit with an MSRP of \$67.98 or as a single car kit for \$22.98.



A 40' riveted steel boxcar with a Youngstown door is decorated for Central of Georgia with a BLT date of October 1947 and a SAV date of September 1955. MSRP is \$22.98.



Also for December is a 50' Riveted Steel Boxcar with a Youngstown door, Bettendorf trucks, high

ladders and brake wheel. Decorated for Penn Central, it has a built date of November 1953 and an ER date of October 1971. MSRP is \$22.98



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The last announcement for the December run is a 40' single-sheathed wood boxcar with metal ends. The built date is

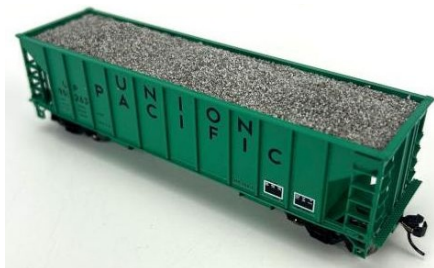
April 1924 with the last air brake test being conducted at "VT" in August 1949. MSRP is \$22.98. All Accurail kits include accurate trucks and Accumate couplers.

Info: accurailinc.com



Bowser has introduced several new loads in its "Real Coal," "Real Woodchips," and "Real Ballast" lines. In HO scale, woodchip loads have been introduced for the Walthers

61' wood chip gondola, the InterMountain FMC welded woodchip gondola, the InterMountain FMC exterior brace woodchip gondola, and the InterMountain FMC exterior post rotary woodchip gondola. Each two-pack retails for \$19.95.

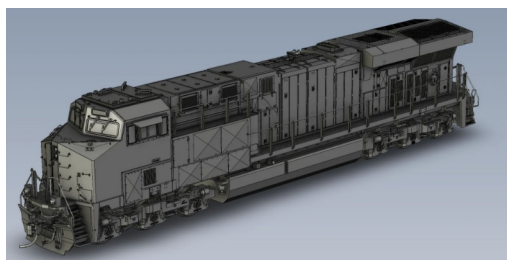


New to the Real Ballast line is a two-pack of loads for the Bowser 100-ton hopper and the Walthers 41' ballast hopper. MSRP is \$19.95.



Real Coal loads have been introduced for the Accurail 50-ton offset twin hopper; the Athearn 34' two-bay ribbed hopper, and the Atlas two-bay offset side hopper. MSRP for a two-pack is \$19.95.

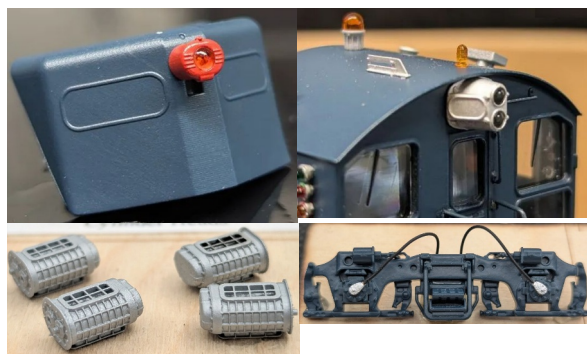
Info: bowser-trains.com



Broadway Limited has announced that they will be producing the HO scale ES44AC model in diecast metal. The first diecast model from BLI, the SD70ACe, weighed 1lb 15oz. The model will

include a diecast chassis and body, brass handrails, horn castings, and other details, and road specific detailing. Road names in the first run are Norfolk Southern's "Landmark" units, Chicago and Altoona, the Norfolk Southern's America 250 locomotive, "The Stars & Stripes;" BNSF's three America 250 locomotives, #1776, #2026, and #250; Canadian National's two America 250 schemes, "Screaming Eagle" and "Air Force One;" and two Union Pacific road numbers in "Building America." Arriving in Spring 2027, **preorders close on December 17, 2026.** MSRP with Paragon4 Sound/DC/DCC and smoke is \$459.99 and MSRP for the Stealth units equipped with a 21-pin DCC socket is \$359.99.

Info: broadway-limited.com



New from **Gotham Rail & Marine** in HO scale are a Pyle 17550 UDE Gyalite (\$5.00), Southern/Norfolk Southern Walkway Light Set (\$6.00), EMD Roots Blowers (\$5.00), Quantum Speedometer

Generator (\$6.00), Q-Tron Wheel Slip Monitor (Axle generator) (\$7.00), and NYC Location Lights (\$6.00).

Locomotive Horns recently released include The Leslie Tyfon A-125 (\$6.00), Leslie Supertyfon Split Manifold S-3L – Early



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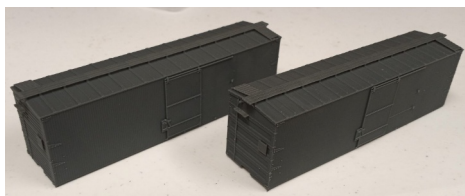
(\$10.00), Nathan Airchime K5LAR24 (\$10.00), Nathan Airchime P1R2 (P2) (\$8.00), and the Nathan Airchime P24R1 (\$10.00). Info: gothamrailmarine.com



Kadee's August car is a Southern Pacific two-bay 70-ton PS-2 covered hopper with road number #8053. It features a built date of

1957 and a repaint date of 1962. MSRP is \$45.99.

Info: www.kadee.com



Lines West Products has released three new HO scale Nickel Plate 40' Double Sheathed, Single Door boxcar kits. The first kit includes Murphy ends, the second

Hutchins ends and a Murphy XLA roof, and the third Hutchins ends and roof. The kits feature pre-drilled grab iron holes, Kadee whisker coupler compatible draft gear, a fishbelly underframe with KC brakes and brake piping, and threaded brass inserts for mounting the body, couplers, and trucks. Couplers, trucks, and grab irons are not included, Tichy grab irons are recommended. Each kit is priced at \$59.99.



Also new from Lines West is the HO scale Southern Pacific class F-70-26 bulkhead flatcar. GBEC produced 400 of these cars in 1964, when they were numbered 508000 through 508399. Two decking options are included, used and with broken

boards. The included car weight is cut to allow the modeler to see through the broken board decking. Both styles of bulkhead

boards are included as well as “boxcar door” ends representing cars that had one or both bulkheads replaced with recycled doors. A jig for bending non-standard grab irons is included as are the decals. Trucks, couplers, and .008 brass wire for grab irons need to be supplied by the modeler.

Info: lineswestproducts.com



ModelTrainBox.com has introduced a line of HO scale acrylic display boxes with a clear top and gloss black base. Slots to hold HO/00 gauge wheels are molded into the bases. Three sizes are available: 10" (\$25.00), 15"

(\$29.00), and 20" (\$35.00).

Info: modeltrainbox.com



Oak Hill Track Supply has announced new 36" HO scale Rail-Flow Track Alignment Guides. The straight versions are \$19.99 with curved versions available from

18" to 72" on the website for \$34.99.

Info: ohrtracksupply.com



Rapido Trains has announced a new run of HO scale square cab CF7 locomotives. Road

names in this run are ATSF Warbonnet, Aberdeen & Rockfish, Ashley, Drew & Northern; Gloster Southern, Mass Central, Mexicana De Cobre SA, Midsouth, Midwest Coal Hauling, Minnesota Commercial, Pioneer Valley RR, Reading & Northern,



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Rescar, Santa Cruz & Big Trees, and The Indiana RR. Several of the road names have multiple road numbers available.

Preorders are due by November 16, 2026. MSRP for DCC/Sound: US\$369.95, DC/Silent: US\$259.95.



Up next are new paint schemes and variations on the HO scale F40PH

locomotive. Road names and variations in this run are Amtrak Phase III early, Amtrak Phase III Late w/ditch lights, Caltrain as delivered, CSX Executive Scheme (B&O Heritage), MBTA as delivered, MBTA maroon/silver, MBTA simplified, Metra F40PH w/Metropolitan Rail Logo, Metra F40PH-2 mid-1990s blue scheme, Metra F40PH-3 new blue scheme, Metra F40PH-3 Blue "Operation Lifesaver", Metra F40PH-3 City of Chicago, Metrolink simplified stripe, Caltrain F40PH-2CAT Red Caltrain Logo, Metro-North F40PH-3C Current scheme (West of Hudson), NJ Transit F40PH-2CAT. **Preorders are due January 15, 2027.** MSRP for DCC Sound: Normal: US\$359.95, MBTA: US\$381.55, Metro-North: US\$374.35. MSRP Non-Sound: Normal: US\$269.95, MBTA: US\$286.15, Metro-North: US\$280.75.



A new run of Pullman-Standard Comet

I railcars is also part of this announcement, with three NJ Transit three packs of two low door coaches and one high door cab car, in pre-ditch lights, with ditch lights, and Tiger Stripes (pre-ditch lights) versions. Available as singles are NJ Transit refurbished/low door coach/1985+, NJ Transit ditch light era/low door coach/1996+, NJ Transit pre-ditch light/high door cab car/1985+, and NJ Transit ditch lights/high door cab car/1996+. Also available are low door coach cars decorated for FrontRunner which were also leased by Metrolink and the CSX Safety Train low door coach car with ditch lights. Preorder due date was not noted. MSRP for a single coach is US\$129.95, single cab is US\$149.95, and a three-pack is US \$409.95.



Along with the Comet I comes a new run of Comet

II railcars. Three-packs include one cab car and two coaches. Road names are CTrail (2017+), CDOT (1998+), MARC (2009+), MBTA (2005+), and Metro-North (2010+ and 1998+). Single cars are available decorated for CTrail, CDOT, MARC, MBTA (2005+), MBTA – Laser Train, MBTA – Operation Lifesaver, MBTA – Massachusetts “250” wrap, and Metro-North (2010+ and 1998+). **Preorder deadline is January 15, 2027.** MSRP for single cars are Normal: US\$129.95, MBTA: US\$137.75, Metro-North: US\$135.15. Three-packs are normal: US\$ 409.95 MBTA: US\$434.55 Metro-North: US\$426.35



Rapido has joined with the Western Maryland Railroad Historical Society to release a model of WM #3798, a GP40 that was the last operating WM-painted locomotive, wearing its paint into the CSX era. The model

will include cab roof strobe lights, fireman’s side-mounted bell on the hood, ribbed blower duct, and late dynamic brake housing. Preorders are highly recommended, email:

wmrhsmmodels@gmail.com.



The last announcement from Rapido involves the Maine Central GP38 that was due to ship to modelers recently. It was determined that the shade of yellow on the paint scheme was incorrect as well as some of the

rooftop art. Due to this the models will need to be repainted. There are still some DC/DCC/Sound equipped models available for order.

Info: www.rapidotrains.com

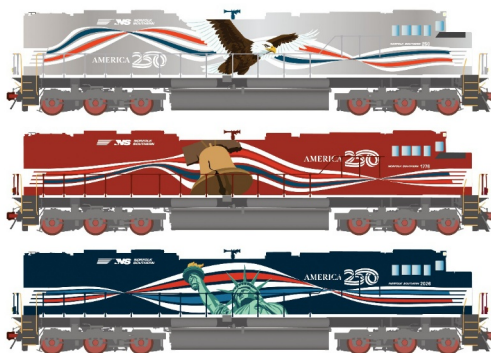
All artwork and graphics are courtesy of Rapido Trains



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PROTOTYPE ARTWORK PROVIDED BY NORFOLK SOUTHERN

ScaleTrains joined in the America 250 locomotive celebration at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC to announce nearly 150 new products or paint schemes with preorder and delivery dates spread across the next year and a half. Many of the locomotives will also be available in limited edition boxed sets. A new locomotive model in HO scale is being produced, the SD70IAC. Rebuilt from SD70ACe locomotives by Norfolk Southern, the models are part of the Rivet Counter line, with per-locomotive details. The model will be available in the #250 Freedom/Eagle, #1776 Liberty Bell, and #2026 Lady Liberty paint schemes. **Preorders are due May 24, 2027**, with an estimated time of arrival of December 2027. MSRP with DCC and Sound is \$347.99, DC/DCC Ready is \$249.99. A boxed set of the three DCC and Sound equipped locomotives is available only through scaletrains.com for \$1,174.99. **Preorders are due by June 28, 2027**, for a December 2027 arrival date.



The Fox Valley Models HO scale N&W Class J 4-8-4

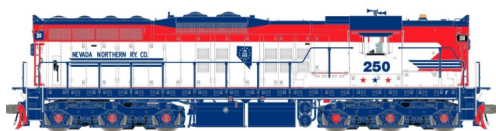
steam locomotive will duplicate the prototype's America 250 wrap, paying homage to the original 1976 American Freedom Train concept art. **Preorders are due April 26, 2027** with an estimated delivery time of November 2027. MSRP is \$559.99 for DCC/Sound equipped and \$449.99 for DC/DCC Ready.



The Cincinnati Scenic Railway decorated its GP30 #1776 “Spirit of Lebanon” in an America 250 paint scheme.

Preorders for the HO scale

Rivet Counter GP30 are due September 28, 2026, with an estimated arrival date of April 2027. MSRP is \$347.99 for DCC/Sound equipped and \$222.99 for DC/DCC Ready.



The Rivet Counter HypoTypical HO scale EMD SD9R represents Nevada Northern’s America 250

locomotive #250. Previously announced in April, this locomotive is still available for preorder with an arrival date of November 2026. MSRP for the DCC/Sound equipped model is \$329.99 and the DC/DCC Ready version is \$219.99.



With the Reading Blue Mountain & Northern and Wheeling & Lake Erie Rivet counter HO scale SD40-2

paint schemes already announced, Scale Trains is now adding Burlington Northern/Bicentennial #1876, Milwaukee Road/Bicentennial #156/1976 version, and Milwaukee Road Bicentennial #156/2026 version to the run. **Preorders are due September 28, 2026**, with an estimate date of arrival of March 2027 for the new paint schemes. MSRP for the DCC/Sound equipped version is \$339.99 with the DC/DCC Ready version \$224.99.



Rivet Counter EMD SD45 locomotives will be available in HO scale decorated in America 250 on New York,

Susquehanna & Western #3634, and Norfolk & Western #1776 in its Bicentennial scheme. **Preorders are due February 1, 2027**, with an anticipated arrival date of August 2027.



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Five railroads and eight paint schemes are featured on the HO scale Rivet Counter GE ES44 GEVO locomotive. The preorder and delivery dates are different for different locomotives in this run. BNSF

has three ES44ACH's decorated for America 250 - #250, #1776, and #2026 (**Preorder December 31, 2026, arrival September 2027**). Canadian National has ES44AC Screaming Eagle #1776 and Air Force One #2026 (**Preorder November 2, 2026, arrival July 2027**). Florida East Coast is represented by ES44C4 #250 and Iowa Interstate's America 250 locomotive is #510 (**Preorder November 2, 2026, arrival July 2027**). Norfolk Southern has Soaring (Eagle) #8096, Stars & Stripes #8118, and Patriot (Horsehead) #8143 (**Preorder December 31, 2026, arrival September 2027**). MSRP for DCC/Sound is \$369.99 and DC/DCC Ready is \$244.99.

The three BNSF (**Preorder November 2, 2026, arrival August 2027**), two Canadian National (**Preorder November 2, 2026, arrival July 2028**) and three Norfolk Southern (**Preorder December 31, 2026, arrival September 2027**) locomotives will be available in the Limited Edition Commemorative Boxed Sets. BNSF/NS MSRP is \$1,159.99, CN MSRP is \$789.99.



CPKC has five ET44 Tier 4 GEVOs decorated for America 250 - #250, #704, #776, #1776, and #7626, with Union Pacific's representative

being #4547. MSRP for DCC/Sound is \$345.99 and for DC/DCC Ready \$232.99.

All five CPKC locomotives will be grouped in a Commemorative Box Set with an MSRP of \$1,799.99.

Preorders are due by September 3, 2026 with an estimated date of arrival of February 2027.



Two Genesee & Wyoming railroads have painted patriotic schemes on GE Dash 9-44CW locomotives, with

two Buffalo & Pittsburg locomotives, Bald Eagle #4426 and Liberty Bell #4434 joining Indiana & Ohio's Bald Eagle scheme #4445. MSRP for the HO scale locomotives are \$264.99 for DCC/Sound equipped and \$159.99 for DC/DCC Ready. **Preorders are due by August 2, 2027** with an estimated arrival date of January 2028.



The last HO scale locomotive in the announcement is the Rivet Counter Wabtec CM44AC, decorated by CSX in a Stars & Stripes scheme as #250 and a

Bald Eagle scheme as #2026. The HO scale CM44AC **preorders are due by May 24, 2027** with an estimated arrival date of November 2027. MSRP for DCC/Sound equipped is \$344.99 and DC/DCC Ready is \$229.99.

The two CSX locomotives are also available in a Limited Edition Commemorative Boxed Set. Preorders and arrival are the same as single locomotives. MSRP in HO scale is \$749.99.

Info: scaletrains.com



Speedwitch Media is reproducing some of its older, sold-out kits. Re-run kits are K110.1 – Ann Arbor 41000-series Single Sheathed Automobile Cars,

K110.2 – Ann Arbor 74000-series Single Sheathed Boxcars, K119 – Northern Pacific 52' straight side sill flatcar, K119.1 – Spokane Portland & Seattle straight side sill flatcar, and K128 –



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Great Northern 53000-series stock car.

Info: speedwitchmedia.com



New from **State Tool & Die** is an HO scale DODX M140 Naval Spent Fuel Shipping Container, designed for the transport of radioactive

nuclear reactor components. The prototype M140 weighs up to 350,000lbs fully loaded with the cask, which is constructed of at least 10 inches of stainless steel. The undecorated kit includes trucks with metal wheels, decals, and Kadee #158 whisker couplers. State Tool & Die also sells two styles of DODX escort cabooses that would travel with these cars. Its price is \$75.00.



Another new model from State Tool & Die is an HO scale 4-truck, 8-axle

depressed center flatcar with the road number DODX 39780. When looking for the prototype, Google's AI assured me that the car was a fantasy, as every car in that number series had 3-axle buckeye trucks and a flat deck. Google's AI is incorrect. Searching on rrpicturearchives.net reveals photos of DODX 39781 and DODX 39782 which essentially match this model. This undecorated kit also includes trucks with metal wheels, decals, and Kadee #158 whisker couplers. Its price is \$60.00.



The last new model is an HO scale Pollock 90-ton hot metal car. The undecorated 3D-printed kit also includes trucks with metal wheels, Kadee #158 whisker couplers, and decals. Its price is \$35.00.

Info: statetoolanddie.com



Walthers August announcements begin with a new run of

WalthersProto Amtrak Superliner II Coaches, Sleepers, Dinners, Sightseer Lounges, and Transition Sleepers. Featuring Superliner II trucks and a simulated stainless-steel finish, the cars have full interiors with factory installed lighting. Available in both Amtrak Phase IV and Phase VI paint schemes, they are currently priced at \$134.98.



Also from WalthersProto is a new run of the Wabash Streamlined Caboose. Detailed as appropriate for the prototype being

modeled, the car includes swing motion trucks with 33" RP-25 metal wheels and Proto MAX metal knuckle couplers. Road names in this run are Ann Arbor (two schemes), Chicago & Eastern Illinois, Norfolk & Western (three schemes), Wabash, and painted unlettered. They are currently priced at \$74.98.



From WalthersMainline is a run of ACF 50' exterior post boxcars. Road names in this run are CSX, Lake Erie

Franklin & Clarion, Marinette Tomahawk & Western, Norfolk Southern, and Railbox in both the standard yellow and the pink breast cancer awareness schemes. Equipped with 33" RP-25 metal wheels and Proto MAX metal knuckle couplers, the current MSRP is \$44.98.



A new run of WalthersMainline ACF 5250 four-bay covered hoppers has been announced with roof hatches and outlet gates appropriate to the prototype. Road



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names in this run are ACF/ACFX, Borg Warner/ACFX, Burlington Northern/BN, Santa Fe/ATSF, Union Carbide/CCBX, Dow/DOWX, Philips 66/PSPX, Cotton Belt/SSW, data only with round hatches and pneumatic gates, and undecorated with trough hatches and gravity gates. The current price is \$44.98.

All Walthers products in this announcement are anticipated to arrive in Winter 2027.

Info: www.walthers.com

N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



Bowser has released three new Real Coal loads in N scale. The loads are designed to fit the Bachmann Ore Hopper, the Broadway Limited H2a hopper, and the Rapido Auto Flood II. Each two-pack retails for \$12.95.

Info: www.bowser-trains.com



Kato has announced several new sets of Amfleet I and II cars. The Amfleet & Viewliner Intercity Exp 3-car add-on set includes an Amfleet II coach, Amfleet II café, and Viewliner I sleeper in Phase VI paint. MSRP is \$135.00 for the base set and \$180.00 with factory installed lights.

The Amfleet I Coach Phase VI 2 Car Set A includes two Amfleet I coaches, #82039 and #82755, in Phase VI paint. Amfleet I



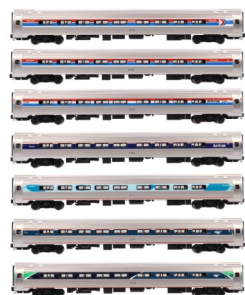
Coach & Café Phase VI 2 Car Set B includes coach #82647 and Café #48159. MSRP for each is \$70.00 for the base sets and \$100.00 with factory installed lights.



The Amfleet I 4 Car Bookcase Set Phase III includes Amfleet I coaches #21200, #21267, and #21226, and café #20011. MSRP for the base set is \$140.00 and \$200.00 with factory installed lights.

coaches #25003 and #25107. MSRP for each set is \$75.00 for the base sets and \$105.00 with factory installed lights.

Amfleet II Café & Baggage 2 Car Set Phase III includes Amfleet II lounge #28023 and Baggage #1212. Amfleet Coach 2 Car Set Phase III includes Coaches #25000 and #25068. The Amfleet II Phase VII Paint Coach 2 Car set includes



The Amtrak Amfleet I Coach 7 Car Set All Phases (Limited) edition includes Phase I #21134, Phase II #21020, Phase III #21725, Phase IV #21254, Phase V Acela #82511, Phase VI #82707, and Phase VII #82766. MSRP for the base set is \$250 and \$355 with factory installed lights.

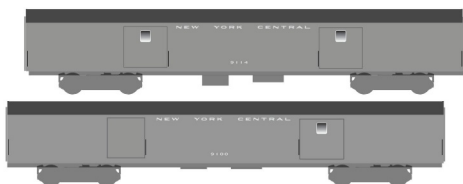
Info: www.katousa.com



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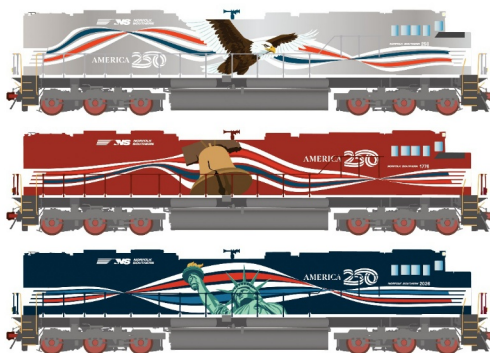
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Railsmith has announced more baggage cars in N scale, with Union Pacific, New York Central, and ATSF being offered as a two-pack and

Milwaukee, Union Pacific, and New York Central available as singles. The road names have different prices, with the Union Pacific priced at \$122 (pair) and \$65 (single), New York Central at \$119 (pair) and \$62 (single), the ATSF at \$121 (pair), and the Milwaukee at \$64 (single).

Info: lowellsmith.net



PROTOTYPE ARTWORK PROVIDED BY NORFOLK SOUTHERN

ScaleTrains joined in the America 250 locomotive celebration at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, NC to announce nearly 150 new products or paint schemes with preorder and delivery dates spread across the next year and a half. Many of the locomotives will also be available in limited edition boxed sets. A new locomotive model in N scale is being produced, the SD70IAC. Rebuilt from SD70ACe locomotives by Norfolk Southern, the models are part of the Rivet Counter line, with per-locomotive details. The model will be available in the #250 Freedom/Eagle, #1776 Liberty Bell, and #2026 Lady Liberty paint schemes. MSRP with DCC and Sound is \$293.99,

DC/DCC Ready is \$179.99. A boxed set of the three DCC and Sound equipped locomotives is available only through scaletrains.com for \$931.99. **Preorders are due by June 28, 2027**, for a December 2027 arrival date.



The Cincinnati Scenic Railway decorated its GP30 #1776 "Spirit of Lebanon" in an America 250 paint

scheme. **Preorders for the N scale Rivet Counter GP30 are due September 28, 2026**, with an estimated arrival date of September 2027. MSRP is \$293.99 for DCC/Sound equipped and \$168.99 for DC/DCC Ready.



Rivet Counter N scale SD40-2 paint schemes in the America 250 run include Reading Blue

Mountain & Northern #1776, Wheeling & Lake Erie #1776, Burlington Northern/Bicentennial #1876, Milwaukee Road/Bicentennial #156/1976 version, and Milwaukee Road Bicentennial #156/2026 version to the run. **Preorders are due December 7, 2026**, with an estimate date of arrival of June 2027 for the new paint schemes. MSRP for the DCC/Sound equipped version is \$249.99 with the DC/DCC Ready version \$149.99.



Five railroads and eight paint schemes are featured on the N scale Rivet Counter GE ES44 GEVO locomotive. BNSF has three ES44ACH's decorated for America 250 - #250, #1776, and #2026. Canadian National has ES44AC Screaming Eagle #1776 and Air Force One #2026. Iowa



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Interstate's America 250 locomotive is #510. Norfolk Southern has Soaring (Eagle) #8096, Stars & Stripes #8118, and Patriot (Horsehead) #8143. MSRP for DCC/Sound is \$288.99 and DC/DCC Ready is \$173.99.

The three BNSF, two Canadian National and three Norfolk Southern locomotives will be available in the Limited Edition Commemorative Boxed Sets. BNSF/NS MSRP is \$914.99, CN MSRP is \$629.99. **Preorders are due September 28, 2026** for arrival in April 2027. Florida East Coast's America 250 locomotive, GMXT 250, is part of an earlier run with an estimated arrival date of May 2027. Preorders appear to still be open for it.



PROTOTYPE SHOWN. PHOTO CREDIT: SCHONNORRI

CPKC has five ET44 Tier 4 GEVOs decorated for America 250 - #250, #704, #776, #1776, and #7626, with Union

being #4547. MSRP for DCC/Sound is \$288.99 and for DC/DCC Ready \$179.99.

All five CPKC locomotives will be grouped in a Commemorative Box Set with an MSRP of \$1,499.99. **Preorders are due by April 26, 2027**, with an estimated date of arrival of October 2027.



Two Genesee & Wyoming railroads have painted patriotic schemes on GE Dash 9-44CW

locomotives, with two Buffalo & Pittsburg locomotives, Bald Eagle #4426 and Liberty Bell #4434 joining Indiana & Ohio's Bald Eagle scheme #4445. MSRP for the N scale locomotives are \$334.99 for DCC/Sound equipped and \$219.99 for DC/DCC Ready. **Preorders are due by November 2, 2026** with an estimated arrival date of June 2027.



PROTOTYPES SHOWN PHOTO CREDIT CASEY THOMAS/CSX

The last HO scale locomotive in the announcement is an all-new model, the Rivet Counter Wabtec CM44AC, decorated by CSX in a

Stars & Stripes scheme as #250 and a Bald Eagle scheme as #2026. The N scale CM44AC **preorders are due by March 29, 2027** with an estimated arrival date of August 2027. MSRP for DCC/Sound equipped is \$264.99 and DC/DCC Ready is \$159.99.

The two CSX locomotives are also available in a Limited Edition Commemorative Boxed Set. Preorders and arrival are the same as single locomotives. MSRP in N scale is \$579.99.

Info: scaletrains.com

STRUCTURES & SCENIC SUPPLIES



3G Resin Prints has released a 3D-printed kit for a 1920s Packard box truck in HO scale. The kit contains several separate 3D-printed parts, including the driver, steering wheel, and resin representations of the wood spoke wheels. The kit is priced at \$20.20.



Also new from 3G Resin Prints is an HO scale kit of a Bucyrus 120B Electric Shovel from the early 20th Century. Designed by Greenway Models, the 3D-printed kit has a paint ready surface and is priced at \$60.35.

Info: 3gresinprints.com



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New from Rail Center by **Ammo** are two paint and weathering sets. The Railway Fast Method Paint set (Current MSRP \$17.44) includes six 20ml bottles of highly pigmented acrylic colors: Boiler Brown, Freight Red, Dark Rust, Engine Black, Ochre Sand, and Rail Brown.



The Depot Areas & Track Filth Weathering Set includes four enamels and one pigment in 35ml jars. The enamels are Trackside Wash, Fresh Rust Wash, Mechanical Wash, and Fuel Staining. The pigment is Metal slag, used for reproducing corroded and aged metal textures. MSRP is currently \$19.38.

Info: www.migjimenez.com/en



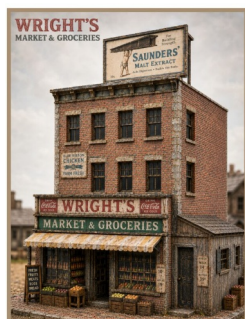
Bar Mills Scale Model Works has released several new HO scale kits as part of its Brickyard Basics series. The first, Reed's Locksmith, is a standalone single-story building with a 2.5" x 2.5" footprint.



The next structure is City Plumbing Supply, a two-story building with a 3" x 2.5" footprint.



The most recent kit in the Brickyard Basics series is R.C. TV Repair, a two-story building with a 2.5" x 2.5" footprint.



A new craftsman kit from Bar Mills, Wright's Market & Groceries, is available in N, HO, and O scales. Its footprint in HO scale is 7" x 5" and includes many 3D-printed and resin parts, including 3D-printed door knobs. MSRP is \$67.95 for N scale, \$79.95 for HO scale, and \$149.95 for O scale.



Hickory Corner is a craftsman kit consisting of the Central House Hotel and Heywood Brothers Fine Furnishings. Including 3D-printed and resin castings, brick sidewalks, and 3D-printed lamps, the footprint of the kit is not specified. MSRP is \$77.95 for N scale and \$89.95 for HO.

Info: barmillsmodels.com

Berkshire Valley Models is producing a former American Model Builders kit, Mrs. Williams House, in HO scale. The kit includes front and rear porches, exterior cellar doors, and laser-cut latticework. Construction is tab and slot, peel & stick windows and doors, and self-adhesive laser-cut roofing strips.



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It measures 6" long x 3.75" wide x 3" high. It is priced at \$44.00. Figures and scenery are not included.

Info: berkshirevalleymodels.com



A recent release from **B.T.S.** is The Warehouse, a freelance structure inspired by freight stations from the era of 30' and 36' boxcars. Consisting of laser-cut basswood, cardstock, and plywood, the kit includes two styles of freight doors and the

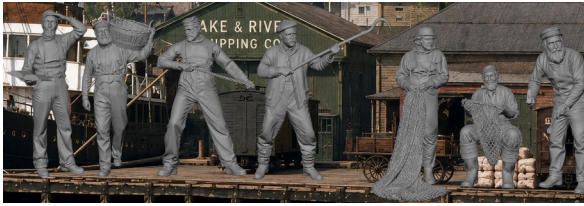
dock and ramp are optional. Available in HO (\$139.95) and O (\$179.95) scales, the building alone measures a scale 68' x 28'. Info: btsrr.com



Characters Count Miniatures has announced the release of the NNGC Special Collectors Collection – the Nevada California & Oregon No. 5 Crew Collection. Based on a photo from 1927 reprinted in the Record Centennial newspaper in 1992, The Nevada California & Oregon No. 5

Crew Collection consists of six figures that will be available in O, S, and HO scale. See the website for pricing.

Other sets released recently are the Gold Tooth Mine Companion Characters, Sawmill Collection #2, Ladies of the Night Collection, The Wharf Collection #1 (left), Pulp Mill Collection, Wild Kingdom Collection #1, The Docks #1, Ice House Collection, Working on the Railroad #2, and Main St. Collection #2. The characters' appearance tends to be between



the mid/late-1800s and the 1930s. The Wild Kingdom Collection is six animals typical to North America. Note that most images are renderings of the figures, not actual 3D-prints.

www.characterscountminiatures.com



New from **Conowingo Models** is a Two-Stall Engine House in HO scale. Originally a Sugar Pine Models design, it has been expanded by Conowingo. The kit features laser-cut wood, Tichy and 3D-printed

details, a full ridge beam and rafters to facilitate a removable roof, and a partial floor and track. Approximately 11 inches by 9 inches, the engine house will accommodate two 2-8-0 locomotives. The workshop can be placed anywhere alongside the model or left off entirely. The kit is priced at \$260.00.

Info: conowingomodels.com



Digcom Designs has released several sets of HO and N scale 2026 Autorack Vehicle inserts. The first three sets are the 2026 Honda

Accord, the 2026 KIA Sportage, and the 2026 Toyota Camry.



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The inserts are printable PDFs that include nine inserts with three vehicle profiles in five colors in HO scale and six inserts with six vehicle profiles in N scale. There are inserts for 2016 Ford sedans and F150 trucks as well. Priced at \$5.95 for each set of inserts, which can be printed multiple times, it's an inexpensive way to fill your autoracks with vehicles.



Digcom has also released a Small Pumper Body in HO and N scale. The second kit in the First Responders series, the kit is a printable PDF body and requires a suitable cab/chassis to complete the vehicle. This release includes 6 different fire/rescue liveries, including

equipment compartments, control panels, and exterior graphics. Info: www.digcomdesigns.net



East Coast Circuits has available LED equipped Peterbuilt 359 heavy duty tow trucks using a Brekina model as the base vehicle. East Coast Circuits has

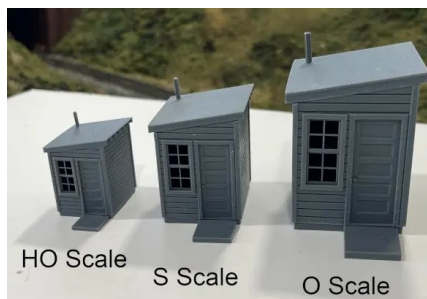
added operating headlights, taillights, front and side marker lights, operating light bar, bi-color blue/red grill LEDs, and lower and upper deck lights. Check the ECC website for availability. The models are \$250.00 each.



LED illuminated Ford CLT-9000s, also based on a Brekina model, are available in White & Silver, Black & Red, BF Goodrich, Gray & Red, Red White & Black, and Blue White & Black. LEDs installed include

operating headlights and taillights, and front and side marker lights. MSRP is \$100.00.

Info: eastcoastcircuits.com



FineScale 360 has introduced a Utility Shed kit in HO, S, and O scales, consisting of a shed frame with molded-in door, roof, base, window, and an electrical post. MSRP is \$12.99 (HO), \$14.99 (S), and \$16.99 (O). Info: finescale360.com



New from **Frenchman River Model Works** is a 1:48 scale Walker Stake Bed Electric Truck. Designed by Thomas Yorke, the versions of the electric truck were built from 1907 to 1942. It is available with either

hard rubber tires or modern pneumatic tires. The resin kit consists of 14 resin parts, wire, and other details. It is 4 7/8" long, 1 3/4" wide, and 2 1/2" tall. MSRP is \$54.95.



A similar model is a 1:48 scale Walker Tanker Electric Truck. This kit includes a resin cab and tank and tank details, making it 2 3/4" tall. It is priced at \$64.95.



The third version is the Walker Delivery Electric Truck. It is available with either open or closed side curtains which are selected when ordering. Wheel types for all truck versions also need to be selected when ordering. The



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delivery truck is 3" tall and 2" wide. It is priced at \$64.95.

Info: www.frenchmanriver.com



Industrious Models has introduced a new cement storage silo available in N (\$30.00), HO (\$30.00), S (\$40.00), and O (\$48.00) scales. It includes an enclosed auger with motor details.



Currently available only in N scale is a two-track, two-truck woodchip loader with an enclosed conveyor. The prototype is at Southern Chips on the Sandersville RR. Its price is \$80.00.

Info: industriousmodels.com



Jason Jensen Trains has released a kit for an HO scale Laundromat kit. With an approximate footprint of 4.5" x 5.5" the kit includes a fully equipped interior. It is priced at \$42.50.

jasonjensentrains.com



McCarville Studios has released Placerville Texaco in HO scale. A craftsman kit consisting of laser cut parts, 3D-printed tanks, and decals, the kit has a footprint of 4.5" x 9". Its

price is \$150.00+shipping.

Info: mccarvillestudios.com



New vehicles from **Oxford Diecast** are available for preorder at Walthers. New cars include a 1965 Ford Mustang Convertible in Raven Black with a red interior and a 1966 Pontiac GTO in Cameo Ivory for \$17.95 each.



Also on preorder is a new concession trailer/food cart, The Happy Plaiice, which serves fish and chips, mushy peas, tea, and coffee. Its MSRP is \$15.95.

Info: walthers.com/collections/oxford-diecast



Railroad Kits has released "Add-a-Dock" a single-piece resin casting based on the loading dock in the FSM G. Wilikers Machinery Wholesaler kit. Measuring approximately 2.8" x 1.5" x 0.5" the dock comes with an assortment of FSM metal detail castings such as crates, drums, a scale, pallets and other

items. Its price is \$15.00.

Info: railroadkits.com



Rusty Rails has released several new 3D-printed products. RRMS-H-12 and RRMS-H-13 are two new copper moonshine stills in HO scale. RRMS-H-12 is \$9.00 and RRMS-H-13 is \$8.00. Both products are unpainted single piece 3D prints. RRMS-O-06 is the O scale version of RRMS-H-13 (pictured) for \$14.00.



Rusty Rails has also released several sets of 3D-printed



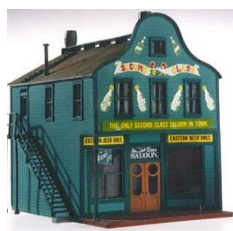
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figures in HO and O scales. Figures come unpainted and the sets vary in the number of figures included. HO sets are priced at \$8.00 and O scale figures are between \$6.00 and \$10.00.

Info: rustytrain.com



New from **San Juan Details** is the Second Class Saloon, based on a business established in Nome, Alaska by Wyatt Earp after leaving Tombstone, Arizona in the 1880s. With a footprint of 3.5" x 4.75", the kit includes window material, printed signage, and window interiors. The price is \$32.95.



A small Utility Building is suitable for a variety of locations on a layout. Measuring 1.15" wide x 1.4" deep x 1.6" high, the kit includes the barrels seen in the photo. Doors and windows are separate parts. The price is \$7.95.

Info: sanjuandetails.com



Showcase Miniatures has released an HO scale US&S Style B Two Position Lower Quadrant Semaphore Signal kit. The signal head is attached using tiny 000 120 size screws. Optional purchases include an assembly jig for \$3.00 and a hex shank driver for \$7.00. A wired sunny white 603 size LED is also available for \$4.00 to illuminate the semaphore heads – one LED per head is required. MSRP for the semaphore kit is \$24.00.

Info: www.showcaseminatures.net

New from **Silver Spike Designs** is an HO scale 3d-printed Tie Sweeper kit. The kit contains the main frame, a single piece

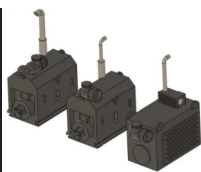


cab, operator and jump seats, engine, the sweepers in two positions, and accessories. Its price is \$46.50.



Also new from Silver Spike is a Cline/Isco ShuttleWagon rail car mover from the late 1970s. Available in HO scale, the scale model features rolling wheels on brass axle stock. It was available in

N scale but has sold out according to the webpage.



Additional details are also newly available, such as a LowBoy Generator four-pack and a three-pack of modular engines for \$12.50 a set.

Info: silverspikedesigns.com



Tully Models has released three “Everything’s in the Box” kits in the Southern-Tier Grain Modeler’s Supply line. The first is the Millersburg Feed Mill, replicating a building from the pre-WWII era that might still exist today. The kit includes the structure, roofing material and adhesive backed shingles, styrene awning with brass

rod stays, loading dock with a roll-up door, Tichy windows, doors, and glazing; building materials for bracing and corner molding, a hanger-style LED lamp with shade and resistor, signage, feed sacks, rail service dock door and bumper. The footprint of the kit is 4 3/4" x 6". Its price is \$85.00.



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The second kit is The Millersburg Addition, a single-story building that can be added to one end of the Millersburg Feed Mill or used as a standalone building. The kit contains the structure, corrugated styrene

sheet roofing, Tichy windows and doors, roll-up overhead doors, sconce-style LED lamp with resistor, and signage. It is priced at \$65.00.



The final kit is the Millersburg Annex. Designed to work with the Millersburg Feed Mill and Addition kits, it can also be a standalone structure. The kit includes the structure walls, sconce-style LED lamp with

resistor, Tichy windows and doors, glazing fret for windows, corrugated styrene sheet roofing material, signage, and instructions. It is priced at \$55.00.

Info: tullymodels.com



Under Construction Replicas has introduced several new construction and highway details recently. 3D-printed Crash Attenuator Sand Barrels are available in O (1:50), S, HO, and N scale, with O and S scale sets having two tall barrels and 10 short barrels for

\$12.00. The HO scale set is also two tall barrels and 10 short barrels for \$11.00. The N scale set has four tall barrels and 20 short barrels for \$11.00.



In HO scale a posable 12 cubic foot concrete mixer is available for \$17.00. The drum pivots and can be posed upright or tilted.



Also in HO scale is a 30" curb set. It consists of twelve 16' sections of curb with four left turns, four right turns, and four 15' driveway entrances – two flush

and two sloped. It is priced at \$13.00.

Info: underconstructionreplicas.com



Wallace Locomotive Works has DSP-2000 V2 style EOTs in a variety of colors and two types – removable and permanent. The removable style hooks onto a coupler and can be moved from car to car; the permanent must be glued to the coupler. Both are available in black, blue, green, orange, red, yellow, and undecorated. The permanent mount is \$6.00 in color and \$3.00 in undecorated. The removable style is \$8.00 in color and \$3.00 in

undecorated. The EOTs come two to a package.

Info: store.wallacelocoworks.com



Wild West Models has introduced an Ore Bucket Ore Car in HO, S, and O scales. 3D-printed in resin, the cars are the push-style that would fit on 18" track. HO: \$16.99, S: \$17.99, O: \$20.99.



New in O and S scales and also available in HO and N are push-style V-Body Side Dump Ore Cars. Also 3D-printed in resin, they come in two pieces per car and fit on 18" track. N (3 pack): \$20.99, HO (2 pack): \$20.99, S (2 pack): \$22.99,

O (1 pack): \$19.99.

Available in HO, S, O, and Large scale is a Portable 3-stamp battery. Used in prospecting operations, a portable 3-stamp battery could crush between three and four tons of rock per





day with 90 drops per minute.

Info: www.wildwestmodels.com



Yelton Models has introduced six new railroad maintenance trucks in N, HO, and O scales. Trucks 1, 2, 3,

and 6 are based on commercial trucks while 4 and 5 are based on pickup trucks. The N scale commercial trucks are \$12 and the pickup trucks are \$10. In HO scale the commercial trucks are \$20 and the pickup trucks are \$15. Only the commercial trucks are available in O scale and they are priced at \$60.



Also from Yelton is a 1954 Massey-Harris Tractor. Available only in HO scale it is \$12.00.

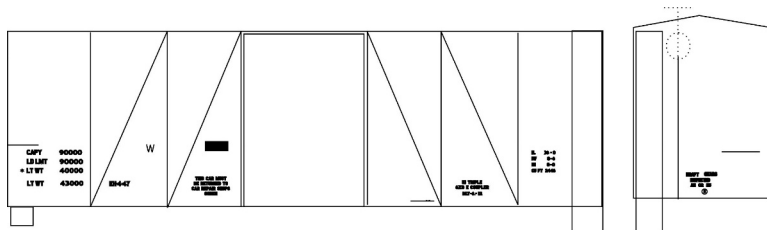


An HO scale WWII M3 Lee medium tank is priced at \$20.00. A Mk 4 Sherman tank is also available in HO scale for \$20.00 and the British Centurion tank is available in HO and N scales for \$20.00 and \$12.00 respectively.

Info: www.yeltonmodels.com



NEW DECALS, SIGNS, AND FINISHING PRODUCTS



New decals from **Black Cat Decals** include set DAR#1427-H, Fowler/Dominion boxcar lettering. MSRP is \$9.00

www.blackcatdecals.com



Circus City Decals has released several sets of HO scale decals for replicating the America 250 locomotives and cars. Both NS 8118, an ES44, and NS 1776, an SD70ACe are represented, as are

two CSX 250 and 2026. There is a set to replicate NYSW SD45-2 #3634, the BNSF ES44AC 250th locomotives and business cars, Union Pacific SD70M #1776, and two sets of America 250 logos in black and white to create a custom locomotive or car.



Another recent decal release is a page of HO scale #1075 Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) Hazmat Placards.

Info: circuscitydecals.com

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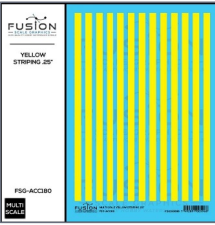
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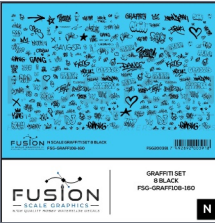
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Fusion Scale Graphics has several new sets of decals in multiple scales. The MRMX Hopper Car Patch decal set is available in O, S, HO, and N scales, as is the CEFX Patch w/White Background decal set. MSRP is \$8.00 except for the O scale MRMX set which is \$9.00.



Multi-scale .25" striping is available in yellow, white, black, red, blue, light green, and dark green. .125" striping is available in yellow, white, black, red, and blue. Each set is \$12.00.

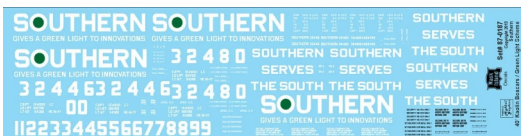


Two new N scale graffiti decal sets, numbers 8 and 9, are available for \$9.00 each.
Info: fsdecals.com

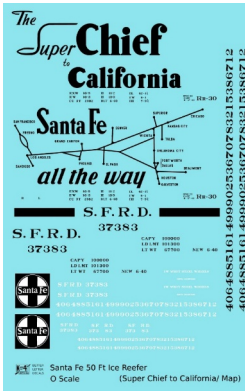


New decals from **Highball Graphics/Mask Island** include Highball Graphics set L-395, for Huron & Eastern GWI Hood Units. N scale decals are \$8.00, HO scale are \$9.00.

Mask Island set 87-0187 is designed for Southern 40' Kaolin Boxcars with the Green Light scheme. The N scale set is \$8.00, HO scale is \$9.00.



Info: highballgraphics.com/product-category/mask-island-decals



K4 Decals has released 70 new sheets of decals for use with Santa Fe 40' and 50' boxcars and Santa Fe Reefer Despatch 40' and 50' ice and mechanical refrigerator cars. Available for Z, N, TT, HO, S, O, 1:24, 1:29, and 1:32 scales, the price depends on how many sheets are required for the decals. A single sheet is \$7.45, two sheets are \$9.95, and three sheets are \$12.45.



Other newly available sheets include Virginian Steam Locomotives, Virginian Gondolas, Virginian Flatcars and Cabooses, Virginian twin and triple hoppers, and three Southern Railroad trailer and intermodal sets. Info: k4decals.com

ELECTRONICS

Jacksonville Railcar has released the RailNet Layout Lighting Controller Pro Kit. Consisting of the RailNet Environmental Lighting Controller, eight breakout boards, an LED test board, four CAT6 cables, 20 pre-wired 0402 LEDs, and a 12V 2A power supply, the kit allows up to 48 lighting channels in 8 controllable banks. Effects include everyday structure lighting with adjustable brightness by bank, flash and alternate flash, sequence and chase lighting, random lighting, lightning effects, and traffic light sequences. Configuration is via web browser



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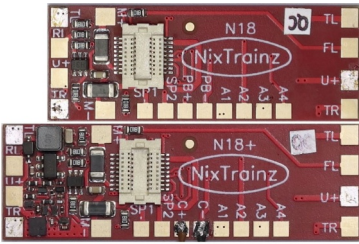
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through a WiFi connection to the lighting controller. Available through Midwest Model Railroad, the MSRP is currently \$179.95.

Info: www.jacksonrail.com

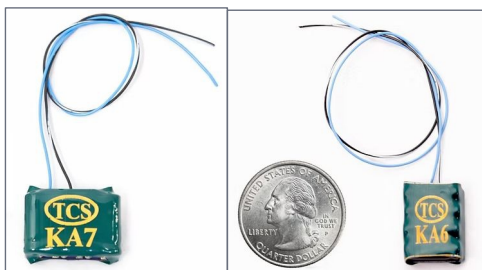


Coming soon from **NixTrainz** are the N18 and N18+ Decoder Buddies. They are both designed to use the Next18 format decoder and include six lighting outputs with onboard 1K Ohm resistors, motor pads, speaker pads, and two pairs of track

power input pads. The N18+ includes the Power Bridge III stay alive electronics with separately mounted super capacitors. The N18 includes solder pads for the modeler's choice of stay alive electronics.

Info: nixtrainz.com





Train Control Systems has introduced two new Keep-Alives to the KAx line. The KA6 and KA7 are approximately half the size of the KA3, and they both offer 1/3rd the capacitance of the KA3/KA4 Keep-Alives.

The dimensions for both are 72" x 0.53" x 0.25". Both Keep-Alives also have a "P" version that includes a plug installed on the wires to the decoder.

Info: www.tcsdcc.com

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BRIEFLY NOTED AT PRESS TIME ...

Bowser has announced a new run of HO scale RoadRailers, preorders are due October 15, 2026 with an expected delivery date of Summer 2027. Info: [bowser-trains.com](https://www.bowser-trains.com)

Broadway Limited has announced N scale heavyweight passenger cars decorated for Chesapeake & Ohio, Chessie Steam Special, Canadian National, Norfolk & Western, Northern Pacific, Pennsylvania RR, and Santa Fe and other railroads. The cars will be based on PRR prototypes. Combines, Business Cards, and five-car sets will be available. Preorders are due December 3, 2026 for a Spring 2027 arrival. Info: [broadway-limited.com](https://www.broadway-limited.com)

MicroTrains by Atlas has released the September 2026 Micro-News including preorders and new releases in N and HO scale. Info: shop.atlasrr.com/d-765-september-2026-micro-news.aspx

Railsmith has announced new diner cars in N scale for the Missouri Pacific and Baltimore & Ohio, and a Coffeeship Lounge for the Golden State. New GN Glacier Sleepers are available for preorder. Info: [lowellsmith.net](https://www.lowellsmith.net)

Scale Trains has announced a run of HO scale Rivet Counter EMD SD40-2 locomotives decorated for Chessie, Conrail, CNW, MILW, SOU, and UP. Preorders are due September 28, 2026 with delivery expected in Spring 2027. Info: [scaletrains.com](https://www.scaletrains.com) ■



SELECTED EVENTS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | September 2026

SEPTEMBER

Please submit your event information, including website, to model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contact/News_event-product_announcement

Ongoing Online and In-Person

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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September - October 2026

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

Info: heritagepark.ca

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

ALABAMA, GADSDEN, October 3, 2026. 3rd Annual Coosa Valley Model Railroad Fall Show. Mary G Hardin Center for Cultural Arts, 501 Broad St.

Info: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1041263175111359&set=a.198078312763187

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

Info: www.ccrf.com

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

Info: sphts.org/convention

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

Info: corpm.org

DELAWARE, NEW CASTLE, October 3, 2026. The Delaware Train Show. Nur Shrine Center, 198 S Dupont Hwy.

Info: trainshows.net/event/1665/delaware-train-show

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

Info: www.nmrasunshineregion.org

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

INDIANA, INDIANAPOLIS, October 3, 2026. Indianapolis Train Show @ Garfield Park. Burrello Family Center, 2345 Pagoda Drive.

Info: www.naptownrr.org/shows

INDIANA, JEFFERSONVILLE, September 26, 2026. Southern Indiana Railroad Annual Train Show and Sale. First Presbyterian Church, 222 Walnut Street.

Info: www.facebook.com/events/710429618586676

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

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



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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

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

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, 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, 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

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

NEW YORK, HENRIETTA (Rochester), October 4, 2026. Greater Rochester Train Fest, sponsored by the Genesee Society of Model Engineers. ROC Dome Arena, 2695 East Henrietta Rd.
Info: gsme.org

NORTH CAROLINA, CONCORD, October 24, 2026. Carolina Train Shows. Hilton Garden Inn, 7831 Gateway Lane.
Info: carolinatrainshow.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, MIDDLEBURG HEIGHTS, October 3-4, 2026. The Great Berea Train Show. Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds, 19201 Bagley Rd.
Info: thegreatbereatrainshow.org

PENNSYLVANIA, DUNMORE, October 18, 2026. The Great Northeast Model Train Show. Holiday Inn Scranton East, 200 Tighe St.
Info: bernies-model-railroad-shop.square.site

PENNSYLVANIA, EASTON, October 4, 2026. 48th Annual Lehigh Valley Regional Train Show & Expo. Charles Chrin Community Center, 4100 Green Pond Rd.
Info: www.lehighlines.org/chrin-flyer.html

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



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

Info: carolinatrainshows.com/#shows

SOUTH CAROLINA, ROCK HILL, September 26, 2026. Carolina Train Shows. Student Activity Center, 611 Myrtle Drive.

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

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

WASHINGTON, CENTRALIA, October 17-18, 2026. Lewis County Model Railroad Club Train Show and Swap Meet. Southwest Washington Fairgrounds Blue Pavilion, 1909 S Gold St.

Info: tinyurl.com/mr24nueh

WEST VIRGINIA, INWOOD, October 10, 2026. Bunker Hill Train Club Model Train Show. South Berkeley Volunteer Fire Department, 7556 Winchester Avenue.

Info: bunkerhilltrainclub.com

Future 2026/2027 by location

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, INDIO, November 7, 2026. Coachella Valley's Semi-Annual Premier Model Railroad Display. Front Gate 1, Riverside County Fair, National Date Festival Fairgrounds, 82503 Highway 111, directly across from Wienerschnitzel.

Info: www.cvmrr.com

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

ILLINOIS, ROBINSON, February 20-21, 2027. Crawford County Model Railroaders Train Show. Robinson Civic Center, 300 S. Lincoln St.

Info: www.facebook.com/groups/3415453285366609/posts/4513558255556101

INDIANA, DANVILLE, November 21, 2026. 19th Annual Danville Train Show, sponsored by the Central Indiana Division of the NMRA. Hendricks County Fair Grounds, 1900 E Main St.

Info: www.cidnmra.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

MAINE, BREWER, November 21, 2026. Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club 50th anniversary show. Jeff's Catering, 15 Littlefield Way.

Info: tomcote4270@gmail.com

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, MASON, February 20, 2027. 1st Ever Mason Michigan Train Show and Sale. 700 East Ash St.

Info: www.facebook.com/groups/MTSS1/posts/4610422492536466



MISSISSIPPI, MERIDIAN, November 7, 2026. Meridian Rails Historical Society RAILFEST. 1805 Front St.

Info: meridianrails.org

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

OREGON, RICKREALL, December 5, 2026. Railroad Show and Swap Meet, sponsored by the Willamette Valley Model Railroad Museum. Polk County Fairgrounds, 520 S Pacific Hwy W

Info: www.wvmrm.org/new-page

PENNSYLVANIA, ALTOONA, November 15, 2026. Model Train Show sponsored by the Alto Model Train Museum Association, Inc. Blair County Convention Center, One Convention Center Drive.

Info: [www.facebook.com/photo/?](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1073151698444343&set=g.3415453285366609)

[fbid=1073151698444343&set=g.3415453285366609](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1073151698444343&set=g.3415453285366609)

WASHINGTON, KENT, November 14, 2026, 46th Annual Boeing Employees Model RR Club Swap Meet. Kent Commons Community Center, 525 4th Avenue North.

Info: bemrrc.org/events

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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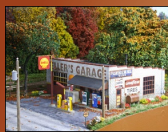
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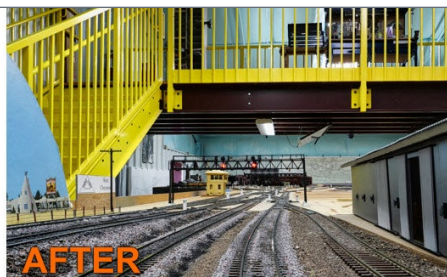
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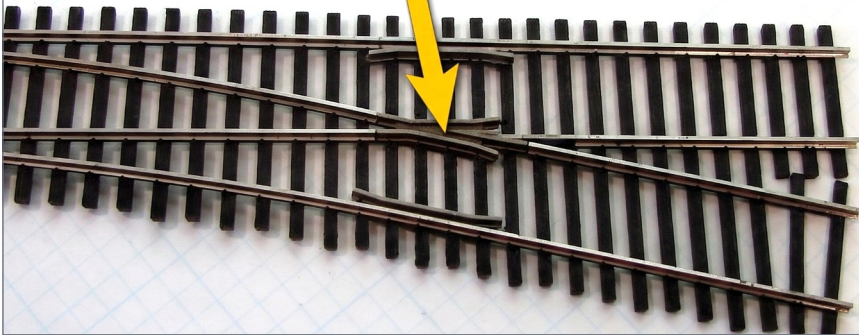
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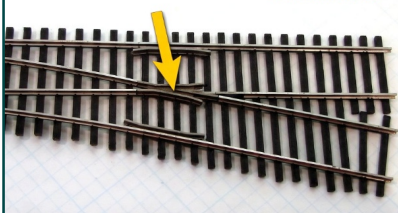
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