



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains[®] Release Report Issue #332 – August, 2024

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Hello again everyone! Before we begin this month, a programming note for those of you who receive these bytes using a Gmail address. It's actually been a couple of months since I (accidentally at first!) made this change, but all Gmail subscribers are now once again receiving the UMTRR through my "standard" process, that is, from my UMTRR at Irwinsjournal.com address. In fact, I'm able to cover the entire subscriber base from that one single outbound e-mail address now, as opposed to the umtrr2, 3, and 4 e-mail addresses. Hurray—a bit less grunt work needed here. And I've just jinxed this, haven't I...

Our look behind the red and yellow sign this month includes the first release of the N Scale sixty foot flat cars, and the initial announcement of an N Scale billboard that Eric Smith talked about at the National N Scale Convention. Off we go...

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



**033 00 610 and 033 00 611, \$29.95 each.
Reporting Marks: UP 165231 and 165284.**

50 Foot Steel Boxcars, Combination Plug and Sliding Door, Union Pacific.

Yellow with aluminum roof, ends, bottom side sills, and truck frames and draft gear. Black lettering including reporting marks left of sliding door and class code BC-50-9 at bottom right. Large red, white and blue shield herald on left. Multicolor "Automated

RAILway" logo at far right. Cushion underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period (ATP): 1963 (build date) to mid-1970s as modeled.

This virtual two-pack models a series of UP boxcars built in April 1963, perfect for inclusion as a brand-new piece of rolling stock on my own Wilmington and New York Railroad. According to the **Union Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** (Volume One), UP 165231 was also "a nice example of a modern freight car of the 1960s... Equipped with cushion underframe, roller bearings, wide doors and a cubic capacity of 5053 feet it would still be considered a modern boxcar 30 years later." The text accompanied a bingo photo of the 165231 at Omaha, Nebraska, in April 1963. This was likely a builder's photo. We do pick up differences between the prototype and the MTL 033 body style, namely, the configuration of

the bottom sills and the use of riveted, not welded, sides. There are also those two annoying diagonal rows of rivets either side of the doors (annoying, of course, to those manufacturers of model railroad equipment!) The “Automated RAILway” logo was approved for use by the UP in 1962, so it, too, was almost brand new at the time these cars joined the fleet.

The July 1963 edition of the Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) has the full complement of 150 cars in the series UP 165150 to 165299. They were described as “Box, Steel, Staggered Doors, Cushion Underframe” with AAR Designation XME. End notes called out side wall lading anchors and “flush type auxiliary doors” – or what we know as plug doors, 8 feet wide. That plus the eight foot sliding door yielded a total door opening 16 feet wide. The rest of the major dimensions were: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 52 feet, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, and capacity 5053 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds.

Perhaps the Union Pacific didn’t share the view of the **Color Guide**’s author that these boxcars would be considered modern 30 years after they were built, since, 29 years later in the July 1992 ORER, just a single car, UP 165180, remained from the original set of 150. Strictly speaking, it’s probably better to note that 139 of the 150 were shown in the July 1974 Equipment Register. By that time you’d need to think about running board removal, and an ACI Label, and perhaps a COTS panel as well. It would still be a bit early for the U-1 wheel inspection “dot” though. If you’re curious, however, there were 133 cars on the roster as of the January 1978 ORER, the closest issue I have to the March 31, 1978 start of the U-1 stencil requirement. It’s entirely possible, though probably not verifiable, that some of these cars stayed in the as-delivered Automated RAILway paint for their entire service life, with some modifications. There is an undated photo of UP 165208 on the Fallen Flags site (www.rr-fallenflags.org) which has to have been taken after the U-1 mandate. The reporting marks are larger, and there are COTS panels and the U-1 dot, and the running board is gone and at least one side ladder shortened while the brake wheel remains in the upper position.

In the Fun With Catalog Numbers Department, this virtual two pack is not near any of the previous releases in this body style, including last month’s UP virtual two pack release in brown, 033 00 21x. I’d thought this was because of the use of the cushion underframe... but Runner Pack #216 of Southern Pacific boxcars had Catalog Numbers 033 00 20x... and also had cushion underframes.



094 00 870, \$35.95.

Reporting Marks: KCS 530049.

Three Bay Center Flow Covered Hopper, Trough (Long) Hatches, Golden West Service / Kansas City Southern.

Blue with yellow lettering including reporting marks on left. Yellow “Golden West Service” roadname with red and yellow “blocks” logo on right. White on black COTS panel on far right. Approximate Time Period: late 1980s to 1991.

We know the Golden West Service story pretty well by now. In the late 1980s, the cash-strapped Southern Pacific sold a significant amount of rolling stock to Greenbrier, which used Gunderson to rebuild the fleet. Greenbrier then leased the cars back to SP. Boxcars, open and covered hoppers, and other types of cars were lettered with reporting marks for Galveston Railroad (GVSR), Coe Rail (CRLE), Ventura County Railway (VCY)... and the Kansas City Southern?

Yes, according to the Railgoat website: “A few covered hoppers were also lettered for KCS early in the program, but were relettered for another road after a brief time.” There’s a list of those Center Flows on the website. Among them were the Class H-100-30, originally Cotton Belt cars built in 1974 and numbered SSW 74500 to 74999. These were 4650 cubic foot cars, matching the MTL 094 body style.

Several sources note the KCS cars were relettered to GVSR in 1991. So absent Rule #1 (“It’s your railroad”) there is a short Approximate Time Period for this release. In fact, the ATP is so short that I don’t have an Official Railway Equipment Register showing the cars with KCS reporting marks—they’re not in the July 1989 ORER and the cars are already under the Galveston Railway listing in the October 1991 Register. Fortunately, there is a bingo photo of this car on RailcarPhotos.com, taken in May 1991. KCS 530049 was previously SSW 74955 and was eventually stenciled back to these same Cotton Belt reporting marks at the close of the Golden West Service. Also on that site are KCS 530027 in GWS paint as of August 1991, the former and future SSW 74614, and KCS 530052 photographed in June 1991, previously and later SSW 74500.



106 00 270, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: CR 617210.

50 Foot 15 Panel Fishbelly Side Gondola, Fixed Ends, with Low Cover, Conrail.

Brown with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and small roadname and “wheel on rail” herald on right. White on black COTS panel on last panel left of herald. Approximate Time Period: 1984 to 1986 only for this road number.

The bingo photo on Page 92 of the **Conrail Color Guide to Freight Equipment** confirms that yes, the first four digits of the road number of this former Erie Lackawanna car are crammed into the second panel from the left of the fifteen side panels on this car. The photo in the **Color Guide** is from March 1984. It was taken by the book’s author Larry DeYoung, who noted that “The Erie Lackawanna had no cars that I can trace with this type of roof, so these may have been fabricated and installed at Hollidaysburg [Pennsylvania] after Conrail operations began.” The cover shown in the photo looks even lower than the one Micro-Trains has available, and it doesn’t have a running board, but that should be simple enough a difference to rectify at the modeler’s discretion. Not so simple is the usual delta between the prototype which was a nominal 52 feet 6 inches long inside and MTL gondolas which are a nominal 50 scale feet long. From the photo in the **Color Guide** it’s also noted that the prototype had extended draft gear

which suggests a cushion underframe. A look at the **EL Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** shows that the series EL 17625 to 17674, built by Ortner in 1969, was also of 15 panel gondolas with extended draft gear couplers (Page 59), so this **may** be what Conrail got. These were also covered, but not with the same, well, covers, as the Conrail version. The ORER for October 1976 has all fifty of these EL cars in the Conrail listing.

It's a pretty good bet that the image of CR 617210 in the **Color Guide** shows a newly painted car. Although the Conrail roster shows a variety of covered gondolas starting with road number 617100, it's not until the January 1985 that **this** car appears – and in its own entry. It's described as just "Gondola" – no mention of a cover – though it has the AAR Designation GBR – the "R" standing for "Roof." The dimensions were: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 5 feet even, outside length 59 feet 4 inches, extreme height 9 feet 10 inches, and capacity 2500 cubic feet or 185,000 pounds. This doesn't match the dimensions of the EL series cited above, and so much for that hypothesis.

It is perhaps a Very Short Approximate Time Period for this car! After being in the April 1985 ORER, it's no longer listed in the October 1986 Equipment Register. I don't think I'm going to try to explain that...



134 00 011 and 134 00 012, \$34.95 each.

Reporting Marks: OTTX 97331 and 97409.

60 Foot Flat Car, TTX (Trailer Train).

Yellow and light brown sides. White reporting marks on black panel left of center. White circa-1991 "TTX" logo on black panel right of center. Mostly black lettering otherwise including Trailer Train/TTX Class TSH 60A left of TTX logo. White on black COTS panel at far right. Orange conspicuity stripes at six points along side. Simulated wood floor. Metal wheels and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: After 2005 given conspicuity stripes to as late as the present.

According to RailcarPhotos.com, the series OTTX 97194 to 97418 was built by Thrall Car in April and May 1974, as the company's class TSH60A. The entry with the highest road numbers in the OTTX subset within the Trailer Train listing for April 1975 is this series. Yes, that's well before the Approximate Time Period of these models begins. But the dimensions are still good: "inside length" 60 feet even, "inside width" 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 64 feet 10 inches,

extreme height 3 feet 9 inches, and capacity 154,000 pounds. With flat cars, the “inside length” is more like the length of the deck, and the inside height and cubic foot capacity is not really applicable. There were 225 cars in the series at the time. They were described as “Flat, TSH60A, End of Car Cushioning” with AAR Designation FMS, meaning an ordinary flat car “equipped with permanent racks for stowing parts, or are specially modified or equipped to provide for loading of a particular commodity.” Freight Car Historian Jim Eager posted to the MFCL discussion group on groups.io that these cars had inboard and outboard chain tracks, chains and binders. It was also noted in a general thread on this topic that some of the earlier OTTX cars could be found in their original brown paint as late as 2005! Yellow paint was adopted in 1971, so that data point would definitely not include these models. All the Trailer Train 60’ flatcars are detailed in **The TTX Story**, a recent multi-volume book set published by the Pennsylvania Railroad Historical and Technical Society.

While searching for more on this specific class of cars, I came across a thread also on the MFCL group in which Dick Dawson participated. Dawson is a long time veteran of the railroad industry including tenure at Trailer Train/TTX. It turns out that when built, these OTTX cars had end mounted brake wheels. An example of this is on the Fallen Flags website, OTTX 97326 as of July 1981 (in glorious black and white, no less), and another is OTTX 97311 found in May 1996 posted to the Canadian Freight Car Gallery. These cars were eventually converted to the side mounted ratchet brakes that are present on the MTL models. Dawson said this was part of the program for “all cars receiving AAR Extended Service Status (EXS) to extend their lives from 40 to 50 years. The hand brakes are also switched on cars receiving Increased Life Status (ILS) to extend their lives to 65 years.” The net of it is to further bring forward the start of the ATP for these models... and of course the presence of conspicuity stripes does so already.

Given all that, we jump in the ORER stash all the way to the January 2006 edition, where a total of 207 cars remain in service. The car count was 189 in the October 2020 ORER. But the OTTX reporting mark was definitely diminishing in importance for TTX, as those 189 represented almost 82 percent of the roster with that particular set of markings. The operational definition of cars with these reporting marks provides more detail: “Flat cars equipped with forty-eight chains, with snubbers, each secured to movable and retractable tie-down winches in four longitudinal channels; for transporting agricultural and military equipment; equipped with end of car cushioning.” Well, that’s a mouthful! And perhaps we’ll see some loads of this type from Micro-Trains (beyond the one announced this month, that is). A possible start could be the three military vehicles chained down to OTTX 97226, in an undated photo posted to the Canadian Freight Railcar Gallery that clearly shows the Thrall Car trademark at the far right as well as extended couplers.

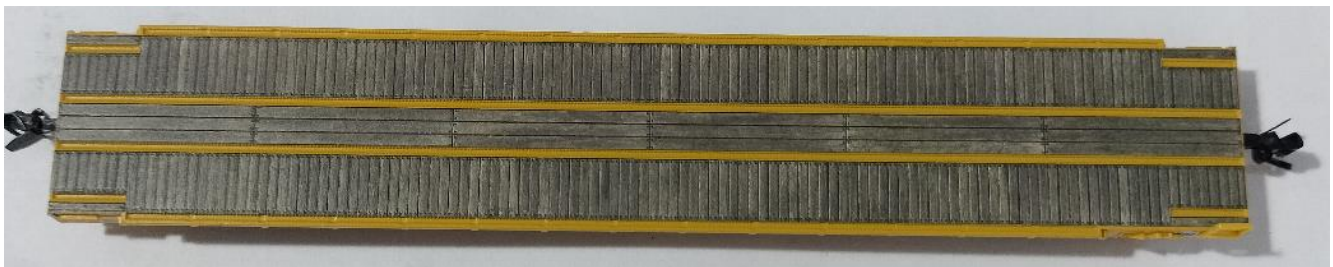
Meanwhile, an example of the agricultural equipment carried by these cars is in the form of a bingo photo of OTTX 97311, taken on what looks like a lonely siding in American Falls, Idaho in July 2005. There are no conspicuity stripes yet, and the vertical end brake wheel staff hasn’t been changed out for the ratchet brake either. Atop the car are two green and yellow farm tractors and a pair of tires, the size of which might be an obstacle in an ironman competition or a CrossFit studio! This image is on RRPictureArchives, as is another bingo from May 2014 showing the car in a form more like the Micro-Trains model.

The overhead bingo photo of OTTX 97409, available on RailcarPhotos, gives us a great view of the wood decking, in considerably worse shape than how it's modeled by Micro-Trains. It would be an interesting challenge to model a deck with warped wood and loose and missing boards. This photo from July 2020, along with a February 2002 image of OTTX 97382 taken by Collin Reinhart, also show cars with the TTX black and white logo, same as on these models. That illustrates to me that we could come out at least this far—or to the present, for that matter—with this white on black predecessor to the red version of the company's trademark.

What's also interesting—to me, anyway-- about the more contemporary photos of cars in this series is how they appear to be a mix of yellow and brown paint. It seemed to me that the brown areas were patch panels, but now I think it's the other way: the brown areas are where the yellow paint wore away or rusted to reveal the original brown, and the yellow is where the car was repainted. Either way, it's a nice attempt by MTL to show the car later in its life, which would be appropriate given the ratchet brake and the conspicuity stripes.



From the UMTRR Spy Network we have a shot of this car in the packaging in which it's delivered. There are user-installed parts in the two small openings in the foam nest. I'm told that there aren't instructions in the box, so hopefully it's obvious to the modeler where these are placed.



And we've also obtained an image of the simulated wood grain deck... yes, it **is** decoration on a cast metal body, not actual wood. Quite impressive!



In addition to the above, the **St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt) 50 Foot Fishbelly Sides and Boat Load (045 00 331, \$29.95, Reporting Marks SSW 85237)** is now available, confirmed via online sale listings. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the January 2024 issue.



Also, the **CTXX (Cleveland Track Material) Track Panel Flat Car Singles (071 00 930 and 071 00 931, \$39.95 each, Reporting Marks CTXX 003 and 005)** are expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the March 2024 issue.

*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 **August 31**.*



**Targeted Delivery
January 2025:**

123 00 140, \$54.98.

**Reporting Marks: LRS
137999.**

**60 Foot High-Cube
Exterior Post Double**

Plug Door Boxcar , Laurinburg and Southern “Save the Monarch Butterfly.”

Blended shades of green with multiple spots of yellow and orange. Mostly white reporting marks on left and program sponsors on left and right. White and yellow “Save the Monarch” information in English and Spanish on left above reporting marks. Multicolor depiction of a monarch butterfly on right. Black and white QR code outlined in orange on right next to butterfly. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at seven points along bottom of side. Black “Excess Height Car” in white band at top of ends. White reporting marks on otherwise black ends. Metal wheels and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 2022 to present. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Our Special Correspondent David Grothe was researching this car before I even started this month’s bytes, for which many thanks. He found a bingo photo of this car, which is the last in the LRS series 137200 to 137999, built by TrinityRail for GATX (which uses the LRS reporting marks) from October 2021 to June 2022. That image is a three-quarter view taken in December 2023. It reveals that the ends differ on this car versus the MTL 123 body style. The sides are pretty close including on the count of exterior posts (seven each side of the doors). And yes,

those yellow spots on the MTL artwork match what's on the prototype. This is going to re-raise the bar for decorating N Scale cars, I think!

The "60,000 Tree Challenge" advertised on this boxcar is a reference to the multi-company fundraising effort to plant that many oyamel trees in the El Rosario Butterfly Sanctuary in Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico. This is the ending point for the annual Monarch Butterfly migration which begins as far north as Canada. The boxcar followed a similar path, starting in September 2022 in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, traveling 5,450 miles with ten stops enroute ultimately reaching Morelia on November 4th. After that, it appears to have been placed in regular service. Hopefully there won't be any, ahem, incremental unauthorized decoration added any time soon, but I am a bit cynical about this since defacing a car this attractive will certainly be a "prize" for a certain class of these vandals. (How do you really feel, George?)

More oyamel trees at the Butterfly Sanctuary means more food during the winter, which means a better chance for survival for these insects. However, it's not the only issue facing these insects, and in fact the survival of the Monarch is a lot more complicated than I thought. For example, a report published in 2016 cited the loss of breeding habitat and milkweed, which is the exclusive food for these creatures in their larval stage. Just planting more milkweed isn't necessarily the answer either, since if overdone, it can lead to the rise of a dangerous parasite... and it's toxic to other wildlife.

In addition, it's been hypothesized that the count of overwintering Monarch populations in Mexico doesn't necessarily mean a further decline in the overall population of Monarchs. Even so, there's no arguing over the point that there are a lot fewer of these butterflies than there used to be. They are good pollinators so this is a cause for concern. We certainly find joy when one occasionally appears in the backyard of UMTRR HQ, but they're not regular visitors.

David also points us to a page on the Kansas City Southern website which at this writing announces that the "60,000 Tree Challenge" was met. The quest to raise \$100,000 to plant sixty thousand trees was exceeded and the final total was expected to be at least twenty percent higher than that. In the winter of 2022, "El Rosario hosted upwards of 130 million butterflies and we hope to see this number grow with the new oyamel trees and pollinator gardens planted along the route."



Meanwhile, I wonder if the QR Code on the finished car (excerpt from artwork at left) will actually work? (Not on my "smartphone" –it's not "smart" enough.) How would that be for a new level of realism? I'm not nearly as familiar with other N Scale products as I am with MTL items, but I don't recall seeing a QR code on an N Scale freight car previously to this.

N SCALE REPRINTS:



059 00 521 and 059 00 522, \$29.90 each. Reporting Marks: PFE 41611 and 41631.

40 Steel Ice Refrigerator Cars, Hinged Doors, with Preco Fan, Pacific Fruit Express.

Orange sides, brown roof and ends. Black lettering including roadname and reporting marks on left and PFE Class Code R-40-30 right of door. Black and white Union Pacific shield herald and Southern Pacific Line round herald on right, split by "Refrigerator." Approximate Time Period: 1953 (service date on car and

based on paint scheme) to early 1960s. Previous Release: Road Number 41507, October 1996.

From my own archives, here's a grab shot of the first and only previous regular run release of this car from October 1996 (at right). Note that I've photographed the opposite side of the car which has the SP and UP heralds reversed. That was the case on the prototypes; on one side it's UP/SP, and on the other it's SP/UP.



And that prototype is the PFE Class R-40-10, built in 1936 and 1937 by the PFE itself, General American, Pullman-Standard, American Car and Foundry, Standard Steel Car, **and** Pacific Car and Foundry. Seem like a lot of cars? It was, numbered from 40001 to 44700... inclusive! As noted in the book **Pacific Fruit Express** (Page 162), the 4700 total R-40-10s "represented one of the largest single classes of such cars ever built." That would give MTL plenty of choices for road numbers, which is good since their 059 and 0595 body styles are modeled after this particular car. Design work for these cars began starting in 1930, but actual construction didn't occur until after the Great Depression eased. If you're keeping score, this virtual two pack and the previous run represent cars built by General American, the cars numbered 41201 to 41700 in 1936 and 1937.

The base paint scheme of this virtual two pack dates to March 1952. In June 1950, the all black and white herald version of the "double herald" paint scheme was adopted by the PFE. At the same time that the UP shield was changed from the previous red, white and blue, the word "Railroad" was added to it. In March 1952, the horizontal lines above and below the reporting marks were dropped, and in 1953, the periods in the reporting marks were discontinued, so just "PFE" instead of "P.F.E." The service date of April 1953 on the MTL cars should represent

the first repainting into this exact version of the double herald scheme. The “LA” in that service date stands for the PFE shops in Los Angeles. This PFE scheme remained the standard until 1961, when it was replaced with the version with the large stepped roadname on the right. Since PFE was still pretty good at repainting its cars in the early 1960s, I wouldn’t take the Approximate Time Period too far past that 1961 change... though I plan to for my model pike which is set in 1963. Rule #1, folks!

An ORER from the Approximate Time Period will do here. The series 40001 to 44700 was still 4438 cars strong in the January 1958 Register. They were described as “Ventilator” in the “Refrigerator” section with an inside length of 33 feet 2 ¾ inches, inside width 8 feet 3 inches, inside height 7 feet 3 inches, outside length 41 feet 8 ½ inches, extreme height 14 feet 8 5/8 inches, door opening 4 feet wide by 7 feet ¾ inch high, lading capacity 1968 cubic feet or 82,000 pounds, and ice capacity 263 cubic feet or 11,000 pounds crushed ice, 10,600 pounds coarse ice, or 10,000 pounds chunk ice. End notes call out capability for half-stage icing, that the load limit includes both lading and ice capacity, and that there are “air circulating devices” – that is, fans. This is what distinguishes the 059 from the 0595 body style.

N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS: No single car releases or pre-order announcements this month, but see “N Scale Multi-Packs” below for a pre-order release.

N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:



025 44 931, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: EEC 3017.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Door, East Erie Commercial/ ex-Berlin Mills Railway.

Release #5 in the ex-Per Diem series (pre-orders were not taken for this

series). Green with mostly white lettering including large Berlin Mills Railway herald on right. Black restenciled EEC reporting marks on gray patch panel on left. White on blank COTS panels and yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection “dot” on right. Moderate weathering and rust effects. Scrawl and multicolor graffiti. Lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 2008, plus or minus, based on photo evidence. Previous Releases: Unweathered, Catalog 025 00 930, Road Number 435, July 2016 (#6 in the Incentive Per Diem Series).

Here’s the previous run of a Berlin Mills Railway car, from July 2016 (at right). It certainly looks like the faded lettering on this Weathered Release is pretty closely aligned to the “clean” release of, wait, eight years ago already? My coverage of that car in that issue of the UMTRR (available via the “Back Issues” page of the UMTRR website) includes a personal account from someone whose father was an employee of the Berlin Mills Railway. That short line was built to serve the large paper mill complex located in Berlin, New



Hampshire. Connection was made with the Boston and Maine and the Grand Trunk (the latter being the New England subsidiary of the Canadian National, not the Grand Trunk Western). The Brown Company, owner of the paper mill and the railroad, was shuffled from one owner to another following its acquisition by Gulf + Western in 1968. The Berlin Mills were torn down in 2007, ending some two hundred years of logging and paper making.

The 300 cars built in 1979 by Pacific Car and Foundry and leased by the Brae Corporation certainly looked like Incentive Per Diem cars, and there probably was a bit of that service going on, but outbound products from the Berlin Mills certainly kept them busy as well. The series of 300 cars numbered from 201 to 500 is the only set of cars listed in the July 1980 ORER. They're described as "Box, Steel, End of Car Cushioning" and have the standard AAR Designation of XM. The inside length was 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 11 feet 1 inch, outside length 56 feet 4 inches, extreme height 14 feet 11 inches, door opening 10 feet and capacity 5317 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds. In April 1995 there remained 156 cars, still in the 201 to 500 range and still the only series registered to Berlin Mills Railway. By April 1999 that was down to only 66 cars, and the entire registration was gone by the January 2000 ORER with the boxcars that remained transferred to the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, no doubt a consequence of the closing down of the Berlin Mills and its railway. BMS-marked cars stayed in the St. Lawrence and Atlantic roster well into the decade of the 2000's.

At least a few of the Berlin Mills boxcars were restenciled for the East Erie Commercial Railroad. The EEC has been covered in these bytes before; while it's physically an operation that serves the General Electric diesel manufacturing plant just, well, East of Erie, Pennsylvania, it also has quite a large pool of leased freight cars. This included EEC 3017, one of several former Berlin Mills cars for which there are bingo photos on RailcarPhotos.com. The bingo photo was taken in April 2008. Given that three years past the mandate for conspicuity stripes, this car still didn't have them, I'm going to go with a "plus or minus" from the bingo photo date for the ATP, since those reflectors could have been added not long after the 3017's picture was taken. It could also have been repainted in Plain Brown at some point. I first see the 3017 in the EEC roster in the October 2004 ORER. The last Register I have in which it appears is October 2014.

For photos of the car in full Berlin Mills paint, check the Fallen Flags site. Images range in vintage from a shot of a nearly-new BMS 311 taken by Jim Sands in 1979 in Marshalltown, Iowa to photos of BMS 388 and 462 caught in Longlac, Ontario during 1994. The bright green paint held up, well, okay, I guess, though the latter two cars clearly show rusting particularly on the doors. I should note that the cars do differ a bit from the MTL 025 body style, as would be expected with a 5317 cubic foot prototype versus the 5077 cubic foot car that's the basis for the Micro-Trains model. I also note that the 1994 view of the cars still includes the "Leased from Brae Corporation" even though that firm's rolling stock went to GE Capital in 1989.

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



094 44 900, \$36.95.

Reporting Marks: HPJX 19059.

Three Bay Center Flow Covered Hopper, Trough (Long) Hatches, Helm Leasing / ex-Golden West Service.

Base car is blue with yellow lettering and yellow "Golden West Service" roadname with red and yellow "blocks" logo on right. White restenciled reporting marks on black patch panel over blue patch panel on left. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at six points along bottom of side. Moderate to heavy weathering and rust effects. Multicolor graffiti. Approximate Time Period: 2016, plus or minus.

As the Golden West Service wound down, not all of the cars which went back to the Southern Pacific or other railroads that ended up part of the Union Pacific stayed there. Helm Leasing took some ex-Golden West cars into its roster, along with other UP castoffs. These ex-GWS cars and other open and covered hoppers were assigned the HPJX reporting marks, as opposed to the more familiar HLMX reporting marks, which you might also have seen on Helm's fleet of locomotives. HPJX technically stood for Helm-Pacific Leasing and had its own entry in the Official Railway Equipment Register, with the distinction from the mainstream Helm that Helm-Pacific was the owner **and** shipper.

RRPictureArchives has bingo photos for this car, taken in January and September 2016. That gives us the "plus or minus" point for the ATP. This is a 4650 cubic foot car, which matches the MTL 094 body style. The first ORER in which I see it is the January 2011 issue, where it's a series of one... which is not to say that there aren't other CF4650s with adjacent road numbers in the registration. The January 2020 Register has a much more consolidated view, with the series HPJX 19006 to 19325, however, with only seven total cars in a series that could hold 320. So "plus or minus" aside, I don't think we get to "the present" in any case.



105 44 056, \$28.95.

Reporting Marks: TM 2009.

50 Foot 15 Panel Gondola, Fishbelly Sides, Fixed Ends, Texas Mexican.

Green with mostly yellow lettering including reporting marks on left and roadname across side. Multicolor round herald on second panel from right. White on black double COTS panel on last panel on right. Moderate to heavy weathering and fading effects. Simulated scrap load included. Approximate Time Period: mid-1980s (1980 build date) to as late as 2011 (add conspicuity stripes after 2005), or more specifically as modeled, 1987, plus or minus. Previous Releases: None.

This is **almost** the first Micro-Trains release for the “Tex-Mex” (see below), so a quick history of the line is in order. It began in 1875 as a narrow gauge venture to bring cattle from ranches in the southern part of Texas to the Gulf Coast. After laying track from Corpus Cristi to San Diego, Texas, the line was sold to a syndicate that was building the Mexican National Railway between Mexico City and Nuevo Laredo, the latter on the Rio Grande (the river, not the railroad!) just south of Laredo, Texas. Laredo was the farthest point that the Texas Mexican ever reached, but it was enough. A bridge across the Rio Grande built in 1883 was the first rail connection between Mexico and the United States, but the line didn’t connect to the rest of the North American rail network until connection was made with the San Antonio and Aransas Pass in 1885. The narrow gauge was changed to standard gauge in 1902. The building of the Tex-Mex established Corpus Cristi as a major port, substantially diminishing both the Port of Brownsville farther south in Texas and the use of the Rio Grande below Laredo for commercial shipping. The purchase of Whitcomb locomotives in 1939 made the Texas Mexican the first railroad of its size to dieselize.

While operated independently since 1889, the company’s stock had been controlled by the National Railways of Mexico until 1982, when the NdeM was privatized; Grupo TFM took it over. Kansas City Southern purchased a 49 percent interest in it in 1995, handy when they were granted trackage rights in 1996 to connect to it, and thence to Mexico, as one of the conditions of the merger of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific. The KCS acquired the rest of the Texas Mexican and formally merged it in 2005; I’m leaving out some of the corporate transactions that occurred in between.

It’s usually bright Incentive Per Diem boxcars that get the attention. A not so bright IPD boxcar got Micro-Trains’ attention: the only previous release of which I’m aware for the Texas Mexican—sort of. It’s a heavily weathered IPD boxcar in TM paint, restenciled for the Alabama and Gulf Coast. It was a component of the pre-order only “UP/SP Weathered Train Set” (993 01 370, February 2016)... which I see I never added to the 2016 Release List on the UMTRR Website. A fix is in process...



But other types of cars were also leased to railroads by some of the same companies. We have an example right here. The Texas Mexican leased the gondola series 2000 to 2049 from Itel. According to RailcarPhotos, these cars were built by Portec’s Clinton, Illinois facility in February 1980. That’s the build date we see on this model. Portec was a relatively small freight car manufacturer for a relatively short time, the early 1970s to 1985, when it sold its three plants to Duchossois Industries to focus on their railway-maintenance, construction equipment and materials handling businesses. At the time, Duchossois also owned Thrall Car Manufacturing and Transportation Corporation of America.

On RailcarPhotos is the bingo, from February 1987 at Saltillo, Mexico. It’s looking rather worn out already but with the lettering mostly intact, as on the MTL model. The car was a fifteen panel gondola, as usual slightly longer than the Micro-Trains model, and has different ends than the MTL 105 body style. From RRPictureArchives, we see sister car 2006 hiding behind a

National Railways of Mexico RSD12 diesel in Saltillo, Mexico, in February 1987. It's got a scrap load as well. There are other shots on RRPictureArchives of this series. A November 2003 shot of TM 2007 shows restenciled reporting marks, necessary I think considering how faded the rest of the lettering was at that time.

The ORER for April 1981 shows the series TM 2000 to 2049, described as "Gondola, Fixed Ends" with AAR Designation GB. The key dimensions were: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 3 feet 8 inches, outside length 57 feet 1 inch, extreme height 7 feet 3 inches, and capacity 1828 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. Given photo evidence, I jumped to the January 2011 ORER, where 23 cars remained; Texas Mexican was still listed separately from Kansas City Southern. That's the last register I have in which these gondolas are listed.



123 44 017, \$52.95.

Reporting Marks: TBOX 665661.

60 Foot High-Cube Exterior Post Double Plug Door Boxcars With Modified Door Hardware, TTX.

Yellow with aluminum roof and black doors. Mostly black lettering including reporting marks on left. Red, blue and black "Next Load/Any Road" logo on left. White on black TTX logo on right. White on black double COTS panel on far right. Orange vertical conspicuity stripes

across car. Tops of ends are white (denoting excess height car) with black reporting marks. One side of car has white restenciled road number on black patch panels. Light weathering; scrawl and multicolor graffiti, mostly along bottom of both sides of car. Body mounted couplers and metal wheels (wheels weathered). Approximate Time Period: 2011 to 2013, plus or minus. Previous Releases: Unweathered, TTX Three Pack with Road Numbers 665118, 665138, and 665141, November 2020; then single releases as follows: Road Number 665113, July 2022; Road Number 665130, August 2022; Road Number 665148, September 2022, then Weathered Releases: Road Number 665822, January 2024, Road Number 665898, March 2024, Road Number 665919, April 2024.

Though there are several images of this car online, I think the July 2013 photo on RRPictureArchives was the basis for one side of this model, given that it has the restenciled reporting marks. No, I can't read that, ahem, additional lettering that is partially obscured by the redone reporting marks. Never was good at that... The other side of the Micro-Trains car looks like a photo from November 2011 on the same site. We'll stick with the "plus or minus" ATP here (subject to Rule #1, of course), but include both photo dates in the range from which one can, well, plus or minus.

This makes four Weathered Releases, all part of the prototype series 665500 to 665999, built between July and October 2003 by National Steel Car Company of Hamilton, Ontario, as their

Job 5165. They carry TTX class XHN60, as did the 665000 to 665499 from which all the previous road numbers were taken by MTL. And looking at the real cars, there's plenty more where that came from. I think it's reasonable to conclude that this virtual series is a hit for the folks behind the red and yellow sign.



993 05 077, \$109.95.

Reporting Marks: MRL 50002, 50007, and 50024 (Catalog Numbers 094 44 880, 094 45 880, and 094 46 880).

Montana Rail Link Weathered Three Pack.

Jewel box packaging. Consists of three 094 Series Three Bay Center Flow Covered Hoppers. Blue with mostly white lettering. Large red and white Montana Rail Link roadname on left and large white Washington Companies logo on right. Extensive bleed-

through of previous Burlington Northern green paint on most of the sides of each car (amount varies by car). White restenciled reporting marks on blue patch panel at lower left. Scrawl and multicolor graffiti (varies by car). Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at six points along sides. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to early decade of the 2010s. Previous Releases: None.

Well, the heritage of these cars is rather obvious, even without the Micro-Trains car copy. Not such a great job in the paint shops getting these cars ready for a new owner, eh?

According to RailcarPhotos, the Montana Rail Link series MRL 50001 to 50100 came from the Burlington Northern series BN 455000 to 455199. These CF4650 cars were built by American Car and Foundry in 1970. They have as a spotting feature the earlier single seam rib between the main carbody and the roof, something I learned about while researching in general the HO Scale "Grit and Grime" cars; that's the way AC&F built these cars until about 1973. The MTL 094 body style is a good match for these prototypes, with an exception noted below.

Bingo photos for all three Center Flows are on RRPictureArchives. MRL 50002 was found rolling through Avery, Washington on the last day of 2007, and again in Vancouver, Washington in June 2010 and in Bend, Oregon in August 2010. There's a shot of the 50007 as of April 2007 in Blossburg, Montana. There are two images of MRL 50024. The photo from June 2008 shows the car in a condition closer to the MTL rendition; the shot taken in June 2010 shows even less of the MRL paint, illustrating how much it could further deteriorate in just two years.

If you'd like to see what one of these cars looked like freshly painted, head over to RailcarPhotos for a May 2002 image of MRL 50023. And if you'd like to see a photo of one of these cars with just the BN paint patched out, stay there for a view of MRL 50088 from August 1988. That's probably right after Montana Rail Link picked up these cars, since MRL began operations on October 31, 1987. Though not from the same prototype series, MTL released an MRL car of this type in 1997 and 2005 (the latter at right).



That brings us to the ORER for July 1989. All 100 cars in the series MRL 50000 to 50100 are in place already, described as "Covered Hopper, Center Flow, Triple Hopper, Self Clearing, One Full Length Trough Loading Hatch, Three Hopper Discharge Gates." That description points out a relatively small difference between the Micro-Trains car, which has disconnected trough hatches, and the prototype, which had a "continuous" hatch—not a single hatch the length of the car, but four sections with no spaces in between. An overhead shot would help here: see MRL 50009 on RailcarPhotos for that image. The outside length was 54 feet even and extreme height 15 feet 6 inches; no inside dimensions were given. There were 90 cars in the main series with 200,000 pounds capacity and subsets of another nine cars with 199,000 pounds capacity and a single car with 198,000 pounds capacity. Given the bingo photo dates, I jumped to the January 2011 ORER where the car count was 89. By the next Equipment Register in the Research Accumulation, April 2013, the entire series was gone.

I'll close here with more Fun With Catalog Numbers: if one looks at the regular release database that Micro-Trains has now updated through the start of this month, it would seem that the individual catalog numbers for these Center Flows seems to skip ahead quite a bit. That's not quite true, for many of the 094 cars released in the past few years have been part of Weathered Packs—and by that I mean as little as a pair in a pack, like the "Agribusiness Weathered Center Flow Two Pack" – which had 094 44 850 and 860 as their catalog numbers.



N SCALE MULTI-PACKS:

Runner Pack #226, also known as the Burlington Northern Four Pack (983 00 226, \$149.95, Jewel Case Packaging; 993 00 226, \$134.95, Foam Nest Packaging) is now available, confirmed through

online sale listings. UMTRR Pre-Order Coverage was in the March 2024 issue. The individual Catalog and Road Numbers are: 094 51 311, 446115; 094 52 311, 446262; 094 53 311, 446272; 094 54 311, 446307. These are the fourth through seventh releases for this item.



Expected mid-month is the **Union Pacific Heavyweight Three Pack (983 02 251, \$101.95 with Jewel Cases, 993 02 251, \$89.95 with Foam Nest Packaging)**. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the March 2024 issue. The individual Catalog Numbers and car names are: 142 51 420, “Bradshaw”; 142 52 420, “Weverton”; 142 53 420, “Pocatello.” These are the second through fourth releases

for this item; the first was the “Newton Hook” in August 2021, Catalog 142 00 420, confirming what I’d mentioned might be the case in the March pre-review of this three pack.

*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 **August 31**.*



Targeted Delivery December 2024:

983 00 231, \$119.95.

Reporting Marks: GM&O 58000, 58004, 58021, and 58025.

Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Runner Pack (Runner Pack #231).

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of four MTL 180 series fifty foot boxcars with single Youngstown doors, without running boards, with lowered brake wheel and short side and end ladders. Green with white lettering including semicircle road name and reporting marks on left and “Cushioned For A Soft Ride ... Inside” herald on right. Return instructions left of door. Cushion underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 1968 (build date) through the decade of the 1970s. Previous Releases: None. MTL

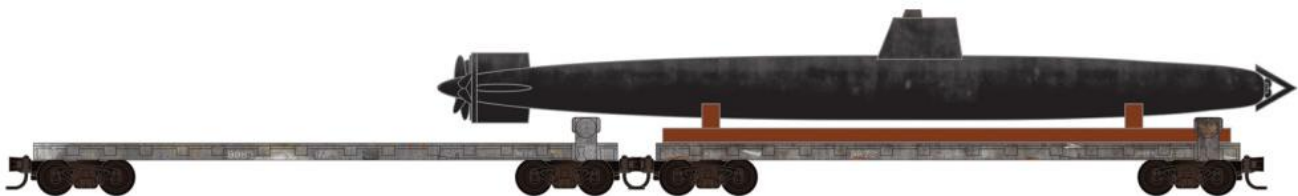
artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Page 96 of the **IC/GM&O Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** has two photos of cars from the prototype series – neither of which are bingos to the four road numbers coming in this Runner Pack, but they’ll do. GM&O 55136 remains in its as delivered paint as of May 1974, coupled to two other GM&O 50 foot boxcars that are from different series but are painted about the same way. GM&O 58103 has a large “DF” to the left of the reporting marks as of October 1974, presumed by **Color Guide** author James Kincaid to have been painted later. Both cars were in the series 58000 to 58199, built in mid-1968 by Pullman-Standard as its Lot 9315. They had Hydroframe-40 cushioning, four Evans DF-2 belt loaders and ten foot doors. Those doors are a bit different than the ones on the MTL 180 body style. They have three sections each of which has four raised panels. The large routing instructions (clip from the MTL artwork at right) appear on a fair number of this railroad’s cars. Online, there’s a February 1976 image of GM&O 58112 on RailcarPhotos.com, and that number isn’t a bingo to any of the Runner Pack cars either.



The ORER for April 1970 has all 200 cars in the series with these dimensions: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 4 inches, inside height 10 feet 5 inches, outside length 58 feet 6 inches, extreme height 15 feet even, door opening 10 feet and capacity 4941 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. In the October 1972 Equipment Register, 199 of these cars with GM&O markings are shown in the Illinois Central Gulf listing. There weren’t yet any cars restenciled to the then-new ICG reporting marks, as the merger of the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio and the Illinois Central had officially occurred just a few months before, on August 10, 1972.

The July 1974 ORER is the closest I have to the **Color Guide** photo dates, and it shows 188 cars remaining in the GM&O series. That was down to 118 cars in the July 1980 ORER, then 104 in the January 1985 Register. By the July 1989 ORER, the ICG had reverted to just Illinois Central again, but four of these cars still survived with GM&O reporting marks. I would think that most of these cars were repainted into ICG orange, black and white, but I don’t have the numbers to which they were, well, renumbered.



Targeted Delivery January 2025:

983 02 256, \$76.95.

Road Numbers: 9872 and 9972.

Weathered Flat Car Two Pack with Captured World War II HA-19 Submarine Load.

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of two MTL 044 Series 50 Foot Straight Side Flat Cars. Cars are gray with minimal white lettering including road number only left of center. Includes multi-media kit for a HA-19 miniature submarine and mount (unassembled and unpainted). Approximate Time Period: 1942 and 1943. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Micro-Trains tells the short story of this two pack in its car copy: “Only one of the 5 Japanese midget subs that were attempting to penetrate Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7th, 1941 survived almost intact. After the attack, the Type A, HA-19 was recovered on the beach east of Oahu, sent stateside and transported via rail across the United States to help with the War Bond effort.” So, yes, this two pack is “based on actual events”! I’ll note that the artwork here is of the 044 body style, the straight side flat car, while the verbiage calls out the 045 body style, the fishbelly side flat car. I think what will be delivered are the straight side cars.

The “Naval History and Heritage Command” website, a part of the official United States Navy online presence, has more information. “The Japanese Navy included five Type A midget submarines in the Pearl Harbor raid of 7 December 1941. Transported on board large I type submarines, the midgets were launched near the entrance to Pearl Harbor the night before the attack was to begin. One, spotted trying to enter the harbor before dawn, was attacked and sunk by USS Ward (DD-139) in the first combat action of the as yet unopened Pacific War. At least one of the midgets was able to enter the harbor and was sunk there by USS Monaghan (DD-354). Another, the Ha-19, unsuccessful in its attempts to penetrate Pearl Harbor, drifted around to the east coast of Oahu and was captured there the day after the attack.” Four of the five craft are accounted for, and two are on exhibit, one at Eta Jima, Japan, and the other, presumably the one being modeled, at Fredericksburg, Texas. There are “bingo photos,” if you will, here: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/wars-and-events/world-war-ii/pearl-harbor-raid/japanese-forces-in-the-pearl-harbor-attack/japanese-midget-submarines-used-in-the-attack-on-pearl-harbor.html> . From the Wikipedians we have some dimensional data: length, 78 feet 5 inches, height, 9 feet 10 inches, beam (like “extreme width” in the ORER), 5 feet 11 inches, and weight when submerged, 47 tons. These used an electric motor powered by 192 trays of two-volt cells. There were 101 of these built including three prototypes.

Photo # NH 47036 President Roosevelt tours Mare Island Navy Yard, 1942



And yes, this submarine was sent “on tour.” This Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval History and Heritage Command (at left) shows it, clearly atop a flat car, at the Mare Island Navy Yard in Vallejo, California, in 1942. (The facility was closed in 1996.) It has a very famous visitor who was probably the main subject for the photographer: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. My non-diligent check for additional photos online didn’t show any others with the sub on flat cars, though there were two with it being towed by a truck with special trailer,

one in Albuquerque, New Mexico and the other in Fredericksburg, Texas, in 1943. I’ll assume that it was on the way to permanent exhibit at that time and I’ll call the Approximate Time Period there, so 1942 and 1943. Rule #1 applies, of course.

It's noted that four of the five midget subs are accounted for. There's a possible connection to a previous Special Edition series produced by MTL... remember the "Battleship Row" set of boxcars (example at right, the USS Missouri, 038 00 601, July 2006)? "Recent studies of Pearl Harbor attack photography have led some observers to argue that one of the midgets was in place off 'Battleship Row' as the Japanese torpedo planes came in, and may have fired its torpedoes at USS Oklahoma (BB-37) or USS West Virginia (BB-48). This contention is still controversial, but, if it is true, the 'missing' Type A midget submarine may lie undiscovered inside Pearl Harbor."



Targeted Delivery
January 2025:

983 02 257, \$99.95.

Road Numbers: 66, 90 and 92.

**Alaska Railroad
Heavyweight Three
Pack.**

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of one MTL 147 Series Heavyweight Baggage Car, one MTL 141 Series 10-1-2 Heavyweight

Sleeping Car, and one MTL 142 Series 12-1 Heavyweight Sleeping Car. Cars are blue with yellow band across windows. Black roof, underframe and six wheel trucks. Yellow lettering including roadname in center of letterboard and road number at bottom left and right. Baggage Car and 12-1 Sleeper have "United States" at left end of letterboard and "Department of the Interior" at right end of letterboard. 12-1 Sleeper has car name "Lake Minchumina" at bottom center. Approximate Time Period: mid-1950s to around 1967. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Here's a data point that is a clue to the ATP: Ownership of the Alaska Railroad moved from the United States Department of the Interior to the United States Department of Transportation in 1967, after the latter was created. A bingo photo on the Fallen Flags site of Sleeping Car 92 is tagged as being from the mid-1960s. It's in black and white but definitely matches the Micro-Trains artwork. There's also a pretty good match between the prototype and the MTL 142 body style. A color photo and a diagram is on the alaskarails.org website. The car was built in 1924, started service on the Alaska Railroad in 1956, and was retired in 1973. By the way, Lake Minchumina is the largest lake within Denali National Park. It's north of Denali (Mount McKinley) and while it's about 20,000 acres in size, it's shallow, not deeper than 30 feet.

I was wondering when the blue and yellow paint scheme was adopted. A data point here is a 1958 breakfast menu for the railroad which shows a train in that scheme. (Another fun fact: the Alaska fitted carbodies to some of its RS-1s to help shelter crews from the extreme cold.) A scan of that menu is also on Fallen Flags. The site alaskarails.org has the 1950s for this as well, “when everything [motive power] was in either the road switcher blue and yellow or the cab-unit blue and yellow.”

Here’s an unusual way to get a more specific start to the Approximate Time Period, in this case, for Car 90. [Alaskarails.org](http://alaskarails.org) shows it being unloaded from a ship at the Seward, Alaska dock in September 1955. How’s that for “taking delivery”? The ARR had no connection to the rest of the North American rail network (and still doesn’t, though the topic resurfaces from time to time with little forward progress). So it’s via barge from Canada and Washington State that the line received rolling stock. This was no exception! I don’t think I’ve ever seen this particular perspective of a passenger car: mid-air, being lifted off the ship to be placed on rails. Certainly we get a much better than usual look at the underframe and six wheel trucks. As, well, delivered, the car was painted as it appears in the preliminary artwork. The 90 was a six compartment / three dressing room car, built in November 1924 (the late Jerry Laboda had this as Plan 3523A) and was formerly the “Raphael.” On the Alaska, the car also carried the name “Mt. Susitna.” Both cars saw service on the overnight Anchorage-Fairbanks train in the late 1950s, along with ARR 91, the former “Flotow” built in July 1925). After that was discontinued they were mainly used for Army troop movements and as spare coaches. What’s left of these cars was found in Nenana, Alaska, in the summer of 2017.

[Alaskarails.org](http://alaskarails.org) also has a black and white shot of Baggage Car 60, or at least the left hand side of it, being loaded at an unspecified place and time. It was snowing at the time this picture was taken. From what we can see, the roofline differs from the MTL 147 body style, not particularly surprising since the model has an Erie Railroad prototype. The paint scheme looks to align with the MTL artwork.



Targeted Delivery January 2025:
983 02 258, \$174.95.

Reporting Marks: BNSF 203003, 203004, 203006, 203013, and 203014.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Weathered Five Pack.

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of five 135 series Well Cars. Red with aluminum walkways. Mostly white lettering including “48” on far

left, reporting marks on left and Burlington Northern herald on right. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at multiple points along side (position varies by car). Light to moderate weathering; scrawl and multicolor graffiti on at least three cars. Approximate Time Period:

after 2005 given conspicuity stripes into the decade of the 2020s. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

According to RailcarPhotos.com, the short series BNSF series 203003 to 203018 was built for the Burlington Northern in March 1991 by Gunderson, carrying numbers 64003 to 64018. The point at which these cars flipped from BN to BNSF reporting marks would be sometime after the 1996 merger that created Burlington Northern Santa Fe. But I catch a break from trying to determine more precisely when that occurred since the MTL artwork shows these five cars with conspicuity stripes. That places the ATP start at no earlier than 2005. (And you can see why I generally call out this detail in descriptions!)

Four of these five cars are pictured on RRPictureArchives. It's noted that BNSF 203003 was previously BN 64003, and BNSF 203004 was formerly BN 64004. So perhaps this was a straightforward renumbering. The 203003 was a bit far from home in Altoona, Pennsylvania in October 2008. The 203004 was found in September 2006 in Sidney, Indiana carrying two twenty foot and one forty foot container (the 40 footer on top) painted for "K" Line in a brighter red than that of the car in which they rode. The car was also seen empty in June 2008 in Goshen, Indiana. BNSF 203006 was carrying three blue Hanjan containers—a 45 foot atop two 20 footers—in July 2007 in Rochelle, Illinois, then with a mixed set of three boxes in Coon Creek, Minnesota in July 2015. We note a possible split ATP end here since BNSF 203013 was captured as late as January 2024. We wrap up the bingos on RailcarPhotos.com with BNSF 203014, with just a small amount of, ahem, additional unauthorized paint work, as of December 2009.

The car count stands at 14 in the January 2006 ORER. The cars were described there as "Flat, Double Stack Pack" (lending some credibility to Colleen and I calling trains comprised of cars of this type "Interesting Double Stacks"). The inside length was 48 feet, outside length 71 feet 8 inches, and extreme height 4 feet 9 inches—without load, obviously! The gross rail weight was 220,000 pounds. From RailcarPhotos we get the light weight of 53,300 pounds, leaving 166,700 pounds for the weight of the containers and what's in them.

The January 2011 ORER shows 16 cars in the series, up two from January 2006, probably meaning that the last two cars with BN reporting marks were restenciled. The car count was twelve in the October 2020 Equipment Register, which is far as I can go in the ORER pile. (Yes, I really do need to address that...) Considering that 48 foot well cars were in serious decline starting with the rebuild to 40 foot well cars in 2003 by TTX, these cars were pretty scarce in the 2020s.

N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: There are no releases this month, but there is quite the spooky pre-order item...

*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 **August 31**.*



Targeted Delivery September 2024:
102 00 850, \$39.95.

Reporting Marks: None.

Modified 60 Foot Excess Height Boxcar, 2024 Micro-Mouse Illuminated Halloween Car.

Multicolor sides, black ends and

roof. Full car graphics including Micro-Mouse on left, jack-o-lantern in modified door opening and "Happy Halloween" right of door opening. Includes lighting kit and magnetic wand light actuator. MTL pre-production sample shown; actual product may vary.

A key feature of this year's Halloween offering is the interior light. Here's the MTL rendition of what it looks like with that light on and, I presume, the lights in the room off (at right).



We're going to keep this commentary short here, though, and pick it up below at the end of these bytes with something a little different... from my wife!

In addition to the above, I also received an e-mail early this month from MTL about the **Micro-Trains Christmas Set (983 21 388, \$249.95)**. Based on that e-mail, it appears that the pre-order window for it has been extended a bit.

Z SCALE: No releases or pre-order announcements this month. One update: The first two virtual two packs of 60 foot flat cars pre-ordered in June 2023, previously expected to be available mid-June, are listed as now available in the August Micro-News and on the MTL website. I've updated the 2024 Release Table on the UMTRR Website with this new delivery date. They are:



Norfolk Southern (524 00 181 and 524 00 182, NS 101101 and 101104, \$23.95 each). Only

the MTL artwork for the 181 release is shown here for illustration. These are the first and second road numbers for this release.



Union Pacific (524 00 201 and 524 00 202, UP 52033 and 52058, \$23.95 each). Only the MTL

artwork for the 201 release is shown here for illustration. These are the first and second road numbers for this release.

HO SCALE: The CSXT Three Bay Center Flow Weathered Kit, also known as Grit and Grime Series #6 by my reckoning (2000-001, \$49.95, CSXT 247177) is now available. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the May 2024 issue.



And the two Rio Grande Two Bay Center Flows (2200-005, D&RGW 10000 and 2200-006, D&RGW 10002, \$49.95 each) are now scheduled to be available mid-month; that's moved up a bit from the September target. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the March 2024 issue.

I've updated the 2024 Release Table with this information. I **think** I'm up to date now... Meanwhile, the workbook of MTL Weathered Releases available on their site (see the "Downloads" section) now includes a list of the HO Scale offerings in a separate sheet (tab).

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 August 31.



Targeted Delivery November 2024:

900 56 010, \$54.95.

HO Grain Storage Kit.

Structure kit including Accurail 3100 Series 40 Foot Plug Door Boxcar (no trucks or couplers). Boxcar is decorated on one side only in brown with white lettering with large Santa Fe circle cross herald with roadname painted out on left and large Cooper Black roadname painted out on right, and has moderate weathering and rust effects including door scrapes. Building is unassembled unpainted kit with additional detail parts (boxes, barrels, pallets, grain sacks). Assembly required. Image is presumed to be

decorated pre-production model; actual product may vary.

I wasn't sure whether to include this in the main HO Scale section or in the MTL Announcements section, but the coin flip came up heads so there you go. It does include an Accurail car kit—well, most of it, I presume, but it is a structure. On the other hand, I suspect that very few if any HO Scale modelers have tripped over my coverage here anyway...

At any rate, this kit reminds me of the N Scale "Grain Elevator" kit released in December 2023 (499 00 104, at right) and it's certainly got a family resemblance. This HO Scale kit, like its N Scale counterpart, is good for small spaces, though it's probably not suitable for direct rail service. (Rule #1 still applies, though, even in 1:87 proportion!)



The boxcar's ATSF decoration is a bit of a borrowing from the similar N Scale boxcar (Catalog Number 21110/021 00 110, at left.)

MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: Discussed at the National N Scale Convention in June, and I'm sure elsewhere as well, the first N Scale Billboard Kit is now available for pre-order (499 50 503, \$20.95). There's enough material in this kit to make a scale 32 foot high sign with either a single or double sided billboard, about 24 feet wide by 12 feet high. Included are four full-color billboards. Micro-Trains notes that future kits of this type will have different advertisements.



For the just released N Scale 60 foot flat car, we have a **Construction Equipment Load Kit (499 45 027, \$14.95, not on MTL Dealer Standing Order).**

DISCONTINUED ALERT: The MTL website is mostly back up at this writing, with the exception that the themed series pages aren't yet available (or perhaps, aren't coming back). However, the individual items within those series can be searched—and I did just that. For example I've found that among the Constellation Series, some cars remain in stock.

While the Annual Release Tables from 2016 to June 2024 have all been revalidated and posted to the UMTRR website at "press time," I'll focus on only this year and last year for the official Bye-Bye Board here. Which makes for a long enough list of things that have been sold out!

As before, my criteria for declaring that items have left the building is that they no longer appear anywhere in the listings on the MTL website. But **not** as before, this is sometimes via a direct search on the MTL site for the catalog number. So let's look at outs from 2024 since the last Discontinued Alert I did in May. We start with the first number of the RBMN boxcar

(025 00 426, May, second number still available). The 2024 Solar Eclipse Car (038 00 551, May) has left the building. The April Fool's "Frigerator" boxcar has sold out, no foolin' (042 00 160, April). The 80th Anniversary of D-Day flat car with United States graphics and load has been discontinued (045 00 780, June) but the D-Day flat car with UK graphics and load has not (045 00 781). The gondolas with loads for both the Norfolk and Western (046 00 490, March) and Chessie System (046 00 500, also March) have shipped out. I can't think of a good pun for the sellout of the W.S. Riester refrigerator car, also known as Poultry and Egg Series #2 (058 00 601, January), but I can think of several bad ones: the chickens have danced away, it's scrambled, etc. The Weathered CSX two bay center flow has flowed out (092 44 351, June). The Santa Fe steel caboose reprint has rolled away (100 00 471, June), and so has the Erie Lackawanna gondola with load (105 00 680, June). Both numbers of the Southern Pacific and the first number of the Pennsylvania Railroad mill gondolas are gone (107 00 080, April, 107 00 081, May, and 107 00 080, June). The Norfolk Southern three bay open hopper, also NS Family Tree Series #11 (108 44 540, March) has emptied out and the Illinois Central Gulf depressed center flat car (109 00 310, May) has exited. Both numbers of the Union Pacific 'TBOX' boxcar are outta here (123 00 101, April and 123 00 102, May). And the following Multi-Packs now have the Dreaded "D": Runner Pack #222 of three NATX tank cars (983 00 222, April); the Jewel Box version of Runner Pack #224 of four Chesapeake and Ohio open hoppers (983 00 224, June; Foam Nest version still available); both versions of both MT&L Dinner Car Four Packs (70s/80s, 9x3 02 236, February, and 30s-50s, 9x3 02 237, March); the Foam Nest version of the CP/Soo Line four pack of hoppers with tarp covers (993 02 239, February, Jewel Box version still available); both versions of the Hay Gondola Three Pack (9x3 02 243, April); the Jewel Box version of the Rio Grande gondola three pack (983 02 244, March, Foam Nest version still available); the Foam Nest version of the Southern Pacific flat car three pack with load (993 02 245, May, Jewel Box version still available); both versions of the Louisville and Nashville Heavyweight Five Pack (9x3 02 246, June); and both versions of the Northwestern Oklahoma three back of weathered bulkhead flat cars (9x3 02 247, June). In Z Scale, we have these out of stock: the first number of the Southern Pacific well car (540 00 023, April) and both numbers of the CSX Intermodal well car (540 00 11x, April).

Staying with Z Scale and moving back to 2023, the Christmas Car has sold out (507 00 740, November); both numbers of the Norfolk Southern x-post boxcar with Southern reporting marks are marked out (511 00 04x, December); and the weathered Bangor and Aroostook boxcar has taken a powder (511 44 300, March). I note that several War of the Worlds cars are again listed in stock so I've adjusted the 2023 Release Table to reflect this.

Over in N Scale, these single items are sold out from 2023 since last look – a whole lot of them: the Southern/ex-Central of Georgia boxcar, NS Family Tree Series #3 (020 44 377, December); the sky blue Great Northern boxcar (024 00 550, August); the Union Pacific x-post boxcar with SP reporting marks (025 00 306, May); the Norfolk and Western / former ART boxcar, NS Family Tree Series #2 (032 44 590, June); the Great Northern flat car with load (045 00 640, January); the Delaware and Hudson red gondola with load (046 00 411, January) and the Lehigh Valley gray gondola with load (046 00 480, March); the MT&L / Southern Oregon Refrigerator "Pinnacle Pears" refrigerator car (049 00 943, July); the second number of the Pacific Fruit Express "curved corner" refrigerator car (049 00 962, November, first number still

available); the Norfolk and Western/ex-Virginian open hopper, NS Family Tree #5 (056 44 480, September); the Rio Grande TOFC flat car (071 00 531, November); the first number of the NdeM COFC flat car (072 00 031, October, second number still available); the FCP COFC flat car (072 00 050, October); the BNSF/ex-Santa Fe boxcar, BNSF Family Tree Series #7 (076 44 150, March); the BNSF weathered two bay Center Flow, BNSF Family Tree Series #8 (092 44 283, April); the second number of the Union Pacific PS-2 covered hopper (095 00 032, March); the Conrail excess height boxcar (102 00 080, January); the second number of the Union Pacific "Automated Railway" excess height boxcar (104 00 152, October, first number previously sold out); the first number of the Norfolk Southern gondola with cover (105 00 461, May, first number still available); the second number of the CSX open hopper (108 00 442, February, first number already gone); the second number of the CSX open hopper with NYC reporting marks (108 00 622, September, first number already gone); both National Railways of Mexico tank cars (110 00 550 and 110 00 570, April); the weathered TTX/BNSF auto rack (111 44 103, June); the weathered Trailer Train/N&W auto rack (111 44 460, May); the third War of the Worlds flat car, #9 in the series (139 00 033, November); the Norfolk Southern/ex-N&W boxcar, NS Family Tree Series #6 (181 44 300, October); and the first number of the Rio Grande boxcar (182 00 111, July, second number still available). Well, now isn't that a run-on sentence... and I think I just created a shortage of semicolons.

Now, to the sold out packs from 2023: the Southern Pacific "Railroad Police" two pack (993 00 212, July); the SP "Air Repeater" boxcar two pack with Foam Nest (993 02 207, January); the Foam Nest version of the "Wabash Cannonball" Heavyweight Five Pack (993 02 211, May, Jewel Box version already gone); the Foam Nest version of the CP Camp Car Four Pack (993 02 212, March, Jewel Box version still available); the Foam Nest versions of the NS Ribbon Rail Flat Car Pack #2 and #3 (993 02 221 and 222, August, Jewel Box versions still available); both versions of Eight Pack #26 of BNSF open hoppers (9x3 00 826, October); both versions of the Union Pacific Yellow weathered stock car two pack (9x3 05 045, March) and the Foam Nest version of the Union Pacific Brown weathered stock car two pack (993 05 046, March, Jewel Box version already gone); the TILX weathered tank car three pack (983 05 059, September); and both versions of the Agribusiness Two Pack (9x3 05 065, December).

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: David Grothe found a bingo photo for last month's Maine Central caboose on Flickr: [flic.kr/p/20pxBy5](https://www.flickr.com/photos/20pxBy5/) . It's a rather oblique angle, but it's better than the zero angles I found!

UMTRR Gang Member Mickey Levine relates that the Northwest Railroad Museum in Snoqualmie, Washington, has a restored Baptist Chapel Car. It's wooden, not steel like the forthcoming MTL models, but it's nice to see that one of these unusual pieces of equipment survives. "The 'Messenger of Peace' traveled the country for 50 years. Thanks to the in depth research compiled by Norman and Wilma Taylor, an extensive travelog has been assembled. That log is reprinted with permission as part of the information on this car and the restoration effort, which was substantially completed in 2012. See www.messengerofpeace.org/A.php for the opening page of this coverage.

OOPS PATROL: I think this is my first recorded Oops in HO Scale: With respect to last month's pre-order announcements of three bay center flows, the SP/Golden West Service car, 2000-002, is Grit and Grime Series #9, not #7, and the Union Pacific car, 2000-003, is Grit and Grime Series #10, not #8. I have all Grit and Grime Series cars, announced and released, in a table near the bottom of the 2024 Release Table page on the UMTRR website.

FINALLY, AN EARLY TRICK OR TREAT STORY: As I mentioned in the brief "pre-review" of the N Scale Halloween Car above, I'm turning over the close of these bytes this time to my wife. Take it away, Colleen...

Every October, as the leaves begin to fall and the air turns crisp, our home transforms into a haven of Halloween magic. Since moving into this house in 2018, we've welcomed children from the neighborhood, eager to experience the wonder of our Halloween train layout. It's a tradition that started small with my husband putting a track on an old door covered with paper and just running our Halloween train sets. It has grown into something special, drawing the same bright-eyed kids year after year, along with new faces, all equally enchanted by the spooky spectacle we've created.

The heart of this tradition is our meticulously crafted Halloween train layout—a miniature world that brings a unique kind of joy to both children and their parents. We now actually have two layouts running simultaneously, each offering its own kind of adventure. One of the layouts features a scavenger hunt, where kids can search for hidden treasures scattered throughout the scene. The prize? An extra treat to add to their already bountiful Halloween haul. (This year it will be miniature Aero bars from Canada!) It's always a delight to see the kids, eyes wide with excitement, as they comb through the details of the layout, spotting the hidden gems and eagerly sharing their discoveries.

The layout itself is a marvel of creativity and imagination. There's a broken-down car parked ominously in front of a haunted house, where shadows seem to dance behind the windows. Nearby, a pumpkin patch bursts with vibrant orange gourds, while a spooky graveyard adds a touch of eerie charm. There's a farmhouse with horses in a fenced field, and a small railway station. The centerpiece, however, is undoubtedly the haunted house—a place where, in the imagination of the children, anything could happen. Will the broken-down car's occupants end up as ghosts in the graveyard, or will they escape the clutches of the supernatural?

But it's not just the scenery that captivates; the train itself plays a starring role. Our main locomotive, an orange-colored Kato "Pocket Line" switcher, chugs along the tracks, pulling a collection of themed freight cars. Two of these are special—a "Trick" car and a "Treat" car, each holding its own surprises. The laughter and shouts of joy as the train rounds a curve or passes through a tunnel are the soundtrack of our Halloween evenings. It's a moment of pure magic when a child's face lights up, their imagination sparked by the simple yet profound joy of watching a train glide effortlessly through this miniature world.

And then, there's the pickle. Yes, you read that right—a pickle, the load of the 2017 National N Scale Convention Banquet Car, a gondola lettered for H.J. Heinz. It's become something of a legend among our Halloween visitors. Some kids, in an unexpected twist, ask for a pickle with their treat. It's a request we never anticipated, but it's now a part of the tradition, something that adds a quirky touch to the evening and leaves parents chuckling at the unexpected whimsy of childhood. The treat is a Tootsie Roll, which we hand out each year. Hinting at that is the 2019 National N Scale Convention

Banquet Car, lettered for and containing one of those candies. (Neither the “pickle” or the Tootsie Roll is edible.)

The parents, too, find themselves drawn into the magic. When they pause at the other end of the driveway, we invite them in: “Grownups are welcome too!” They marvel at the way their children take to the trains, the way they immerse themselves in the storylines we’ve subtly woven into the layout. For many of them, it’s a nostalgic experience, a reminder of their own childhoods when trains held a certain mystique. And for others, it’s a simple pleasure, watching their children engage with something tangible, something that requires no screen or gadget—just a bit of imagination and a lot of fun. Built on a clearance sale frame from a craft store, it features a loop of 7 ½ inch radius track that harkens back to the Aurora “Postage Stamp” train sets of old. We kept the design simple, using scenic materials from our basement stash, and the result was a charming little pike that felt just right for our young trick-or-treaters. The kids love it, and so do the adults who accompany them. There was something for everyone, from the spooky to the whimsical, and the train itself, with its orange boxcars and themed cargo, was the cherry on top.

This annual tradition has become more than just a display; it’s a way of connecting with our community, of creating memories that last far beyond Halloween night. The kids who visit our layout each year are growing up, but the magic remains the same. They come back not just to see the trains, but to recapture a piece of the wonder they felt the first time they saw it. And for us, that’s the true reward.

So, as October approaches and we begin to set up the layout once again, we look forward to the familiar faces and the new ones, to the laughter and the gasps of surprise. We’re not in it for the accolades—our joy comes from the simple pleasure of sharing something we love with others. And as long as there are kids who want to see our Halloween trains, we’ll be here, ready to welcome them into our little world of magic and imagination.

Thanks, Colleen! Those of you who wandered into the Model Contest Room at the 2024 National N Scale Convention saw the Halloween Layout in person, and hopefully didn’t gasp at the sight of seeing two NNSC Banquet Cars circling the loop! (Not to worry, I refill the “Factory Air” when I put the two cars back in their boxes.) We hope that the story of our little pike might inspire you to do something a little different and model train related for your Trick-Or-Treaters this October.

Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers, George

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