

N-Circle Railroad Update – September 25, 2020

The N-scale T-Trak standard is based on 14-inch deep modules, so two fit back-to-back on a standard 30-inch wide by 8-foot table used at train shows. There is a standard for installing a back drop on the modules, some modelers do, but many do not. The N-Circle Railroad inserts a one foot wide scenery module between the front and back modules, to allow continuous scenery across the full three-foot width of the layout, so thus there are no backdrops.

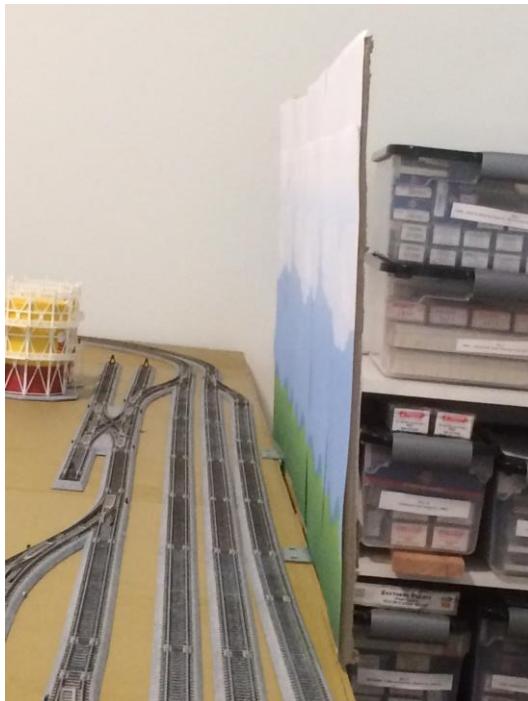
Therefore, when taking track-level photos, the far wall and any junk in the train room becomes the background, unless you only shoot “helicopter” views from above. This has been a distraction, as can be seen in the photos from previous N-Circle Railroad updates.

To improve this situation, I had a three-foot wide cardboard shield to block the sun from shining on the scenery in the morning and fading it, so I modified it to create a “modular back drop” for this modular layout. I added a pair of shallow metal L-brackets to allow it to hang on the edge of the module surface, without impinging on the outer track. The block of wood on the bottom provides a counter weight to keep it balanced in place.

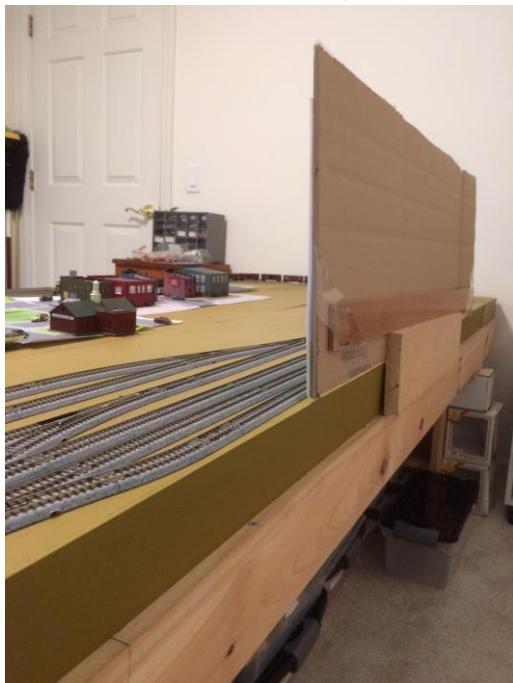
For now I created some simple Power Point scenery with gentle rolling hills - enough topography to look like Vermont, but not too much to prevent them from being used for Louisiana scenes! Obviously one could attach a commercially available printed backdrop, or create your own. This approach could be used for modules in any scale, where one wishes to take photos across back-to-back modules which do not have internal backdrops.

The following two photos show the structure of the backdrop, later photos in this update show it in use.

[N-Circle_200913-Backdrop-1](#)



N-Circle_200913-Backdrop-2



Since the previous N-Circle Railroad update, I reworked the brown steel freight transfer building, which previously rested on a temporary Power Point slab to raise it to loading dock level. This is a Micro Engineering Murphy Manufacturing kit, which I built many years ago, but did not attach the foundation pieces, which fortunately I kept. The following photos show the addition of the foundation, with steps and a ramp and railing added on the truck side, and a loading dock on the rail side, constructed from pieces leftover from my previous freight terminal kit-bash project. Note that I rotated the building so that the two docks are on the truck side, and only one on the rail side, as the building is too short to realistically have two rail docks.

[N-Circle_200923-3_MurphyManuf_RailSide](#)



[N-Circle_200923-3_MurphyManuf_TruckSide_2](#)



After completing this structure upgrade, I then created new scenery panels for the west side of the layout, with better transitions between the panels. We also planted the first trees ever on the N-Circle Railroad! These are some basic Bachmann trees I picked up a while back. They include bases, so they were easy to attach to the scenery panels with a small piece of double-stick tape for now. The bases can be removed, so the trunks can be inserted and glued into permanent scenery later. We will probably not add significant trees until the scenery panels evolve to a more "final" state, where we will use rows of trees to visually separate areas like the TOFC yard and oil refinery from the adjacent suburbs and school. These maple trees are pretty good, but the pine trees are a bit too tall, their exposed lower trunks need to be shortened, but nonetheless these trees add a bit more interest to the scenes.

After my previous N-Circle update, George King very kindly offered to make me some N-scale trees...I told him I need a couple hundred sugar maples for Vermont scenes, and a couple hundred bald cypress for Louisiana...funny, I haven't heard from George since! ;-)

[N-Circle_200925_TownSquare](#)



In the new panels, the school is moved forward some, and we added playground equipment in front, taken from a Bachmann school set. We used patches of fine grit sandpaper to create a textured gravel surface under the playground equipment, and did the same for the two gravel driveways for the mobile homes. This adds a bit more interest to otherwise smooth printed Power Point surfaces. And note the back drop in use, we no longer see the train room's walls...as much....

N-Circle_200925_FreightTerminals_RailSide



It is a busy day in the 'burbs in this updated view from the north - Borden's is making milk deliveries at the mobile home park, while dad had to move the big Plymouth family sedan out of the driveway so that Sears could deliver a new washing machine!! Note the A&P, Borden's, Blatz Beer and Swift's Premium reefers at the rail docks...

N-Circle_200925_FreightTerminals_TruckSide



With corresponding matching trucks loading from the other side (and I failed to move the back drop for this photo...) But it is great to finally put to use these rail cars and trucks purchased for these scenes!

And I am sure Kara and Willie are pleased with the focus on N-scale food industries!

In my previous update with the Central Vermont steamers, I promised to transition to Delaware & Hudson diesels for Jack. So in this last shot of the new scenery panels, we find a pair of E-R Models D&H RF-16s coming into town, to meet up with the Rutland. I haven't included a video today, but these units purchased in 2002 and run for the first time this week are excellent – super smooth operation down to creep speeds!

D&H_1950s_200925



Finally, they say "You can find a railroad prototype photo to justify anything you may model"...the following photograph on the Union Pacific Railroad in Lake Charles, Louisiana after Hurricane Laura probably predicts future operations on the Louisiana Division of the N-Circle Railroad...!

