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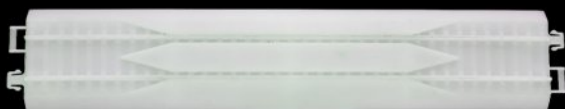


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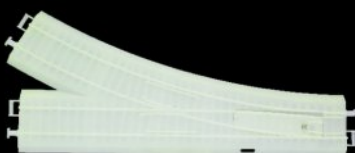
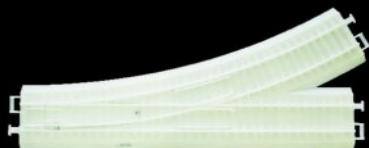
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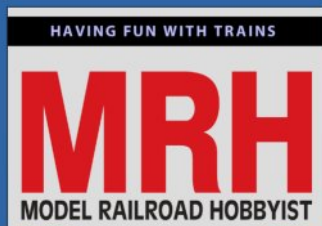


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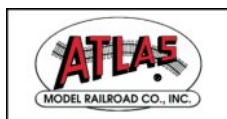
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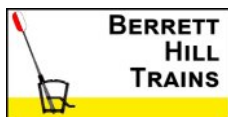
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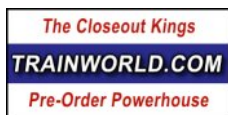
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Publisher's Musings: A.I. for model railroaders

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MRH Website this month: multi-track grade crossing, ...

Compiled by JOE FUGATE



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JOE FUGATE



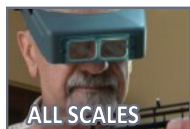
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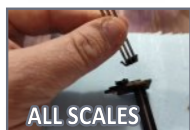
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JOE FUGATE



Build a durable backdrop with FRP

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Savvy Modeler online: Ground throw with frog contacts

Compiled by the MRH STAFF



October 2025 news and events

RICHARD BALE and JEFF SHULTZ



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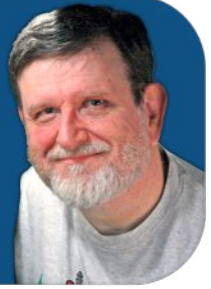


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PUBLISHER'S MUSINGS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

JOE FUGATE GIVES AN UPDATE ON THE SHENWARE OPS SOFTWARE PACKAGE ...



WHEN I FIRST HEARD ABOUT CHATGPT AND OTHER ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS, I was skeptical. Having worked with computers since 1973, I've seen many "revolutions" in computer tech come and go.

But after integrating AI into my publishing workflow at MRH Media, I've realized this technology offers useful applications for model railroaders.

What is AI?

Today's AI tools – like ChatGPT, Claude, and Google's Gemini – are advanced pattern-matching systems trained on vast amounts of internet data.

They're good at understanding questions and generating human-like responses, but they're not infallible.

The internet is their source material, and as we all know, everything on the internet is always 100% accurate, right? (I'm being sarcastic, of course.)

An AI can "hallucinate" – confidently presenting incorrect information as fact. Understanding this is crucial for using AI tools properly.

My journey with AI

As publisher of *Model Railroad Hobbyist*, I started using AI for routine tasks: drafting emails, brainstorming, editing, and troubleshooting. It saved me time, allowing me to focus on the creative work I enjoy.

That made me wonder: if AI can streamline my publishing workflow, what can it do for the hobby itself?

Practical applications for model railroaders

Research and historical accuracy: AI excels here. Need to know the details of the paint scheme Southern Pacific used on their cab-forwards in 1952? Curious about the typical consist of a Pennsylvania Railroad coal drag over Horseshoe Curve in 1965?

AI offers detailed research starting points in seconds.

I recently asked AI about freight car distribution for a 1950s Midwestern layout and got detailed explanations of per-diem charges and typical percentages – a great research starting point.

Layout planning and design: Designing a new layout or fixing a tricky section? AI can help.

Describe your constraints, era, and goals, then request track plan suggestions or critiques.

I've used AI as a sounding board for layout ideas, asking it to spot operational bottlenecks or suggest industries for switching challenges. It's like having a knowledgeable club member available 24/7.

Learning new techniques: Whether weathering a freight car or installing a DCC decoder, AI can guide you step-by-step. Request plain English explanations or ask about alternative methods.



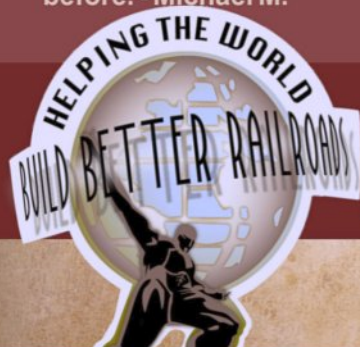
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The advantage? AI never tires of explaining, and you can ask anything without embarrassment.

Let AI interview you: Instead of explaining everything upfront, ask the AI to interview you about your problem or task. For example, when debugging an intermittent track short, I told Claude, "I have an electrical problem. Please ask me questions to help diagnose it."

The AI guided me: What happens during the short? Which track section? What locomotives or rolling stock are present? Have you checked for metal wheelsets bridging gaps? And so on.

AI asks questions like an experienced troubleshooter, helping you think through the problem. The result? Often, the problem is resolved!

Scenery and weathering guidance: AI can suggest techniques for effects like rust streaks, doing rock castings, or mixing seasonal grass blends. It can recommend products and materials, but you do need to check availability.

Writing and storytelling: Need a fictional history for your freelanced railroad? AI excels at creative writing, generating waybill suggestions, creating operating session ideas, or drafting newsletter content for your model railroad club.

Documentation and organization: AI helps organize hobby inventory, create maintenance logs, or draft how-to documents. I've found it invaluable for turning rough notes into polished documentation.

Addressing the concerns

Some of you might ask, "Joe, isn't this cheating?" or "Won't this rob the human touch from our hobby?"

These are fair concerns. Here's my take: AI is a tool, not a replacement for modeling skills or creativity. Using AI for research doesn't diminish your abilities any more than using a reference book does – it's just a faster way to access information online.

The craft of the hobby is still in your hands. AI can't weather a freight car, lay track, or wire a turnout. However, it can help you make informed decisions and learn techniques more efficiently.

What about AI-generated content lacking soul or authenticity? I share that concern for creative expression.

But for research, troubleshooting, and learning techniques, AI shines.





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What AI can't do

AI definitely has limitations.

AI lacks aesthetic judgment and can't tell if your scenery is realistic or if your weathering is overdone. That needs human eyes, ideally experienced ones.

It doesn't know the current market, so it might suggest discontinued products. Always check availability!

Most importantly, AI can't build your layout. The joy of our hobby is in working with our hands, devising solutions, and bringing our vision to life.

Getting started

ChatGPT, Claude, and Google's Gemini offer free tiers ideal for hobby use. Paid versions with more features are available, but start with the free tools.

Your first conversation:
Unsure where to start?

Open ChatGPT or Claude and type, "I'm building an HO scale layout set in 1955 on



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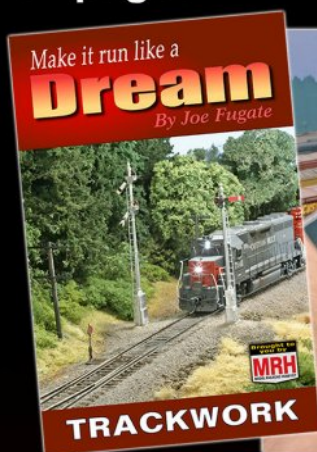
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the Southern Pacific. What types of freight cars were common?"

AI will provide a detailed breakdown. Don't stop there – ask follow-up questions like, "What paint schemes did Southern Pacific use on boxcars in that era?" or "How can I verify this?"

This back-and-forth is where AI excels, helping you dig deeper.

Start with questions you know the answers to. This helps gauge the AI's reliability before exploring unknowns.

Common mistakes to avoid

AI is helpful but not perfect.

Don't accept answers blindly. AI can sound authoritative even when wrong. Always cross-check – paint schemes, dimensions, historical dates – against trusted sources like prototype photos or reference books.

Avoid vague questions. "Help me with my layout" won't get you far. Instead, try: "I have a 10x12-foot space for an N scale layout. I want to model 1970s Conrail in Pennsylvania with a focus on switching operations. What track arrangements should I consider?"

Don't use AI as a substitute for hands-on learning. AI can explain weathering a boxcar, but it can't teach the feel of applying powders or knowing when enough is enough. Some skills only develop through doing.

Resist using AI-generated text without editing. AI writing often sounds flowery and not quite normal. Add your personal voice, experiences, and opinions to make it yours.

The bottom line

AI isn't a replacement for traditional skills in the hobby, but it can save time on research or writing first draft content, letting you focus on the fun stuff.



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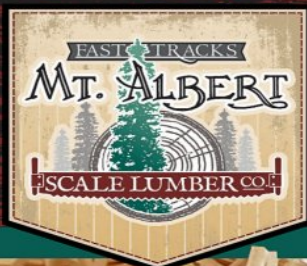
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Is AI perfect? No. Will it revolutionize model railroading overnight? Unlikely.

Used thoughtfully, AI can make your hobby time more productive and perhaps help you tackle postponed projects.

If you haven't tried AI for hobby tasks, maybe it's time to kick the tires. ✓

P.S. I wrote this editorial's first draft by dialoguing with an AI, then heavily edited it to add my personal voice. AI is now helping us edit *MRH* and *Running Extra*, speeding up the process. But as mentioned, it does the grunt work well, leaving us more time for adding the fun creative stuff.

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Limited Modeler: Availability of early railroad equipment

JIM SIX



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Best of the

MRH FORUM



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

Compiled by **JOE FUGATE**



Multi-track grade crossing

MRH forum member **chepp** (Charlie H.), writes on his blog about figuring out how to build this three-track grade crossing scene.

Charlie says, "I marked out the wooden plank grade crossing with pavement, and selected three sizes of basswood. I designed it to be about 1/64" below the top of the rail so it doesn't interfere with track cleaning later."

Good thinking, Charlie! Read the full build process on the MRH forum.



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



MRH'S MONTHLY GREAT MODELER POSTS



1. *MRH* forum member **Sauced07** (Shane B.) asked the forum for assistance with this decoder inside a used Atlas Classic RS-3 he bought.

NCE decoder help

MRH forum member **Sauced07** (Shane B.) says:

“I purchased an Atlas Classic RS-3 for my DC layout. It arrived and I took it to the layout to run it. It sputtered at first, so I checked the obvious things, then noticed the headlight was working. I took it apart to find an NCE decoder with no plug. Are these DC compatible or must I remove it for DC operations?”

This is an excellent example of how *MRH* forum members can help you debug problems. Forum members provided Shane with methodical debugging steps and he's happy to report everything is running perfectly now. We love a happy ending!

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



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OKCTRAINSHOW.COM**



2. *MRH* forum member **ezlyamuzd66** (Steve P.) is building a DRGW layout and recently took this photo of the staging. All we can say is: what a nice job!

Tennessee Pass layout staging

MRH forum member **ezlyamuzd66** (Steve P.) has a blog journaling the construction of his Tennessee Pass layout on the *MRH* forum. He recently completed the staging area and posted photos of it [2].

Is that one superb looking staging area or what? Having done staging on my Siskiyou Line 1, I can tell you my staging never looked this well-built. I have come to the conclusion that for Siskiyou Line 2, I'm either going to do it up nice like this, or fully scenic it.

Follow Steve's full layout build for more inspiring techniques!

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



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Recent photo fun thread

These images posted on a recent *MRH* forum Photo Fun thread show some nice caboose photos.

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

3. *MRH* forum member **SouthlandModeler** (Chris B.) posted this shot of his layout. That kudzu growing up the abandoned telegraph pole is a nice touch, and the rest of the scene looks quite natural. Well done, Chris!



4. Forum member **scottympm** (Scott M.) took this photo of some recent scenery work on his layout. We are impressed with the clean integration of the foreground scenery with the photo backdrop. And that foreground scenery looks fabulous! ✓



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

Developing a realistic ops mindset

On my Siskiyou Line 1 at the beginning of an op session, I would discuss how to get a more realistic ops mindset, and hand out a sheet with these guidelines. I find it helps the “enjoyment factor” of running a model train to think more “prototypical thoughts.” What do I mean by this? Consider the following points.

1. Full-sized trains are heavy and can be dangerous if not operated safely. Take your time and don't rush things. Carefully check your train before you start, and stay alert for problems as you run so you can catch things before they develop into a major mishap. Such mishaps can mean costly damage or even a fatality on the prototype, so stay alert!
2. One person is the engineer, and operates the locomotive. The other is the “rear-end” crew, including the jobs of conductor and switchman/brakeman.
3. The rear end crew cannot see the track ahead of the train, and the engineer can seldom see much of the train behind. The rear-end crew person should refrain from walking out ahead of the train to check the track, but should keep their eyes on the train itself to make sure all is well. Note that the rear-end position is great fun, because you can railfan the train and do your job at the same time!
4. Meanwhile, the engineer should stay with his engine set and watch the track immediately ahead. The engineer should not walk way out ahead of his train to track he would not be able to see from his loco-



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1. I prefer two-person ops crews. Per the realistic ops mindset, John (left) is the rear-end/conductor and Jim (front) is the engineer. John watches the entire train while Jim focuses just on the locomotive and what's immediately ahead.

motive. The engineer should not watch the train itself, but should rely on the rear end crew to find out how things are going with the train and check with them now and then.

5. When approaching a turnout that needs thrown, the engineer should stop the train, throw the turnout, pull the train through the turnout, then stop the train again to allow the rear-end crew to re-align the turnout. Things like this lengthen the run, and add to the enjoyment of the assignment. Obviously, this is manually thrown turnouts only.
6. In fun, I would occasionally give out a "pink slip award" to perpetrator(s) of the worst snafu or derailment of the session! If the mishap was especially bad, we may declare that it was a fatality and one of the two crew members (chosen with a coin flip) may have to start out next session at the bottom by working in the yard throwing switches for the yardmaster. In effect, they're a new hire. Note: I grant first time visitors grace on this and exempt them from the pink slip award.

While realistic ops often focuses on car and train routing procedures, I feel we should also talk about the realistic ops mindset. ☑

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Floquil/PollyScale stash running out?



**MRH has mapped the old familiar colors
to new readily-available acrylic paints.**



Floquil / PolyGloss	Color (approx.)	MIR's Color	Sample	Conversion	Note
Pearl Grey		MIR 4262	WASA 11659	16-02	
Engine Wash		MIR 4688	BL 29022 WASA 11720	16-07	
Steamtrain Black		MIR 4796	WASA 11627	10-06B	
City Wash		MIR 4262	WASA 11620	16-04*	
Weathered (Horizontal Wash)		MIR 4700	BL 29022 WASA 11624	16-05	
Reflex Grey		MIR 4184*	WASA 11646	16-04	
Reflex White		MIR 4675	BL 29020 WASA 11626	16-02	
Grey Wash		MIR 4267	BL 29024 WASA 11625	16-03	
Catalina Red		MIR 4400*	BL 29026 WASA 11623	16-08	MIR color 4422 is a very close match to Catalina Red. *MIR color 4400 is a very close match to Catalina Red.

*Note: color is closer but not exact match. All MIR colors are a proprietary formula. Values listed for the Miracolor and Wash colors are approximate. © 2008 MIR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Color A020 (top right) gives you a closer match to the color of the PolyGloss color. A02 20% (far right) for reference to other colors.

Product	PolyScale® (MIR 1000000)	MIR Model	Color	Value	Notes
Tan		MIR 40027	VIMA 71,625	16-15	
Beaver-Grey		MIR 40048	VIMA 71,625	16-09	
Beaver Yellow		MIR 40070	VIMA 71,675	16-10	
Red-Brown		MIR 40061	MS 20000 VIMA 71,249	16-17A	
Reddish Tan Brown		MIR 40062	MS 20000 VIMA 71,625	16-17B 16-17C 16-18 16-19	
Red-Brown		MIR 40067	MS 20000 VIMA 71,249	16-15	
Red		MIR 40075	MS 20000 VIMA 71,625	16-10Z	
Cinnamon		MIR 40076	VIMA 71,625 16-10Z 16-11 16-12 16-13 16-14 16-15 16-16 16-17 16-18 16-19 16-20 16-21 16-22 16-23 16-24 16-25 16-26 16-27 16-28 16-29 16-30 16-31 16-32 16-33 16-34 16-35 16-36 16-37 16-38 16-39 16-40 16-41 16-42 16-43 16-44 16-45 16-46 16-47 16-48 16-49 16-50 16-51 16-52 16-53 16-54 16-55 16-56 16-57 16-58 16-59 16-60 16-61 16-62 16-63 16-64 16-65 16-66 16-67 16-68 16-69 16-70 16-71 16-72 16-73 16-74 16-75 16-76 16-77 16-78 16-79 16-80 16-81 16-82 16-83 16-84 16-85 16-86 16-87 16-88 16-89 16-90 16-91 16-92 16-93 16-94 16-95 16-96 16-97 16-98 16-99 17-00 17-01 17-02 17-03 17-04 17-05 17-06 17-07 17-08 17-09 17-10 17-11 17-12 17-13 17-14 17-15 17-16 17-17 17-18 17-19 17-20 17-21 17-22 17-23 17-24 17-25 17-26 17-27 17-28 17-29 17-30 17-31 17-32 17-33 17-34 17-35 17-36 17-37 17-38 17-39 17-40 17-41 17-42 17-43 17-44 17-45 17-46 17-47 17-48 17-49 17-50 17-51 17-52 17-53 17-54 17-55 17-56 17-57 17-58 17-59 17-60 17-61 17-62 17-63 17-64 17-65 17-66 17-67 17-68 17-69 17-70 17-71 17-72 17-73 17-74 17-75 17-76 17-77 17-78 17-79 17-80 17-81 17-82 17-83 17-84 17-85 17-86 17-87 17-88 17-89 17-90 17-91 17-92 17-93 17-94 17-95 17-96 17-97 17-98 17-99 18-00 18-01 18-02 18-03 18-04 18-05 18-06 18-07 18-08 18-09 18-10 18-11 18-12 18-13 18-14 18-15 18-16 18-17 18-18 18-19 18-20 18-21 18-22 18-23 18-24 18-25 18-26 18-27 18-28 18-29 18-30 18-31 18-32 18-33 18-34 18-35 18-36 18-37 18-38 18-39 18-40 18-41 18-42 18-43 18-44 18-45 18-46 18-47 18-48 18-49 18-50 18-51 18-52 18-53 18-54 18-55 18-56 18-57 18-58 18-59 18-60 18-61 18-62 18-63 18-64 18-65 18-66 18-67 18-68 18-69 18-70 18-71 18-72 18-73 18-74 18-75 18-76 18-77 18-78 18-79 18-80 18-81 18-82 18-83 18-84 18-85 18-86 18-87 18-88 18-89 18-90 18-91 18-92 18-93 18-94 18-95 18-96 18-97 18-98 18-99 19-00 19-01 19-02 19-03 19-04 19-05 19-06 19-07 19-08 19-09 19-10 19-11 19-12 19-13 19-14 19-15 19-16 19-17 19-18 19-19 19-20 19-21 19-22 19-23 19-24 19-25 19-26 19-27 19-28 19-29 19-30 19-31 19-32 19-33 19-34 19-35 19-36 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WHAT'S NEAT

column



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

KEN PATTERSON COVERS THIS MONTH:



- 2-8-0 CONSOLIDATIONS IN HO FROM BLI
- HO SCALE EXPRESS REEFERS FROM BACHMANN
- KEN AND THE CREW VISIT THE ST. LOUIS RPM



click to play video

PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF SUPERB MODELS

FOR THE OCTOBER “WHAT’S NEAT,” Ken shows an example of BLI’s new HO scale 2-8-0 Consolidation locomotive and talks about Bachmann’s new express reefers in HO scale. Ken, Joshua, Mike, and Daniel went to the St. Louis RPM this past summer and interviewed vendors and modelers.

Broadway Limited’s 2-8-0 in HO scale



1. BLI’s new HO scale 2-8-0 Consolidation locomotive graces one of Ken’s outdoor photography modules, as well as multiple run-bys for this month’s video.

Info: broadway-limited.com



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Bachmann's HO scale express reefers



2. Bachmann is introducing a new run of HO scale express reefers, used as head-end cars on passenger trains to expedite the transport of perishable goods.



3. Based on a New York Central-design car, the model was developed with the assistance of the New York Central Historical Society.



4. The cars feature knuckle couplers, metal wheels, and separately applied details such as running boards, loading hatches, ladders, and brake wheels.

Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com

“What’s Neat” goes to the St. Louis RPM



5. Daniel Combs, Joshua Barton, Ken Patterson, and Mike Budde preparing to interview vendors and modelers at the 18th annual St. Louis RPM, located across the Mississippi River in Collinsville, Illinois.



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6. Daniel interviews SoundTraxx's George Bogotiuk, who was at the RPM to announce the new Blunami BLU-1100 Bluetooth sound decoder, the first Bluetooth decoder small enough to fit in an N scale locomotive.

Info: soundtraxx.com



7. While the Railroad Prototype Meets began simply as an opportunity for modelers to display their scratchbuilt, kitbashed, and detailed models, both complete and in-progress, many of them now include clinics such as this hands-on weathering clinic.



8. Paul Ellis brought a selection of HO and N scale models from ScaleTrains, showcasing some recent announcements and arrivals, including HO scale GP30s, including modernized ones, SD40-2s in both scales, and N scale reefers and GE diesels, as well as other models.

Info: scaletrains.com



9. Mike Budde interviews Bob Johnson of Masterbilt Models, the source of many of the vehicle models that Mike frequently shows on "What's Neat this Week."

Info: www.masterbiltmodels.com



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10. Next up was Ken interviewing Richard Rands, formerly of MicroEngineering, who now owns Berkshire Valley Models and has purchased American Model Builders.

Info: berkshirevalleymodels.com



11. Joshua found Curtis Koch at the Broadway Limited table, showing off upcoming passenger and railroad officer cars, a Class D Shay, and these N scale E8 and E9 locomotives. The E8s and E9s, along with E7s and B-units, will have road-specific details. Info: broadway-limited.com



12. Alex Hoffner of ABR Model Works sits down with Ken to discuss how ABR didn't just import models from Australia, they imported the entire company, moving it to Iowa. They also take a look at new products from ABR, such as plastic rail bumpers and a paint-drying rack.

Info: abrmodelworks.com



13. As well as individual models on display, some modelers brought entire dioramas, such as this N scale MoW equipment yard. See the video for a much closer look at it.



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14. Ken joins Robert Stears of Roka Models, and they discuss Roka's newest product, the HO scale spiral tank car, a modern LPG high-pressure tank car. The prototypes were produced between 2009 and 2015, and there are multiple variations of these cars. Info: rokamodels.com

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15a.b.c.d. Ken joins Steve Hirt to discuss some of the highly detailed 1:25 scale models he has on display.

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16. Bob Rivard and FW Jordan built this diorama of Model Stone Contractor's Supply.



17. Daniel interviewed Nick Santo of NixTrainz, which has a new product, Power Bridge Stay Alive circuits, with both two- and three-wire configurations.
Info: nixtrainz.com



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18. Mike Budde receives an InterMountain Railway auto rack car from Dan Goins and David Hyde of the Texas Northern Model Railroad Club. Mike contributed to the research that resulted in the special run of MKT/TTGX auto racks that the TNMRC is selling as a fundraiser.

Info: texasnorthern.org

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19. Between 900 and 950 people attended the 18th St. Louis RPM in Collinsville, IL. Here many gather at the end-of-show raffle to see who will win the products donated to the RPM Meet.

Click on the video link at the beginning of the article to see the full video, including the BLI Consolidation running on Ken's basement layout, all of the Bachmann Express Reefers, and all the different models and products that were on display at the meet. ☑

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Track feeders that disappear



Electrical
Impulses

1. These yard tracks have several feeders installed. Can you see them? This article shows how to install feeders so they're hidden, yet easily found when debugging electrical issues.



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

JOE FUGATE DEMONSTRATES HIS BEST PRACTICES FOR DOING FEEDERS ...

THOUGH OFTEN OVERLOOKED, few aspects of layout construction can be as critical as proper track feeder installation. Whether building your first 4x8 layout or expanding a basement empire, understanding track feeders and installing them correctly will mean the difference between smooth, reliable operation and frustrating performance issues.

Through the years I've developed some best practices for my own layouts, and I'd like to share what I've learned. There are certainly other successful ways to do track feeders, but in this article I cover

my approach and why. See the link at the end of the article for a shopping list of all the tools and materials I use.

WHY YOU CAN'T SKIMP ON TRACK FEEDERS

Track feeders deliver power from your command station or power pack directly to the rails. These wires – typically soldered to the base of the rail – create multiple redundant power distribution points throughout your layout, ensuring consistent voltage reaches every section of rail.

Newcomers to the hobby might assume rail joiners can conduct electricity throughout the entire layout by themselves. While rail joiners do provide some electrical continuity, they're fundamentally mechanical connections designed to align rail sections, not serve as electrical conductors.

Over time, oxidation, paint, ballast glue, and the natural expansion and contraction of materials can degrade these connections. What might work adequately on a small test loop becomes wholly inadequate on a larger layout, resulting in locomotives that stall, hesitate, or run erratically in certain areas.

I cannot overstate the importance of properly installed track feeders. Without adequate feeder distribution, you'll encounter voltage drop as track power current travels through resistance. As a result, locomotives can slow down or stop in certain areas, lights will flicker in lighted passenger cars, and DCC decoder performance can become inconsistent.



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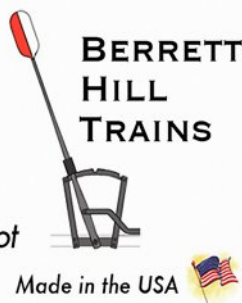


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Rail Code	----- VOLTAGE DROP at 5A current -----			
	3 ft	10 ft	50 ft	100 ft
40	1.28	4.25	21.25	42.50
55	0.69	2.30	11.50	23.00
70	0.35	1.17	5.85	11.70
83	0.21	0.70	3.50	7.00
100	0.09	0.28	1.40	2.80
125	0.05	0.17	0.85	1.70

How the values in this table are computed: Code 40 at 3 ft.
Resistance = 0.085 ohms/ft × 3 ft = 0.255 ohms; Voltage drop
= 5A × 0.255 ohms ≈ 1.275 V rounded to 1.28V.

2. Table of nickel silver rail resistance by code size and rail length. Nickel silver rail has a resistance that's about 30 times higher than copper wire, which is why I recommend copper wire feeders every 3-6 feet. A voltage drop of less than 1V is ideal, with a drop of more than 2V definitely to be avoided.

THE RESISTANCE OF NICKEL SILVER RAIL

Understanding why adequate feeders are necessary requires examining the electrical properties of the track itself. Nearly all modern model rails are nickel silver – an alloy composed primarily of copper (roughly 60%), nickel (18%), and zinc (22%). While this material offers excellent corrosion resistance and looks like steel rail, it's considerably more resistant to electrical current than pure copper wire.

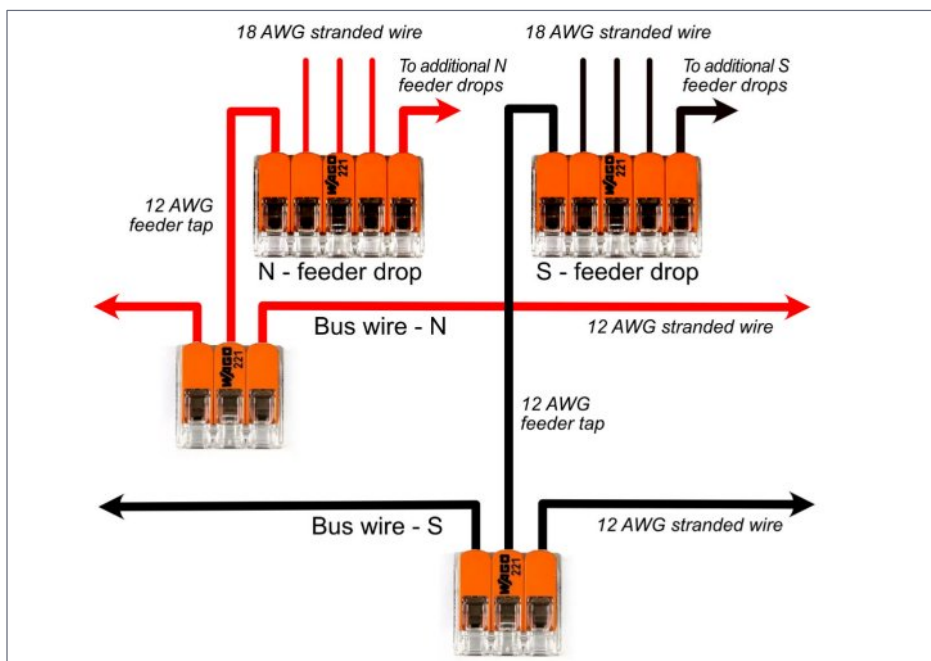
Nickel silver has about 30 times the resistance as copper wire. With multiple locomotives, sound decoders drawing additional current, and longer distances, this effect compounds significantly.

A 10-foot run of code 70 rail on a 5A DCC system [2] could see a voltage drop of 1.17 volts or more – enough to cause some performance degradation, especially at the lower speeds where voltage

margins are tightest. This inherent resistance in the rail itself, combined with the unreliability of rail joiners as electrical connections, makes frequent feeder connections not just advisable but essential for reliable operation.

Proper feeders are also critical for clean DCC signal transmission. Digital Command Control requires consistent power delivery to maintain the digital signal to decoder-equipped locomotives. Inadequate feeders can create spots where decoders lose communication, causing locomotives to stop or behave unpredictably.

Proper feeders with easily accessible bus wire terminal strips or Wago connectors also facilitate troubleshooting, allowing



3. This diagram shows my all-Wago feeder wire connecting method. All I need is wire strippers and my fingers! Every six feet or so, I have one 3-tap Wago for each bus wire to do the feeder drops. To debug, I need no special tools to disconnect or connect feeders – just a volt meter.





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me to trace and isolate issues quickly as they arise [3]. I can disconnect feeders and test individual track sections, rapidly identify problem areas, and make repairs without needing to get out the wire cutters.

UNDERSTANDING WIRE GAUGE AND VOLTAGE DROP

Wire gauge – the thickness of your feeder wires – directly affects voltage drop and overall system performance. In the American Wire Gauge (AWG) system, smaller numbers indicate thicker wire. For model railroad feeders, the most common gauges are 20AWG, 22AWG, and 24AWG, though some modelers use heavier gauges for bus wires.

----- VOLTAGE DROP at 5A current -----			
Wire Size	Drop over 10 ft	Drop over 50 ft	Drop over 100 ft
30 AWG	8.600		
28 AWG	5.050		
26 AWG	3.200		
24 AWG	2.050		
22 AWG	1.250	6.250	12.500
20 AWG	0.650	3.250	6.500
18 AWG	0.365	1.825	3.650
16 AWG	0.200	1.000	2.000
14 AWG	0.126	0.630	1.260
12 AWG	0.080	0.400	0.800
10 AWG	0.050	0.250	0.500

4. Main bus wire voltage drop table. Note AWG 12 or 10 gives you the least voltage drop for a 5A bus wire over long runs. 14 AWG can work for shorter runs of less than 50 feet. On small layouts with bus wire runs less than 10 feet, 18 AWG can work. Ideally you want to keep the total voltage drop under 1V.

The physics are straightforward: thinner wire has more resistance, and more resistance produces more voltage drop over distance. This relationship is described by Ohm's Law ($V = IR$), where voltage drop equals current multiplied by resistance.

MY WIRE SELECTION APPROACH

Based on my experience with voltage drop on my Siskiyou Line 1 layout, I've standardized on specific wire choices that have served me well and will be using on Siskiyou Line 2. As a general rule, I suggest keeping total feeder voltage drop under half a volt [5]. For my feeders, I use 18AWG stranded wire up to three feet long, giving me a comfortable maximum voltage drop of about 0.1V.

I strongly prefer stranded wire over solid wire. Some people find solid wire easier to work with, but I don't like it – it breaks off too easily. Siskiyou Line 1 lasted over 26 years, and I never had a stranded wire feeder break off. Yes, stranded wire is more difficult to solder to the rails, but with the right technique – which I'll share with you – it becomes quick and routine.

----- VOLTAGE DROP at 5A current -----			
Wire Size	Drop over 0.5 ft	Drop over 1 ft	Drop over 3 ft
30 AWG	0.430	0.860	2.580
28 AWG	0.253	0.505	1.515
26 AWG	0.160	0.320	0.960
24 AWG	0.103	0.205	0.615
22 AWG	0.063	0.125	0.375
20 AWG	0.033	0.065	0.195
18 AWG	0.018	0.037	0.110
16 AWG	0.010	0.020	0.060

5. Feeder drop wire voltage drop table. For feeder drops from the bus wire to the track, keep the total run to less than 3 feet. As shown here, 22 AWG or larger wire gives less than half a volt of drop, with 24 AWG or 26 AWG working as long as you keep the total feeder length to 1 foot or less.



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I prefer 12 AWG wire for the bus wires that run beneath the layout. These heavy-gauge bus wires act as a low-resistance high-way distributing power throughout the layout, with the short feeders serving as exit ramps to the track. This combination – heavy bus wires with frequent, relatively short feeders – ensures excellent power distribution with minimal voltage drop.

I recommend different colored wire for each track rail to avoid cross-wiring feeder polarity. My convention is red for one rail and black for the other. This simple practice prevents confusion and makes troubleshooting easy. Trust me on this – when you're under your layout with a flashlight trying to trace a problem, you'll thank yourself for using color-coded wires. Note: If you prefer other colors than red and black, that's fine, I've also seen yellow and blue for reversing area track rails, for example.

MY RECOMMENDED FEEDER SPACING

How close together should you install feeders? Conservative practice suggests feeders to every three to six feet of track, though I've found that installing them to every rail section provides excellent results. This might seem excessive, but it's a minimal additional cost and effort that provides insurance against operational problems.

On curves, I like to lay flex track six feet at a time, so I use rail joiners to connect two three-foot pieces of flex track and then solder the joint, giving me one long six-foot section of flex track. I do want to leave every other six-foot section having unsoldered joiners with a 0.020" gap (the thickness of two business cards) between the ends to allow for expansion. I carefully bend the ends of the unsoldered curve joint to make sure there's no kink at the joint.

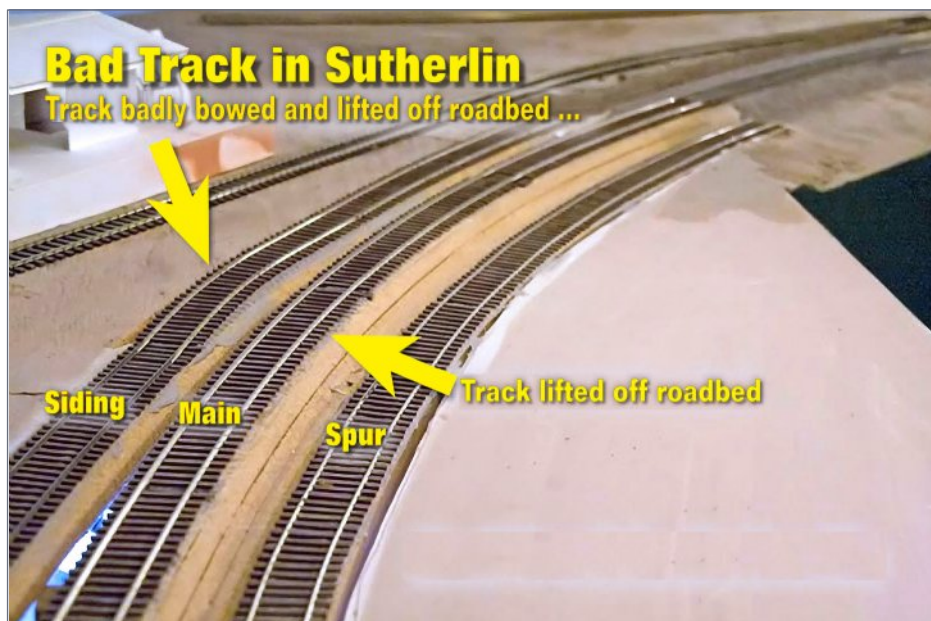
Believe me when I say to leave this expansion gap. I did not have this expansion gap on some track on my Siskiyou Line 1

– then we had a multi-day summer power outage after a storm, and it got well over 100 degrees in the house. Once electricity was finally restored, I went into the layout room and found some track popped up due to missing expansion gaps. Lesson learned!

MY APPROACH TO SOLDERING FEEDERS

There are many opinions on the best way to attach feeder wires to track, and through the years I've developed techniques that work reliably for me. Let me walk you through my process.

My trick for hiding feeders: solder to the backs of the rails



6. I failed to leave a sufficient expansion gap on some curves on Siskiyou Line 1 and due to a multi-day summer power outage after a storm, the layout room got very hot and two tracks I had caulked down popped up off the roadbed. I am now a staunch advocate of proper expansion gaps every six feet.

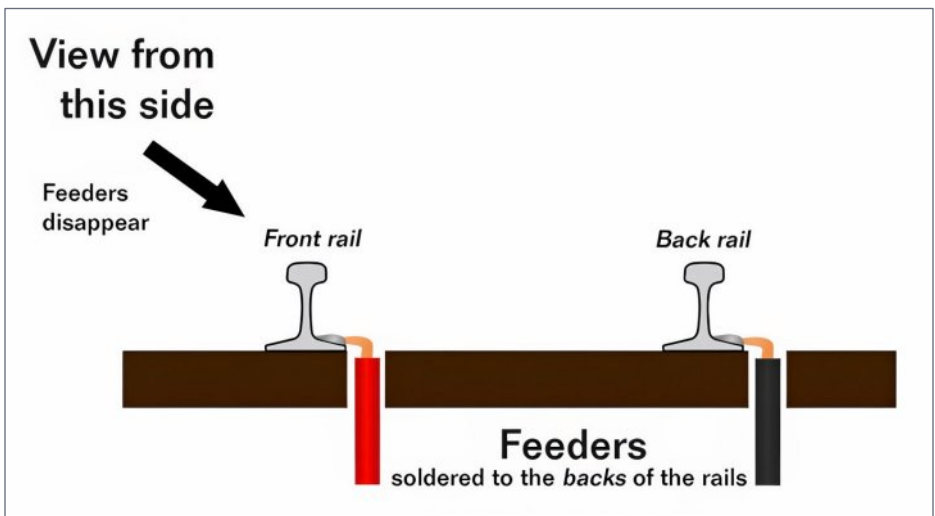


I prefer to solder the feeders to the backs of the rail, onto just the base [7]. By soldering to the backs of the rails, the feeders become practically invisible from normal viewing angles. The key here is to solder only to the base of the rail so you won't have a problem with the wheel flanges clearing the feeder on the front rail; I'll show you how to achieve this [9].

That being said, I make no real attempt to disguise the feeders because I *want* them visible if I'm troubleshooting [8]. I just use a hand mirror and voila! There are the feeders I've soldered to the backs of the rails.

Planning your feeder installation

Before I begin soldering, I plan my feeder locations and drill holes through the roadbed next to the rails where feeders will attach. I drill from above using a 1/8" bit at a slight angle, with the bit pointed to go slightly under the rail and all but touching the rail base. I feed the feeder wires through the holes, then route them to the bus wires beneath the benchwork.



7. My approach is to attach the feeders to the backs of the rails, which makes them "disappear."

Prep the area

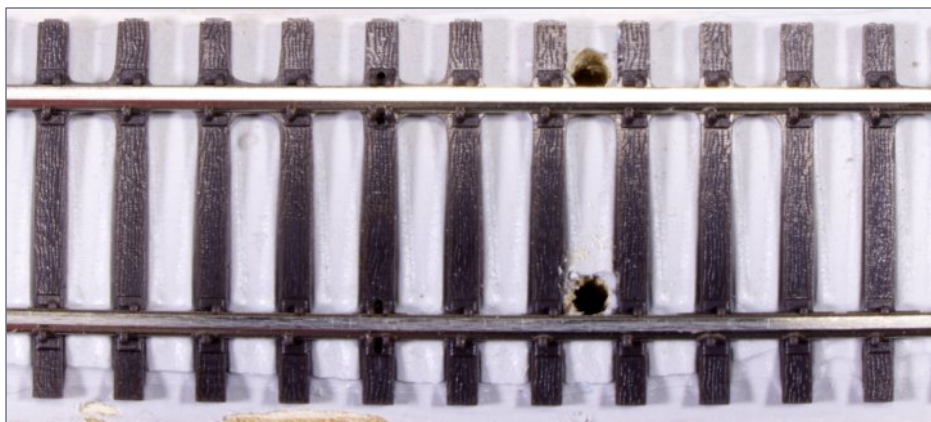
Before soldering, it's important to prepare the area. I use a pen-type scratch brush – I consider this tool essential. I use it to scrub the rail where I want to attach the feeder. This removes any tarnish or residue on the rail and makes the solder stick well to the fresh metal. If you've already ballasted your track, carefully clear away a bit of ballast from the rail base if needed.

The goal is bright, clean metal that will accept solder readily. I then apply a dab of no-clean paste flux for electronics with a toothpick to the base of the rail where the feeder will go. Some modelers use rosin-core solder, which eliminates the need for separate paste flux. However, the rosin leaves a residue on the joint, whereas no-clean paste flux is just that – no clean



8. Here is the same track shown in [1], but this time with a mirror exposing the feeders on the back side. By not doing anything special to hide the feeders on the backs of the rails, I can use a mirror to locate them if needed during electrical troubleshooting.





9. I drill the 1/8" feeder holes as close to the base of the rail as possible without actually touching the rail.

Preparing the feeder wire

I strip approximately 1/4" of insulation from the end of the feeder wire. Too much exposed wire creates a connection that's difficult to hide; too little makes it hard to achieve a solid solder joint. After stripping, I pre-tin the wire with solder.

I use needle-nose pliers to bend the exposed wire at a right angle, creating an "L" shape [10]. With my 18-gauge stranded wire feeder ends, I also press the tinned end into a flattened spade shape with the needle nose plier jaws. This shape allows the wire to lie flat against just the base of the rail, maximizing contact area. I use rail flush-cutters to trim the flat tip into a square spike head shape.

The magic of low-temp solder

This is where my technique differs from many other modelers, and I believe it makes a significant difference. I have come to prefer low-temperature solder. The stuff I use melts at about 275 degrees Fahrenheit, which is well below the 400°F melting point of the plastic ties. For more on solder temperatures and melting plastic ties, see the side note: *Which solder to use for feeders?*



10. After stripping and tinning the end of the feeder wire, I shape the end into a spike head shape.

With low-temp solder, there's no huge rush to get in and get out. I make sure the solder melts well at the joint and then remove the iron after 15-20 seconds. The plastic ties never get touched.

I tried solder paste for feeders, but it has a limited shelf life of a year or less, so it went bad before I could use much of it. I've standardized on fine solid solder that's about 0.020" – 0.030" in diameter and have never looked back.





J. Fugate

WHICH SOLDER TO USE FOR FEEDERS?

The two most common solders are 60/40 and 63/37, referring to their tin-to-lead ratio. The key difference: 63/37 is eutectic, meaning it transitions instantly from solid to liquid at 361°F (183°C). The more common 60/40 has a melting range where it passes through a plastic phase – if disturbed while cooling, you'll create a weak cold joint. For model railroads, I recommend 63/37.

Low-temperature solder: a game-changer

Low-temperature solder has become indispensable in my toolkit. My favorite is Tix solder, which melts at just 275°F (135°C) – 86°F lower than conventional solder.

This lower temperature matters when attaching track feeders. Model railroad ties are typically styrene plastic with a melting point around 400°F (204°C). When soldering feeders to rails, heat conducts through the rail into the ties. Hold the iron too long on the rail, and you'll melt the ties. Low-temperature solder dramatically lowers this risk.

Accounting for heat loss

If 63/37 solder melts at 361°F (183°C), why set your iron to 600°F (316°C) or higher? When your iron touches the work, the workpiece acts as a heat sink, drawing thermal energy away from the tip. If your iron is barely above the solder's melting point, the tip temperature will drop below that threshold and the solder won't flow.

For 63/37 solder, I recommend 675°F (360°C). For Tix low-temperature solder, I use 550°F (290°C). While this is above the melting point of styrene, heat loss is my friend here, taking 30 seconds or more before the plastic ties get soft. This extra thermal cushion lets me linger on the joint for up to 30 seconds before heat damages nearby ties – 15-20 seconds is usually plenty.

My bottom line

For general electrical work, I use 63/37 solder with the iron set at about 675°F (360°C). For attaching feeders to rails, I switch to Tix low-temperature solder with the tip at about 550°F (290°C). This combination has virtually eliminated soldering-related damage while ensuring reliable connections. ■

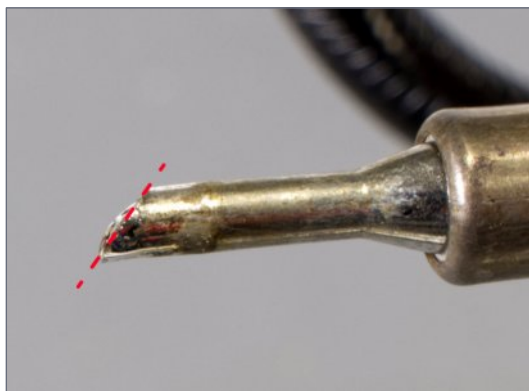
Making the joint

I position my tinned feeder wire against the outside base of the rail. I use a 65-watt temperature-controlled soldering iron set to 550°F with a bevel tip for generous contact coverage of the joint [11]. I apply a tiny bit of flux and a dab of solder to the hot tip flat end to load it up [12].

I position the tip flat-face-down onto the rail base to get optimum heat application. I touch the iron to the rail base where it meets the wire and hold it there, heating both simultaneously. The flux will begin to boil almost immediately. The solder then flows smoothly around the connection, creating a shiny fillet that bonds wire to rail. I hold the iron on the joint and watch for the solder to flow and bubble onto the rail.

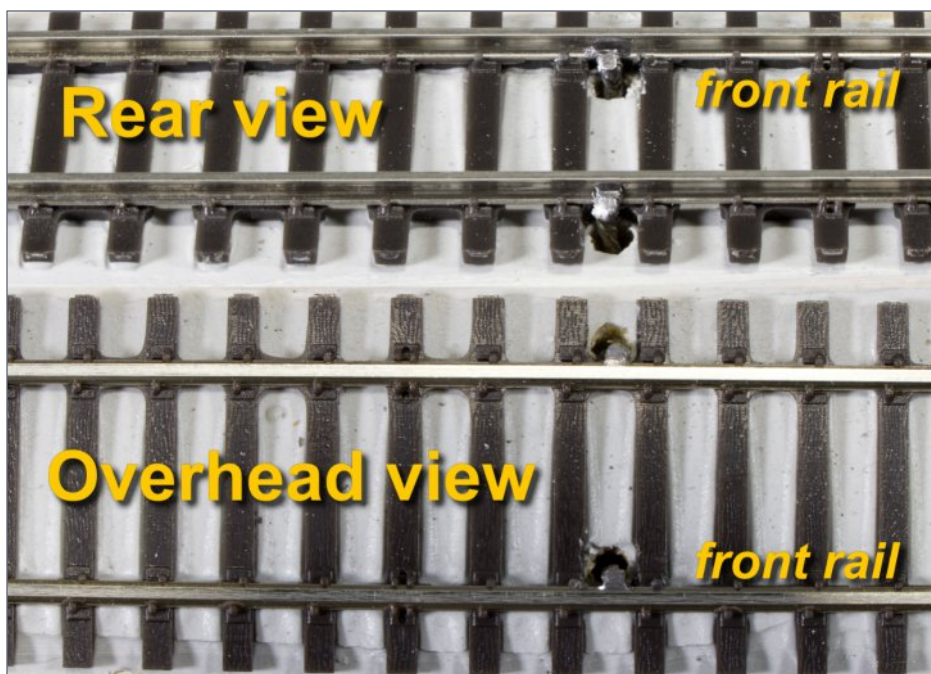


11. For soldering feeders, I like to use a bevel tip on my 60-watt soldering iron.



12. I clean the soldering iron tip and apply a dab of flux. Then I melt a bit of solder onto the tip as shown before touching it to the feeder joint. Don't overdo it or your feeder joint will become a huge glob of solder.





13. Here's the final feeder joint after some touch-up with a needle file.

The entire process takes 15-20 seconds of iron contact. If the solder balls up or looks dull and grainy, I haven't achieved sufficient heat – but with the low-temp solder there's little concern about melting the ties, so lingering up to 30 seconds to make sure the solder flows well is fine.

But what if you're using regular solder that's not low-temp?

Protecting the ties when using regular melting point solder

If you're using regular melting point solder, to avoid melted ties, you need to employ speed and heat sinking. Work quickly – get in and get out with less than five seconds total contact. Clip a small heat sink (available at electronics suppliers) or even a metal alligator clip to the rail on both sides of the feeder joint. This draws heat away from the plastic.

If you do start to melt a tie, immediately remove the iron and allow everything to cool before attempting again.

But, as I have indicated, if you use low-temp solder as I do, there's little concern for melting ties.

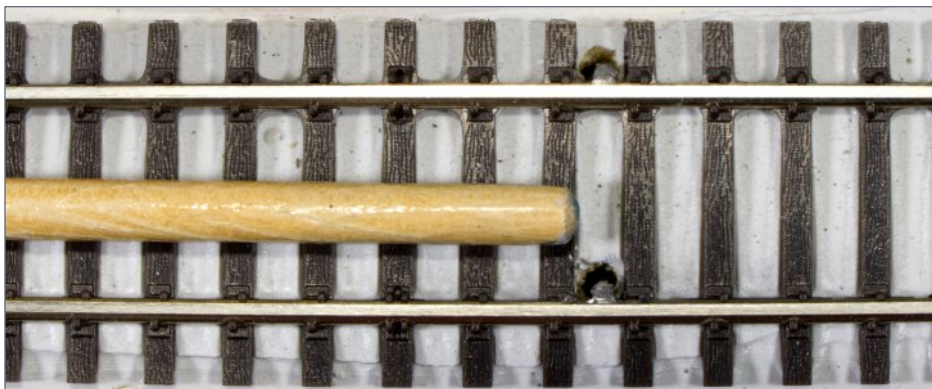
Testing the connection and finishing up

Once the joint has cooled (wait at least 30 seconds), gently tug on the wire to verify a solid mechanical connection. It shouldn't move at all. Then use a multimeter to verify electrical continuity between your feeder and the rail. A properly soldered joint will show near-zero resistance – typically less than 0.1 ohms.

A quality solder joint appears smooth and shiny, with solder fully flowed onto the rail base. If your joint looks dull, grainy, or blobby, it may be a “cold joint” with poor electrical contact. Re-heat it properly or remove the solder with desoldering braid and start fresh.

Tix solder looks shiny when liquid, but it looks a bit waxy when it cools and becomes solid. I have found the joint is plenty strong, so this is normal.

After soldering the feeders, I use a needle file to touch up the joint, especially on the front-inside rail base. This ensures no flanges will catch on the feeder joint.



14. Here's an overhead shot with a paintbrush handle marking the location of the feeders. Compare it with [15].



FINAL THOUGHTS

Track feeders represent an investment in reliable operation that pays dividends every time you run trains. By understanding what feeders are, why they matter, and how wire gauge affects performance, you can design and implement a power distribution system that ensures smooth, consistent operation for years to come.

I've shared the techniques that have worked for me through decades of model railroading and through observing countless layouts featured in *Model Railroad Hobbyist* magazine. The combination of 18AWG stranded feeders, low-temp solder paste, and frequent feeder spacing has proven itself time and again.

Remember, there's no single "right" way to do things in model railroading. Experiment, find what works best for you, and most importantly, have fun! But do take the time to install adequate feeders during construction, and you'll spend your operating sessions enjoying your trains rather than troubleshooting electrical gremlins on your layout. ☑

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15. Here's the "money shot." The feeders in [14] are not visible when viewed from normal angles. The end of the paintbrush handle points to the feeder location.

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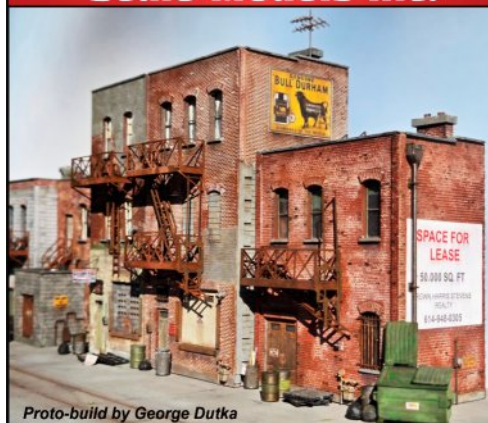
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Who's who in model railroading

A tribute to individuals and companies who
have influenced the model railroading hobby

RICHARD H. BALE



Charlie Getz, past president of the National Model Railroading Association ...

"Richard Bale's monumental *Who's Who* should appeal to anyone who cares and is curious about the hobby and its history. There is an amazing amount of information about many pioneers who shaped and created the hobby of scale model railroading we enjoy today. Even if you do not think you need to know about them, you will be fascinated by the stories and connections of these individuals and the products and features we know and use. This book is a monument to some truly great people who are responsible for what we have today."

Photo of Ken Ehlers Pandora & San Miguel layout



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JOE FUGATE SHOWS HOW **TMTV** MIGHT BE
JUST WHAT'S MISSING IN YOUR HOBBY ...



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TRAINMASTERS TV *IS BACK!*



IF YOU'VE SQUINTED AT YOUTUBE VIDEOS WITH POOR FOCUS AND hands blocking the view, or struggled to hear instructions over noise, you're not alone. Model railroaders have relied on free, sometimes frustrating content that too often lacks the professional touch our hobby deserves. That's why we created *TrainMasters TV (TMTV)* to be an indispensable resource for model railroaders serious about honing their skills.

THE GENESIS OF A VISION

In 2013, Barry Silverthorn, a seasoned model railroader with a background in network TV documentary production, noticed the hobby could use quality, broadcast-level video content. He aimed to showcase expert techniques on professional cameras, saving modelers time and money with methods hard to convey in text.

Barry approached me and *Model Railroad Hobbyist (MRH)* magazine because we'd built a strong online presence, reaching over 71,000 modelers. Our internet-focused approach made us the perfect platform to deliver professional video content to model railroaders.

This partnership created a streaming video channel [1] that applies broadcast standards to model railroader education, transforming how modelers approach their craft.

TRAINMASTERS TV REBOOT

I have a confession: over recent years *TMTV* has had a rough period, especially during the COVID era when it was difficult to get modelers together in the studio or with modelers reluctant





1. Producer Barry Silverthorn [on the right], with G-scale modeler Barry Birkett in “Barry’s Backyard.” Barry (the producer), a modeler with a background in network TV, approached me (Joe Fugate) about partnering with MRH Media to make broadcast-quality video for model railroaders. *TrainMasters TV* launched at the end of 2013, and the rest is history as they say.

to let strangers into their home to shoot a layout. As a result, *TMTV* content production slowed to a halt. Longtime subscribers had every right to be disappointed.

But *TMTV* is back! We’re rebooting our release frequency to add at least two to three new segments every month.

We have exciting new content planned, including a comprehensive new project layout construction series. But more about that later.

If you stepped away during our content drought, I hope you'll return. And if you're new to *TMTV*, you're joining at the perfect time.

WHY VIDEO CHANGES EVERYTHING

Frankly, some modeling techniques are tough to learn from written instructions alone. You can read a thousand words on weathering a locomotive, installing a decoder, or creating realistic scenery, and still feel lost.

I know this from running *MRH*. Even with detailed text-based tutorials, more than a few readers have asked to somehow see techniques demonstrated. A 10-minute video can make the light bulb come on in ways written tutorials can't [2]. Watching a skilled modeler, seeing the angle of their airbrush, noting the actual paint consistency, and hearing their thoughts – true learning happens then.



2. Ralph Renzetti demonstrates his “extreme weathering” methods for TMTV. Note: sadly, we lost Ralph recently – as a tribute to Ralph, his TMTV videos will be free to watch for the next few weeks. [trainmasters.tv/programs/extreme-weathering].



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Mistakes in this hobby can be costly. Whether damaging an expensive locomotive during decoder installation or choosing incompatible DCC components, errors can easily cost \$50, \$100, or more, plus all the wasted hours and increased frustration.

TMTV helps you learn from a skilled modelers before committing resources. You see how to do it right the first time and can approach projects with confidence.

THE COMPREHENSIVE TMTV APPROACH

What sets *TMTV* apart isn't just production quality – it's our comprehensive approach that respects your intelligence and time.



Aha Moment offers short, focused videos of five to 10 minutes covering lesser-known techniques – those “head-slapper” moments that make you wonder why you never thought of that. These bite-sized

videos deliver genuine value whether you have a quick coffee break or a few minutes before dinner.



Backshop Clinic pairs skilled modelers with hosts who ask the questions you need answered. The host ensures no critical details are missed. Expert modelers often assume beginners know more

than they do. This format creates easy-to-follow tutorials instead of incomplete ones.



DCC Decoded demystifies Digital Command Control with clear visuals on wiring, decoder installation, and system selection. By showing rather than telling, it transforms DCC from a mysterious black box

into an accessible technology.



Notch 8 showcases advanced modeling techniques that satisfy even demanding "rivet-counter" modelers seeking museum-quality results. If "good enough" isn't good enough, this series is for you.



Layout Tours feature in-depth owner interviews on decision-making, design philosophy, and lessons learned. By sharing their missteps as well as their victories, layout owners help you avoid the same costly

mistakes and inspire you to achieve a more satisfying layout.

THE PRODUCTION QUALITY DIFFERENCE

Professional-grade production sets *TMTV* apart from many on-line hobby videos.



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Multi-camera advantage: Ever watched a tutorial where hands block the view? We use two to three cameras. If one angle is blocked, we switch to another. You never miss a moment.

4K production: We shoot in 4K, allowing us to crop and zoom for detail. Released in 1080 HD, the 4K master ensures clarity on critical details.

Close-ups and lighting: We show the action with professional lighting that reveals colors accurately and highlights subtle effects.

Broadcast-quality audio: Professional microphones ensure clear audio without background noise.

Professional editing: Our editing enhances pacing and flow, creating engaging content that maximizes information transfer.

All this stems from Barry Silverthorn's broadcast TV expertise. Barry trained our *TMTV* staff, embedding professional standards into our videos, applying television production methods to model railroad instruction. While Barry has stepped away from *TMTV*, he has passed on his expertise and he remains an active consultant to *TMTV* staff.



3. One example of how *TMTV* does seldom-covered topics is this segment on layout end-of-life. What's it like to tear out a layout and start over?



4. Here Barry is shooting *inside* the firebox of SP Daylight 4449 while it is in the shop for its every-couple-decades of major maintenance. This illustrates how TMTV likes to go the extra mile with our content – and yes, this amazing video is on **TMTV**.



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CONTENT YOU CAN TRUST

With anyone able to post “how-to” videos online, reliability is crucial. How do you know the technique works, or the person knows his stuff?

At *TMTV*, we ensure quality with thorough planning and careful talent selection:

- We plan every video with all necessary tools and materials ready.
- If something isn't working, we pause and reset instead of settling for sub-par footage.

Our talent pool is made up of highly skilled modelers who really know their stuff. They're not experimenting with half-baked ideas – they demonstrate vetted, proven methods.

When you watch *TMTV* tutorials, you learn techniques that work from highly experienced modelers. In a hobby where mistakes are costly, this assurance is invaluable.



5. *MRH* and *TMTV* likes to find topics about the hobbyist as well as the models (after all, hobbyist is in our name) – a case in point: *TMTV* has a two-part series on vision and model railroading. It's a topic that's seldom covered, and we guarantee the tools and aids we discuss will surprise you!

THE TOMA REVOLUTION

One initiative I've promoted through *TMTV* is TOMA – “The ‘One Module’ Approach” – which we believe is ideal for our space- and time-constrained world.

In the traditional layout building process, you:

1. Fill a room with benchwork.
2. Lay track, wire everything.
3. Complete scenery, add details.
4. Finally, operate.

While impressive, this can be enormous in scope, costly, and completion takes years or sometimes even decades. More than a few modelers never finish, and many never experience the most satisfying operations through nice scenery because they're perpetually stuck in construction.



6. One of the rare times Barry Silverthorn (right) got on camera was during our TOMA layout series hosted by Miles Hale (left). Barry prefers to be on the other side of the camera, and we agree his expertise there is second to none.



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In fact, this is so common that in his book *Playing with Trains*, writer Sam Posey describes only two kinds of model railroaders: 1) those who operate trains on a Plywood Pacific and 2) those who build nice scenes and seldom run trains. Why one or the other when you can have *both* with TOMA?

With the TOMA alternative, you:

- Build in small, bite-sized modules.
- Control scope and keep projects manageable.
- Start with one or two modules and build them completely, adding the scenery and details.

This means with TOMA, you:

- Hone all hobby skills early.
- Add staging tracks on the ends to hold pre-assembled trains, and you can run trains across completed modules, experiencing operations quickly.
- Have a nice looking operational layout in months, not years.

This approach provides regular completion milestones, refines techniques on smaller sections, and gets you operating trains through great scenery much sooner.

Our new TOMA series documenting my Siskiyou Line 2 layout [7] brings layout building into the 21st century, showing how TOMA modules fit modern life, and how to build a complete DCC system for under \$100 with an Arduino.

WHY TMTV PAYS FOR ITSELF

“Why pay for a subscription with so much free content online?”

Simple: *TMTV* has real value that exceeds the subscription cost.

Avoiding costly mistakes: A single mistake – damaging a locomotive during decoder installation, using the wrong adhesive, or choosing incompatible DCC components – can cost \$50, \$100, or more, plus wasted hours. If one *TMTV* video helps you avoid

just one mistake, the subscription pays for itself. For as low as \$1.92 per month, it's cheaper than a single detail part.

Learning from savvy modelers [8]: Even expert modelers discover new techniques on *TMTV*. If veterans are learning, imagine the value for less seasoned modelers. The knowledge you gain from *TMTV* helps you achieve better results, work more efficiently, and tackle challenging projects.

Entertainment value: *TMTV* subscribers say even non-railroader family members enjoy watching. The production quality, interesting personalities, and creative glimpses make *TMTV* entertaining – not just educational. A movie rental or a cup of premium coffee costs more than a month of *TMTV*.

TMTV is more than a streaming service – it's the future of how model railroaders learn and grow. As technology evolves,



7. We're launching a new *TMTV* project layout series: "Siskiyou Line 2: The layout that grows." If you've been in the hobby for a while, you may notice the call back to Linn Westcott's popular *HO railroad that grows* book from decades ago. I see the SL2 approach using TOMA as the new 21st -century update on this idea.



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8. One of the things that **TMTV** does to help you avoid costly mistakes is that we draw from the insights of seasoned modelers like Mike Confalone. **TMTV** has a lot of Mike Confalone videos (with more coming), and they're among our most popular.

we're at the forefront, exploring techniques like LED lighting, photo backdrops, 3D printing, battery power, Arduinos, and computer control.

My upcoming Siskiyou Line 2 series will show how modern tech and thoughtful methods make layout building more accessible and achievable. This isn't abandoning tradition – it's embracing new tools to reach our modeling goals more effectively.

WATCH ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

TMTV is the only model railroading streaming channel on **Roku** and **Apple TV**, offering big-screen viewing with Netflix-like ease. Free **TMTV** players for **Android** and **iOS** mobile devices let you watch it on a tablet at your workbench, on a phone during your commute, or in the layout room as you work.

TRAINMASTERS TV IS BACK! | 15

This accessibility means *TMTV* fits your busy lifestyle. Watch tutorials on your tablet while working, savor every detail of layout tours on your big-screen TV, or hone techniques on your phone while on-the-go.

AN INVESTMENT IN YOUR HOBBY

If you're serious about model railroading – wanting to improve skills, avoid costly mistakes, and stay current with new techniques – *TMTV* is essential. It brings better results, greater confidence, and more enjoyment.

Our monthly price for *TMTV* is \$4.99 per month, but the annual subscription of \$22.99 drops that to \$1.92/month, making *TMTV* one of the hobby's best values: [visit TMTV for details](#). For a tad more than a quality freight car wheelset, you get unlimited access to a growing library of professional-quality content each month.

Coming attractions ...

LAYOUT TOURS



Qualman's Michigan Lines
Dean Ferris' Oregon Joint Line
Mike Armstrong's Rock Island
Ron King's Erie Railroad
Jim Tilley's PRR / B&O

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... and many more!



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ALSO COMING: More 'The Lounge Car' episodes
More 'Ops Live' episodes
More 'DCC Decoded' episodes

9. Here's the rebooted *TMTV* lineup of coming attractions.



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OCTOBER SALE! Click here for our fall special: [**TMTV + Running Extra combined for just \\$2.99 per month**](#) – that's right both of them for one low price! If you prefer annual billing, then it's \$35.88 per year (\$2.99 x 12) with a bonus: you get all 80+ back issues of Running Extra for thrown in free.

The question isn't whether you can afford to subscribe to *TMTV*. It's whether you can afford not to. Struggling with techniques, making avoidable mistakes, or postponing projects due to lack of confidence – these are the real costs of not having quality video education at your fingertips.

Some techniques are nearly impossible to learn from written instructions alone. You can read a thousand words on weathering a locomotive or creating realistic scenery, and still feel lost at your workbench.

TMTV is the resource the model railroad hobby has needed. Barry Silverthorn and I created it to meet that need, and now it's available, affordable, and ready to transform your modeling experience. The only question is: are you ready to take your hobby to the next level?

Visit *TMTV* today and see why thousands of model railroaders have made it indispensable. Your future self – with better skills, more confidence, and enjoying a more satisfying hobby – will thank you. ☑

[**Click here to visit the *TMTV* website ...**](#)





10. When I was doing my Siskiyou Line 1, I staged this picture to convey how overwhelmed I would sometimes feel. The mountain of unfinished projects in the basement layout room could bury me under its weight, just as this photo suggests. I'm excited about the new Siskiyou Line 2 TOMA layout project series coming to TMTV – finally a way to build a layout in bite-sized chunks. Reminds me of that old proverb: How do you eat an elephant? A bite at a time ...

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What's new on TMTV

Some recent shining examples ...



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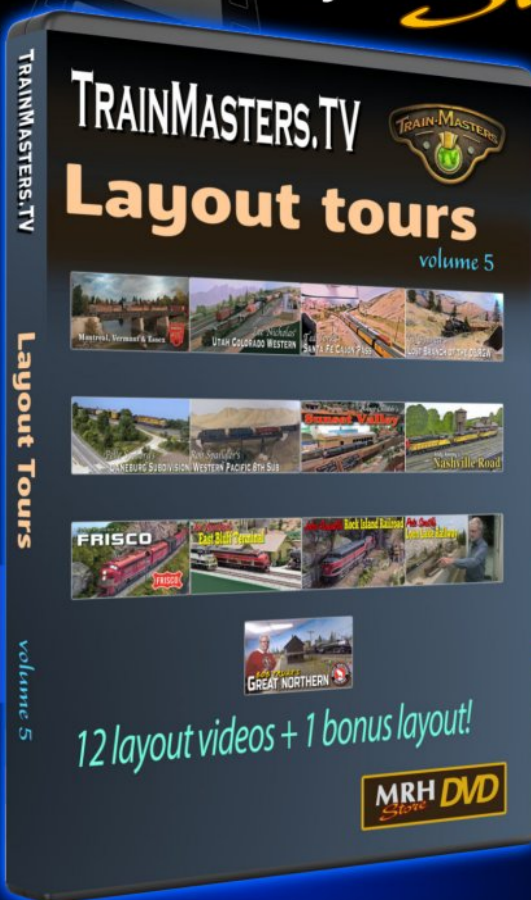
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Creating a durable backdrop with fiberglass reinforced plastic



1. The blue-painted FRP backdrop curves smoothly around corners, adding depth to the new trackwork for the Dover, New Hampshire yard plan.



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

ED HINTON DEMONSTRATES THE BENEFITS OF AN
FRP BACKDROP ...

FINDING THE PERFECT BACKDROP MATERIAL CAN BE FRUSTRATING. You need something flexible enough for tight curves, yet tough enough to last decades. After testing several options, I found fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) provides the ideal solution.

WHY FRP MAKES SENSE

My Drover yard divider presented multiple outside corners, some of which were sharp, that called for a flexible approach [2]. I thought of many traditional materials that were unsuitable.

Masonite works well for straight runs, but is prone to cracking on sharp bends. DuraFlash vinyl flashing was too flexible and prone to sagging. Sheet styrene or thicker linoleum, though flexible and durable, were unavailable locally.

I found 0.09" FRP at Lowe's. FRP offered compelling advantages:

- Nontoxic
- Extremely resistant to scratching, denting, and breaking



2. The divider before installation showed the challenging curves that standard backdrop materials couldn't handle.



- Flexible enough for tight curves while maintaining strength
- Readily available at home improvement stores

MATERIAL PREPARATION AND SAFETY

FRP has a smooth side and a textured (pebbled) side. Use the smooth side as your front surface.

Before starting, gather safety equipment: disposable latex gloves and dust masks. Dust from fiberglass composites can irritate skin and lungs during cutting or sanding.

CUTTING AND TEST-FITTING

I marked a chalk line on the FRP at 20" for a consistent backdrop height. Using a saw would create hazardous dust, and the score-and-snap method was reportedly ineffective for FDP.



3. Tin snips with offset handles were perfect for cutting FRP.

Tin snips produced clean cuts quickly, without mess, and the pair I used had offset handles. Having both handles on the same side made cutting the material much easier [3].

After cutting, I test-fitted the material in place. FRP is lightweight, which allows single-person handling.

At outside corners, I installed 1" x 2" bracing to create anchor points for screws at top and bottom. This provides just enough structure to maintain gentle curves while keeping the backdrop secure.

SURFACE PREPARATION

Before sanding, I drilled holes at all fastener locations, making them 1/8" larger than the screws' diameter to accommodate thermal expansion and contraction.

Proper surface preparation ensures long-term paint adhesion. Following advice from fellow modelers, I wet-sanded the smooth surface using 200-grit sandpaper in a random circular pattern [5].

Not only does wet-sanding yield smoother results, but it also helps reduce airborne fiberglass dust, which can be a skin and lung irritant. As you sand, the water turns slightly milky – a sure sign you're preparing the surface effectively. I wiped each panel with de-natured alcohol before and after sanding to remove contaminants.

INSTALLATION PROCESS

FRP installation requires specialized adhesive and a notched trowel (3/16" x 1/4" V-shaped notches). The adhesive has limited working time once opened, so thorough preparation is essential. I strongly recommend having an assistant for this step, especially with trackwork already in place.

Installation sequence:

1. Apply FRP adhesive to the textured back side using the notched trowel.
2. Spread the adhesive in an arcing pattern to create uniform V-shaped beads.



3. Immediately close the adhesive container to prevent drying.
4. Position the panel carefully—once the adhesive touches the substrate, repositioning becomes nearly impossible.
5. Install screws with washers in pre-drilled holes while the adhesive remains workable.

PRIMING FOR SUCCESS

FRP won't accept standard primers, so you need a bonding primer, which combines a bonding agent with an acrylic binder. I chose Valspar. The primer rolled on smoothly and cured to a flat finish in about eight hours [6].

A BLUE SKY

After overnight curing, I applied the final blue paint. The results exceeded my expectations – the backdrop flows smoothly around complex curves while delivering excellent durability.



4. In the test-fit, the FRP easily wrapped around corners that would crack rigid materials.

I noticed some minor issues where screw placement created flat spots in curved sections. In the future, I may try some techniques to avoid this.

I used square 1" x 2" braces to support the backdrop, and the screws flattened the curve to match the wood's flat surface. These are hardly noticeable, but using round stock might make for a smoother curve in that the only point of contact would be the tangent where the round stock meets the curved backdrop.

Other problematic kinking spots were around the screws where the backdrop transitioned from curve to flat plywood backing. Positioning screws further from the curve apexes could help prevent this, or using shims to ease the transition at the screw points might help ensure the screws would pass through the FRP at a 90-degree angle.



5. Materials ready for wet sanding, including the bucket of water that keeps dust down and improves results.



Wooden curve transition pieces at the bottom and top of the backdrop where it meets the plywood backing might also provide a solution for an even smoother curve. Custom curves would require a lot more planning and cutting than shims, and shims would likely correct the issue well enough.

As it was, the kinks were only slightly noticeable. Also, since the screws were at the top and bottom of the backdrop, scenery and the overhanging valance will likely hide them completely.

ADDING CLOUDS

To enhance realism, I hand-painted simple clouds using techniques from instructional videos I found on YouTube from Jerry Yarnell



6. Bonding primer appears shiny when wet but dries flat, ideal for applying paint.

(youtu.be/AiRideZBv5U) and Tim Gagnon (<https://youtu.be/OIB1Rddh2p8>).

While I'm no artist, the results add convincing depth that brings the scene to life [9].

BOTTOM LINE

FRP proves to be an excellent backdrop material, combining the flexibility needed for complex installations with the durability required for long-term layouts. The material cuts cleanly, adheres securely, and paints beautifully. I plan to use FRP for my fascia work as well, taking advantage of its easy-cutting properties to match scenic contours perfectly.



7. Properly installed FRP curves smoothly around both inside and outside corners. The screws attach to the 1x2 bracing to help form and reinforce the curve.

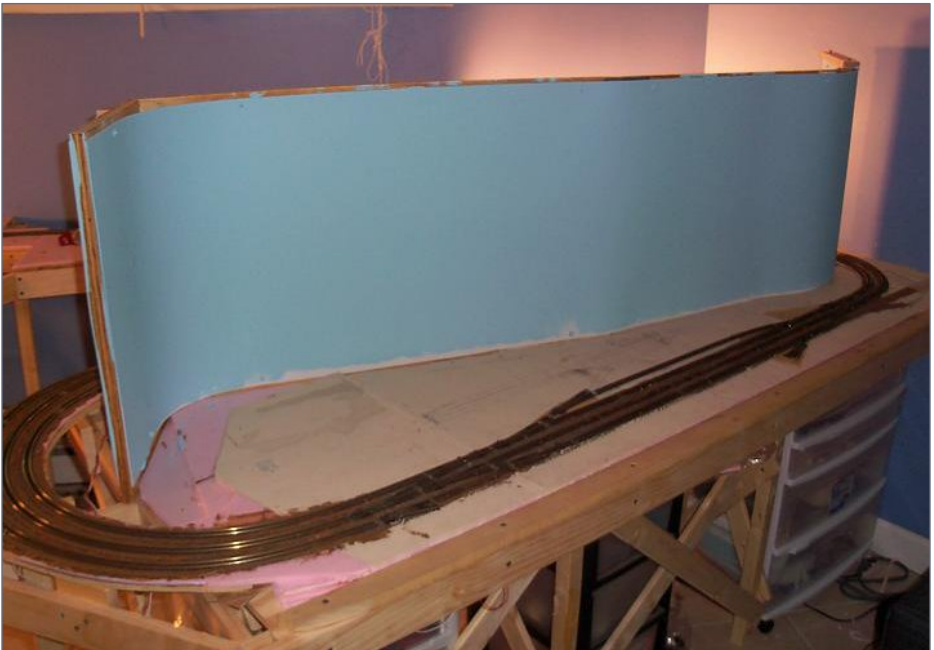


CREATING A DURABLE BACKDROP | 9

For modelers facing challenging backdrop installations, FRP deserves serious consideration. While it requires specific adhesives and primers, the superior results justify these extra preparation steps. The whole project took about seven hours for backdrop installation, with a little more for cloud painting and other detail work. ☑

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8. The backdrop hugs the curves nicely, and looks good in blue paint.



9. Hand-painted clouds provide visual interest.

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ED HINTON



Like many, Ed discovered his passion for model railroading as a child, before life led him on a 40-plus-year journey through the software industry.

Over the past 12 years, the hobby has rekindled into a true passion as he works on successive versions of his N scale Northern New England Scenic. The railroad's name reflects his love of scenic vistas, though it should not be mistaken for a lack of interest in operations.

When not running a software organization, he enjoys experimenting with new methods on the railroad – learning from what works, and especially from what doesn't. It may never be perfect, but it will always be fun! ■

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Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025



## Caboose Industries power-routing ground throw

Did you know you can get Caboose Industries ground throws that have power routing contacts for the turnout frog? YouTuber **Lee Calkins** shows how to assemble and install one of these little guys.



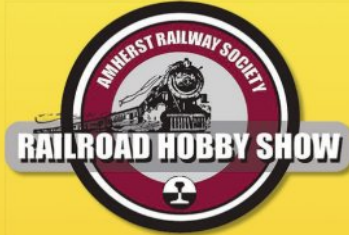
Caboose industries makes three versions of their ground throws with contacts: 220S (HO with sprung contacts), 119R (HO/N with rigid contacts), and 224S (N with sprung contacts). Assembling these guys is a bit tricky, so having this 5 minute how-to video is extremely helpful! ☒

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# OCTOBER NEWS

column



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

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



## CLUB MODELS



The **New Haven Railroad Historical and Technical Association** is selling three prototypically accurate HO

scale models of 1937 AAR 40' boxcars.



The options include a car with round corner ends, Youngstown door, and an Ajax hand brake wheel. A

second option is a car with round corner ends, Superior doors and a Miner hand brake.



The third car in this exclusive NHRTA production run has round corner ends, Youngstown

doors, and a Miner brake wheel. It wears the traditional NYNH&H herald in script lettering. All versions come with Bettendorf-style plain bearing trucks and knuckle couplers. The

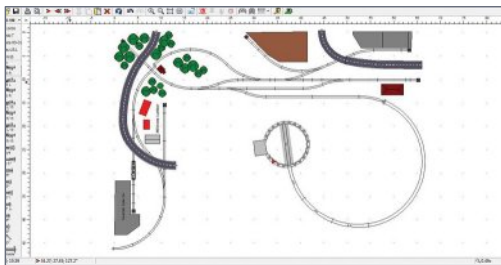
**THE LATEST MODEL RAILROAD PRODUCTS, NEWS & EVENTS**

models are being prepared for the historical association by Rapido Trains.

Info: [nhrhta.square.site](http://nhrhta.square.site)

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## NEW PRODUCTS FOR ALL SCALES



**Atlas** has released version 1.9.8 of its Track Planning Software. The software allows users to design custom layouts in HO, N and O scales using Atlas track, then view their design as a 3D model. This

latest version corrects small bugs and updates language translations. It is fully tested and certified for Windows 11.

Info: [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com)

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## O SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



R. Bale

### 2-8-0 STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

Baldwin Locomotive Works built the first 2-8-0 steam locomotive in 1866. It was dubbed Consolidation. Its eight drivers offered more adhesion than previous six-coupled engines, and the two-wheel pilot truck provided the stability that was lacking in 0-8-0s locomotive types than in use for heavy freight. From the 1880s to about 1910 the 2-8-0 Consolidation was the locomotive of choice for freight service. Although the majority of 2-8-0s became branch line engines after the development of freight locomotives with trailing trucks, builders continued to produce 2-8-0s through the 1920s. In total, about 21,000 Consolidations were built: more than any other wheel arrangement.



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locomotive. The hefty model has a diecast metal chassis and boiler. The tender body is also diecast.



the tender and cab, an updated ladder at the rear of the tender, and a new PCB draw bar between the engine and tender.



and tender backup light. The locomotive comes with Proto-Sound 3.0 with the Digital Command System featuring passenger station sounds. Road names available on this release include Boston & Maine, Southern Railway, and Western Maryland.



Atlas has released an O scale model of a Funnel Flow tank car in six new paint schemes. The Funnel Flow concept – where the middle of the car is lower than the ends – allows products to be unloaded by gravity. The idea was developed by Union Tank Car Company in 1961.



The model features a detailed ABS body with separate metal handrails. Decorating schemes are GATX-Trusweet, UTLX-Thiele, UTLX-Specialty Minerals, PJBX-Schmidt Beer, PJBX-Pabst Blue Ribbon, and

PJBX- National Bohemian Beer.



(black wedge). The model is based on an 89' Greenbrier prototype with internal racks that can be reconfigured for bi-level or tri-level loading of vehicles.



Also released to Atlas O scale hobby dealers is a Gunderson Multi-Max auto rack in two colorful paint schemes; Canadian Pacific (Beaver) and BNSF (black wedge). The model is based on an 89' Greenbrier prototype with internal racks that can be reconfigured for bi-level or tri-level loading of vehicles.

Atlas's newly tooled model features detailed side screens, separately applied wire grab irons, and specially designed trucks. Both 2-rail and 3-rail versions of the O scale model are available in this release.

Info: [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com)

## HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



New economy priced HO scale freight car kits coming from **Accurail** include a 3-pack of 40' double-sheathed wood boxcars decorated for western railroads including Santa Fe, Western Pacific, and Union Pacific.



A kit for a 50-ton twin-bay steel hopper car with offset sides is also new from Accurail. The model represents a car built in 9-34 with a capacity of 1850 cu. ft.

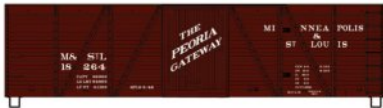
This single-sheathed wood boxcar decorated for Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway, aka The Peoria Gateway, is also available from Accurail. The prototype follows a Fowler design with six side



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wheelsets and Accumate knuckle couplers.

Info: [accurailinc.com](http://accurailinc.com)

panels and wood sheathed ends. All Accurail car kits come with appropriate trucks with Delrin



R. Bale

## EMD GP38-2 DIESEL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE

Electro Motive Division's GP38-2 was a popular moderate speed road switcher produced between 1972 and 1986. Top speed was limited to 65 mph. The GP38-2 was powered by EMD's reliable 2,000hp 645E V16 diesel prime mover. The essential difference between the GP38-2 and the basic GP38 was the Dash 2 used modular electronics. There were no significant exterior differences between the two locomotives.

**Athearn** has gained enough confidence in the scheduling of its overseas operation to announce a specific release date – February 2027 – for several new models. At the top of the list is a Genesis model of a GP38-2 diesel locomotive.

Details on all road names will include uncoupling levers, trainline hose and MU hoses, cab interiors, windshield wipers, wire grab irons, textured walkway tread, lift rings, sander lines, and fuel tanks detailed with fillers, gauges, and breather pipes. Additional details include operating classification and number board lights as appropriate to the railroad being modeled.



Athearn Genesis models decorated for Burlington Northern and BNSF will have Phase 1a bodies,

3,600-gallon fuel tanks, dynamic brakes, ditch lights, and mushroom vents on the nose.



GP38-2 units decorated for Iowa Interstate and EMDX Leasing are also Phase 1a bodies but have smaller 2,600-gallon fuel tanks.



Lehigh Valley and Boston & Maine models will come with 3,600-gallon fuel tanks and chicken wire radiator screens.



Soo units are Phase IIb bodies. They will have Q fans, a winterization hatch, a large snowplow, and a

strobe light.



GP38-2 diesels decorated for Kansas City Southern will have a 2,600-gallon fuel tank under a Phase II

body. A unique feature is a gyalight on the roof.



Details on the Rock Island model include an EMD snowplow, 2,600-gallon fuel tank and a chicken wire grill on the radiator.



Athearn's production schedule for early 2027 includes an HO scale Genesis version of the

Trinity 5161 cu. ft triple bay covered hopper car. The model is based on a prototype introduced in 1995. Details scheduled for the new model include separate brake cylinder, valve and air reservoir; wire brake plumbing, uncoupling levers, air hoses, photo-etched metal roof walk and end platforms. The 100-ton roller-bearing trucks will have 36" machined wheelsets with animated end caps.



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Road names will be Trinity Industries Demonstrator, Iowa Interstate, and two schemes each for Archer

Daniels Midland, Farmland, and GACX-Potash Corporation.



Also in the Genesis lineup is a 57' FGE mechanical reefer. It will have body details similar to those listed above

for the Trinity 5161. Unique to the FGE model is an optional system that randomly plays sound recorded from prototype mechanical reefer cars.



Road names include Burlington Northern and a fantasy Conrail scheme. Two road names each will be

available for BNSF and Union Pacific cars.



R. Bale

## ALCO RS-3 ROAD SWITCHER

The American Locomotive Company introduced the 1,600hp RS-3 road switcher locomotive in May 1950. Designed specifically to compete with EMD's GP7, the RS-3 would become the most commonly seen Alco

locomotive across the country. Schenectady-based Alco and its Canadian counterpart, Montreal Locomotive Works, built 1363 of these versatile locomotives before production ended in late 1956. Spotting features of the familiar and reliable RS-3 included pronounced rounding at the corners on the cab and long, low hoods, giving the locomotive a more streamlined appearance than its RS-1 predecessor. The radiator-fan housing was also rounded. The short hood could accommodate a steam generator. Because of this option, and the RS-3s good looks, some railroads elected to employ theirs in passenger/commuter service.



Athearn's HO version of Alco's reliable RS-3 diesel road switcher will be available in nine road names in early 2027.



Special features on this production run include horizontal twin beam headlights and water-cooled turbocharger exhaust stacks. Additional details include see-through etched metal radiator fans and factory-installed metal grab irons on the injection molded body.



Road names on this release will be Penn Central, Central of New Jersey, Reading, Lehigh Valley, Conrail, Chicago & North Western, Louisville & Nashville, Delaware Lackawanna, and Delaware & Hudson.



DCC-ready models will have Athearn's Quick Plug plug-and-play technology with a 21-pin NEM connector. Sound equipped models will come with a DCC decoder with SoundTraxx Econami sound and a single cube speaker.



Athearn has included two 36' freight cars from the truss-rod era in its February 2027 production schedule. The basic car is a flatcar with a simulated wood grain deck, K air brake fixtures, underbody piping, uncoupling levers, and 40-ton Arch Bar or Andrews trucks with 33" metal wheels.



The second 36' model is the flatcar with the addition of a drop bottom and low wood sides with a ratcheting gate closure mechanism. Road names



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will be the same for both cars: Baltimore & Ohio, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific; Central of New Jersey, Canadian Pacific, Denver & Rio Grande Western, and Union Pacific.



The models will come with knuckle couplers and will be able to handle a minimum track radius of 15".



Bay window cabooses with Barber-Bettendorf swing motion caboose trucks with machined metal wheelsets are included in

Athearn's February 2027 production schedule.



Road names, which include some fantasy schemes, will be Santa Fe, Atlantic Coast Lines, Southern Pacific Police, BNSF, Norfolk

Southern, Louisville & Nashville, Chicago & North Western, Canadian Pacific, Conrail, and Penn Central.



Athearn has included three Roundhouse brand models in its February 2027 production schedule. Most of the details on

the economy-priced models are cast on the injection molded bodies of the Roundhouse models.



An EMD F-unit in a choice of eight paint schemes will be available under the Roundhouse brand.



The model features a revised body-to-chassis mounting that simplifies disassembly and allows

for easier kit-bashing into de-skirted versions. Also new is an

all-wheel electrical pickup with two wires to each truck for improved current flow to the 5-pole motor.



Norfolk & Western, BNSF, Atlantic Coast Line, and two painted but unlettered schemes.

Decorating schemes will be Norfolk Southern, Santa Fe (Yellow Bonnet), Pennsylvania Railroad,



Also coming in February 2027 under the Roundhouse brand are five lightweight passenger cars.



Features include a decorated drumhead on the observation car, realistic fluted bodies, clear window glazing, and four-wheel passenger car trucks with machined metal wheelsets.

Features include a decorated drumhead on the observation car, realistic



Road names will be Santa Fe, BNSF, Norfolk Southern, Norfolk & Western, Atlantic Coast Line, Penn Central, and Pennsylvania Railroad.

Road names will be Santa Fe, BNSF, Norfolk Southern, Norfolk & Western, Atlantic



that include two coaches and an observation car.

The models will be available individually as well as in three-car sets



These are shorty passenger cars designed to operate on 18" radius track.



Completing the selection of Roundhouse models is a 50' Hi Cube steel boxcar with double plug doors.



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Road names will be Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Conrail, Delaware & Hudson, Norfolk & Western, and Bangor & Aroostook.  
Info: [www.athearn.com](http://www.athearn.com)



R. Bale

## ELECTRO MOTIVE DIVISION GP7

Introduced in 1949, the GP7 was the first model in EMD's GP (general purpose) series of locomotives. It was also the first EMD road locomotive to utilize a hood instead of a full car body design. Although narrow enough to allow outside walkways, the full height hood easily accommodated EMD's 1,500hp 16-cylinder 567 diesel engine. The hood concept was an immediate success since it cost less to build, was cheaper and easier to maintain, and offered much better fore and aft visibility for the operating crew. When shopping for new locomotives, many railroads found it more economical to rebuild their reliable GP7s rather than to purchase new equipment.



**Atlas** has just released an HO scale version of a classic GP7 locomotive to dealers. The model is available in Atlas' Gold Series

with a LokSound Select DC/DCC Dual-Model decoder. An Atlas Silver series model for DC is also available in this release. Road names include Florida East coast, Guilford Rail System, Maine Central, Maryland & Pennsylvania, Chicago & Eastern Illinois, Missouri Pacific (C&EI patch), Texas Mexican Railway, Western Maryland, Burlington Northern, Conrail, and Reading.



Atlas has retooled the diecast sill/frame assembly on this model since it was last released in 2018.

Additional features include

optional road-specific 800 or 1,600gallon fuel tanks, painted handrails, wire grab irons, MU hoses, uncoupling bars, golden-white LEDs, and directional lighting.

Info: [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com)

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**Bowser** has scheduled an October 2026 release date for an updated version of its Executive series

100-ton triple bay coal hopper. The model is based on a class H-11 prototype introduced by Norfolk & Western in 1960. The design was subsequently copied by several coal hauling railroads with over 130,000 cars built.



New features scheduled for

Bowser's popular HO scale model include wire grab irons, uncoupling

bars, airline detail, improved brake wheel detail, and new trucks. Additional features include roping eyes with integral end buffers, end slope sheets at a steeper angle than the upper sheets and 13 riveted side posts with the middle two panels wider than others. Other details on the Bowser model include Wine bay door locks, full height side ladders, and 36" metal wheels.



Road names on the 2026 release will be Bessemer & Lake Erie, Baltimore & Ohio (class H43), Canadian

National, Conrail (H43A), Delaware & Hudson (ex RDG), Frisco, Norfolk & Western (H12A Claytor), N&W (Bicentennial scheme), Norfolk Southern, Pecos Valley Southern, Penn Central (H43D), Pittsburg & Shawmut, PPLX-Pennsylvania Power & Light, Reading, Seaboard System, Southern Pacific (H-100-34), Southern Railway, and Union Pacific (H-100-9).

Info: [bowser-trains.com](http://bowser-trains.com)

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**Broadway Limited** is working on three new HO scale projects for delivery in mid-2026. The level of response to the announcement will determine if the projects move forward in the decorating schemes listed below.



Leading the list is a brass-hybrid Union Pacific 4-6-6-4 Challenger steam locomotive. This production run will

include era-specific versions of the early class CSA-2 Challenger including an as-delivered front engine, rebuilt front engine, and integral cast cylinder front engine.



In addition to historically correct paint schemes, BLI plans to offer the model in three fantasy schemes as well

as an unlettered model painted brass.



BLI plans to offer its Santa Fe 4-6-4 Hudson in two new fantasy paint schemes. Using its iconic ATSF Blue Goose tooling, one of the new models will wear the 1947 American Freedom Train scheme – a fitting decoration for the nation's 250th Anniversary celebration scheduled for 2026.



Broadway Limited's 4-6-4 will also be available decorated as Santa Fe's Valley Flyer, a semi-

streamlined Pacific that led a heavyweight passenger train between Bakersfield and Oakland, California, from 1939 to 1942.

All versions of the 4-6-6-4 and 4-6-4 will be available with Paragon4 Sound/DC/DCC with smoke, or in BLI's Stealth

Series with no sound, DCC-Ready with factory-installed speakers. The Stealth Series allows customers to install an aftermarket 21-pin DCC decoder of their choice.



Most railroads utilized instruction cars to train its employees about potential mechanical failure, fire prevention, and other safety

issues. In some examples the cars were also fitted with exhibits to promote the railroads service to potential shippers and passengers. Broadway Limited plans to release HO scale instruction/exhibit cars next summer for nine railroads.



Since every prototype inspection/exhibit car was one-of-a-kind, BLI plans to use its 80' heavyweight coach with windows blanked out as a

universal sample of these distinctive cars.

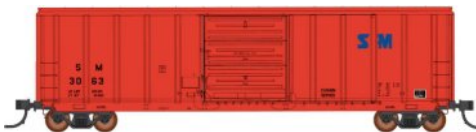


Road names will be Chesapeake & Ohio, Chessie System, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Great Northern, New York Central, Western

Maryland, Santa Fe, Norfolk Southern, and Southern Railway.

Info: [www.broadway-limited.com](http://www.broadway-limited.com)

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**InterMountain Railway Co.** is taking advance reservations for the PS 5277 boxcar in eight prototypical and four Famous Image paint schemes, with six

numbers available for each scheme.



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Prototype road names in this release are Canadian Pacific, Chicago & North Western, Golden Triangle, Railbox, Railbox (faded and patched), St

Lawrence Railroad, and Wisconsin Central. The cars will include road number specific Youngstown, Superior, Pullman Standard, or Rolled Steel doors. Some models include Hennessey Door Openers, vents and waffle panels, or rope pull tabs.



Famous Image cars include Camas Prairie Railroad, Colorado Midland, New York Ontario & Western, and

Tonopah & Tidewater. All cars include etched metal cross-over platforms, separately applied grab irons, Kadee couplers, and InterMountain metal wheelsets.



Also announced is a new run of GBEC MAXI IV well cars with and without containers. Available in nine road names, the three articulated car sets are available empty or with a set of six

containers. The containers will be decorated for the same shipper but with separate numbers. The containers will also be available separately in two packs.



Road names for the MAXI IV car sets are Arkansas Oklahoma (Stax containers), BNSF Railway (HUB containers), Iowa Interstate (BNSF containers),

Mass Central (HUNU containers), Pacer Stacktrain (EMP containers), Trailer Train (Trailer Bridge containers), Trailer Train ex BRAN (EMP containers), Trailer Train faded and patched (EMP containers), and Trailer Train On Track for a Cure (JB Hunt containers).

All cars include etched metal walkways, separately applied photoetched details, multiple road numbers, metal knuckle



couplers, and Intermountain metal wheelsets.

Info: [www.intermountain-railway.com](http://www.intermountain-railway.com)



**Kadee's** latest release is a 50' Great Northern PS-1 boxcar decorated in Glacier green. The HO scale ready-to-run model is based

on a prototype built in 1966 by Pullman-Standard with a cushion underframe and bright red 10' Youngstown sliding steel doors. The model comes with Kadee couplers and Kadee self-centering trucks.

Info: [www.kadee.com](http://www.kadee.com)



**Kaslo Shops** has released a prototypically accurate 3D printed kit for a 40' CPR/BCR/CNR 3900 cu. ft. NSC boxcar with an interior height of 10' 6". Special details include 8' Youngstown

doors, and etched metal ladders and brake platforms. Accurate decals for Canadian Pacific, British Columbia, and Canadian National versions of the car are available from Highball Graphics and Black Cat Publishing.

Info: [www.kasloshops.com/products/hk-45a-cpr-pge-cnr-3900-cu-ft-nsc-40-boxcar-8-door-no-roofwalk](http://www.kasloshops.com/products/hk-45a-cpr-pge-cnr-3900-cu-ft-nsc-40-boxcar-8-door-no-roofwalk)



**Piko America** has scheduled a November release date for modified versions of its HO scale Krauss-Maffei ML4000 diesel hydraulic locomotives. Both Denver & Rio

Grande Western and Southern Pacific modified their KM locomotives shortly after delivery. Before selling their three units to Southern Pacific, D&RGW added lower air intake screens and moved the air reservoirs to the middle of the roofs.



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SP No. 9022 operated for some time in its faded and patched D&RGW gold – an unusual bright spot of color in SP's huge stable of gray locomotives.



Preorders are being booked now for modified units in their original D&RGW, SP patched, and SP red and gray liveries.

Both DCC//Sound and non-sound versions of the models will be available in this release.

Info: [www.piko-america.com](http://www.piko-america.com)

**Rapido** reports that preorders for the CLRV (Canadian Light Rail Vehicle) have been sufficient to more than justify going forward with the project. Preparing production tooling is expected to begin soon. For full details on the model see the July 2025 edition of *MRH*.



R. Bale

## NH ROGER WILLIAMS

In 1956, the New Haven purchased the Roger Williams, a complete train set that consisted of Budd RDC cars with modifications for high-speed service into New York City. The push-pull style end cars both incorporated streamlined fronts and cabs, including full train control, while the four other cars were powered (like all RDCs) but lacked cabs or controls. The units also incorporated third rail electrical pickup shoes and small traction motors, allowing them to run into Grand Central Terminal under electric power. The interior and exterior styling was the work of noted architect Marcel Breuer. Rapido.



Rapido is modifying its existing tooling to create an accurate HO scale model of

the Roger Williams, a unique high-speed train set that was able to operate directly into New York City's Grand Central Terminal.

Both powered cab units and unpowered intermediate cars will be available.



The cars will have separate grab irons and handrails, and interior details including lighting and a MoPower capacitor for uninterrupted DCC power.

Decorating schemes include New Haven, Penn Central, Amtrak, Amtrak Phase I, and Amtrak Phase III. A minimum track radius of 22" is recommended. An order deadline is pending.



Rapido is preparing an upgraded version of its Northeastern caboose. The HO scale model faithfully replicates the prototype introduced by the Reading

Railroad in the early 1920s. Several other railroads ordered cabooses to Readings design. The earliest production had solid underframes while cars built later were equipped with Duryea cushion underframes.



Rapido's production will include models with solid underframes, etched metal Apex running boards, three-

tread steps, etched window frames, Andrews or Birdsboro trucks, and square end windows decorated for Lehigh Valley (Bi Centennial), Lehigh Valley (Green), Metro North, Providence & Worcester, and Western Maryland.



Similarly equipped models with solid underframes and the end windows blanked out will be available decorated for

Central of New Jersey, Reading, and Reading & Northern.



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The lineup of cabooses with Duryea cushion underframes and porthole end windows includes Conrail, Lehigh Valley (Black

Diamond), Penn Central, Rock Island, and Union Pacific. All versions will come with operating interior lights and MoPower capacitor for uninterrupted DCC lighting.



Beginning in 1980 CP began modifying some of its GP9 units with chopped noses, new electronics, and upgraded prime

movers. Dubbed the GP9u, the rebuilds worked as both yard and road-switchers. Later CP converted various end-cab switchers to slugs by decommissioning or removing the prime mover (replacing it with ballast to return the unit to its operating weight) and drawing power for the traction motors from GP9u mother units.



Rapido has restarted its previously announced GP9u and slug program with new details including Cannon and Company

radiator and dynamic brake fans. Additional details include a diecast frame with detailed piping and traction cables, Blomberg trucks, new traction motor details on the gearbox, and metal handrails. Lighting features include flashing beacons and working track, classification, and control stand lights.



Decorating schemes for single GP9u locomotives will include CP Rail (Multimark), CP Rail (Beaver), Canadian Pacific (Block

lettering), St. Laurence & Hudson, Southern railway of British Columbia, and CCGX-Cando.



Mother and slug sets will be available decorated as CP Rail, CP Rail (Multimark), and St. Laurence & Hudson.





Both single GP9u units and mother and slug sets will be available as DC/Silent (21-pin DCC Ready) models or with DCC/ESU LokSound and MoPower capacitor for uninterrupted DCC.



R. Bale

## PC&F B-100-32 AND B-100-34 BOXCARS

In the early 1970s, the Southern Pacific placed an order with PC&F for a unique fleet of 40' 6" 100-ton boxcars, an unusual length seldom built since the 1950s. The primary purpose of the short cars was copper anode service in the southwest. The cars featured a modern Hydra-Cushion underframe, 100-ton roller-bearing trucks, 10' doors, and DF-2 loaders. In the early 1990s SP launched a fleet renewal program that included many of the B-100-32 and B-100-34 boxcars. They completed the refurb in an attractive blue with Golden West Service logos. Some were re-marked for the Galveston Railway (GVSR), a subsidiary of SP. Fifty more were leased to CCAA. After the Union Pacific merger in 1996, the B-100s were gradually sold off to secondary owners including the Northwestern Oklahoma Railroad (NOKL) and the Arizona Eastern Railway (AZER).



Rapido is preparing an HO scale model of the 40' class B-100-32 and B-100-34 boxcars Pacific Car & Foundry built for the Southern Pacific in the 1970s.



A preliminary list of features scheduled for the new model include separately applied metal grab irons, etched metal coupler platforms, a Hydra-Cushion underframe, full underbody



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brake rigging, real rubber air hoses, and separately applied etched metal uncoupling levers. Side door options will include a Superior door and two styles of Youngstown doors. The model will come with 100-ton trucks with machined metal wheelsets.



Decorating schemes include Southern Pacific (as delivered), SP (DF loader logo), Golden West Service, Canadian Pacific, SP (ex-Golden West), SP (faded), Northwestern Oklahoma (patch), and Arizona Eastern (patch).

Images in this report are courtesy of Rapido Trains.

Info: [www.rapidotrains.com](http://www.rapidotrains.com)

The Pullman-Standard PS-2CD 4750 cu. ft. covered hopper was the largest production covered hopper design in history.

**Tangent's** latest release is an HO scale version of the 4750 as produced in 1980-1981 with both open-hole and closed-hole side posts, large and small jacking pad tabs at the bolsters, and other production trends and car details, including brake systems.

Decorating schemes available include a CNW as-delivered green with thick sill protrusion over the bolsters, closed-hole side posts, bolted outlet bay flanges, C&NW-specific vertical extensions under the jacking pads, and Gravac Combo Gravity/Pneumatic outlet



gates. The model comes with 100-ton trucks fitted with Stucki HS-7 snubbers. Ex-CNW cars with similar features are available patched for AOK and Caney Fork & Western Railroad.



Models decorated for Foster Farms and INTX (ex-Foster Farms) feature open hole side posts, thick sill protrusion over the bolsters, wider jacking tabs, and 100-ton Barber S-2 trucks.



PLCX (Producer's Grain) models in Pullman-Standard gray have a thick sill protrusion over the bolsters, wider jack tabs, center tube

brake linkage, side-mounted train air line and Miner Selflok outlet gates. Models with similar features are available patched for SOO (ex-Producer's Grain) and INTX (ex-Producer's Grain).



Cars decorated for Southern Railway (including a 1981 SOU car with conspicuity marks, and an ex-SOU car

patched for TCWR) have a thick sill protrusion over the bolsters, closed hole side posts, wider jacking pads, Landreth-style roof hatches, and Miner Selflok outlet gates. The PLCX, CNW and SOU versions of Tangent's 4750 are also available as unpainted ready-to-run models.

Info: [www.tangentscalemodels.com](http://www.tangentscalemodels.com)

---

New ready-to-run rolling stock coming from **Walthers** this winter includes both passenger and freight equipment.

HO scale Pullman-Standard 85' Superliner I sleepers, diners and lounge cars decorated in Amtrak Phase III and Phase VI



paint schemes will be available in this release. The models are based on 1970s prototypes inspired by the

Hi-Level cars of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad.



Walthers HO scale versions feature accurate, full upper and lower interiors including interior lighting, tinted

windows with detailed gaskets, working diaphragms, and factory-installed grab irons. The models will be finished with Walthers special paint that effectively simulates stainless steel.



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A minimum track radius of 24" is recommended.



Also scheduled for release this winter is an HO scale 70-ton triple bay open hopper car. The newly-retooled Walthers Mainline series model is based on an AAR (Association of American Railroads) nine-panel design with an inside length of 40' 8". Details include a diecast metal underframe, Ajax hand brake, and flat or arched ends as appropriate to the road name being modeled.



Road names available on this release will be Alaska Railroad, Norfolk & Western, Chesapeake & Ohio, Southern Railway, Chicago Burlington & Quincy, Denver & Rio Grande Western, and Western Maryland. The model comes with Bettendorf-style trucks with 33" machined metal wheelsets.



Walthers 2026 spring production schedule includes a Mainline series Trinity 31' 3281 cu. ft. twin bay covered hopper car. The Mainline series model is based on a short, seven-panel prototype introduced in the 1990s to handle heavy, dense dry lading.



Decorating schemes scheduled for this release include Arkansas Oklahoma, CIT Group, Cementos Mexicanos, Keg River, Norfolk Southern, OLB-Omaha Lincoln & Beatrice, Winchester & Western, and Union Pacific. All Walthers brand rolling stock come with metal knuckle couplers.

Info: [www.walthers.com](http://www.walthers.com)

## N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



**Athearn** has included an N scale 57' FGE mechanical reefer in its recently announced production schedule.



Details include a Keystone cushion underframe, with an air brake reservoir, control valve, and brake cylinder: correct fuel tank, and 100-ton roller-bearing trucks with 36" metal wheelsets. The model can negotiate a track radius of 9.75", however, Athearn recommends a minimum of 11" for reliable operation. The reefer is available with onboard SoundTraxx reefer sounds.

Info: [www.athearn.com](http://www.athearn.com)



**Atlas** has just released two new N scale freight car models to its network of hobby dealers. They include an ACF 33,156 gallon tank car, and a Trinity PD5000

covered hopper. The big ACF tank car, affectionately known as a whale body, was designed to haul liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and anhydrous ammonia. It was introduced in the early 1960s with many still in use today.



Atlas' N scale version features separate handrails, fine end ladders, and 100-ton roller-bearing trucks. Decorating schemes available on this latest

release include Penn Central, GLNX, ACFX, SHPX-Cal Gas, CNTX, and Canadian National.



The PD – Pressure Differential -- covered hopper was introduced in the early 1970s to compete with the General American



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Transportation Airslide hopper. Unlike the Airslide, which forced pressurized air up through a fabric liner to help fluidize the cargo, the PD series of hoppers applied both a positive pressure above the five bays as well as a vacuum at the outlet to help draw the cargo from the car.



The Atlas N scale model is available decorated for ADM, CLI Industries, CAGX-Conagra, NAHX-FCC Catalysts, NAHX-Grace Harrison, and Kansas City Southern.

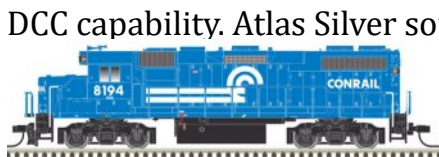


Also new from Atlas is an N scale model of an EMD GP38-2 road switcher. Road names include Conrail, Norfolk

Southern, Rock Island, Southern Pacific Canadian Pacific, South Shore Freight and GMTX. Check with a dealer for availability since some roads are sold out at the factory.



The Atlas Master Gold version of the N scale model comes with a factory installed ESU LokSound decoder with full DCC capability. Atlas Silver sound-ready models are equipped with a speaker for easy conversion to sound with the addition of an aftermarket decoder.



Info: [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com)

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**Bachmann** has released a run of N scale Evans coil cars, with both angled and rounded hoods. Road names in this run are

BNSF (rounded), Conrail (angled), CSX (rounded), and Norfolk & Western (angled). The hoods are removable and stackable.



The models include six removable steel coils, a separately applied brake wheel, E-Z Mate Mark II couplers, and

blackened metal wheels with RP25 contours.

Info: [shop.bachmanntrains.com](http://shop.bachmanntrains.com)

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**Broadway Limited** is taking preorders for an N scale 2-8-0 Consolidated steam locomotive.



Delivery is planned for the fall of 2026. Paragon4 Sound/DC/DCC versions with synchronized smoke will be available as well as Stealth DCC-Ready models.



Decorating schemes selected for this release will be Santa Fe, Canadian Pacific, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Great Northern, Northern Pacific, Southern Railway

(Apple green), Southern Pacific (Daylight), and Union Pacific.



An unlettered model painted black will also be available.

Info: [www.broadway-limited.com](http://www.broadway-limited.com)

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**English's Model Railroad**, a division of **Bowser Mfg**, has announced N scale versions of the Real Coal Hopper Loads. Consisting of 3D-printed bases covered with ground Pennsylvania anthracite coal, the loads are designed to fit specific hoppers. The six loads



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announced are for the Bowser H21 and Gla hoppers, the Bluford Shops 2-bay 8 panel & War Emergency hopper, the Bluford shops 3 bay offset side hopper, and the Bachmann 40 ft Quad and 100-ton hoppers.

Info: [www.bowser-trains.com/index.html](http://www.bowser-trains.com/index.html)

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## **InterMountain Railway Co.**

has announced a run of PS 5277 50' boxcars in N scale.

Featuring etched metal cross-over platforms, separately applied grab irons, knuckle couplers, and InterMountain metal wheelsets, the models will feature road number specific doors and details.



Road names in the release are Canadian Pacific, Chicago & North Western, Golden Triangle, Railbox, Railbox

faded and patched, St Lawrence Railroad, St Mary's (Red), and Wisconsin Central.



Now shipping from InterMountain is a run of SD40-2 locomotives. Road names in the run are

Alabama & Gulf Coast (GWI), Canadian Pacific, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern; First Union Rail, HELM Leasing, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific, and Webb Asset Management.



The locomotives are DCC ready or equipped with ESU LokSound decoders, etched metal screens, wire

grab irons, and separately applied details.

Info: [intermountain-railway.com](http://intermountain-railway.com)

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comes pre-weathered.



Also new from Micro-Trains is this 40' steel ice reefer. The N scale model is based on a prototype built by American Car & Foundry in 1958 that was later modified to carry beer for the St. Louis Refrigerator Car Company.



Micro-Trains has released this RR-83 class mechanical reefer decorated for SFRC-Santa Fe. The 4,014 cu. ft. rib side prototype was built in 1964 with a shock control underframe.

Info: Contact a dealer.

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**RailSmith** is scheduled to release EMD E units later this month decorated for Great Northern, Spokane Portland & Seattle, and Frisco's Texas Special. The N scale models are based on models supplied by Broadway Limited. Availability is limited but some non-reserved units may still be available.



Pre-orders are being booked now for the Southern Pacific heavyweight sleeper Golden Prairie, and a lightweight skirted small-window chair car. Both are decorated in SP's colorful Golden State scheme. Availability is planned for the first quarter of 2026.



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Reservations are also underway for the New Albany, a heavyweight

Pullman decorated in Frisco's red and silver scheme.



Pre-orders are also being taken for a heavyweight sleeper car, the Great Northern Klondike. Available as a single car release, it will be decorated in the Empire Builder paint scheme.



RailSmith anticipates producing SP&S #304 and 305, part of a five coach order from Pullman Standard in 1950. Used in all SP&S trains but the Empire Builder, #304 and 305 were delivered in SP&S Pullman Green with four Dulux Gold stripes. In 1964 they were painted in the SP&S 'broad stripe' scheme, making these models appropriate for the 1950 to 1963 era.

Info: Info: [www.lowellsmith.net](http://www.lowellsmith.net)

## STRUCTURES & SCENIC SUPPLIES



**FOS Scale Models** has announced Railroad Avenue, the 2025 limited run kit, made to order with only 250 to be made. The kit includes ten separate businesses with an overall size (minus streets and track) of 5" x 35".

Construction materials include laser-cut clapboard, scribed, and board and batten walls; laser cut roof cards and sidewalks, 3D-printed and metal details, Tichy injection molded doors

and windows, and laser-cut doors, windows, and details. Kits will begin shipping December 31, 2025.

Info: [fosscalemodels.com](http://fosscalemodels.com)

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**Frenchman River** is offering a 1:48 scale kit that can be used to convert a truck from almost any era into a moving van. Although

the wheelbase of the donor truck is not critical, around 13" 6" would be ideal.



Also in 1:48 scale, Frenchman River has created the Olde Reliable Moving & Storage Warehouse. Consisting of resin construction for most of the walls and other structural and detail elements, the window glazing is laser-cut, the roofing material is metal, and lumber, signs, decals, the fire escape and other parts are included. The footprint of the constructed kit without the loading docks is 10" x 7" and it is 10.375" tall.



If you'd prefer a three or more story version of the Old Reliable Moving & Storage Warehouse, an additional floor kit is also available. Consisting of the same resin and other materials as the primary building, the floor adds an additional 3.5" in height per floor. Vehicles and people not included.

Info: [www.frenchmanriver.com](http://www.frenchmanriver.com)

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**Mine Mount Models** has released Glenn's Greasy Spoon Grill, a small corner restaurant kit in HO scale. The primary structure is laser-cut, with rolled roofing, resin details, and laser-cut and



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Ticky doors. The restaurant footprint is 3" x 4.75" with a height of 3.75" at the top of the billboard. Instructions come with color photos included.

Info: [minemountmodels.com](http://minemountmodels.com)

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The Luis Martinez Body Shop is the latest creation from **Minifer**. The HO scale kit is based on a structure on the French-Spanish border. The laser-cut model comes as a cardboard and wood kit that requires assembly and painting.

Info: [www.minifer.fr/en](http://www.minifer.fr/en)

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## Scale Model Buildings

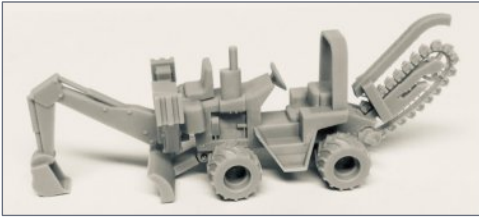
offers a wide selection of realistically designed printable paper background structure kits. While some hobbyists may prefer 3D

built up models for up close scenic use, Scale Model Buildings' economy priced pre-weathered printed kits are well suited as background or stand-in models. The files are scaled to OO gauge/1:76. After downloading hobbyists can adjust their printer settings to create a model in N or HO scale.

Info: [www.modelbuildings.org/catalog](http://www.modelbuildings.org/catalog)

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**Silver Spike Designs** has announced a 3D-printed trencher kit in HO and N scales. Used for excavating trenches to emplace pipelines, wires, or fiber-optic cables, the trencher is a typical



piece of equipment that might be found in use roadside or trackside. The HO model consists of a one-piece body, rear trencher chain assembly, front plow blade and two separate

(tucked & transport) backhoe assemblies. The undecorated kit can be assembled with the trencher chain in the raised or lowered position. Two sets of tires are included. The N scale model includes a pair of trenchers, one with the trencher molded in the raised position, the other with it lowered.

Info: [silverspikedesigns.com](http://silverspikedesigns.com)

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**Walthers** has released a new kit for a track side industry titled Glacier Industrial Sands. The complex includes a main office, guard shack, two conveyors, vehicle fuel tank, a mixing bin, piping and a pair of double loading silos. The components can be arranged in various

configurations. The silos are 11.375" tall. Printed company and safety signs are included along with detailed Instructions.



Coming from Walthers this winter is a Cornerstone kit named Vintage Coal Dealer. The kit includes a brick office building, a concrete coal bunker with between-

the-rails unloading grate, two coal conveyors, vertical steel fuel tanks with a pump house, a molded approach ramp for coal trestle, and a detailed trestle with supports and an abutment.



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The assortment of buildings can be arranged to fit in odd-shaped spaces.



Also due from Walthers this winter is Railroad Paint Shop, a Cornerstone kit for a unique HO scale railroad structure. The building features two roll-up service doors, rooftop HVAC units, vents, ductwork, and a dust collector/filtration system that

captures the look of prototype facilities.



A kit with a set of six poles with paper windsocks is coming from Walthers this winter. In addition to airports, windsocks are often seen at heavy industry and rail-served industries.

All the Walthers structure kits in this report require painting and assembly.

Info: [www.walthers.com](http://www.walthers.com)

## NEW ELECTRONICS

**SoundTraxx** has announced the availability of the BLU-1100, a Blunami decoder compact enough to fit in N scale models. The BLU-1100 offers full access to the Blunami experience

including wireless control, realistic sound, and intuitive app-based programming—all in a decoder that fits the space constraints of smaller

models. The BLU-1100 can be operated via a traditional DCC system or controlled wirelessly using the Blunami App, available for iOS and Android devices. Blunami operates using either an NMRA-compliant DCC command station or a digital device such as a tablet or phone with the Blunami App. The



wireless operation works reliably up to 100 feet and allows the user to easily connect to and run multiple decoders.

Info: [soundtraxx.com/products/blunami/blu-1100](https://soundtraxx.com/products/blunami/blu-1100)

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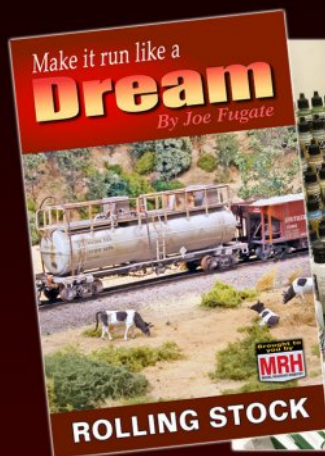
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## BRIEFLY NOTED AT PRESS TIME ...

N scale Great Northern lightweight duplex sleepers decorated for Empire Builder and Western Star are available for preorder now from **Rail Smith**...

**ScaleTrains** is working on an all-new HO scale ARI 33K spiral jacked tank car and a new production run of N scale GE Dash 9 diesel locomotives. MRH will have full details on both Rivet Counter models next month...

**Woodland Scenics** has released N, HO, and O scale versions of its Interlocking Tower... ■

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# SELECTED EVENTS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | October 2025

## OCTOBER

***Please submit your event information, including website, to [model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contact/News\\_event - product announcement](https://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contact/News_event-product_announcement)***

## Ongoing 2025

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

Info: [newtracksmodeling.com](https://newtracksmodeling.com)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCMA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMAVhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA)

[VhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMAVhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA)

**ONLINE, Facebook & YouTube**, dates vary, see Facebook page. “NMRax” organized by Gordy Robinson, Martyn Jenkins, Speed Muller, Jordan Kramer.

Info: [www.facebook.com/groups/nmragroup](https://www.facebook.com/groups/nmragroup)

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

Info: [groups.io/g/NNG](https://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](http://rrvd-nmra.com)

## October – November 2025

**CANADA, ONTARIO, BURLINGTON**, October 17-19, 2025. Real Rails 2025 Convention, sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Historical Association. Holiday Inn and Candle Wood Suites, 3060 South Service Road.

Info: [www.cptracks.ca/realrails2025.html](http://www.cptracks.ca/realrails2025.html)

**NEW ZEALAND, LOWER HUTT**, November 15-16, 2025. RailEX Model Train Show, sponsored by the Marklin Model Railway Club (Upper Hutt) and the Wellington British Railway Modellers from Lower Hutt. Walter Nash Centre (WNC) between Taine & Tocker Streets, Taita.

Info: [railex.org.nz](http://railex.org.nz)

**ARIZONA, TUCSON**, November 9, 2025. All Gauges Tucson Model Train Train Show and Swap Meet. Gadsden Pacific Division Toy Train Operating Museum, 3975 N. Miller Ave.

Info: [gadsdenpacific.org/train-shows](http://gadsdenpacific.org/train-shows)

**ARIZONA, TUCSON/PHOENIX/PRESCOTT/FLAGSTAFF**, November 15-16, 2025. 2nd Annual Cactus Crawl Layout Tour, hosted by the Arizona Division, PSR, NMRA.

Info: [www.azdiv-nmra.org](http://www.azdiv-nmra.org)

**CALIFORNIA, SACRAMENTO**, November 8-9, 2025. International Railfair. Cal Expo, Building C, 1600 Exposition Blvd.

Info: [internationalrailfair.com](http://internationalrailfair.com)

**CONNECTICUT, PRESTON**, November 23, 2025. Mohegan-Pequot Model Railroad Club Open House. Mohegan-Pequot Clubhouse - 73 Route 2.

Info: [www.mpr.org](http://www.mpr.org)



**CONNECTICUT, VERNON**, November 9, 2025. Vernon Model Train Show, sponsored by the Rockville High Info: [www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551588057395](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551588057395)

**FLORIDA, OCALA**, October 9-11, 2025. Sunshine Region 2025 Annual Convention. Ocala Hilton, 3600 Southwest 36th Ave. Info: [www.nmrasunshineregion.org/2025-annual-convention](http://www.nmrasunshineregion.org/2025-annual-convention)

**ILLINOIS, NAPERVILLE**, October 16-18, 2025. Railroad Prototype Modelers Conference - RPM Naperville 2025. Northern Illinois University Conference Center, Northern Illinois University.  
Info: [www.rpmconference.com](http://www.rpmconference.com)

**INDIANA, DANVILLE**, November 22, 2025. CID-NMRA Danville Train Show. Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E. Main Street. Info: [www.cidnmra.org](http://www.cidnmra.org)

**INDIANA, FORT WAYNE**, October 18, 2025. Three Rivers Division Train Show and Swap Meet, Allen County Ware Memorial Coliseum, 4000 Parnell Avenue.  
Info: [www.nmra.org/events/three-rivers-division-nmra-train-show](http://www.nmra.org/events/three-rivers-division-nmra-train-show)

**IOWA, IOWA CITY**, October 19, 2025. The 5th Annual Iowa City Train Show, sponsored by The Hawkeye Model Railroad Club and Scale Signs. Johnson County Fairgrounds, 4261 Oak Crest Hill Rd SE.  
Info: [hawkeyemodelrrclub.com/iowa-city-train-show](http://hawkeyemodelrrclub.com/iowa-city-train-show)

**KANSAS, BENTON**, November 8-9, 2025. Mid-Continent Prototype Modelers Meet. Benton Lions Community Center, 150 S. Main St.  
Info: [www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100054537216230](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100054537216230)

**MAINE, WESTBROOK**, November 1, 2025. Southern Main Model Railroad Club Fall Train Show. Westbrook Community Center, 426 Bridge Street.  
Info: [southernmainemrc.wordpress.com/train-show](http://southernmainemrc.wordpress.com/train-show)

**MARYLAND, TIMONIUM**, October 25-26, 2025. The Great Scale Model Train Show. Maryland State Fairgrounds, 2200 York Rd.  
Info: [sites.google.com/view/greatscalemodeltrainshow](https://sites.google.com/view/greatscalemodeltrainshow)

**MASSACHUSETTS/NEW HAMPSHIRE, VARIOUS**, November 28-30, 2025. Tour De Chooch, a free, self-guided model railroad Open House. Featuring over 20 layouts.

Info: [www.tourdechooch.org/wp](http://www.tourdechooch.org/wp)

**MICHIGAN, BELLEVILLE**, November 23, 2025. Southeast Michigan Model Railroad Show and Sale, sponsored by Rails on Wheels and Division 6, NCR, NMRA. Wayne County Community College's Ted Scott Campus, 9555 Haggerty Rd. ½ mile north of I-94, exit 192.

Info: [www.railsonwheels.com](http://www.railsonwheels.com)

**MICHIGAN, SHELBY TWP**, November 29, 2025. Model Train Show at the Packard Proving Grounds. Packard Proving Grounds, 49965 Van Dyke Ave.

Info: [packardprovinggrounds.org/event/model-train-show](http://packardprovinggrounds.org/event/model-train-show)

**MINNESOTA, WOODBURY**, October 18, 2025. Newport Model Railroad Train Flea Market, sponsored by the Greater East Area Model RR Club. Woodbury High School, 2665 Woodlane Dr.

Info: [newportclub.us](http://newportclub.us)

**NEW JERSEY, CINNAMINSON**, November 29-30, December 6-7, 27-28, 2025, January 10-11, 17-18, February 14-15, 21-22, 2026. Burlington County Model Railroad Club 2025-2026 Winter Open House. 808 Pomona Road, basement of the Footlighters Theatre.

Info: [bcmrc.org](http://bcmrc.org)

**NEW JERSEY, NORTH HALEDON**, November 28-30, December 6-7, 13-14, 2025. Garden State Model Railroad Club Annual Fall Show. 575 High Mountain Rd.

Info: [gardenstatetrainclub.org/modelrailroadshow](http://gardenstatetrainclub.org/modelrailroadshow)

**NEW YORK, SYRACUSE**, November 1-2, 2025. 50th Great New York State Model Train Fair, sponsored by the CNY Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. NYS Fair Exposition Center, 581 State Fair Blvd.

Info: [www.modeltrainfair.com](http://www.modeltrainfair.com)



**NORTH CAROLINA, RALEIGH**, November 8-9, 2025. Raleigh Fall Train Show, organized by the Neuse River Valley Model Railroad Club. Jim Graham Building, North Carolina State Fairgrounds, 4285 Trinity Road.

Info: [nrvcclub.net/november-model-railroad-show](http://nrvcclub.net/november-model-railroad-show)

**NORTH CAROLINA, SUMMERVILLE**, November 21-22, 2025. Summerville, SC Model Train Show and Sale. Hilton Garden Inn, 406 Sigma Drive.

Info: [www.carolinatrainshow.com](http://www.carolinatrainshow.com)

**OHIO, CAMBRIDGE**, October 26, 2025. Seventh Annual Buckeye Division (Division 6, MCR) Train Show. Pritchard Laughlin Center, 7033 Glenn Hwy.

Info: [div6-mcr-nmra.org/trainshow.html](http://div6-mcr-nmra.org/trainshow.html)

**OHIO, DAYTON**, November 1-2, 2025. 2025 Dayton Train Show, sponsored by Division 3, Mid-Central Region, NMRA. Fairgrounds and Event Center of Montgomery County, 645 Infirmary, Rd.

Info: [www.daytontrainshow.com](http://www.daytontrainshow.com)

**OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA CITY**, November 15-16, 2025. OKC Train Show. Bennett Event Center, Oklahoma State Fairgrounds, 2101 Gordon Cooper Blvd.

Info: [www.okctrainshow.com](http://www.okctrainshow.com)

**OREGON, PORTLAND**, October 25, 2025. 6th Bridgetown Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet. Holiday Inn Airport – Portland (I-205), 8439 NE Columbia Blvd.

Info: [www.facebook.com/groups/2001136043323501](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2001136043323501)

**PENNSYLVANIA, KING OF PRUSSIA**, October 16-19, 2025. Philly Express, 2025 NMRA/MER Convention. Crowne Plaza Hotel, 260 Mall Blvd.

Info: [phillyexpress.org](http://phillyexpress.org)

**TEXAS, PEARLAND (Houston)**, November 15-16, 2025. 2025 Houston Area Model Train Show. Knights of Columbus Hall, 2320 Hatfield Rd.

Info: [houstontrak.org](http://houstontrak.org)

**UTAH, SALT LAKE CITY**, November 7-8, 2025. 37th Intermountain Train Expo, hosted by the Northern Utah Division. Stadler USA, 5880 West 150 South.  
Info: [www.intermountaintrainexpo.com](http://www.intermountaintrainexpo.com)

**WASHINGTON, KENT**, November 8, 2025. Boeing Employees Model Railroad Club Annual Swap Meet. Kent Commons Community Center, 525 4th Avenue North.  
Info: [seattleandnorthcascades@gmail.com](mailto:seattleandnorthcascades@gmail.com)

**WISCONSIN, MILWAUKEE**, November 1-2, 2025. Trainfest – America's Largest Operating Model Railroad Show. Baird Center, 400 W Wisconsin Ave.  
Info: [www.trainfest.com/trainfest.html](http://www.trainfest.com/trainfest.html)

## Future 2025-26 by location

**COLORADO, LONGMONT**, December 12-14, 2025. 48th Annual Boulder Model Railroad Club Train EXPO. Boulder County Fairgrounds Exposition Hall, 9595 Nelson Road.  
Info: [www.bmrconline.org](http://www.bmrconline.org)

**FLORIDA, COCOA BEACH**, January 8-10, 2026. Prototype Rails RPM Meet. Cocoa Beach Hilton Oceanfront, 1550 N Atlantic Ave (Hwy A1A).  
Info: [www.prototype Rails.com](http://www.prototype Rails.com)

**MASSACHUSETTS, WEST SPRINGFIELD**, January 24-25, 2026. Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show. Better Living Center, Young, Stroh, and Mallary Buildings at The Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds – Home of the Big E. 1305 Memorial Avenue.  
Info: [www.railroadhobbyshow.com/index.php](http://www.railroadhobbyshow.com/index.php)

**NEW JERSEY, CINNAMINSON**, November 29-30, December 6-7, 27-28, 2025, January 10-11, 17-18, February 14-15, 21-22, 2026. Burlington County Model Railroad Club 2025-2026 Winter Open House. 808 Pomona Road, basement of the Footlighters Theatre.  
Info: [bcmrc.org](http://bcmrc.org)



**NEW YORK, ROCHESTER**, February 21-22, 2026, RocRPM – Rochester Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet. Edgerton Community Center, 41 Backus St.

Info: [www.facebook.com/RocRPM](http://www.facebook.com/RocRPM)

**NORTH CAROLINA, NEW BERN**, February 21-22, 2026. 30th Annual Train Show, presented by Carolina Coastal Railroaders. New Bern Riverfront Convention Center, 203 S. Front St.

Info: [www.carolinacoastalrailroaders.org/trainshow](http://www.carolinacoastalrailroaders.org/trainshow)

**OKLAHOMA, TULSA**, March 13-15th, 2026. 2026 Layout Design and Operations Weekend, presented by the Indian Nations Division of the NMRA. Locations: Various around Tulsa

Info: [ldopsigmeet.tulsanmra.org](http://ldopsigmeet.tulsanmra.org)

**TEXAS, PASADENA (Houston)**, February 21, 2026. Greater Houston Train Show, sponsored by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. Pasadena Convention Center, 902 Fairmount Parkway.

Info: [sanjacmodeltrains.org](http://sanjacmodeltrains.org) ■

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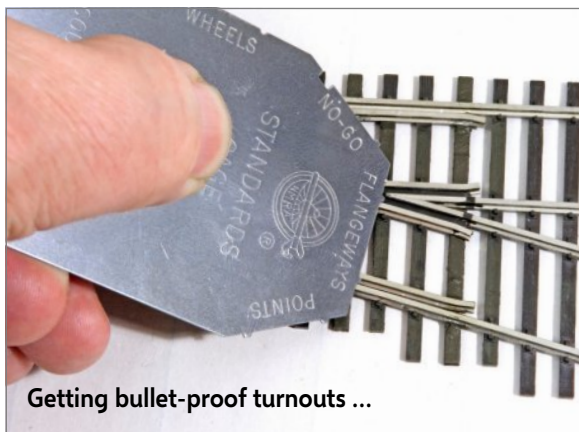
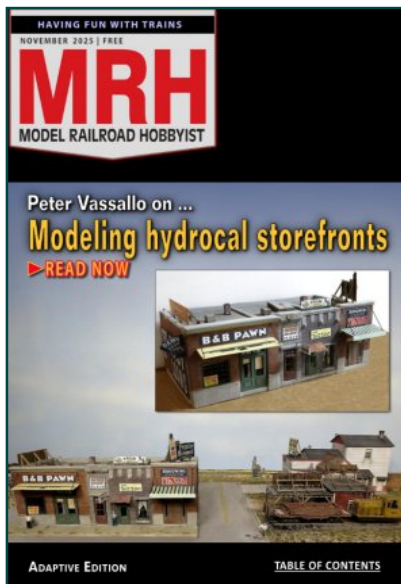
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