N-Circle Railroad Update 37 – May 29, 2026

Adding Structures and Scenery to T-Trak Rail Yard Modules for the NWV

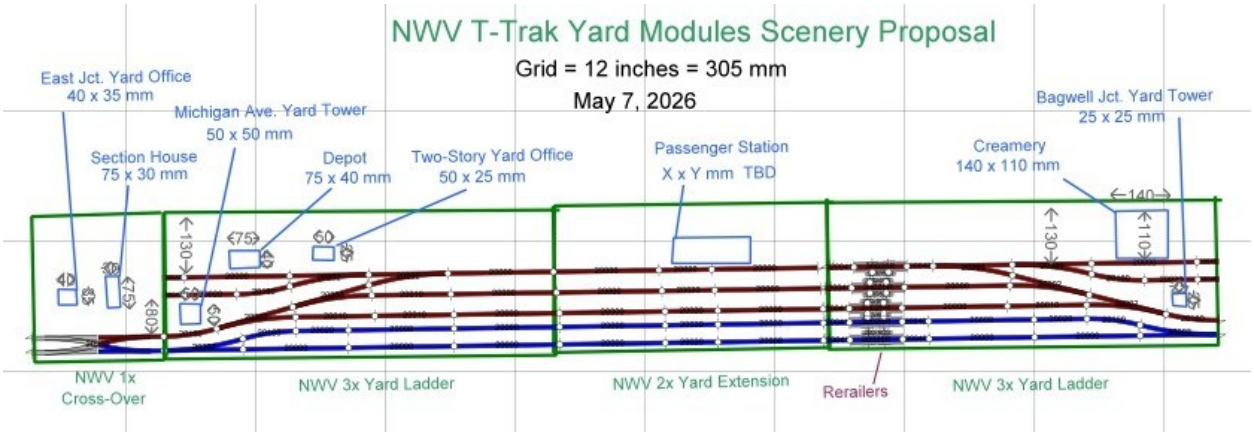
Another departure from the usual discussion of projects for the N-Circle Railroad layout, this Update will describe completing more T-Trak modules for the NWV Model Railroad Association, to join the two in Updates 28 and 29. In N-Circle Updates 30, 31 and 32 I described building six rail yard buildings and a creamery to be used on this set of yard modules. In this Update I will complete the detailing of the structures and add them to the modules.

This Update also will be released as "Rail Yard Modules Project" in the "NWV T-Trak Modules Development" section of the Education page on the NWV's website.

These yard modules have been operational and used in public displays without scenery for a couple of years. The yard ladders were built on two 3x length straight modules made by Tab-Tech, purchased from CMR Products, and the center section is a 2x module. There also are two 1x double crossover modules in the set, this Update will add structures and scenery to one of them.

Here is a rough diagram of the planned placement of the structures. The passenger station for the 2x center section is a separate, later planned project which will not be discussed here.

NWV_T-Trak_Yard_Scenery_Proposal_2026-05-07



Final Detailing of the Structures

For the yard buildings, I added signage for the NWV, the "Home Railroad" for the layout, making custom decals using the process described previously in Update 16. I modified the NWV logo to remove the "Model Railroad" to create a simple NWV herald.

To finish the creamery, I downloaded Creamery sign images from a Google web search and selected a simple, generic design with light blue to match the trim color of the building. This is meant to be a small-town creamery, not company-specific to whatever creamery reefer cars we may park in front of it. The space on the front and rear walls is about 20 x 7mm, so I shrunk the image in the Power Point slide to print at these dimensions, then cut a rectangle from thin, white styrene for a signboard, applied the decal to that, then glued it to the walls. I also added some

pallets and barrels and crates on the loading docks, and a man carrying a sack of something. Note again the technique of placing him passing by a barrel, so a drop of superglue on the elbow helps hold him vertically next to the barrel.

After the decals were applied on the walls, I used weathering chalks on the roofs, then sprayed all the surfaces with Testor's Dullcote. I placed blue painters tape over the windows so that the Dullcote would not cloud them. The three JL Innovative Design structures are shown here as an example, prepped for spraying.

N-Circle_26-04-29_JLI_All_1_Cropped

I did not tape over a few windows that would not be readily visible on the layout and could see that the DullCote did fog them some.

Here are photos of all seven buildings ready to go with the new signage in place and the surfaces protected by the Dullcote.

N-Circle_26-04-29_AMB_All_2_Cropped

N-Circle_26-04-29_AMB_All_3_Cropped

N-Circle_26-04-29_JLI_All_2_Cropped

N-Circle_26-04-29_JLI_All_3_Cropped

N-Circle_26-05-01_Creamery_1_Cropped

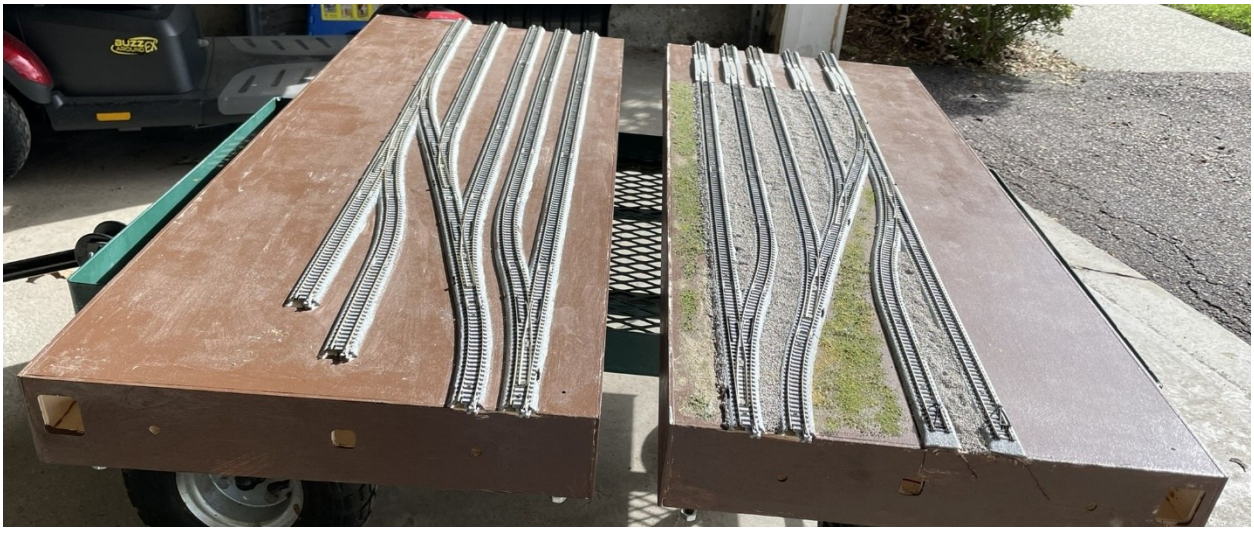
N-Circle_26-05-01_Creamery_2_Cropped

N-Circle_26-05-01_Creamery_3_Cropped

Adding Structures and Scenery to the Modules

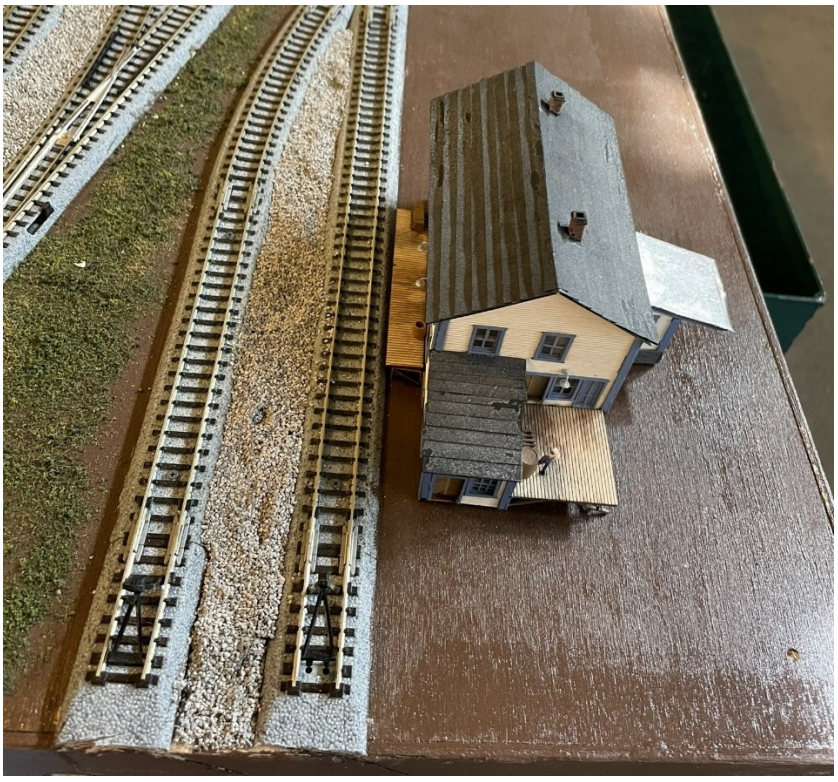
Here is a “Before” photo of the yard ladder modules, before work begins. Note that yard ballast and some ground foam had already been added to one of the modules.

NWV_2026-05-07_YardModules_2_Cropped



The Creamery is 110 mm deep, from the front loading dock to the rear loading shed roof edge, while it is about 130 mm from the inner yard track to the rear of the module. From this photo, yes, it looks like the spacings will work!

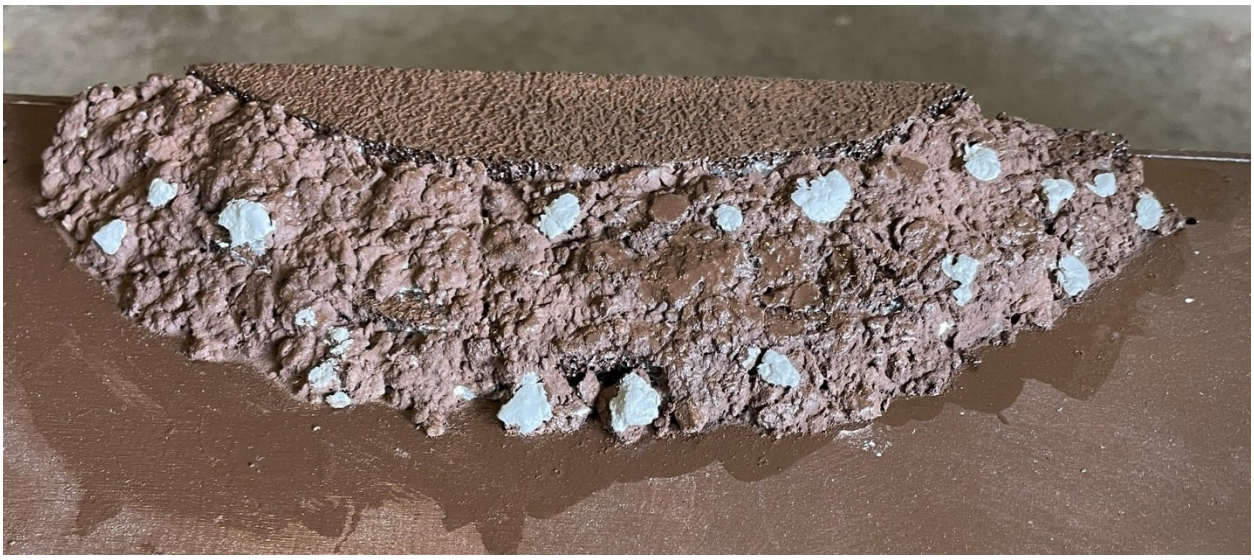
NWV_2026-05-07_YardModules_4_Cropped



At the entrance to the yard module, there is an area about 80 mm deep by 110 mm wide between the inner mainline track and the spur siding track, where one might place a yard tower. Any cluster of buildings would go on the rear of the module.

I created low berms on the back of all three modules using stacks of solid white foam cut to fit the space then glued down with white glue. I then formed slopes around them with Sculptamold mixed two parts Sculptamold to one part water, pressed over the foam base and smoothed with fingers. Here we see two of them after painting with a brown underlayer and adding a few grey rock outcroppings to show through the ground cover.

NWV_2026-05-20_YardModules_1_Cropped



NWV_2026-05-20_YardModules_2_Cropped

These berms add a little interesting topology variation to otherwise flat modules and also will provide a base for planting some trees along the back edges of the modules.

I added custom NWV decals to three Atlas Ford trucks and a modern yellow car to place next to the buildings, using the same process as for the buildings signage above. After they were dry, I applied a spray coat of Testor's GlossCote to protect the decals.

NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_1_Cropped

I only added basic scenery around the new buildings on their respective ends of the two yard ladder modules, the other ends will eventually be completed to transition to the yard center section, which does not have scenery yet. But I fully completed the scenery on the double crossover module. The gravel roads on the double crossover module are placed to align with the roads on the ends of the yard ladder modules, as it will often be placed at one end or the other of the yard.

The ground cover was added using Woodland Scenics Scenery Cement and standard techniques for scenery, using Woodland Scenics earth and green turf blends around the buildings and a few clumps of green scenery foam for shrubbery.

We will finish ballasting the yards and adding more scenery details over time back at the NWV, but hopefully this project to this point will make the modules more interesting at public displays!

For the final photos from this phase of the project, we will start with the double crossover module. In this overhead view we can see that I added a picnic table and BBQ grill next to the section house for the overnight crew, a couple of the company vehicles and an official looking guy stepping off the section house porch headed for the company car.

NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_2_Cropped

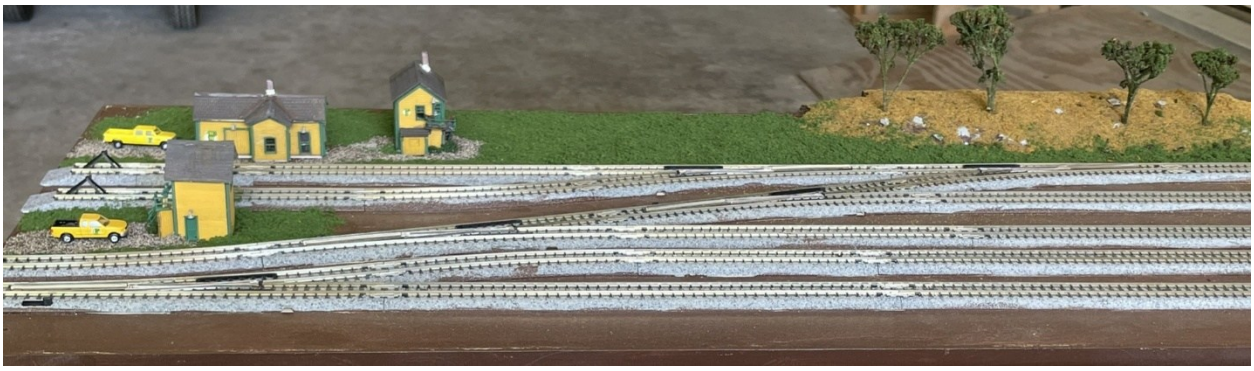
The next two photos provide more close-up straight-on views of the scene details.

NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_3_Cropped

NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_5

As stated previously, the two yard ladder modules are only partially completed, on the ends with the new buildings. We will add more ground cover and details over time.

NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_6_Cropped



NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_7

NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_8_Cropped

NWV_2026-05-27_YardModules_9

The three modules together required about 12 hours to complete. Most steps in the process were shared across the three modules, optimizing the number of sessions to complete the project.

Adding Power-Routing Jumpers to a Kato UniTrack Double-Crossover

During this project, I also added jumper wires to the double crossover module, connecting the inner switched rails which are normally open. For DCC operation, they can be connected together. We often place the double crossover module next to the yard ladder module, so that trains can cross over from the outer operating loop to the inner yard tracks. But we do not have a power drop to the entrance to the ladder, so that track is only powered through the power-routing turnouts in the ladder, which can occasionally be problematic. If the standard double crossover is placed next to the ladder, no power is driven to it from that end. But with the jumpers in this module, power will be routed all the way through and up into the ladder.

I used the standard technique of drilling a hole through the roadbed next to the outer side of the rail, running a tinned wire up through the hole and soldering it to the outer side of the rail, where it will not interfere with rolling stock wheels and flanges. I inserted a Kato two-conductor connector between the two sides in case we ever want to disconnect the jumpers.