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## The Unofficial Micro-Trains®

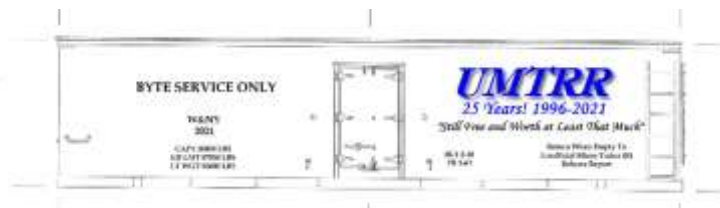
### Release Report

Issue #295 – July, 2021

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Hello again everyone, and what's your sign... I mean, constellation? That's the question that will be raised with the newest Special Edition series announced by Micro-Trains this month. We've also got the traditional "Christmas in July" pre-order window for the 2021 version of that N Scale train set, this time going around the world. Otherwise, it's a relatively light month for new releases this time around, as MTL continues to clear its backlog from The Year That Shall Not Be Named. On with the regularly scheduled news and views...

### N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



055 00 610, \$25.80.

Reporting Marks: SL-SF 91062.

33 Foot Two Bay Open Hopper, Offset Sides, Flat Ends, Frisco (St. Louis-San Francisco).

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left, small Frisco herald

left of center and "Frisco Fast Freight" slogan right of center. Approximate Time Period: 1949 (build date) or 1952 (service date on car) into the 1950s at least.

There have been slogans on many different types of freight cars, but they don't appear as often on hoppers as, say, boxcars and refrigerator cars. I usually don't think of cargo carried in hoppers as "Fast Freight" so that makes this slogan, "Frisco Fast Freight," even more atypical in this byte-slinger's opinion. The more familiar "Ship it on the Frisco!" slogan appeared in the 1950s and according to one online citation didn't start appearing on cars until about 1954. So we could be looking at the "as delivered" paint scheme for this model. Reinforcing this idea is information on the Protocraft O Scale Decal site that has boxcars painted with "Frisco Fast Freight" in June 1951 and December 1952. One of the December 1952 cars was produced by "brother company" Kadee in HO Scale. Yeah, I think I'm convinced that this is the paint scheme applied when the hopper was built.

The Frisco had six different sets of two-bay hoppers built between 1948 and 1957, totaling 2900 cars. The group in which we're most interested was the series SL-SF 90800 to 91599, constructed in 1949 by Pullman-Standard. P-S did a fair amount of business with the Frisco, not least because their Bessemer, Alabama facility was located on the SL-SF. Sharp-eyed readers might catch that prototype series



as containing the road number 90950, which was offered by MTL in November 2013 (at right). It was a nominal “not a reprint” from the original release in March 1984 (road number 91735, not from the same prototype series). However, that’s a later paint scheme on the car, complete with large “coonskin” herald (and by that I mean raccoon skin, although its origin is hardly obvious as seen from today). In fact, there is a group of builder’s photos on Pages 147 and 148 of the book **Pullman-Standard Freight Cars 1900-1960**. They show SL-SF 91735, built in 1953... and already carrying the large “Frisco” scheme. So we get an ATP that might not be that long at all... but I’ll hasten to add an “at least.”

The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for July 1950 has the 90800 to 91599 group at the full complement of 800 cars. They were described as “Hopper, Self Clearing, All Steel” with AAR Designation HM. The inside length was 33 feet, outside length 34 feet, extreme height 10 feet 9 inches, and capacity 2145 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds. Since it’s noted by MTL that some of these cars lasted into the 1980s, I did check the ORER for April 1981. That’s the first in which I have the Frisco as part of the Burlington Northern. There are 63 cars remaining in a larger series, SL-SF 90876 to 92853. However, I don’t think there is any way any of these would have been in the “Frisco Fast Freight” paint scheme.

Page 94 of the **Frisco/Katy Color Guide to Freight Equipment** shows sister car SL-SF 90941 as of January 1968. It has the successor paint scheme with large FRISCO herald (like the Micro-Trains model above) but allows for a comparison of model to prototype. In general, the look and feel is the same.

Going back in MTL history, specifically, to August 1993, we find that Micro-Trains offered a trio of examples of the first of the six different sets of two bay hoppers. These were modeled after the prototype series 90000 to 90499, also built by Pullman-Standard in 1948. What differed with these was the use of peaked ends. This was captured in the MTL three-pack 88012, with road numbers 90241, 90243 and 90248, sold together in one of the “infamous” clamshell boxes. This is the only model – so far – on the 88000/088 body style. An example from my accumulation is at right. Will we ever see another car of this type again from the folks in Talent? Who can say...



**065 00 176, \$29.95.**

**Reporting Marks: GATX 86127.**

**39 Foot Tank Car, Domino Sugar.**

Car #5 in the “Sweet Liquid Series” (Pre-order announcement last September). Gray with black underframe, trucks and details. Black lettering including reporting marks on left.

Yellow, orange and blue “Domino Sugar / Liquid Pure Cane” at left and right. Approximate Time Period: probably 1960 (build date given by MTL) to at least 1971 (based on photo evidence).

We'll go right to the bingo photo for this car, found on Page 72 of **Tank Car Color Guide Volume One**. It's noted that the 86127 was probably among fifty cars numbered GATX 86110 to 86149, assembled by General American in 1960. Yes, I know that can't be fifty cars (unless there is a 86110 ½ for example!) , so something isn't quite right with the caption here. The car has a full dome platform and railings, a delta to the MTL 065 body style (and the Z Scale 530 body style). I wonder if there's a call for a 3D-printed version of this for those N (and Z) modelers that might want to add this to tank cars?

The photo date of 1971 shows it existed in the MTL-modeled paint at that time. Leased cars are notoriously prone to repainting and change of lessees without extant documentation of this. I'm thinking that these Domino cars were more stable since liquid sugar traffic was also relatively stable, as was the company. So I'll go with a "probably" and "at least" for the Approximate Time Period. The ORER for January 1962 shows a fifty car set, but in the number series GATX 86100 to 86299 which should hold 200 cars, and it's listed as an "exception" with 100,000 pounds capacity to a larger group GATX 85900 to 86799 which had a capacity of 140,000 pounds. An "exception" group in the GATX listing for January 1972 was spot on at the road number range of 86110 to 86149, but it's in a bracketed group with other road numbers totaling 119 cars. A set of cars numbered 86110 to 86141 is around in the July 1980 ORER with 110,000 pounds capacity. But in January 1985, the 86127 has been downgraded to 79,000 pounds capacity, among other cars that were in the original number set given in the **Color Guide**. Broken record alert: Capacity is all we get from the Equipment Registers, and of course they are silent on how these cars were painted.

The Domino Sugar brand and products have changed hands a number of times in recent years, but the company's history goes all the way back to 1807. William and Frederick Havemeyer set up a sugar refinery in that year in what is now Long Island City, Queens, New York, called the W. & F. C. Havemeyer company. In 1859 they moved to a site on the waterfront of what is now the Williamsburg Section of Brooklyn, New York, which is where they stayed in operation until 2004, eventually building it into one of the world's largest sugar refining facilities. (The complex, some of it a landmark and the rest demolished, has now been repurposed as a mixed-use retail, commercial and residential space along with a waterfront park.) The Domino Sugar brand was established in 1901. In between, the American Sugar Refining Company was split out of the Sugar Trust, was one of the twelve original companies in the Dow Jones Industrial Average, expanded both vertically and horizontally into the sugar market, changed its name to Amstar, and was passed around by larger concerns, becoming a subsidiary of the British Tate and Lyle in 1988. Today Domino Sugar is one of four brands made by a different and unrelated American Sugar Refining Company which was created in 1998 and was renamed to ASR Group in 2013. That firm is owned in partnership by the Florida Crystals Corporation and the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida. One of those brands is Jack Frost, which MTL put on a covered hopper in February. Three of Domino's refineries, in Yonkers, New York, Baltimore, Maryland and Chalmette, Louisiana, are still in operation.



099 00 300, \$27.45.

**Reporting Marks: UP 14521.**

**Three Bay Covered Hopper, Union Pacific.**

Aluminum (including trucks and draft gear but not couplers) with large red roadname in center. Mostly black lettering otherwise

including reporting marks on left. White on black double COTS panel on far right. Approximate Time Period: as early as 1967 (build date) or strictly speaking, late 1970s to as late as the late decade of the 2000s.

The lettering on the far right of this covered hopper shows it in the CH-90-13 class of the UP. It's part of a group of 100 cars built in 1967 by Transco, the series UP 14500 to 14599. The bingo photo for this car is on RailcarPhotos.com, as caught in December 1985. The photo shows the prototype car in a 5/4/5 rib configuration, same as the MTL 099 body style. Since the MTL car is based on an Evans prototype, I'd expect some differences between it and the UP car, but overall I think we have at least a pretty good match here.

Sister car UP 14530 is also on the site, as of April 2007 repainted into a spartan scheme with reporting marks and a rather small UP shield herald. On RRPictureArchives, we have the same bingo photo of the 14521, plus a shot of UP 14592 in what looks like a brand new paint job with a service date in 1980. Even the aluminum trucks don't look that dirty... yet. At the other extreme are UP 14551 as of May 2002 and UP 14568 as of September 2007, which both have the roadname almost completely faded away, and UP 14550 caught in June 2003, which does have only a "ghost" roadname left.

The ORER for January 1969 has a surprise: only 68 cars in the group already out of a possible 100. The cars are described as "Covered Hopper, Aluminum" which makes them among the cars that were somewhat of an experiment in this construction across several railroads. The inside length was listed at 48 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet, outside length 57 feet 11 inches, extreme height 14 feet 11 inches, and capacity 4750 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. An end note, well, notes, that the cars have a full-length trough hatch; that would actually be a set of continuous trough hatches, but you get the idea. Jumping to the January 2002 Register based on photo evidence, we see a total of 45 cars still in service. Just five are left as of the October 2007 ORER and they're all gone by the next issue in the Research Accumulation, January 2011.

The Union Pacific had a number of variations in its covered hopper lettering, so although I believe I can't say with total certainty that the paint scheme depicted by Micro-Trains is "as delivered." Strictly speaking, the addition of the double COTS panel and the lack of an ACI Label would put the ATP as starting in the 1970s. The lack of a wheel inspection "dot" which was required starting in 1978 also would narrow that "strictly speaking" ATP. However, the service dates and the fresh paint on the sister car 14592 suggests that the ATP should begin on or after 1980. There's going to be a fair amount of the use of Rule #1 ("It's your railroad") here in my estimation.





**105 00 361 and 105 00 362, \$25.90 each.**

**Reporting Marks: NS 197057 and 197156.**

**50 Foot 14 Panel Steel Gondolas, Fixed Ends, Norfolk Southern.**

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left and small NS “speed lettering” herald in center. Yellow horizontal conspicuity stripes at six points along car. Simulated coil steel loads included.

Approximate Time Period: early decade of the

2000s, or after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to at least late decade of the 2010s.

Norfolk Southern’s rebuilding program included a set of former Southern Railway gondolas built by Pullman-Standard in 1969, the SOU series 65000 to 65399. These cars were designated for slab or coil steel service, as evidenced by the instructions reproduced on the MTL models (close-up at right), also making MTL’s choice of a load for these cars correct. There was no particular sequence in which cars were pulled from the Southern’s roster for this rebuild program, which resulted in the NS Class GS26A.



The January 2002 ORER, and others after that, describe the series NS 196830 to 197181 as “High Side Gondolas with Covers for Trash Service”... what? This is an incorrect description, as I quickly determined by looking at the dimensional data, starting with an inside height of 4 feet 6 inches. Sorry, not “high side”! The inside length was 52 feet 6 inches, outside length 57 feet 6 inches, and capacity 2244 cubic feet with a Gross Rail Weight of 286,000 pounds. Just as a double check, I referred back to the dimensions of the original Southern Railway series, and they do match the NS rebuild series; I can also note that the capacity was listed as 154,000 pounds. However, it appears from the April 1999 and January 2000 ORERs that the series **was** originally occupied by high side trash cars, inside height 12 feet 8 inches. These must have been moved out of the way between January 2000 and January 2002, but no one told the ORER folks. Anyway, the car count was 182 in January 2002 and January 2006, and 168 in January 2018. But in last October’s ORER? Nope, back to 30 jumbo size trash cars. Something just doesn’t seem right here.

At any rate, I found three online bingos for NS 197057, formerly SOU 65045. The first is on RailcarPhotos.com, taken in Tulsa, Oklahoma in August 2013. The other two are on RRPictureArchives, as found in Goshen and Elkhart, Indiana, in March 2013 and September 2014 respectively. RailcarPhotos also has NS 197156, ex-SOU 65168, without conspicuity stripes as of January 2008. Then RRPictureArchives has the car with vertical stripes in March 2010, July 2015 and December 2016. All photos show a match to the 14 panel design, ribbed ends and a fair amount of denting above the floor line, which roughly coincides with the line on which the horizontal conspicuity stripes are placed on the 197057. On the MTL cars this is represented by a rivet line, but there are no rivets to count in that area of the real cars since

they're welded. I'll also point out that the NS was not consistent in how or where they placed conspicuity stripes on this series of cars. Well, at least we can unambiguously confirm from plenty of photo evidence that they are **not** high side trash cars!



**105 00 381 and 105 00 382, \$26.90 each.**

**Reporting Marks: SP 323141 and 323211.**

**50 Foot 14 Panel Steel Gondolas, Fixed Ends, Southern Pacific.**

Brown (including trucks and draft gear but not couplers) with white lettering including reporting marks on left and gothic roadname in center. White on black double COTS panel at far right. Simulated scrap loads included. Approximate Time Period: 1976 (build date) to as late as the present.

These two cars represent the SP's class G-100-32, built by Thrall and numbered from 323090 to 323219. The Thrall logo is easily visible at the bottom of the fourth panel from the right (and at right as well). The ORER for April 1980 has all 130 cars in the group, described as "Gondola, Fixed Ends, Steel Floor" with these key dimensions: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet 6 inches, outside length 56 feet 11 inches, extreme height 9 feet, and capacity 2244 cubic feet or 198,000 pounds. As an aside, Thrall also built 20 more cars numbered 323220 to 323239 with bulkheads, called "high ends" in the Equipment Register. I'll leave recreating those from this model to the reader.



Lee Gatreaux's "Railgoat" website has photo examples from the series out to March 2010, and the show cars that are quite beat up indeed, but it does permit an ORER jump to January 2011, where there are a total of 80 of these SP cars listed under the Union Pacific's roster. To note that one should not expect these cars in pristine condition with well-kept paint is an understatement! Only twenty cars are shown in last October's ORER but we might just be able to squeak into "the present." I'll add a "as late as" to the end of that Approximate Time Period. It would be hard to tell what looks more like scrap at this point: the load included by Micro-Trains or the actual car. Well, that's the life of a gondola. I'll also point out that RailcarPhotos.com has images from as early as 2007 captioned as "in MOW service" even though they might still be listed in the Equipment Register. Fallen Flags has sister car SP 323147 as of March 2012, repainted, restenciled and with conspicuity stripes, but with the original roadname starting to show through.

The bingo photo we're looking for can be found on Page 51 of the **Southern Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume Two**. Well, one of the two bingo photos; SP 323141 is shown in relatively nice shape as of November 1979, almost three years after it was built. There is a conflict in the built date; the **Color Guide** has November and December 1976 and the Railgoat has 1978. I'm going with the earlier date not least because the 323141 is shown with a New date of November 1976, which is what Micro-Trains has used.

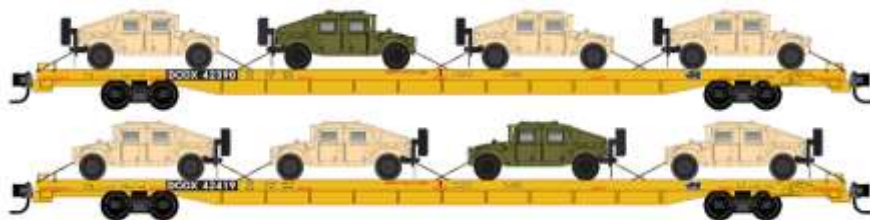
**N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS:** Officially, none this month, but see Special Editions for the Amtrak 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Car.

**N SCALE REPRINTS:** No releases this month.

**N SCALE MULTI-PACKS:** First, an update: **Runner Pack #178 (993 00 178, \$119.95)** of **four Trailer Train Bulkhead Flat Cars with Lumber Loads**, was scheduled to be available mid-last month but is now available at the start of this month. UMTRR coverage was in last December's issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 054 51 040, 80031; 054 52 040, 80084; 054 53 040, 80095; 054 54 040, 80318. These are the eighth through eleventh road numbers for this release. With the delayed release comes an official photo.



Expected mid-month is the **Union Pacific Weathered Concrete Tie Loader Five Pack (992 02 170, \$169.95)**. UMTRR coverage was in the February 2021 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: 045 51 530, 915645; 045 52 530, 915649; 045 53 530, 915657, 045 54 530, 915675, 045 55 630, 915697. I'll repeat the MTL copy for details: "Concrete tie loads will be resin cast. Loader will be a combination of 3D printed and laser board parts and will come painted with decals for cab windows and exhaust vent, but not assembled. Loader rail will be painted laserboard and load supports will be painted 3D parts. Connecting crossover rail pieces will be included for static display use." The weathering patterns really show in the official MTL image, which has received praise online in several venues I follow.



Also, the **89 Foot DODX Two Pack with Eight Humvee Vehicles (993 02 180, \$119.95)** should be out mid-month. UMTRR coverage was in the April 2021 issue. The

individual catalog and road numbers are 071 51 871, 42390 and 071 52 871, 42419. The Humvees are unassembled and undecorated.



*In addition to the above, the following is in pre-order at present and is NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is as noted below. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close **July 31**.*



**Targeted Release December 2021:**

**993 02 200, \$169.95.**

**Norfolk Southern Weathered Maintenance of Way Five Pack.**

Expected to consist of the following items:

- Three 045 body style 50 foot fishbelly side flat cars, reporting marks CR 62103, CR 52109 and PC 38811. Each car is gray with mostly black lettering including reporting marks in center or off center depending on the car, and orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at various points along cars. The 62013 and 52109 include crew trailers with Norfolk Southern “horsehead” herald, and end steps mounted on flat car. The 38811 includes a portable generator. All cars have light weathering.

- One 105 series 50 foot 14 panel gondola with fishbelly sides and drop ends, reporting marks SOU 65249. Brown with heavy rust effects.

Mostly white lettering including repainted “SOU” and road number. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at five points along side. Simulated tie load included.

- One 180 series 50 foot boxcar without running board, short side ladders and lowered brake wheel, reporting marks SOU 900342. Gray with rusting effects including ghosting of Southern Railway lettering. Black lettering including reporting marks on left and “T&S 1 / Tie and Surfacing Gang” right of door. Orange conspicuity stripes at six points along side (two vertical and four horizontal). Rollup door casting replaces standard sliding door. This car has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers.

Approximate Time Period for the set is after 2005 given conspicuity stripes. Body styles, catalog numbers and reporting marks to be confirmed upon release. Per Micro-Trains information, besides the freight cars this is a multi-media kit which includes a combination of resin castings, 3D printed accessories and laser cut detail parts. Access ladders, end stanchions, railing and custom printed decals for the loads will be included. Resin components will be painted. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.



Here's a set that would be relatively small on the prototype but makes for a nice length dedicated maintenance of way set for the typical N Scale layout. There's probably enough here for a self-contained modest-sized work crew and equipment, since we of course don't know what's in the boxcar.

Let's start at the end of this five unit set since that's the first bingo photo I found. SOU 900342 as of November 2012 is on RRPictureArchives.net. Interestingly, in addition to the rollup door installed in the door opening, there is also a "regular" door that has been slid out of the way to the right. I wonder if it could be slid back to protect the roll-up door or if it has been fixed in that open spot. I also wonder if that door was removed sometime after the car's photo was taken. I suspect MTL has another shot of the car which doesn't have the extra door and thus reveals the "T&S..." lettering. The Southern roadname ghosting through the gray paint is visible on the prototype as well. There is a class code on the car at the bottom left, BS 126. I didn't have any success tracing that code back to anything useful. A look in the Southern Railway Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment showed a similar looking car among the boxcar pictured... one that was initially delivered to the Central of Georgia in the "football" scheme! I can't say for sure that the 900342 is actually from that group, but wouldn't that be fun?

Continuing along from bottom to top, I guess with respect to the gondola, it was enough to touch up only the "SOU" part of the roadname and the road number. The 65249 is represented on RRPictureArchives with three pictures taken in September 2009 and a fourth in August 2011. In the first three shots, the gondola is carrying stacks of old ties and does not yet have conspicuity stripes. (But recall "Rule #1" — It's Your Railroad). In the fourth image, I can't see a load (Norfolk Southern SD40-2 number 3335 is the "star" of the picture) but I can see conspicuity stripes. The 65249 was part of the series 65000 to 65399 built by Pullman-Standard in 1969. These were 14 panel fixed end gondolas which generally aligns with the MTL 105 series.

The three flat cars — one still with Penn Central reporting marks and two with those of Conrail, could likely be of Pennsylvania Railroad heritage. For example, the PRR's F30A cars were built back in 1934. Being of one piece cast steel construction, they lasted a **long** time, first in revenue service, and then in company service in the gray paint that was first applied to PRR cars, then PC cars, then Conrail cars. Out of a group of 1500 F30A cars, there were 1203 still in service near the end of the Pennsy in 1968. Bring that up to the present or thereabouts, you have more than eighty years of use for an investment of \$2645 per car, not bad. I didn't find a bingo on the PC 38811, but I'd call it a typical repaint and reletter for a company service car, assuming there was such a thing as typical on the Penn Central. These cars carried just about anything while working on the railroad so a generator and other equipment would certainly make sense.

Conrail called the house trailers mounted on flat cars "camp cars," a throwback term to when workers did set up a "camp" of sorts along the right of way while doing construction or maintenance. Again, I didn't find bingo photos for the specific cars MTL will be releasing. I can tell you that the ones I did locate online each had different trailers on them, that difference ranging from a little to quite a bit. In any case, they certainly seem more up to date and

comfortable than the more traditional camp cars. Air conditioning, perhaps? Indoor plumbing, I guess? I'll also note that the trailers aren't mounted directly to the flat cars; they are instead mounted to relatively thin pedestals. I think this would facilitate easier removal of the trailers from the cars. The modeler might wish to add these using small plastic or metal strips.

All in all, it's a set that is a long jump forward from the previous Special Edition "MOW sets" that were brought out some years ago by MTL. The added touch of supplying decals and not printed on lettering for the trailers means that with a little creativity these could be marked for anything the modeler wants, including third party companies that do more than a little maintenance of way under contract to today's railroads large and small.

**N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:** *The following was announced on the Micro-Trains website on July 15.*



**993 05 920, \$89.95.**

**Reporting Marks: UP 36297, 36299, 36381.**

**Union Pacific Hopper Weathered Three Pack.**

Consists of three MTL 108 series three bay open hoppers, each with simulated coal load. Base cars are brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left (restenciled on road number on the 32381) and large roadname in center. White on black COTS panel(s) on right (varies by car). Moderate to

heavy weathering on all cars; patches of blue paint on the 32381. The individual catalog numbers are as follows: 108 51 361, 36297; 108 52 361, 36299; 108 53 361, 32381. Approximate Time Period: early 1970s to mid-1990s. Previous Releases: None.

Let me clarify that "Previous Releases: None" before going on. There have been UP three bay open hoppers before from MTL, but not exactly like this. Catalog Number 108100/180 00 100, released in February 2003, October 2008 and September 2014, all had yellow, not white, lettering; while Eight Pack #14 from October 2017 (individual catalog numbers 108 5x 360) had the large roadname in a lower position on the body and smaller reporting marks, and was also from a different prototype series. Based on the ending three digits of the individual catalog numbers, this may be considered a "reprint" by MTL but I'd call it a technical "not a reprint." The prototype series this time is split. UP 36381 was among the set UP 36300 to 36499, which was built by Bethlehem Steel during February and March 1971, Class H-100-6. There's a photo of sister car UP 36328 as of December 1979 on RailcarPhotos.com and there's a photo of the 36381 itself on RRPictureArchives.net. Hey, is that blue paint on the side we can see actually graffiti? The disappearance of some of the letters in "PACIFIC" is certainly evident on the prototype photo, which was taken in April 2006.

UP 36297 and 36299 were in the group UP 36200 to 36299, which appears to me to be the UP's class H-90-5 based on my look at the model photos. They were built at roughly the same time since they and the 36300 group are listed as "coming soon" in the April 1970 ORER (shown with no car counts). Over on the Fallen Flags website there is a shot of UP 36230 from October 2000, sufficiently dirty that I cannot confirm the UP class. Same thing with a picture of UP 36268 from May 1992. But if I am to believe an HO Scale model carrying a road number in the same prototype group, then the class is H-90-5.

The ORER for October 1972 shows differences in the extreme height of these cars: the 36200 group at 12 feet even and the 36300 group at 12 feet 7 inches. That's enough for a difference in cubic foot capacity as well, 3290 versus 3565. But in the "go figure" department the weight capacity differs by just 1000 pounds; 198 for the 36200s and 197 for the 36300s, yes, the ones with the larger cubic foot capacity. Why the UP chose to indicate a 90 ton capacity on the first group and a 100 ton capacity on the second is not something I'll be able to figure out.

There are no conspicuity stripes on these cars, probably okay since exactly one from each group survived until the October 2004 ORER, the year before conspicuity stripes were mandated. A more reasonable end for the Approximate Time Period might be around the October 1996 Equipment Register, when there were 43 cars in the 36200s and 22 cars in the 36300s.



**993 05 930, \$89.95.**

**Reporting Marks: NS 145918, 146232, 146524.  
Norfolk Southern Hopper Weathered Three Pack.**

Consists of three MTL 108 series three bay open hoppers, each with simulated coal load. Base cars are black with white lettering including reporting marks and herald left ("Horsehead" on 145918 and 146232; "Speed Lettering" on the 146524). White on black COTS panels on right. Orange horizontal

conspicuity stripes at five points along bottom of each car. Light to moderate weathering on all cars. The individual catalog numbers are as follows: 108 55 280, 145918; 108 56 280, 146232; 108 53 190, 146524. Approximate Time Period: 2014 to present for the 145918 and 146232, and 2008 to present for the 146524. Previous Releases: For the 145918 and 146232, Runner Pack #169 with Catalog Numbers 180 5x 270 and Road Numbers 145444, 145495, 144550, and 144551, last September; for the 146524, Catalog Number 108 00 19x, Road Numbers 146557 and 146559, October 2009, then Weathered Release 108 44 190, road number 14655x (last digit obscured), February 2010.

A little variety here as with the Union Pacific Weathered Three Pack above, but this time it's one paint scheme on two cars from the same prototype series, plus another car with a second paint scheme from a different prototype series. I will need to unpack this set carefully!

Numerically first, then: For the 145918 and 146232, we're looking at the group NS 145250 to 146449. In last October's ORER this group had a car count of 1088. Only the outside dimensions are given: length 51 feet, width 10 feet 7 inches and height 12 feet 7 inches, along with the capacity of 3737 cubic feet and gross rail weight (car plus lading) of 286,000 pounds. Tracking backwards from there, the earliest Equipment Register in which I see these cars is actually the previous one in the Research Accumulation, October 2014.

There are a few photos of hoppers from this series on RailcarPhotos. It's noted in several captions that these are rebuilds of former Conrail cars, performed by FreightCar America in 2013 – which explains why the first ORER in which I saw them was from 2014. FCA's history reaches back to 1901 and the formation of the Cambria Steel Company. For many years it was the freight car division of Bethlehem Steel. The freight car division became Johnstown America and in December 2004 was renamed to FreightCar America.

Both the MTL 108 body style and the prototype are 14 panel nominal 50 foot cars, so the general look is there. If you're literally counting rivets, though, there is a horizontal row of them that lands just below the reporting marks and goes across all but the left and right end panels. Those end panels do have a different shape and different ladder and grab iron arrangement than the Micro-Trains model.

RRPictureArchives has two images of the 146232, formerly Conrail 498855, first with NS reporting marks as of September 2008, and then as modeled by Micro-Trains in April 2014. The 145918 eluded my online photo search however there are plenty of other examples from the overall series on my usual go-to sites.

The 146524 is part of the group NS 146500 to 148329, built new between January and August 2008 at the Roanoke Shops of FreightCar America. When the previous run of these cars was done, I noted that our own Joe Shaw contributed to David Casdorph's compendium of freight car deliveries from 2001 to 2008, which very conveniently for us includes an entry for this group of hoppers. FreightCar America built a total of 1830 of these cars, which carry AAR Type H350 (unequipped hopper with load limit of 185,000 pounds or more, without rotary couplers) and Norfolk Southern class H65, under job file number 1466-151. How this relates to a car count of 1862 in last October's ORER, I'm not sure; perhaps there was an add-on later or a combination of groups into this series. Anyway, these hoppers are of 3744 cubic foot capacity which leads to what could be considered a "see text." The prototype cars are a considerable bit larger than the model represented by the MTL 108 body style. MTL's hopper is closer to the Norfolk and Western's H11a class which was of 3418 cubic foot capacity.

We'll let you judge for yourself, as usual: on RRPhotoArchives.com we have the bingo photo of NS 146524 as of February 2015. There are fourteen panels on this car as there are on the model. I note a horizontal rivet seam across the middle twelve of those panels. The lettering and conspicuity stripes line up. The only thing missing from the MTL car is a tiny red and yellow panel next to each of the far left and far right stripes. We'll let that one go as it looks like inch high (!) lettering on the prototype car. I'd noted when reviewing the previous run that a couple of the ribs on NS 146559 (one of the previously modeled cars) were already



showing a bit of rust. The weathering job on this three pack appears to me to be a good representation of the cars' general appearance on the prototype, that is, not overdone.

### **N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION**

**RELEASES:** The Amtrak 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Car (144 00 740, \$27.95) is now available. UMTRR coverage was in the March issue. Both sides are shown here. This would look good with the prototype Amtrak 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary locomotive, assuming someone releases an N Scale model of it! (An HO version has already been announced.)



*In addition to the above, the following is in pre-order at present and is NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is as noted below. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close **July 31**.*

### **Targeted Delivery November 2021:**

**993 21 360, \$214.95.**

#### **Coast Guard Train Set.**

Scheduled to consist of the following (MTL artwork is preliminary, actual product may vary):



- 987 Series FT-A Powered Diesel Locomotive. White with black trucks and underframe. Black lettering including "U.S. Coast Guard" and road number 1790. Blue and red diagonal stripes with blue and white Coast Guard insignia behind cab.
- 045 Series 50 Foot Flat Car with Fishbelly Sides. Red with white lettering including reporting marks (USCG 3526) on left. Boat and cargo loads shown.
- 065 Series 39 Foot Single Dome Tank Car. White with black underframe and trucks. Blue lettering including reporting marks (USCG 435) on left. Blue and red Coast Guard insignia on right. Red "Salt Water Loading Only" on right.
- 074 Series 40 Foot Plug Door Boxcar, No Running Board, Full Ladders. White with red and blue diagonal stripes. Red and white reporting marks (USCG 3381) partially inside red stripe. Red lettering otherwise. Blue and red Coast Guard insignia on right.
- 100 Series 36 Foot Steel Caboose with Offset Cupola. White with black underframe and trucks and red details. Red and blue diagonal stripes below cupola. Black "U.S. Coast Guard"

at top and blue “Always Ready” opposite cupola, and red reporting marks (USCG 84) at same end as cupola. I would expect the caboose side not shown to be a mirror image of the side that is shown.

After plenty of releases for the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and the generic plain old Department of Defense, the Coast Guard finally gets its due with a Special Edition Train Set. I can’t tell you whether there’s any particular meaning to the other road numbers, but the 1790 on the diesel which will lead this train set. August 4, 1790 is considered the official birthday of the Coast Guard. Let’s quote from the official Coast Guard Historian’s website: “Congress authorized Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton’s proposal to build ten cutters to protect the new nation’s revenue. Alternately known as the system of cutters, Revenue Service, and Revenue-Marine this service would officially be named the Revenue Cutter Service in 1863. The cutters were placed under the control of the Treasury Department.” Just about a year before that, the very new United States of America made its first provision for “public works”: lighthouses. Never would have guessed that! There were already twelve lighthouses in existence at that time, the first erected in 1716 near Boston, paid for by the colonies then the states. In fact, lighthouses are discussed as much as ships on the official timeline on the Historian’s website through the year 1900. For example, in 1840 there were 234 of them in operation. By 1885 that number was 1248 “major lights” and 1745 “minor lights.”

The service, which wasn’t officially renamed to United States Coast Guard until January 28, 1915, continued to watch waters and save lives, and also contributed to several war efforts. And the service was also charged with enforcing Prohibition, including the “Rum Wars,” as it was still part of the United States Treasury. The Coast Guard website details the many actions the Coast Guard took during the First and Second World Wars, during which times it was “transferred” to the Navy. And here’s a fun fact: the “racing stripe” that graces the Coast Guard’s ships and the forthcoming Micro-Trains train set was designed in 1965 by the Raymond Loewy/William Snaith firm. Hmm, would that be the same Raymond Loewy who designed the GG1 electric’s exterior for the Pennsylvania Railroad, and the paint scheme for the Northern Pacific’s streamlined trains? Yes, it would be! In 1967, the Transportation Department assumed control of the Coast Guard, and in 2003 it was placed under the Department of Homeland Security.



*Targeted Delivery October 2021:*

993 21 370, \$229.95.

### **Christmas Around The World Train Set.**

Scheduled to consist of the following (MTL artwork is preliminary, actual product may vary):

- 987 Series FT-A Powered Diesel Locomotive. Black with silver roof. Red ribbon with green accent across body. White lettering “Merry Christmas Around The World” on side. White on black numberboards (Road Number 1225).
- Three Modified 1017 Series 40 Foot High Cube Boxcars. Each car is black with silver roof and ends and red ribbon across sides. Each side has different multicolor artwork showing a world landmark, the location on the globe of that landmark’s city of location, and “Merry Christmas” in the language of the country in which the landmark is located. The first car has the Statue of Liberty in the United States on Side A and the Eiffel Tower in France on Side B. The second car has the Sydney Opera House in Australia on Side A and the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt on Side B. The third car has the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Brazil on Side A and St. Basil’s Cathedral in Russia on Side B. “Merry Christmas” greeting is flanked by sprigs of holly. These cars do not have road numbers.
- 100 Series 36 Foot Steel Caboose with Offset Cupola. Black with silver roof, cupola and details and red ribbon across side. White “Happy New Year” and red and green sprig of holly below cupola. This car does not have a road number.

Instead of thinking, “Will Santa make it to all of these locations around the world” as MTL questions in its car copy (Spoiler Alert: Of course he does!) I thought, gee, I’ve been fortunate enough to have visited three of the six cities that are in this forthcoming set. If I run the train with the “A” sides facing the viewer, then said viewer will see them: New York City, Sydney and Rio De Janeiro. (The “Brazil Trilogy” is on the Irwin’s Journal Online portion of my website, by the way, including the stories “Midnight Moon,” “A Kindness Instead” and “Rio De Janeiro Blue.”) Although Colleen has been to Paris – on business, yet! – I have not, and

neither of us has been to the Great Pyramids or St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, and I did have to look that up.

Of the six landmarks depicted on these cars, I knew the least about St. Basil's—okay, I knew **nothing** about St. Basil's—so I'll focus on it first. According to the Wikipedians, its construction was ordered by Ivan the Terrible and took place from 1555 to 1561. Hmm, that doesn't seem so Terrible of Ivan... well, no, it was to commemorate his defeat of the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, the former of which included a good old-fashioned siege, and the latter of which was believed by Ivan to be the location of the Fountain of Youth. The structure is now a museum but still hosts occasional Russian Orthodox services. But it was almost demolished in the 1930s since Stalin was an urbanist and a 16<sup>th</sup> Century artifact didn't fit that plan even if it was a nine-domed beloved landmark. The powers that were became convinced that destruction was a bad idea when they viewed a model of Red Square without it.

What's called the Great Pyramids is actually several complexes of them plus surrounding structures, some of which were... yes, demolished to make way for more modern villages. The "Great Pyramid of Giza," singular this time, is the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the World and the only one remaining of the seven. It's also named for Cheops or Khufu who was the second pharaoh of the Fourth Dynasty, and the "occupant" let us say of the pyramid. The two other large pyramids in the MTL artwork are "of Khafre" and "of Menkaure," and we can't leave out the Sphinx from this array of ancient structures.

From there, let's go to Rio, and the Cristo Redentor, the Christ the Redeemer statue placed atop Corcovado Mountain outside the main part of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Given its placement on a mountaintop it seems taller (to me, anyway) than its 124 feet or 58 meters including its pedestal. It was constructed between 1922 and 1931 of reinforced concrete and soapstone. There were several designs considered before this one was chosen as a symbol of peace. As of October 2006 Catholic weddings and baptisms can be held in a chapel beneath the chapel. My business travel to Rio (twice!) didn't permit time for a specific visit to the statue, but it was certainly visible during my stay there.

A recent **Jeopardy!** clue was: "The government of New South Wales held a lottery for 30 years to pay for this building whose budget went from \$7 million to \$102 million." The correct response: "What is the Sydney Opera House?" Yikes!

I suppose that considering that the Sydney Opera House—actually a complex of multiple performing venues plus a recording studio and other facilities—is a icon of 20<sup>th</sup> Century architecture, there are worse things that could have gone more than a thousand percent over budget. The design was the result of a competition, the winner being Danish architect Jørn Utzon. Construction began in March 1959 but wasn't completed until 1973 due to numerous revisions and setbacks, not least of which was Utzon's resignation from the job after clashes with government officials and others. Among the issues was the design of the "shells" which give the Opera House its unmistakable profile. They're not officially "shells" but a series of cast concrete panels supported by concrete ribs and covered with glazed ceramic tiles. Queen Elizabeth II formally opened the site on October 20, 1973, though there were some



performances including on the steps of the “podium” on which it sits prior to that date. It’s said that the first singer to appear was Paul Robeson, who sang “Ol’ Man River” to construction workers on their lunch break in 1960.

And back around the world we go to Paris. (I presume that Santa’s route isn’t quite as roundabout.) Although the Eiffel Tower was built far more quickly than the Sydney Opera House, taking only from 1887 to 1889, it was also not without controversy. Some thought the design impossible to build while a number of artists thought it was objectionable on aesthetic grounds. “Imagine for a moment a giddy, ridiculous tower dominating Paris like a gigantic black smokestack, crushing under its barbaric bulk Notre Dame, the Tour Saint-Jacques, the Louvre, the Dome of les Invalides, the Arc de Triomphe, all of our humiliated monuments will disappear in this ghastly dream.” Not exactly an endorsement... Gustav Eiffel responded by favorable comparing the tower to... wait for it... the Great Pyramids. As we know, the tower was built anyway, part monument and part tourist attraction, and also served as the entrance to the World’s Fair of 1889 which marked the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the French Revolution. When it opened it was the tallest structure in the world and held that distinction until 1929 when it was overtaken by New York’s Chrysler Building.

And that brings us back home to the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. (Ahem, the New Jersey part of New York Harbor! Ah, never mind, not going to win this one.) The initial idea for a statue for the United States dates to 1865 and French anti-slavery crusader named Edouard de Laboulaye. French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi took up the idea in 1870 and began designing the statue of “Liberty Enlightening the World.” You probably know from grade school history classes that the statue was built full size in France and then shipped in parts to the United States. It was placed on a pedestal on Bedloe’s Island, now called Liberty Island, inside the walls of the star-shaped Fort Wood – well, once the pedestal was completed, that is! Fun fact: the iron framework for the statue was developed by Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel. Eiffel, Eiffel, where have I heard that name before? The literal unveiling of the Statue of Liberty took place on October 28, 1886 and since then it is a national icon that greets everyone who sails up New York Harbor. It was a particular thrill for me to be present during Operation Sail in 1976 to see tall ships come past Miss Liberty among a flotilla of other boats in the harbor.

And I have a more personal memory of the Statue as well. Like many other natives of the area, I rarely went to visit. The last time I was there was for the Statue of Liberty 5K “fun run” which took place on July 4, 2016. It was an absolutely gorgeous morning, cool temperatures and fair skies... and an early wakeup call in order to be on board a special ferry to the island before it officially opened. I did a Photo Page on that adventure which is on my website: [www.irwinsjournal.com/photos/photo16sl.htm](http://www.irwinsjournal.com/photos/photo16sl.htm). Oops, I never did write that “Irwin’s Journal Online” installment that I mentioned on this page. Good thing “forthcoming” is an indefinite! Well, maybe **this** year...

Taken together, the Christmas Around The World set is pretty cool in itself. But given that there are many more places which Santa visits on his speedy trip around the globe, I could easily see add-on cars coming from the folks in Talent.



*Targeted Delivery Starting November 2021:*

**102 00 210 through 102 00 221, \$38.95 each. Modified 60 Foot Boxcars, Constellation Zodiac Cars.**

Each car will be black and blue with a depiction of the night sky with highlight of the location of, and a description of one of the constellations which make up the twelve signs of the zodiac, and a panel with interior light showing the constellation.

When lit a magnetic wand (Catalog 499 45

910, \$7.95, sold separately), the zodiac sign depiction will be shown as in the lower image. The current scheduling of the twelve releases is as follows: November 2021, Scorpio, Sagittarius and Capricorn; February 2022, Aquarius, Pisces and Aries; May 2022, Taurus, Gemini and Cancer; August 2022, Leo, Virgo and Libra. These cars will be offered only in lighted versions. MTL depiction is preliminary, actual product may vary.

Quite a number of years ago, I don't remember when or where, I joked that perhaps a future series of MTL Special Editions could be "Signs of the Zodiac."

Which reminds me of this exchange from the television show **The Honeymooners**:

Ed Norton, to Ralph Kramden: You are Taurus, the Bull. I am Pisces, the Fish.

Ralph: You are Pistachio, the Nut!

But this series isn't about astrological **signs**, but astronomical **constellations**. Besides, due to something called the "Precession of the Equinoxes," the astrological sign positions are no longer the same as the constellations for which they are named. It's also why Polaris won't always be the North Star, and why The Fifth Dimension sang about the Age of Aquarius about 190 years too early. But that's another story. Speaking of which, there was a hilarious sendup of the stereotypes of each of the twelve signs, called **What Month Were You Born**, which unfortunately does not appear to be available online at this writing.

George, back to the **constellations**...

According to NASA, there are 88 recognized and named. The term is defined as "group of stars that looks like a particular shape in the sky and has been given a name." Stars and constellations appear to stay in the same place for many years, making them useful for navigation. This "celestial navigation" is still taught to astronauts just in case something goes wrong with their more modern systems. ("Third star to the right, and straight on till morning?" Probably not. But thanks, Peter Pan.) Here's something I didn't know: "Robotic spacecraft also use maps of the stars to find their way. They carry a star map in their onboard computers and compare these star maps to patterns of stars in images they take. So, in a way, patterns of stars are as helpful today as they were to ancient navigators."

## Z SCALE NEW RELEASES:



530 00 530, \$29.95.

**Reporting Marks: GATX 86127.**

**39 Foot Tank Car, Domino Sugar.**

Car #5 in the "Sweet Liquid Series" (Pre-order announcement last September). Gray with black underframe, trucks and details. Black lettering including reporting marks on left. Yellow, orange and blue "Domino Sugar /

Liquid Pure Cane" at left and right. Approximate Time Period: probably 1960 (build date given by MTL) to at least 1971 (based on photo evidence).

Please see the commentary on the N Scale release above (065 00 176).

**Z SCALE PRE-ORDERS REMAIN OPEN:** The six virtual two-packs of well cars announced last month remain open for pre-orders through **July 31**. I'm showing only the first of each. As always, MTL artwork is preliminary and actual product may vary.



**Targeted Release November/December 2021:**

**540 00 015 and 540 00 016, \$29.90 each.**

**Reporting Marks: DTTX 56848 and 56861.**

**Gunderson Husky-Stack Well Cars, TTX (White on Black Logo).**

Yellow with silver details. White reporting marks on black panel on left; white TTX logo on black panel on right. Mostly black dimensional data. White on black COTS panel on far right. White simulated reflective rectangles at three points along sides. Approximate Time Period: early 1990s (1992 build date originally given by MTL) into the decade of the 2000s with a few into the decade of the 2010s.



**Targeted Release November/December 2021:**

**540 00 023 and 540 00 024, \$29.90 each.**

**Reporting Marks: BN 64306A and 64306B.**

**Gunderson Husky-Stack Well Cars, Burlington Northern.**

Red with silver details. White lettering including reporting marks on left. Blue, red and white BN herald on right. White on black double COTS panel on far right. White simulated reflective rectangles at five points along sides. Approximate Time Period: 1993 (build date) to mid-decade of the 2000s.



**Targeted Release November/December 2021:**

**540 00 043 and 540 00 044, \$29.90 each.**

**Reporting Marks: SP 513400A and 513400B.**

**Gunderson Husky-Stack Well Cars, Southern Pacific.**

Red with silver details. White lettering including reporting marks on left and gothic roadname on right. White on black double COTS panel on far right. Approximate Time Period: 1992 (build date) to mid-decade of the 2000s.



*Targeted Release November/December 2021:*  
540 00 061 and 540 00 062, \$29.90 each.

**Reporting Marks:** BNSF 240709A and

**240709B. Gunderson Husky-Stack Well Cars, Burlington Northern Santa Fe.**

Red with silver details. White lettering including circle cross herald on left and reporting marks on right. White on black double COTS panel on far right. White simulated reflective rectangles at eight points on sides. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 1996 (BNSF merger) to at least 2007 for this specific car or as late as the present for the series.



*Targeted Release November/December 2021:*  
540 00 113 and 540 00 114, \$29.90 each.

**Reporting Marks:** CSXT 620316A and

**620316B. Gunderson Husky-Stack Well Cars, CSX Intermodal.**

Blue with silver details. White lettering including reporting marks on left and "CSX Intermodal" in center. White on black double COTS panel on far right. Approximate Time Period: 1990 to no later than 2014.



*Targeted Release November/December 2021:*  
540 00 153 and 540 00 154, \$29.90 each.

**Reporting Marks:** SFLC 254245A and

**254245B. Gunderson Husky-Stack Well Cars, Santa Fe (AT&SF).**

Red with black band on one end (possibly alternating, see text) and silver details. White lettering including reporting marks on left and circle cross herald right of center. White on black double COTS panel on far right. White simulated reflective rectangles at five points on sides. Approximate Time Period: 1993 (build date given by MTL) to mid-decade of the 2000s.

**Z SCALE MULTI-PACKS:** No releases or pre-order announcement this month.

**Z SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:** A single and a pair this month...

*The following was announced on the Micro-Trains website on July 15.*



500 44 066, \$26.70.

**Reporting Marks:** NW 44568.

**40 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Youngstown Door, Norfolk and Western.**

Black with white lettering including large "NW" reporting marks on left and roadname right of door. White on black single COTS panel on far right. Light to

moderate weathering. Approximate Time Period: early 1970s (1972 service date on cars) to mid-1980s. Previous Releases: Catalog Numbers 500 00 066 and 067, Road Numbers 44505 and 44567, July 2019.



I'll be truly lazy here and reprint myself from the July 2019 coverage of the virtual two-pack of clean releases. The 44568 and the previous two cars belonged to the prototype Class B-8 on the N&W, part of the group 44000 to 44999 constructed by Pullman-Standard. As they were built in 1952, this could be their third paint scheme. First, they would have been delivered in the late steam-era roadname only scheme which was standard at the time. Next, they could have been repainted in with the large roadname and round, or "moon," or "hamburger" herald after 1964. Then, after 1971 they would have received this scheme with, as you know, is not my favorite "herald." (Which, as you also know, has zero impact on sales.)

Sister car NW 44554 as of April 1973 can be found on Page 36 of the **N&W Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. The car still has its running board so no worries there. However, there is a "door thing" as the prototypes have eight foot doors while the MTL 500 body style has six foot doors. Otherwise, they are PS-1s which is the basis for the MTL car.

For the rest of the key dimensions, we go to the ORER for October 1972. The inside length was 40 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 44 feet 4 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, and capacity 3898 cubic feet. The series was then split into two main groups, the first of 448 cars with 100,000 pounds capacity and the second of another 441 cars with 110,000 pounds capacity. Of the total 889 cars, 14 were equipped with roof hatches and were technically covered hoppers, AAR Designation LC.

By the April 1982 Equipment Register, the total car count was down to 190 from the original 1000, the LC cars were gone and 125 of the 190 had 110,000 pounds capacity. Only 37 cars were left as of the April 1985 Register, and you'd have to be thinking about running board removal anyway, so this is as good a place as any to call the end of the Approximate Time Period.

**994 05 260, \$59.95, ATSF Weathered Two Pack. Consists of the following items:**



- **533 51 011, Reporting Marks ATSF 180866, 33 Foot Two Bay Open Hopper, Offset Sides, Santa Fe (AT&SF).**

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. Black and white

"circle cross" herald above and left of reporting marks. Simulated coal load included. Light to moderate weathering. Approximate Time Period: 1941 to late 1940s (based on reporting marks with periods) but possibly as late as the early 1970s, see text. Previous Releases: Road Numbers 180808 and 180874, March 2012; then Runner Pack #99 with Road Numbers 180866, 180868, 180879, and 180884, January 2017.



- **507 52 652, Reporting Marks SFRB 6172, 50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Plug Door, Santa Fe (AT&SF).** Brown with orange door. White lettering including large circle cross and reporting marks on left, and "Ship and Travel Santa Fe All The Way" slogan on

right. Black "DF / Insulated" on door. Four small white and black simulated reflective circle crosses along bottom of side. Light weathering. Approximate Time Period: 1959 to mid-1970s. Previous Releases: Road Numbers 6160 and 6172, November 2016.

I get to continue my laziness from the above Norfolk and Western boxcar, since both of these cars have been released before, relatively recently in fact. Let's start with the open hopper. I'll reprint myself from the August 2016 pre-review of Runner Pack #99, which was largely taken from the March 2012 coverage of what was the first release of a Micro-Trains Z Scale hopper. And that "reprint" went back to the third run of the N Scale counterpart in April 2003, when two long time UMTRR Gang Members did most of the heavy lifting for me. First, George Hollwedel checked with his data library and found that freight car historian Richard Hendrickson said the GA-54 can be modeled with an Athearn hopper in HO. That helped via comparison to the MTL 055, and now 533, body styles. "I looked at the Athearn hopper," George reported, "and it has extended ends, but otherwise looks like the 55000 MT body. I'm counting it among the 'very close' at least." Coming from George, that was a pretty good endorsement.

Then Brad Scherer offered information from the publication **Santa Fe Railway Listing of Freight Cars by Class and Car Number 1906-1991**, compiled by Larry Occhiello and published by the Santa Fe Railway Historical Society. "In it is listed cars by number series and class over the included years," Brad told us. "Looking up the road number, we find that this is a class GA-54, built in 1941." That's in agreement with MTL's car copy then and now. "As you may remember," Brad continued, "Santa Fe classified its gondolas and hoppers in a single type of class, differentiated by letters and numbers. Thus, all hoppers and gondolas are GA-class (for <G>ondol<A>), and these were part of the 80th series (26 letters of the alphabet + 54) of hoppers and gondolas received. Looking up the Ga-54 class, the number series of 200 cars goes from 180800 to 180999. The brief description is 'Hopper 33 feet, 2 bay.' The manufacturer is listed as the General American Transportation Corporation." Brad relayed the "live listing" of car counts for the GA-54 as well: 1942 and 1945, 200; 1947 through 1961, 199; 1963, 161; 1965, 120; 1968, 90; 1970, 73; 1971, 61; 1973, 19; 1974, 7; 1977, 4; 1978, zero.

Brad noted that the "live listing" made no mention of paint scheme – just like the ORERs don't! But we have that information from the RPI site through a look at how the reporting marks changed over time. The move away from the ampersand, that is, from "A.T.&S.F" to "A.T.S.F." took place in 1938, prior to the delivery of these cars. In 1944, the periods went away, turning "A.T.S.F." into just "ATSF." This would impact the "strictly speaking" ATP, depending on how fast you think the cars were restenciled. The RPI listing for the Santa Fe also notes that in 1941 the line put heralds on its hoppers for the first time. I wonder if that first occurred on this series of cars?

We'll grab the July 1943 ORER for the vital statistics: series 180800 to 180999 had inside length of 33 feet, inside height of 7 feet 5 inches, outside length of 34 feet and extreme height of 10 feet 7½ inches. Cubic footage was 2191 and capacity was 100,000 pounds.

On to the plug door boxcar, and before I go any further, where is the dimensional data on this car? It's clearly visible on, uh, well, the "clean" version of this car from November 2016 (at right), which carries the same road number as this Weathered Release. Perhaps this model represents a car pushed into company service, in which case the dimensional data is no longer all that relevant.



My coverage of N Scale Runner Pack #71, released in December 2012, will help with this commentary. As you might have already guessed, these are technically not boxcars at all. The SFRB reporting marks are a riff on the old SFRD initials that denoted the Santa Fe Refrigerator Department. The class RR-57 cars were the first RBL designation cars built for the Santa Fe by Pullman-Standard, and the RBL designation is the reason for the reporting marks being what they were. ("SFRBL" doesn't work, of course.) They arrived in 1955 but wouldn't have been painted the way MTL depicts them until at least 1959 when the large circle cross with "Ship and Travel" slogan was adopted by the Santa Fe. In 1972, the "Ship and Travel" slogan was retired, since with the coming of Amtrak the year before, you could no longer travel on Santa Fe trains, and was replaced with the large Cooper Black roadname. Another reason to call the Approximate Time Period in the 1970s is running board (roofwalk) removal. Your ATP may vary on that point.

The **Santa Fe Color Guide to Passenger and Freight Equipment** provides a 1972 photo of sister car SFRB 6157 from the series in the paint scheme MTL used. Though we have a nominally good match to the MTL body style, the prototype had riveted not welded sides and there were also diagonal rivet rows sloping toward the door at its left and right. The 6157 also had its running board pulled and ladders shortened by the time of the photo.

The ORER for January 1959 shows the series SFRB 6000 to 6299 just short of full at 298 cars. It was described as "Refrigerator, DF Loader" and had inside length of 50 feet 1 inch, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 9 feet 6 inches, outside length 51 feet 11 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 7 feet 7 inches (a minor "door thing" here), and capacity 4398 cubic feet or 96,000 pounds. Jumping right to near the end of my ATP for these cars, we turn to the April 1974 Register, where there were 277 of these RBLs on the Santa Fe's roster.

**Z SCALE SPECIAL EDITIONS:** No releases this month.

**MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS:** The forthcoming N Scale Union Pacific "TBOX" boxcar three pack (993 02 150, \$134.95, pre-orders last December) will have updated roof details. MTL has artwork showing this (at right). In my pre-review, I said that I didn't note any differences between model and prototype... oops... but to be fair, I didn't have a roof image to compare. The UP cars were built by Greenbrier at their Gunderson plant, while the



TTX TBOX cars were built by National Steel Car. The construction of the MTL model is such that only a new roof piece need be tooled and snapped into the existing body.

“Something Big is on the HOrizon” teased MTL in a banner placement on their website which was posted just after “press time” for the June UMTRR. The outline of a Hummer seemed to be visible in the ad, which advised us to be around July 1 for a BIG announcement. Well, HO is quite a bit larger than N, so “big” it is. And yes... Micro-Trains will be offering the same M1151 A1 Enhanced Armament Carrier in HO Scale that it’s been making in N Scale. Quoting from MTL’s ad copy, this will be a highly detailed multi-piece injection-molded model with separate detail parts including mirrors, snorkel, windows, steering wheel and windows. It will have modular construction which will allow for numerous layout options and configurations. The pre-order window will be August and September for delivery targeted in June 2022. The initial offerings will be in Olive Drab, Desert Sand or Undecorated. No prices yet.

Meanwhile, three more sets of N Scale Humvees have been announced for pre-order through July 31. MTL will give the Tan and Olive Drab body colors some light weathering (499 44 001 and 499 44 002 respectively, \$29.95 per two-pack. And for those of you who were fans of the television

show **Emergency!** or either version of **S.W.A.T.** (Special Weapons and Tactics), there’s a Fire/Rescue and SWAT two-pack coming (499 45 957, \$34.95). Per MTL, the interior window, shell and underframe will be assembled together, however the extra wheel, snorkel, light bar and etched-metal pieces will not come installed. The etched-metal pieces will come painted. If you’re old enough to recall the original version of **S.W.A.T.** which aired on ABC for only 37 episodes from February 1975 to April 1976, you know that they didn’t have anything as fancy as a Humvee on their roster. (Neither did the gang on **Emergency!** for that matter.) Ah, but the theme song hit #1 on the Billboard Pop Chart in 1976. It was an instrumental by the group Rhythm Heritage, but some of us made up lyrics: “Theme from SWAT, Theme from SWAT, Theme from SWAT, Theme from SWAT... Theme from SWAT...” Sing it with me now! Gee, I don’t know why that vocal version never caught on...



Before we leave the Humvee Corner, I can’t forget to note that the Police version (the law enforcement entity, not the band) should be available mid-month (499 45 955, \$34.95). I’m repeating the MTL artwork here as there are no official mug shots... I mean, product photos... available at this writing.



We go from two-packs of Humvees to twenty-packs of couplers: I had thought that there were already ten pair bulk packages of what is often informally referred to as the 1015 coupler but are officially called the Universal Body Mount Short Shank Couplers. But apparently not. They are now available (001 10 006, \$54.50). Coming in August is a pack of ten pair of the



Underslung Short Shank Body Mount Couplers (001 10 007, \$54.50), better known as 2004s, which I know have not been previously offered in that quantity—because I would have purchased them that way! Although the MSRP calculates out to \$5.45 per conversion, with “street price” likely a bit lower than that, I’m happy to see these since I gave up hand-assembling Magne-Matic couplers well before I received my AARP card!

**DISCONTINUED ALERT:** The Do It Yourself Bye-Bye Board begins in N Scale with last month’s Great Northern hopper (055 00 600), and the Norfolk Southern and Santa Fe Center Flows (094 00 031 and 094 00 690), NKCR/Canadian National Auto Rack reprint (111 00 341), the Canadian Pacific Special Edition 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Car (181 00 160) and the Atlantic Coast Line Heavyweight Five-Pack (993 02 080). From the previous months of 2021, the New Haven Heavyweight Five-Pack (993 02 110, May) appears to be gone since it’s not on the MTL website listings. Also outta here is the C&O Paired Window Coach (145 00 410, January). There are no Z Scale outs from 2021 this time around.

From last year, which still shall not be named, there are again no Z Scale sellouts. In N Scale, only the Canadian National straight-side gondola has left the building (046 00 470, September). Backing up to 2019, the N Scale Southern Railway Paired Window Coach has left the station (145 00 330, April 2019), and in Z Scale, the second number of the Burlington Northern Covered Hopper is outta here (531 00 312, December) and the Auto-Train Passenger Car Four Pack (994 01 230, February) is gone. From 2018, the N Scale Union Pacific Heavyweight Baggage Car has rolled away (147 00 190, October). In Z Scale, the second number of the Northern Pacific Double Door Boxcar (501 00 282, February) is gone, as are both numbers of the Canadian National 50 Foot Boxcars (506 00 37x, July), the NRC “Bananas” Refrigerator with the yellow bananas (518 00 620, August). Back to 2017: The N Scale Milwaukee Road Baggage Car (147 00 120, February) and the Baltimore and Ohio Mail/Baggage Car (148 00 090) have been unloaded, the Z Scale Great Northern “Circus Cars” #3 and #8 (500 00 940 and 960, April and September) have gone off the road. Down to 2016: The Burlington Heavyweight Diner has had last call (146 00 030, May), the Great Northern Mail/Baggage Car has been delivered (180 00 020, October), and so has the Milwaukee Road Mail/Baggage Car (180 00 120, April). Finally, from back in 2014, the Golden Oldie Outie is the Southern Pacific Diner (146 00 070, December).

**INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT:** First, Tom Davis checked in with more on last month’s “Streator” Pullman car (141 00 420): “According to **Sleeping Cars of the Santa Fe** (Flick, et al, SFRH&MS), Streator was one of 6 cars assigned to the AT&SF during 1917-18. The cars filled in for cars that were being upgraded to 2585D standard until 1922. As “rotational spares” (the term used in the text) they would have operated on a number of trains as the 10-1-2s of a particular train were sent to Pullman for upgrades. So... a car that did service on the AT&SF in addition to the UP and Florida East Coast.”

Paul Graf has the answer to a question I raised about last month’s Santa Fe Center Flow. It seemed to me that the car looked a bit different than other cars of the type. “The prototype [for the ATSF car] is the earliest version of the 4650, with the horizontal stiffening bar, high brake wheel and tall ladders. MTLs model is the last version with the corrugated top rib, low

brake wheel and short ladders. The car size is pretty much identical, the details are different, which may be what is throwing you off on proportions. There is another version between these that has the horizontal rib and low ladders."



Here's an actual MTL image (at left) of last month's Farmrail Five Pack (993 02 140). That bottom hopper still looks gray to me even though MTL calls the color "tan."

Our Graffiti Special Correspondent David Grothe has some good news for us: "The Forney Museum of Transportation, a local transportation museum here in Denver, has announced that they will be restoring the Rio Grande 'Pikes Peak' dining car, which was released by Micro-Trains as Catalog 146 00 390 last December. Now it's wearing the classic Rio Grande 4 stripe scheme." The museum's website is <http://www.forneymuseum.org/> and the announcement of the restoration is on their Facebook page: "Thanks to Richard and Caroline Tower of The Candelaria Fund, the Forney Museum will be restoring the Rio Grande 'Pikes Peak' Dining Car. Soon, guests will be able to enter this rail car and experience a back-in-time exhibit of what it was like to dine on the rails!"

Finally, it's been quite a while since Micro-Trains ran the Hills Brothers Coffee boxcar, the most recent offering being from April 2004 (at right). We know now that these cars were in captive service in San Francisco. The folks at Protocraft have prototype photos, and the start of the ATP(!) accompanying their O Scale decals for sale: [www.protocraft.com/category.cfm?ItemID=764&Categoryid=20](http://www.protocraft.com/category.cfm?ItemID=764&Categoryid=20).



**OOPS PATROL:** I made a typical (for me) transposition error on the N Scale ATSF Center Flow (094 00 690); the correct road number is **305013**.

**25 YEAR LOOKBACK SPECIAL #7:** In honor of 25 years of the UMTRR, this year I'm going to take a brief look back at twelve of my personal favorite releases from the past quarter-century. There's no particular rhyme or reason to these selections, other than "I liked it."

This month we salute the Cameo Cars of the Chesapeake and Ohio, and Micro-Trains rendition of this famous sextet of boxcars. From April to September 2008 (13 years ago already?) MTL issued their N Scale models of these cars, including #1 (at right) and from January to August last year the Z Scale versions were



released. The C&O boxcar series from which these cars were selected are an interesting story even in the plain brown paint in which they were delivered, according to an article in the March 2002 issue of the **C&O Historical Magazine** titled "A Buyer's Market" by Al Kresse, brought to our attention by our C&O Special Correspondent James Pugh. The story actually starts in 1955 in the offices of-- no, not the C&O, but the New Haven. Under that line's colorful president Patrick McGinnis, an order was placed with Pullman-Standard for fifteen fifty foot boxcars with double doors and five hundred more with single nine foot doors. Oops-- an audit revealed that the NH really couldn't afford them! The fifteen double door cars were delivered to the New Haven (and have indeed been modeled by MTL and others in several scales), but the order for the five hundred single door cars was cancelled. However, Pullman was already building the cars; in fact, the "NYNH&H" designation had already been stamped into the sideframes of one thousand trucks! No matter, in February 1956 all five hundred cars were diverted to the Chessie as their series 21000 to 21499, New Haven stamped trucks and all. The C&O got a good deal on these five hundred, paying \$10,637.78 each for them, versus over \$11,000 each for two series of fifty foot boxcars it had previously acquired in 1955.

Anyway, MTL did the ordinary boxcar red painted versions of these cars way back in October 1974 and January 1975 (Catalog 31080/31487, road numbers 21422 and 21427). But six of the prototype cars were pulled from the roster, probably just six that were in the general vicinity of the Chessie's Huntington, West Virginia shops, and painted up in the "Cameo" schemes. They were also known as the "circus wagons," similarly to the ten car set of boxcars painted by the Great Northern while it was attempting to decide on a paint scheme, and perhaps more appropriately for The Chessie Route, as "kitty cars."

And although, with good reason, these experiments were never repeated nor adopted-- can you imagine what it would have cost to do even a few dozen cars in any one of these intricate schemes, even in 1957?-- they were apparently also not ever repainted either! As evidence of this with respect to one of the cars, the **Chesapeake and Ohio Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** provides prototype photos of the C&O 21299, or MTL's Cameo Car 2, as found in June 1965 and then again in March 1976! James Pugh also points to a black and white photo of the C&O 21463, or MTL's Cameo Car 3, in the book **Chessie's Road**.

And of course these cameo cars featured Chessie, perhaps the most famous mascot in the history of North American railroading. Chessie was "discovered" in 1933 by C&O advertising and public relations executive L.C. Probert on an etching by Viennese artist Guido Gr newald, and the company quickly obtained the rights to the sleeping kitten -- for five dollars! Not yet with a name, she first appeared in an advertisement in the September 1933 issue of Fortune magazine, with the tag line "Sleep Like A Kitten." That led to an advertising campaign that

lasted years and etched Chessie into the minds and hearts of millions of Americans. In 1934, the first “Chessie” Calendar was printed. Chessie got a mate – “Peake” and two kittens “Nip” and “Tuck.” The cats joined the Second World War effort, giving up that comfortable Pullman berth to traveling soldiers. After that, Chessie returned to “promoting” rail travel for the railroad that simply became known as “The Chessie.” When the combination of the C&O, the Baltimore and Ohio and the Western Maryland became more formal, it was under the name of the Chessie System, with the outline of the famous kitten adopted as the “Ches-C” logo. Under CSX, Chessie has faded from the spotlight, although she is still officially the Company Mascot.

**FINALLY, THE FIRST BARCODE:** Micro-Trains has been putting ACI Labels on so much rolling stock recently that this video is worthy of mention here. It’s about the development of “barcodes” for the railroad industry. There’s a connection to the Universal Product Code seen in supermarkets (and on MTL labels) as well. There’s a low-budget version Ken Burns documentary feel to it, complete with piano music and footage found from all over the place. Go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K8UpMNYIPo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K8UpMNYIPo) for **The Forgotten Story of Kartrak: The First Barcode.**

And that’s all for this month. Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers,  
George



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