



*IrwinsJournal.com Presents:*

## **The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report Issue #319 – July, 2023**

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Hello again everyone! This month, there's a bit of a focus on the middle part of the country this month in N Scale items, and there's an answer to the question, "Hey, did you leave Z Scalers out of the fun of the MT&L Freelance Railroad?" Also, it's July, so it must be Christmastime again... at least for pre-orders! Off we go...

### **N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:**



**095 00 072, \$45.95.**

**Reporting Marks: SP 401296.**

**PS-2 Covered Hopper, Southern Pacific.**

Gray (including trucks) with red lettering including small circle herald and reporting marks on left and large gothic roadname on right. Body mounted couplers and metal

wheels. Approximate Time Period: 1957 (build date) into the 1980s as painted.

Most of the coverage of this car would just be a reprint of last month's bytes (and feel free to have a look there), but there's two things I'll point out.

First, despite being 141 numbers away from the first of this quite virtual two pack (last month's car carried Road Number 401155), it's still in the same prototype series, SP 401100 to 401349, built by Pullman-Standard in March 1957, the Espee's class H-70-16.

Second, the photo reference I gave last month turns out to be a bingo photo for this month: Page 63 of the **Southern Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume Two** has a July 1972 photo of SP 401296, found at Watsonville Junction, California. Underneath that dirt and rust most of the original red paint remains.



**105 00 631 and 105 00 632, \$27.90 each.**

**Reporting Marks: ICG 245605 and 245632.**

**50 Foot 15 Panel Steel Gondolas, Fixed Ends, Canadian National / Illinois Central Gulf.**

Brown with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and Canadian National "wet noodle" herald with CN website on right. White on black

COTS panel on far right. Yellow horizontal conspicuity stripes at six points along bottom of

side. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 1998, or after 2005 given conspicuity stripes, to mid-decade of the 2010s as painted.

Wait a minute... if the Illinois Central Gulf, formed in 1972, reverted to its former Illinois Central name in 1988, and wasn't purchased by Canadian National until ten years later, in 1998, then what is rolling stock doing in the CN paint scheme with ICG reporting marks?

Well, I don't know, actually, but there it is on RRPictureArchives, ICG 245605 (bingo!), as it appeared in January 2018, in exactly the paint scheme offered by Micro-Trains, and it's a fifteen panel fishbelly side fixed end gondola. And there's the 245632 (the other bingo!) with some, ahem, additional decoration, as of April 2015 and February 2019, also on RRPictureArchives. That this is not a really tall gondola is evidenced by what the latter car is coupled to, namely, a really tall gondola. The latter car as of the 2019 photo also had some incremental stenciling on the far left, which I can't quite make out but presume to be the same as what's on the Micro-Trains car: "Constant Contact Side Bearings Equipped With Treadguard Shoes."

RailcarPhotos.com shows the series ICG 245550 to 245749, built by the railroad's Centralia Shops in 1978. We saw a car from this series less than five months ago: ICG 245669 was half of the Illinois Central Gulf Weathered Two Pack (983/993 05 044) in mid-February. It carried what was probably the original paint scheme for this car with the simplified solid rail herald (at right).



Well, that makes checks of the Official Railway Equipment Registers (ORER) pile a little easier. The July 1980 Equipment Register has all 200 of these cars listed. The description was "Gondola, Fixed Ends, Steel Floor, Axle Spacing 5 Feet 10 Inches, Truck Centers 43 Feet 4 1/2 Inches" – get out your N Scale Ruler, I suppose, to check the model against this detail. The inside length was 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet, outside length 56 feet 11 inches, extreme height 7 feet 8 inches, and capacity 2000 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. There were 179 of these cars remaining in ICG markings as of the January 2000 ORER. The car count was 122 in the October 2014 Register. Seven of these gondolas lasted as long as the October 2020 ORER but I'm not sure I'm ready to go to The Present on the Approximate Time Period.



**108 00 550, \$27.90.**

**Reporting Marks: KCS 224136.**

**100 Ton Three Bay Open Hopper, Kansas City Southern.**

Brown with white lettering including large reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel on right. Simulated coal load

included. Approximate Time Period: around 1996 to mid-decade of the 2000s.

I first pick up the series KCS 224000 to 224149, of all possible 150 cars, in the October 1996 ORER. The are simply listed as "Hopper, Steel" with an outside length of 48 feet 9 inches,

extreme height of 13 feet 5 inches, and capacity of 4000 cubic feet or 204,000 pounds. The AAR Car Type Code of H340 translates to an open hopper with a load limit of 185,000 pounds and greater with non-rotary couplers. Bingo photos for this car is on RRPictureArchives, both as of September 2005. Conspicuity stripes haven't yet been applied. There are two differences between the prototype and the MTL 108 body style, well, besides the larger capacity of the real car versus the model. More noticeable is the lowered brake wheel on the real car. Not as noticeable is the use of a combination of a ladder and grab irons on the sides and ends.

A curious item appeared on RailcarPhotos.com: a shot of KCS 224060 with a note that it was built in November 1978. That's about where in the ORER Stash I started looking for this series, but I didn't find it until almost 18 years later. Perhaps these were second-hand acquisitions by the Kansas City Southern? Well, that's what appears to be the case, as seven other cars in the series are found on RRPictureArchives with information that they are former Louisville and Nashville and Clinchfield hoppers, which went to the Seaboard System and then CSX Transportation before coming to the KCS. For example, KCS 224059 was originally L&N 197508 and then CSXT 346167, and KCS 224065 was Clinchfield 56974 then CSXT 342683. The lineage of the 224136 wasn't given, but I think it's fair to assume that it was part of the sale.

Since the photo evidence is from 2005 we can safely jump to the October 2004 ORER, where 149 of the original 150 cars remain on the roster. The count was also 149 in the October 2007 Register but it was all the way down to three in January 2011, which is where I stopped looking.



**108 00 560, \$27.90.**

**Reporting Marks: SOO LINE 60841.**

**100 Ton Three Bay Open Hopper, Soo Line.**

Brown (including truck frames) with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and large roadname in center. Multicolor ACI Label on far right.

Approximate Time Period: 1973 (build date) to mid-decade of the 2000s.

Page 105 of the book **Soo Line Freight Equipment and Cabooses** has the bingo to this car. The 60841 was one of fifty cars built for the Soo by Maxson in 1973. They were given odd numbers only from 60831 to 60929. "Cars in this series were equipped with Maxson air-operated doors for ballast service," it's noted. These special doors don't look that much different to me than what's on the Micro-Trains car. These cars had a capacity of 3300 cubic feet, had an inside length of 45 feet and a height of 12 feet 6 ½ inches above the rails. They are a bit smaller than the MTL 108 body style which is based on the Norfolk and Western H11A class of cars. I suppose it doesn't translate to much when reduced to N Scale, but to me the ribs and top chord look a little wider on the prototype car than on the Micro-Trains model. And then again, that could just be my perception of things. The bingo photo is from November 1975 and shows quite the clean looking car. It wasn't looking so clean in May 2009 when it was again photographed; that image is on RRPictureArchives. A shot of sister car 60847 shows a lowered brake wheel, a delta to the Micro-Trains car.

The 60841 might or might not have been the last one left on the roster. The January 2011 ORER shows the entire series, but with a car count of just one. That's down from four in October 2007. The Approximate Time Period I'm giving is wide here. How the car is modeled lines up best with the beginning of that ATP.



**110 00 590, \$35.95.**

**Reporting Marks: GATX 30833.**

**54 Foot General Service Tank Car, GATX (General American Transportation) "Soy Power."**

Black with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and tank

qualification stencil on right. White on black COTS panel on right. Multicolor "REG" (Renewable Energy Group) and "Soy Power" logos on left. Yellow vertical conspicuity stripes at six points along side. Approximate Time Period: 2007 (build date given by MTL) to as late as the present, but see below. This car was expected to be available after July 6 and was available at "press time."

The REG in the small logo on this car stands for Renewable Energy Group, and "Soy Power" is the trade name for what the company produces. REG was a relatively new startup, having been founded in 1995 as a venture of West Central Cooperative. West Central made its first investment in soybean oil refining in Ralston, Iowa, after recognizing that growing amounts of surplus soybean oil carried little to no value. In its first full year of operation it sold just 30,000 gallons of biodiesel fuel. By the time REG was acquired by Chevron in 2022, it had grown, organically and through buying other similar operations, to produce and sell well over 500 million gallons of soy-based biofuel.

MTL's car copy includes that this car was built in 2007, meaning that the conspicuity stripes and tank qualification stencil would have part of the as delivered paint scheme. Trinity Rail built this car, according to the information accompanying the bingo photo of the 30833 on RailcarPhotos.com, taken in July 2007 by Collin Reinhart. It's noted that the car has an outside length of 59 feet 4 inches and a capacity of 25,560 gallons. The tank has that subtle slope to it from ends to center that is common among tank cars built during this century, though it's not present on the MTL 110 body style. There are images of GATX 30831, 30838, 30862, and 30877 on RailcarPhotos as well, with photo dates in 2007 and 2020. The last three cars of these have the additional wording "A product of Renewable Energy Group® just below the "Soy Power" trademark. Moving to RRPictureArchives, we see that the 30831 has had this wording added no later than September 2009. No later than August 2013, the word "Biodiesel" has been unceremoniously taped over. I suppose that makes for a Strictly Speaking Approximate Time Period.

The October 2020 ORER shows the series GATX 30829 to 30928, which had 50 cars at the time. These are listed as being within Plate C dimensions, with Gross Rail Weight of 263,000 pounds and AAR Type Code T107... and that's it. But that's typical for tank cars. Unless Chevron made it a point to eliminate the REG trademark in favor of "Chevron Renewable Energy



Group” it’s probably OK to assume this car with some form of the original logo remains on these cars into the present.



**182 00 111 and 182 00 112, \$30.95 each.**

**Reporting Marks: D&RGW 63770 and 63794. 50 Foot Steel Boxcars, Double Door, No Running Board, Low Brake Wheel, Denver and Rio Grande Western.**

Orange with black ends and silver roof. Mostly black lettering including large reporting marks on left and Rio Grande speed lettering roadname on right. Multicolor ACI Label, white on black COTS panel, and yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection “dot” on right.

Approximate Time Period: 1969, given paint scheme, or after 1978, given U-1 “dot,” into the 1990s (later in company service). These cars have a cushion underframe and body mounted couplers.

Upon the release of these cars, UMTRR Special Correspondent David Grothe checked in:

“These new Rio Grande cars sure look familiar but I guess they are not quite a reprint... the July releases have a silver roof and shortened ladders on the right side compared to this release (037 00 070, April 2011, reprint of 37070, October 2004).



“The weathered release from June 2019 (182 44 110) is pretty close but no ACI label like the clean releases from this month.”



All true! The model cars are from the same prototype series, though, which would be D&RGW 63700 to 63799, built by American Car and Foundry in 1963. This group held several different jobs for the Rio Grande according to the Rio Grande Modeling and Historical Society (that information not currently available online). As built, these boxcars had welded sides, 4/4 Improved Dreadnaught ends, Keystone Cushion Underframes, and Youngstown doors, though in the 8 + 7 foot variety, which sets up a “door thing.” They were also painted in the two-tone scheme of gold and silver.

This group of 100 cars was AAR classified as either XM for general service or XP for special service, and either went into general or assigned service. One of these assignments was carriage of auto parts and the other was hauling of copper bullion as MTL mentions in its car copy. The cars were all off the revenue roster by 1993, although based on photo evidence including one of our bingos this time, a few remained in company service past then.

We go to the ORER for January 1978, given the U-1 wheel inspection “dot” which appeared starting in that year. The series D&RGW 63700 to 63799 had 82 cars with belt rails, AAR Designation XL, and 6 more presumably without belt rails with description “Box, Nailable Steel Floor, 25K” and AAR Designation XM. The dimensions differ between the two groups only on inside width, 9 feet 2 inches versus 9 feet 4 inches, and cubic capacity, 4928 versus 4954 cubic feet. The common dimensions were inside length, 50 feet 6 inches, inside height, 10 feet 6 inches, outside length, 58 feet 1 inch, extreme height, 15 feet 1 inch, door opening as previously noted, 15 feet, and weight capacity 140,000 pounds. Heeding the Rio Grande Modeling and Historical Society comment that these cars were off the revenue roster by 1993, I checked the July 1992 Equipment Register and there are only four listed.

RailcarPhotos.com has the bingo for D&RGW 63770 as of 1985, and for D&RGW 63794 as of June 2006, the latter in company service even though it doesn’t have the usual “AX” prefix that the Rio Grande used. The 63794 was shown as already in supply service in November 1996 in a photo on Flickr ( [www.flickr.com/photos/151089709@N08/53050792803/in/dateposted/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/151089709@N08/53050792803/in/dateposted/) , thank you, David Grothe). I didn’t find any photos of any cars in this series that showed the roof so I can’t confirm that it was aluminum that way... but it looks like that roof color is accurate according to a thread on the DRGW discussion venue on groups.io.

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

**N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS:** No new releases, but there is a pre-order...

*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 December 2023:**

**146 00 540, \$33.90.**

**Road Number: 402 (will be “N&W 402” in UMTRR Website Listings). Heavyweight Diner, Norfolk and Western Safety Car.**

Dark blue with black roof, four wheel trucks and underframe. Imitation gold lettering including roadname across letterboard, road number at bottom left and right, and “Safety First Car” at bottom center. Approximate Time Period: late 1960s at least. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

“I want you all to stay awake for this fil-um...” That’s actually a line from a record album by the late great Jean Shepherd, best known for the now-classic movie **A Christmas Story** but also familiar to diehard fans as the creator of three comedy LPs, one of which, **The Declassified Jean Shepherd**, includes a lengthy monologue about Army Safety Movies. Which, trust me, do not have the same content as a railroad safety film, but I suppose could elicit the same reaction among those, ahem, “invited” to watch it. And given both my twisted mind and my

affinity for all things Shep, my first thought upon learning that Norfolk and Western Car 402 was a “mobile theatre” was Shep’s comment about Army Movies.

And yes, according to the **Norfolk and Western Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, Car 402 was “the first of N&W’s mobile theaters.” It was rebuilt in 1934 from a baggage-express car; as such it doesn’t really match any of the widely available passenger car models out there, but the MTL 146 body style is probably the closest to what the folks from Talent have.

The **Color Guide** contains no less than four photos of this car! It’s in the classic Tuscan Red in an undated photo. Then, sometime after 1966, it was painted dark blue with a change to the lettering from “Safety First Car” to “Safety Instruction Car.” Next, it’s in the ill-advised green MOW paint with runtogether NW “herald” which it received in 1972, and finally, it’s back to the classic Tuscan Red in 1984. Photos online show the 402 in that last Tuscan Red scheme through at least 2009. There is even an early photo from the Roanoke Public Libraries digital collection which shows an end view of the car with a “Motion Picture Car” placard. And in the Norfolk and Western Historical Society archives, there are two interior views showing how a car (perhaps not the 402) was set up for classes and movies. However, none of these photos exactly align with the Micro-Trains artwork; the closest match is the dark blue car, but it has “Safety Instruction Car” lettering. Is that a mystery, then?

No, not really, since I confirmed with Micro-Trains that they have a reference photo on which the artwork is based, which was sourced via the N&W Historical Society. Well, maybe the Approximate Time Period is a mystery, since the photo is undated, as is the one in the **Color Guide**, other than “sometime after 1966.” I’ll go with the late 1960s for the ATP, though I expect Rule #1 (“It’s your railroad”) to be applied here.

## **N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:**



**045 44 660, \$27.90.**

**Reporting Marks: NW 1511.**

**50 Foot Flat Car, Fishbelly Sides, Norfolk and Western / former Illinois Terminal.**

**#3 in the Norfolk Southern Family Tree**

Series (pre-orders taken December 2022). Black with mostly white lettering including restenciled reporting marks on left and 1970’s version Illinois Terminal roadname in center. White on black COTS panel on far right. Yellow conspicuity stripes at six places on car, the rightmost of which covers the yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection “dot.” Moderate to heavy weathering. Weathered deck included to be installed by modeler. Approximate Time Period: After 2005 given conspicuity stripes to at least 2013 from photo evidence. Previous Releases: None.

I’m going to set aside for a bit the fact that this car has its former ITC reporting marks restenciled to NW, and focus on the railroad from which the Norfolk and Western picked up this car. The Illinois Terminal isn’t the only common carrier line that evolved from a traction

system, but it's probably the largest railroad that fits the category. While it might be most closely associated with the Saint Louis Metropolitan Area, its history starts on the other side of the State of Illinois, in Danville. In 1900 William B. McKinley (1856-1926, not the William McKinley who was the 25<sup>th</sup> President of the United States) started his traction empire with the purchase of the Danville Street Railway and Light Company. Next, he took over the moribund Danville, Paxton and Northern, completing it as a line to bring coal to his utility plant in Danville. McKinley saw the possibilities of electric interurban passenger service and expanded quickly and widely from there, adding lines through acquisition and construction. By 1910 he had the Illinois Traction System all the way to Saint Louis, including the McKinley Bridge over the Mississippi River. What set the company apart from many interurban lines was its freight service, with both on-line industries and a robust interchange business. But it also had the disadvantage of street running in a number of the larger towns and cities in which it passed, with accompanying sharp curves and slow speed limits. The passage of the Public Utility Holding Act of 1935 forced Illinois Power and Light, the successor to McKinley's operations, to divest the interurban operations, but the Great Depression also deeply and negatively impacted the Illinois Traction System. The railroad was spun off as the Illinois Terminal in 1937; the name reflected the importance of its terminals: Saint Louis, Peoria, and Danville. As passenger traffic continued to decline, bypasses were built or obtained via trackage rights around the street running trackage. The same year that the last mainline passenger service ended, 1956, the ITC was purchased by a consortium of eleven Class I railroads that had St. Louis in common. The line declined to the point that by 1968, one writer described it as being in "undeclared bankruptcy." The 1970s saw a revival of the company which rebranded itself as "The Road of Personalized Services" and added new diesels and rolling stock to its roster. But it couldn't survive the merger era, and in 1981, the Norfolk and Western bought out the interests of the other owner railroads, officially merging it away in May 1982. The once 550 mile traction system had become a Fallen Flag.

Even though the N&W was notoriously slow at relettering rolling stock of the railroads it absorbed, I was still surprised to see an Illinois Terminal freight car not only still mostly in its 1970s IT paint scheme, but with post-2005 conspicuity stripes! Yet that's what we have in the bingo photo of the 1511 as of 2013, found on RRPictureArchives. There is a bit of ambiguity here with respect to the road number: it looks like a "1" has been spray painted in front of the original four digits, making the car 11511. This would resolve a conflict with a combination passenger /baggage car which was also numbered 1511, located as of 2012 at the Ohio Railway Museum (which also had, at the time, Illinois Terminal 450, a PCC streetcar). Meanwhile, the Fallen Flags website has another photo of the 1511 as of 2012 and a shot of sister car 1517 in what looks like revenue service in May 1991.

The first ORER in which I see the series ITC 1500 to 1519 is from January 1967; it's not in the January 1964 Register, the previous one in the Research Accumulation. The cars were described as, "Flat, Steel, Tie Downs" with an inside length of 53 feet 6 inches and capacity of 140,000 pounds, with a full car count of 20. All 20 are in the April 1981 ORER as well, but then the ITC reporting marks go missing in the April 1982 Register. Fortunately, they're back in the April 1984 ORER where 19 of the 20 cars are listed under new owner Norfolk and Western. Nine are shown under the Norfolk Southern listing as of April 1995 and four in January 2006



and again in January 2011, then three in the shortened series 1509 to 1519 which could still include the 1511. They're gone from the January 2018 ORER; turning back to photo evidence on RRPictureArchives, by May 2018 the car had become NW 711511, ending the ATP by then at latest, but still had its original Illinois Terminal roadname.

*In addition to the above, the following was announced on the Micro-Trains website and via the "E-Line" newsletter on July 14.*



**983 05 043, \$74.95, with Jewel Boxes.**

**993 05 043, \$65.95, with Foam Nest packaging.**

**Reporting Marks: CNW 718115 and 718463. Chicago and North Western/ex-ROCK Weathered Two Pack.**

Consists of two MTL 025 series 50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcars with Single Youngstown Doors.

The 718115 is light blue with white "Route ROCK" roadname and faded ROCK

reporting marks on left, black and white stylized "R" on right, black stencil CNW reporting marks on left and small black CNW herald at top right. The 718463 is white with black "Route ROCK" roadname on left, black and blue stylized "R" on right, and black stencil CNW reporting marks on left. Both cars have moderate to heavy weathering including rust effects. Both cars have a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: After 1980 into the early decade of the 2000s. Previous Releases: Catalog Number 25170, Reporting Marks ROCK 300460, February 1984, then Catalog Number 025 00 170, Reporting Marks ROCK 300233, December 2012, both unweathered and with the original reporting marks. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 025 44 171, 718115; 025 45 171, 718463.

Here's the more recent of the two previous releases under this catalog number (at right). That run was already a "not a reprint" of the February 1984 release, as that first run had an aluminum roof and the second one did not—correctly, I believe, based on photo evidence I found at the time. And this new weathered pair are of course "not a reprints" of the first two cars, not least because of the restenciled reporting marks.



This two-pack is the aftermath, if you will, as the Chicago and North Western picked up a lot of the Rock's newer equipment following that company's shutdown in March, 1980. (I read recently that the Rock had only about three hundred dollars in the bank on their last day of operation—yikes!) But this two pack doesn't represent cars that came from the group previously modeled by MTL, which was ROCK 300000 to 300499 that became CNW 716000 to 716499 according to the September 2000 issue of **Rail Model Journal**.

This time, one of these cars, the 718115, comes from the CNW series 718000 to 718449, which was the ROCK series 301800 to 302249, built by Pullman-Standard from July to August 1979. Yes, that is during the last months of the Rock's existence, which means that these were probably leased cars, not purchased cars. It's noted on Page 46 of the **Rock Island Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, which has a photo of ROCK 302244 as of May 1980, that these cars were not listed in the January 1980 ORER – which means that this group never appeared in the Equipment Register while they were briefly on the Rock's roster! Before going on, I'll note that the cars aren't in complete alignment with the MTL 025 body style. The ends were different and the capacity was 5344 cubic feet; the Micro-Trains car follows an FMC prototype with 5077 cubic foot capacity. And yes, the cars' original color was either blue or white. Bringing us the bingo for this car, CNW 718115, previously ROCK 301916, was caught in March 1998 rolling along as part of a fast freight in Smiths Station, Alabama.

The 718463 was in Selkirk, New York in April 2001, looking very shabby some thirty years after it was removed from the Rock Island's roster. Well, actually, that's not exactly true: this car is actually the former Warren and Ouachita Valley 29, among the series W&OV 1 to 100 that went to that Rock Island subsidiary. A model of sister car W&OV 5 was offered by Micro-Trains in January 2016, Catalog Number 025 00 860 (at right, and once again it's hard to get enough contrast between a white car and a white "piece of paper!"). It's noted that the 718463 went to the leasing vehicle East Erie Commercial as its 510, then got reporting marks BKTY 154125. I see a shot of EEC 504, another former CNW/ex-ROCK boxcar, on RailcarPhotos as of August 2003, so the ATP for the 718463 could have ended not long after its photo was taken in 2001.



I'll grab the Union Pacific entry in the January 2000 ORER, which includes this Chicago and North Western series, for some key dimensions: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 11 feet 1 inch, outside length 57 feet 1 inch, extreme height 15 feet 3 inches, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 5344 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds. There were two main series at the time spanning the numbers 718000 to 718449, plus various subsets, adding up to 432 cars. The car count for this block of boxcars was down to 215 in the January 2006 Register and just two in the January 2011 ORER.

UMTRR Special Correspondent David Grothe, who mentioned to me that he'd suggested ex-ROCK boxcars to MTL, shared a number of images of other cars that the North Western picked up from the Rock Island. No two of these are alike, ranging from minimal restenciling like these two to a full paint-over of the Rock lettering in roughly the same shade of "Bankruptcy Blue" that The Rock used in its final years of operation. There's a lot more than a two-pack worth of ideas in just that set of photos.



**983 05 052, \$160.95, with Jewel Boxes.**

**993 05 052, \$145.95, with Foam Nest packaging.**

**Reporting Marks: UP 75966, 75997, 75956, and 76029.**

**Union Pacific Weathered Four Pack.**

Consists of two MTL 094 series Three Bay Center Flow Covered Hoppers with Trough Hatches.

Base cars are gray with mostly black lettering including large roadname in center and reporting marks on left. All cars have conspicuity stripes, multicolor ACI labels (or the remains of one on the 76029) and white on black COTS panels; configuration varies

by car. The 75966 has roadname bleeding through later spartan paint scheme of gray with small red, white and blue shield herald. The 75977 has a large gray patch panel below the roadname on one side. The 75956 has white on black restenciled reporting marks. All cars have moderate to heavy weathering; all expect the 75966 have rust effects. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to as late as the present. Previous Release: Catalog Number 094 00 350, Road Number 14146, December 2011. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 094 44 351, 75966; 094 45 351, 75997; 094 46 351, 75956; 094 56 351, 76029.

We go four for four on bingo photos for this quartet over on RailcarPhotos.com, which also has the information that these cars all belong to the series UP 75850 to 76149, built by American Car & Foundry, in 1976. These were given the UP's Class CH-100-30 and were originally listed as 4600 cubic foot capacity cars, just a wee bit smaller than the 4650 cars that are the basis for the MTL 094 body style. The 75956 was photographed in April 2014, the 75966 in December 2019, the 75997 in January 2020, and the 76029 in March and September 2020. These photos appear to be the basis for the Micro-Trains models except that the graffiti present wasn't reproduced – the Union Pacific doesn't allow graffiti on models of any of their equipment.

Since all four cars have conspicuity stripes, the Approximate Time Period can't be any sooner than 2005, at least Strictly Speaking. So out comes the January 2006 ORER, where the car count is 251 out of a possible 300. Only the outside dimensions are given: length 60 feet, width 9 feet 7 inches, height 14 feet 11 inches. These had a Gross Rail Weight (car plus lading) of 263,000 pounds. Given the photo evidence I jumped from there to the October 2020 ORER, where 78 cars remained in the listing. Does that mean an ATP to The Present? Well, in 2020 these cars would have already been 44 years old. The long-standing "forty year rule" for equipment now has a myriad of exceptions, and only applies to cars in interchange service. The UP has plenty of its own right of way on which to use these cars. I can also tell you that the most recent image of any car in this series on RailcarPhotos is from April of this year. That's of UP 76093 found in Wichita, Kansas, still in the original paint scheme with large roadname.



Here's the "clean" release from December 2011 (at right) which, by catalog number sequence, is the predecessor of this Weathered Four Pack. Ignoring the weathering, this new quartet earns the "not a reprint" moniker since the December 2011 release has a larger roadname and a different prototype series, namely UP 14051 to 14150.



But here's something else: The previous four pack of UP Weathered Center Flows, Catalog Number 993 05 390, is on the 093, not the 094, body style. Two of the cars from that pack fit into the prototype series in this month's set, UP 75983 and 75951 (both at left). How's that again? And how about an Oops for you, George, since you never covered the 75850 to 76149 series in your commentary on that four pack when it was released in April 2017, even though these two cars belonged in said series!

**N SCALE MULTI-PACKS:** First, I note that **The Blue Comet Heavyweight Five Pack (983 02 215, \$195.95, with Jewel Case Packaging; 993 02 215, \$174.95, with Foam Nest Packaging)** is now available, confirmed via online sale listings. It had originally been targeted for release in mid-June: There's an official MTL image of it as well (at right).

As noted last time, the individual items are: 144 51 500, 3-2 Observation "Biela"; 146 52 500, Diner "Giacobini"; 147 53 500, Baggage Car "Barnard"; 160 54 500, Single Window Coach "Tuttle"; and 160 55 500, Single Window Coach "Winnecke." These are the first releases (first and second for the Single Window Coaches) for each of the components of this set.





The following July multi-packs are all currently scheduled to be available mid-month:



**983 00 212, \$89.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.  
Southern Pacific Railroad Police Two Pack.**

UMTRR coverage was in the January 2023 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 100 51 830, Modified MTL 100 series 34 Foot Steel Caboose with Offset Cupola, 01482; 130 52 071, Bay Window Caboose without Battery Box, 4709.

I committed an Oops of Omission in the pre-order coverage by not mentioning that there **was** a previous release for the Bay Window Caboose, which was Road Number 4762 in May 2010. This is the first release for the other caboose in the two pack. Also note that MTL apparently isn't releasing this pack with the Foam Nest option, even though it was listed in that format for pre-orders back in January.



**983 00 213, \$159.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.**

**993 00 213, \$144.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.**

**Chessie Four Car Runner Pack (Runner Pack #213).**

UMTRR coverage was in the January 2023 issue.

The individual catalog numbers and reporting marks are: 092 51 161, C&O 604572; 092 52 161, C&O 604789; 095 53 560, B&O 605055; 092 54 560, B&O 605095. We have a split here: These are the third and fourth road numbers for the C&O car and the first and second for the B&O car.



**983 02 223, \$121.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.**  
**993 02 223, \$109.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.**  
**Conrail 45 Foot Trailer Weathered Four Pack.**

UMTRR coverage was in the March 2023 issue.

The individual catalog numbers and road numbers are: 451 44 320, 252215; 451 45 320, 235238; 451 46 320, 654602; and 451 47 320, 254101. These are the first through fourth numbers on this release. Please note that there was a Conrail "Trailvan" trailer with Catalog 67070, Road Number 253651 issued in March 1992, but MTL has given these items a new catalog number.

**983 02 227, \$119.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.**  
**993 02 227, \$104.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.**  
**Conrail 45 Foot Trailer Four Pack (Unweathered).**

UMTRR coverage was in the April 2023 issue.

The individual catalog numbers and road numbers are: 451 51 320, 235035; 451 52 320, 235249; 451 53 320, 235301; and 451 54 320, 235354. These are the fifth through eighth numbers on this release (counting the above weathered versions).



*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 December 2023:**

**983 00 218, \$119.95, with Jewel Box Packaging (only, not being offered in Foam Nest Packaging).**

**Reporting Marks: TILX 251399, 251404, and 251406.**

**Trinity Industries Leasing/AGP Tank Car Three Pack (Runner Pack #218).**

Scheduled to consist of three MTL 110 series 56 Foot General Service Tank Cars. Cars are black with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and tank qualification stencil on right. Yellow "AGP" logo on right. Orange vertical conspicuity

stripes at six points along side. Approximate Time Period: 2007 to as late as the present. Previous Releases: None. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

It was back in November 2002 that we first encountered Ag Processing, via the green and yellow Center Flow produced by MTL (Catalog 93060, at right). At the time, I reported that it billed itself as “A Farmer Owned Company,” as it was a three-way pooling of interests in soybean processing. It was formed in 1983 with the mission



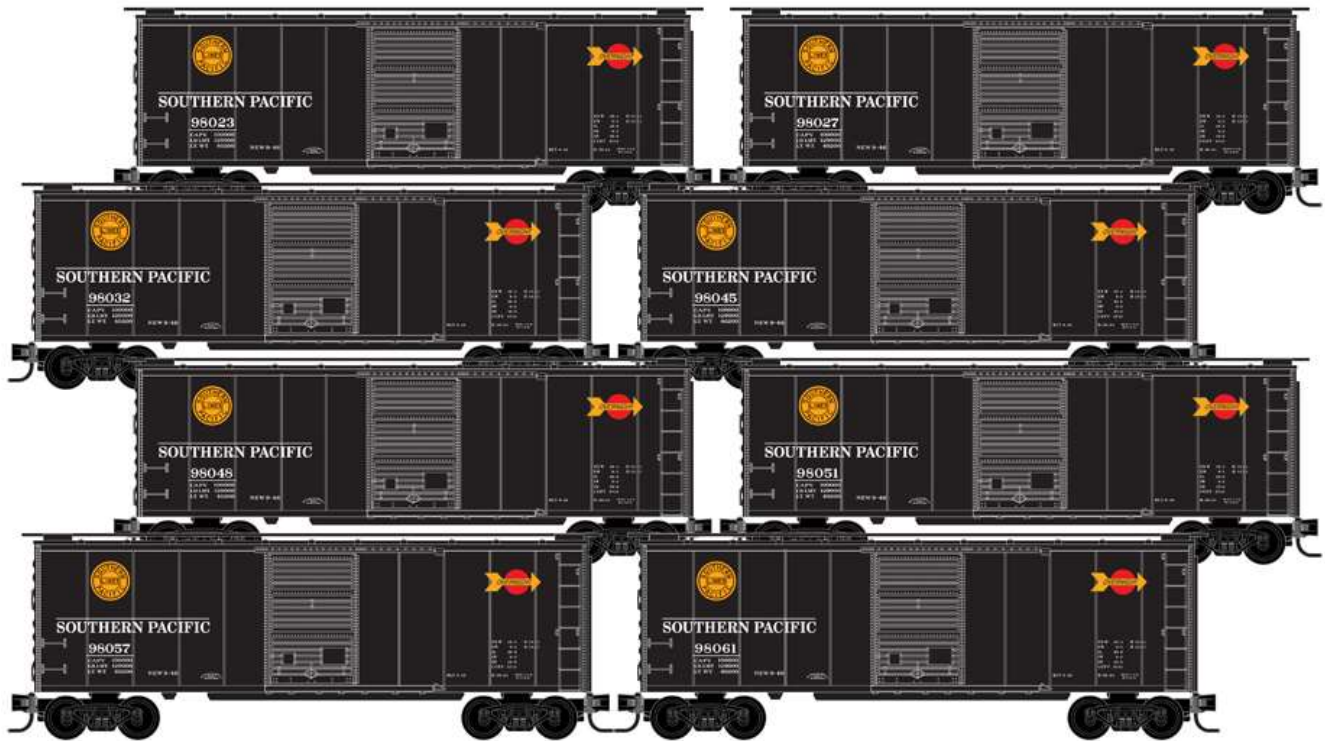
“to serve local cooperatives and agricultural producer-owners by performing the primary business functions of acquisition, processing, and marketing of agricultural products.” It lists its “Reason for Existence” as “to put more money into the pockets of producers and do the best possible job of managing its owners’ investments.” I went back to the AGP website (at [www.agp.com](http://www.agp.com) , not really hard to guess that!) to find that they’re a lot bigger now, but still have the same structure: “Today, our owners include local and regional cooperatives representing approximately 200,000 farmers throughout the U.S.” AGP operates ten soybean processing plants in Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota, as well as four soybean oil refineries, and three biodiesel production facilities. They now bill themselves as “Partners in Food Production.”

I noted back in 2002 that Shippers Car Line was in the process of assuming the AGP fleet of cars, changing the reporting marks to SHPX and prefacing the road number with a “6,” making the 96314 which MTL released into 696314, for example. So it makes sense that AGP would be leasing tank cars as well. This time, they’re from Trinity Rail, which manufactures multiple sizes of tank cars as noted on their website.

The bingo for the first of the three cars expected in this Multi-Pack can be found on RailcarPhotos. TILX 251399 was found in Alorton, Illinois in August 2008. It’s reported to be part of a series numbered 251388 to 251407. The cars are listed at an outside length of 59 feet 4 inches, and a capacity of 25,480 gallons. A build date isn’t given but we know that the previously numbered group, TILX series 251168 to 251337, was manufactured in 2006. I’d expect that series in which we’re interested was built after that, meaning that the qualification schedule and the conspicuity stripes were in place “as delivered.” The 251399 has what I would call more of a matte finish, as opposed to the “shiny” look of many tank cars... well, before they’re weathered, that is. Meanwhile, TILX 252404 has bingo photos on RRPictureArchives from August 2008, January 2009, and May 2011. And there’s a single bingo on TILX 251409 there from February 2016.

The ORER for January 2020 groups several series together to result in TILX 251118 to 251523 with a total of 398 cars. But that is split into one set of 223 cars with a Gross Rail Weight of 286,000 pounds and another 175 cars with a GRL of 263,000 pounds. The three cars here fall into the larger group, but there’s no other information published here other than the AAR Type Code T107 – which applies to both subsets. The earliest ORER in which I have these cars is the July 2007 issue. They’re not in the January 2006 edition which gives us a pretty good handle on the start of the Approximate Time Period.





**Targeted Delivery December 2023:**

**983 00 827, \$244.95, with Jewel Box Packaging.**

**993 00 827, \$214.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.**

**Reporting Marks: SP 98023, 98027, 98032, 98045, 98048, 98051, 98057, and 98061.**

**Southern Pacific Overnight Eight Pack.**

Scheduled to consist of eight MTL 020 series 40 Foot Steel Boxcars with Single Youngstown Doors. Cars are black with white lettering including roadname and road number on left. Black on yellow "Southern Pacific Lines" circular herald at top right. Red, yellow and black "Overnights" arrow logo at top right. These cars will have a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 1946 to mid-1950s. Previous Releases: Road Number 98068, February 1977; a six pack with road numbers 97621, 97663, 97752, 97804, 97960, and 98001, December 1982; a six pack with road numbers 97632, 97645, 97648, 98022, 98152, and 98163, March 1986; a six pack with road numbers 97622, 97635, 97813, 97846, 98012, and 98062, February 1987; Road Number 97940, April 1995; Road Number 97947, April 1997; Road Number 97950, April 2003; and Runner Pack #16 with road numbers 97620, 97806, 97955, and 98060, August 2008. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

When Runner Pack #16 was announced in January 2008, I remarked that this particular paint scheme had the lead for the single most reprinted car in the Micro-Trains regular run series, which, including the Runner Pack, was a pretty astonishing twenty-six, of which there were an unequalled three six-packs. That did not count the very successful "no road number" Special Run with road number decals that was organized, commissioned and distributed by a couple of our long time UMTRR Gang Members. Well, it's been years, and I've lost track (pun intended) of the leader board since that time. For one thing, there are three different releases that have had two sixteen packs done! But this forthcoming eight pack could push the Southern Pacific black "Overnights" boxcar back near the top of the release count chart.



These Overnight cars, meant for the SP's Less than Carload Service, were Espee's B-50-24 class built in 1946 by Mount Vernon Car Company. There were 500 constructed, with 50 put into express service and the rest painted black with white and yellow lettering and numbered 97620 to 98069. When initially delivered these had SP reporting marks instead of the full name. According to freight car scholar Tony Thompson in his book **Southern Pacific Freight Cars Volume Four**, in September 1946, during its build, Mount Vernon started spelling out the full "Southern Pacific" roadname instead of the SP initials, with lines above and below the roadname and road number. This was in accordance with SP practice at the time. Not later than January 31, 1952, these lines were dropped based on a lettering diagram in the book. In 1956 the SP started repainting these cars into the silver with black and red "Overnights" scheme (represented by MTL as their catalog number 20760/020 00 760 from 1987, 1996, and 2004). With the repainting came renumbering into the series 121834 to 122311. I see online that the introduction of Southern Pacific's trailer on flat car service and that service's silver, black and red paint scheme may have been associated with this change to the boxcars. Thompson notes that "although Southern Pacific intended the Overnight box cars to be reserved for on-line service, they did stray considerable distances on occasion." So if you're modeling, say, Peru, Indiana, where one of these cars was photographed in November 1946, you're still good.

I believe this builder photo from Mount Vernon Car has passed into the public domain at this point so I'll include it here (at right). This shows the car in its original paint scheme with SP reporting marks. Get a load of the rivet pattern on this car! It's generally known as the Alternating Center Rivet design. This photo also appears in the book **Southern Pacific Freight Cars Volume Four**. There isn't anything of which I'm aware in N Scale that matches this car exactly; in HO Scale, there is at least one craftsman kit.



The July 1950 ORER has the series 97620 to 98069 described as "Box, All Steel, Lightweight" with these dimensions: inside length 40 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet, outside length 41 feet 10 inches, extreme height 14 feet 6 inches, door opening 6 feet, and capacity 3715 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds. There were 448 cars in the series at that time out of the possible 450. We find the same car count in the January 1953 and January 1955 ORERs, then a drop down to 109 in the January 1959 Equipment Register as the renumbering—and repainting—was well underway for these cars.



**N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES:**  
Car #5 in the “War of the Worlds” (039 00 273, \$26.95) has been released. This car, USA 1899, features the graphic “A Martian Machine Contemplates.” UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the September 2022 issue.



And the **Reading, Blue Mountain and Northern 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Boxcar** (102 00 223, \$28.95) is now available. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the January 2023 issue.

Also, the first three of the six single **Medford, Talent and Lakecreek / Southern Oregon Refrigerator Line** wood refrigerator cars are now available (confirmed via online listings). UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the February 2023 issue. They are as follows:

**049 00 941, \$27.95, Road Number 5870, “Topsy Bee.”**



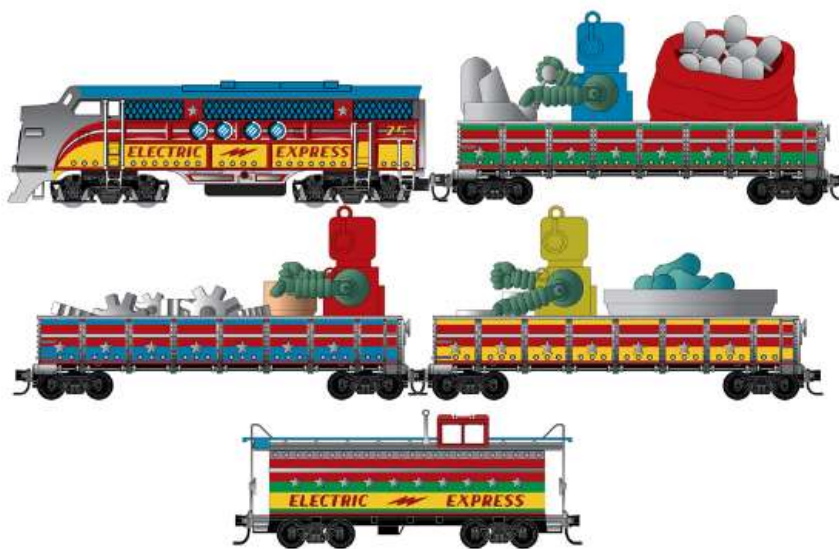
**049 00 942, \$27.95, Road Number 5859, “Golden Bosc Pears.”**

**049 00 943, \$27.95, Road Number 5863, “Pinnacle Pears.”**



On to pre-orders, and Yes, it's Christmas in July!

*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 October 2023:*

983 21 100, \$270.95, with Jewel Box Packaging.

993 21 100, \$249.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

**Robot Christmas Train Set ("Electric Express.")**

Scheduled to consist of an MTL 987 series FT-A Powered Diesel Locomotive, three MTL 083 series 40 Foot Drop Bottom Gondolas and one MTL 100 series Modified 36 Foot Steel Side Caboose.

Each item is painted in a different "tinplate" style color scheme in blue, red, yellow and/or green. The locomotive and caboose have red "Electric Express" lettering across the sides. Each gondola includes a load consisting of a robot (blue, red or green) and "repair parts." These items do not have reporting marks or road numbers. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Micro-Trains says that this set "brings back the charm and wonder of the early 20th century tin type toys." And they are absolutely right about that. Collectors Weekly has a web page on Antique and Vintage Tin Toys ( [www.collectorsweekly.com/toys/tin](http://www.collectorsweekly.com/toys/tin) ) and its overview mentions some names which might be familiar to model railroaders: Marklin, Tri-Ang, Fleischmann and Hornby. Three of these four made N Scale trains (and Tri-Ang might have also). Collectors Weekly calls "model train impresario" Frank Hornby "the most influential British tin-toy maker." How about that? Another page on the Collectors Weekly site describes tin plate toys ( [www.collectorsweekly.com/model-trains/tin](http://www.collectorsweekly.com/model-trains/tin) ): "Around 1875, technological advancements in materials and manufacturing allowed tin to be stamped, cut, rolled, and lithographed faster than ever before. In Europe, particularly in France and Germany, these new techniques were employed to mass-produce tinplate clockwork toys, moving human and animal figurines, boats, cars, motorcycles, and, naturally, toy trains." Naturally! Collecting tinplate toys and trains is a hobby in itself, as my quick look through various websites confirms. That includes larger versions of the "robots" that will be included in this set.

And that brings me to my first thought about this upcoming Christmastime Offering: "Aren't these 'Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots'?" Well, no, George, they are not. But I couldn't help but be reminded of the game first marketed by Marx in 1964. Cue the Wikipedians: "It features two dueling robot boxers, Red Rocker and Blue Bomber, mechanically manipulated by the players, and the game is won when one player knocks the head off of the opponent." There have been variants on this popular game, which has had sales in the hundreds of thousands, and the concept, if you will, is reportedly under development as a motion picture.

**Z SCALE RELEASES:** And the Norfolk and Western makes three, as in three reprinted pairs of F7A diesels. I suppose it's not a coincidence that the three roadnames match those on the passenger cars that have been arriving for the past few months.



**980 01 341 and 980 01 342, \$119.95 each.**

**Road Numbers: 3717 and 3697.**

**F7 Powered Diesel Locomotives, Norfolk and Western.**

Black with yellow details. Imitation gold lettering including roadname across side, and road number with small circular "Hamburger" N&W herald at rear. Approximate Time Period: 1964 to mid-1970s. Previous Releases: Same road numbers, June 2014. These items aren't on MTL Dealer Standing Orders.

*The following is reprinted from the UMTRR coverage of the first release of these items.*

All of the Norfolk and Western's E and F units came into the roster as a result of the 1964 merger of the N&W with the Wabash and Nickel Plate Road. The Wabash collection included about 100 F7s, which were equipped with passenger pilots and didn't have dynamic brakes. They did have extra cooling coils on the roof. The MTL model differs from the prototype on these features.

The usual place to find these was Ontario, Canada, on the Wabash's operation which was completely via Canadian National running rights between Detroit and Buffalo. (The Wabash didn't actually own any right of way in Canada.) Originally numbered in the 1100s when bought by the Wabash in the early 1950s from both the American and Canadian operations of EMD, they were moved into the 600s and 700s before the N&W merged the Wabash. Once on the N&W roster a preceding "3" was added to the road number, bringing the units into the 3600 and 3700 series. There were several variations in N&W paint for these cab units, including this one in black with imitation gold lettering. Given their service in Canada, maintenance for these diesels was often provided by the Canadian National at its Fort Erie, Ontario shops.

I didn't need to go far for a bingo on the first of these two units: to Jersey City, New Jersey, in fact and the Jersey Central's Communipaw Yards circa 1969 for a shot of the 3717 which can be found on Railpictures.net. (Photo #396043, to be exact.) The CNJ was leasing the diesel at the time which is why it was a bit off the N&W right of way. The online photo archives of the Norfolk and Western Historical Society ( [www.nwhs.org](http://www.nwhs.org) ) includes a number of photos of the N&Ws ex-Wabash units, including the other road number MTL chose, 3697, which was caught in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania as of 1972, probably also working for the Jersey Central. Photo evidence on the NWHS site and elsewhere shows that the units lasted into the mid-1970s at least, but that's the best I can do since I couldn't locate definitive disposition information. It'll have to do.





In addition, Car #5 in the “War of the Worlds” (518 00 843, \$26.95) has been released. This car, USA 1899, features the graphic “A Martian Machine Contemplates.” UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the September 2022 issue.

The three 83 Foot Lightweight Business Cars that had been scheduled for this month (566 00 021, Pennsylvania Railroad; 566 00 061, Union Pacific; 566 00 240, Norfolk and Western) now show a “Coming Soon” banner on the MTL website.

**Z SCALE PRE-ORDERS:** *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**.*

Z Scalars will get to share in the fun of Micro-Trains’ “Freelance Railroad” with this upcoming releases. We’ve been told that the series in N Scale has proven quite popular... if it wasn’t, the folks in Talent wouldn’t have expanded these offerings! While I “invented” a “history” for most these cars when they were announced in 1:160, and those are available in the January 2022 UMTRR (on the back issues page of the UMTRR Website), I’ll be lazy here and just list the pre-order items. Together, they’ll make a nice train for your Z Scale pike, all in fun of course. As usual, the Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary and the actual product may vary.



**Targeted Delivery January 2024:**

**533 00 191 and 533 00 191, \$25.95 each.**

**Reporting Marks: MT&L 7343 and 7346.**

**33 Foot Open Hoppers, Offset Sides, Medford, Talent and Lakecreek.**

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left, large “MT&L” in center, and MT&L herald on right. Simulated aggregate load included. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.



**Targeted Release February 2024:**

**518 00 851, \$28.95.**

**Road Number: 5875 (will be “SORC 5875” in website listings).**

**40 Foot Wood Double Sheathed Ice Refrigerator Car, Vertical Brake Staff, Southern Oregon Refrigerator Car Company.**

White sides, brown roof and ends, black underframe, trucks and hardware. Black lettering including company name and road number on left. Multicolor “fruit crate” label on right for Piggy Pears.



*Targeted Release February 2024:*

518 00 852, \$28.95.

Road Number: 5896 (will be "SORC 5896" in website listings).

40 Foot Wood Double Sheathed Ice

**Refrigerator Car, Vertical Brake Staff, Southern Oregon Refrigerator Car Company.**

White sides, brown roof and ends, black underframe, trucks and hardware. Black lettering including company name and road number on left. Multicolor "fruit crate" label on right for SOS Extra Fancy Pears.



*Targeted Release March 2024:*

980 01 540, \$119.95.

Road Number: 1972.

**F7A Powered Diesel Locomotive, Medford, Talent and Lakecreek.**

Maroon and gold sides and nose with gray roof and black underframe and trucks. Gold lettering including roadname across side, road number at rear, and herald on nose. White on black numberboards.



*Targeted Release March 2024:*

535 00 500, \$29.95.

Road Number: 2022.

**30 Foot Steel Center Cupola Caboose, Medford, Talent and Lakecreek.**

Maroon and gold sides, black underframe and trucks. White side grab irons. Gold lettering including road number on left, "Route of the

Rogue Valley" slogan on right, and large herald below cupola.

**MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Once again in the "I'm not sure where to put this" category, the Union Pacific ArroWedge (at right) is available for pre-orders through July 31. Targeted for December 2023 delivery is a reprint in N Scale (Catalog 499 00 103, Road Number 948004) and an initial release in Z Scale (Catalog 799 00 103, Road Number 948001). These are unassembled and unpainted multimedia kits with a multicolor decal sheet. MSRP for either the N or Z Scale version is \$24.95.



Among the rotating banners on the MTL website with the July update was a page on the forthcoming General American 65 Foot Mill Gondola, with some pre-production images. There's a list of features on that page, which I think matches the flyer that MTL distributed at the National N Scale Convention last year (Nashville, not Reno). Now, where did I put that flyer...

**DISCONTINUED ALERT:** Perhaps the lead story in a relatively slow month for the bye-bye board is that both numbers of the Canadian Pacific "TBOX" boxcar have left the building (120 00 07x, April and June). The N&W/former AC&Y boxcar, also known as NS Family Tree Series #1 (076 44 160, May) is outta here. While the War of the Worlds boxcars remain available, the flat car with artillery guns (139 00 031, May) has marched out. Ok, spill it, modelers: are you buying this for the flat car or the artillery guns? And that's it for 2023 releases in N Scale. In Z Scale for 2023, the first number of the "Wait, wasn't this released in December 2022?" Burlington Northern x-post boxcar (511 00 123, June) is off the website so it gets the Dreaded D. Same for the two Pennsylvania F7 Diesels (980 01 02x, June)... well, it was noted that they were Limited Quantities.

Backing up to 2022, we have these N Scale outs: the SP&S/BN Boxcar, BNSF Family Tree Series #2 (020 44 850, October); the FGE "Solid Cold" Weathered Two Pack with Foam Nest (993 05 026, May, Jewel Box version already gone); the Southern Railway Weathered Center Flow Three Pack (983 05 037, December, Foam Nest version still available); and the Fruit Growers Express "Clean" Eight Pack of refrigerator cars (993 00 823, March). In Z Scale, the first number of the New Haven boxcar (500 00 127, July) has rolled away, as has the TTX well car reprint (540 00 015, October).

The last N Scale item from 2021 that was still in stock was the Hobo Spider Train Set (993 21 350, September)... and it's no longer listed on the MTL website so I'll presume that means it's gone. (In fact there are no train sets listed on the MTL website.)

Back to Z Scale: The first number of the Frisco PS-2 covered hopper (531 00 341, April 2021) is gone. The first number of the Norfolk and Western x-post boxcar is also (510 00 481, June 2020, second number already gone). And the last two items from 2018 are sold out: the Christmas Car (548 00 120, October) and Southern Pacific Business Car (556 00 070, November).

**OOPS PATROL:** I put the catalog number for this month's N Scale Southern Pacific PS-2 Covered Hopper onto **last** month's release. Let's try that again: 095 00 071, released last month, has road number 401155 and 095 00 072, released this month, has road number 401296.

Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers, George

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