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Compact layouts have always been a part of the hobby. Get started on one now.

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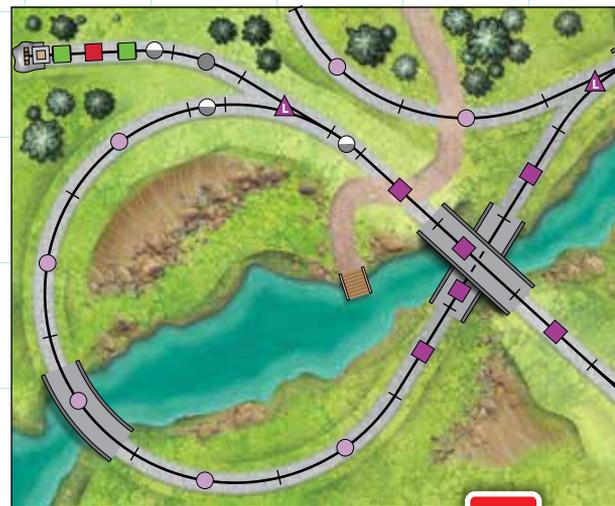
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 These wall-hugging track plans leave room to live



SMALL WORKHORSE CTT'S CITY TRANSFER & TERMINAL

This multi-role 5 x 9 layout truly earns its keep

STORY BY CTT STAFF

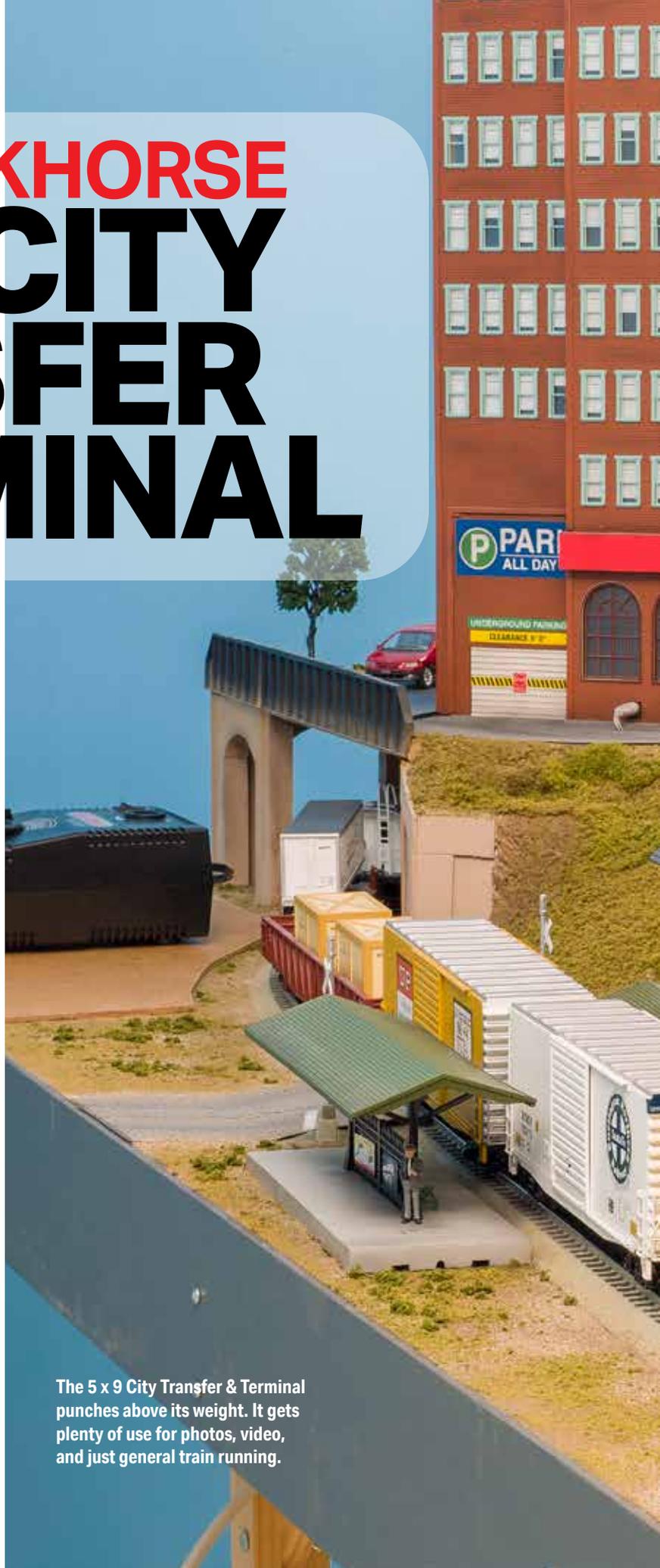
Parked in a hallway at Kalmbach Media is one of the hardest-working layouts in O gauge railroading. Given its humble accommodations, you'd never know it's one of the stars of *Classic Toy Trains* and *Trains.com*. But when it's asked to perform, it does so without fail. It looks good doing it, too.

The City Transfer & Terminal was built as a project layout in 2017 and appeared in the magazine the following year. The four installments detailed its construction by members of the CTT and Model Railroader Video Plus staff.

Like almost all the layouts built at Kalmbach Media, it was designed with space and portability in mind. It doesn't spend its entire life in the hallway; it has work to do! Its size and the inclusion of wheels on the benchwork allow it to roll through the doorways of our workshop or photo and video studios.

On any given day, the CT&T might serve as a test track for a locomotive or rolling stock review, the background for a photo shoot, or as the source of a project for video on *Trains.com*. Its wiring makes it easy to run trains and accessories using a variety of control systems, from a massive Lionel ZW transformer to an app-equipped smartphone.

Thanks to its forward-looking design and robust construction, the CT&T is likely to give quite a few more years of service. That's a pretty good life for a compact layout!



The 5 x 9 City Transfer & Terminal punches above its weight. It gets plenty of use for photos, video, and just general train running.

Bob Keller and video producer Ben Lake make an episode of Bob's Train Box for Trains.com, co-starring the CTT!



8 x 12 LAYOUT



Illustrations by Kellie Jaeger

2 SHEETS TO GROW ON

This O gauge track layout
can be built in stages

BY NEIL BESOUGLOFF

TOY TRAIN LAYOUTS and plywood often go hand in hand. This O gauge plan is specifically designed to fit on two 4 x 8-foot sheets of commercial plywood. Even better, it also can be in operation as you build.

The inspiration for this L-shaped track plan comes from the 68-page booklet *How to Operate Lionel Trains and Accessories*, published by the Lionel Corp. back in 1960. The overall dimensions of this plan are 8 x 12 feet. It features basic Lionel tubular track: straights, half-straights, O-31 curves, O-31 track switches, and only four custom-cut straight sections (two in the reverse loops and two more along the backstretch of the layout).

The complete plan offers three distinct routes for operating trains.

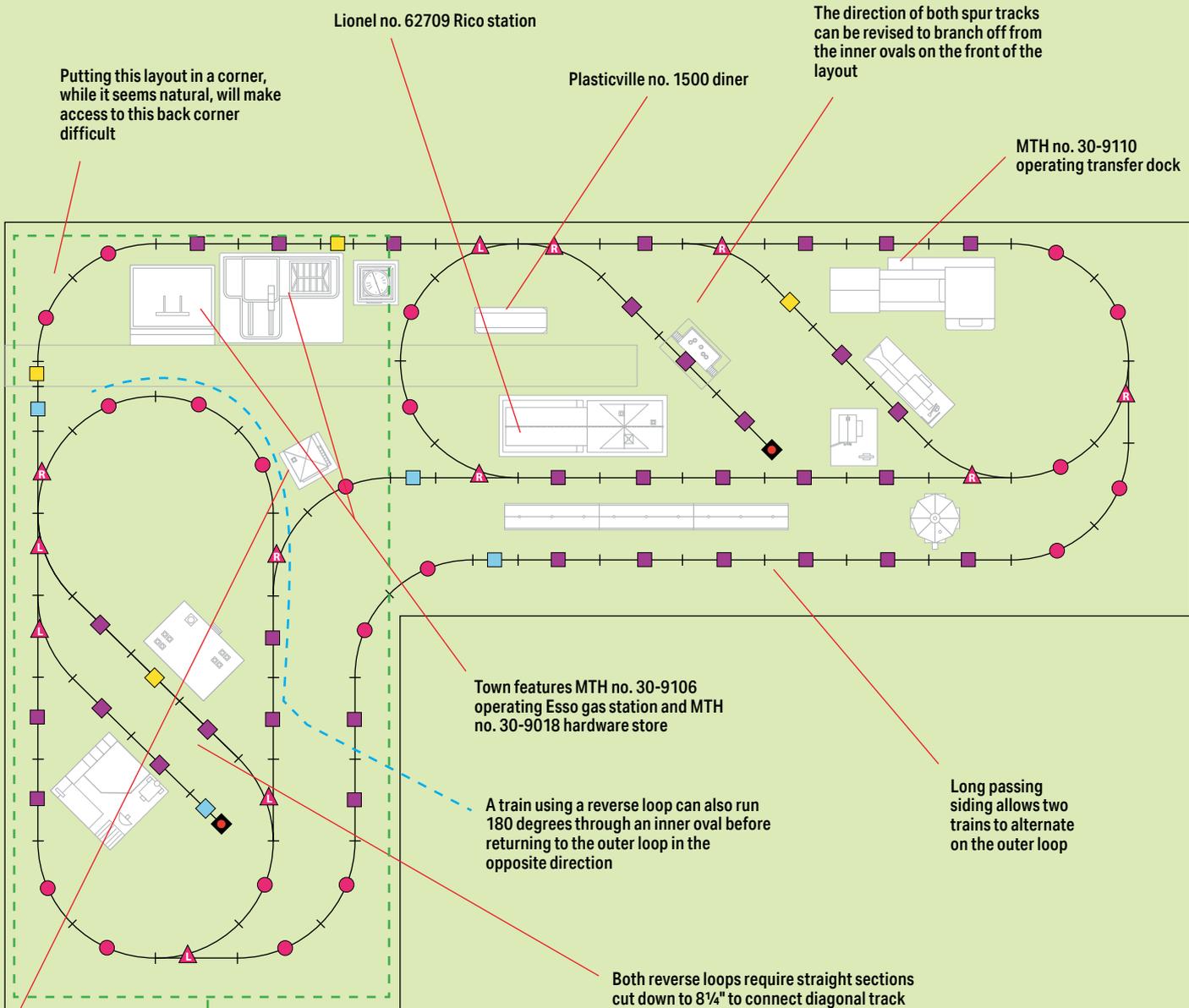
First, two trains can run at the same time on the inner ovals, both of which have short spur tracks for accessories. You'll need to separate these ovals electrically from other parts of the layout using two transformers and plastic pins in the center rails.

Second, the outer loop is designed with a long siding to allow you to alternate between two different trains traveling the perimeter of the layout in the same or opposite directions.

Third, each of the inner ovals features a reverse loop. Using both reverse loops would make it possible for a train to follow a dog-bone pattern back and forth along the rear edge of the layout.

This is a great starter plan because you can operate trains throughout any phase of construction. Start with one sheet of plywood and one of the inner ovals. Then add a second sheet of plywood and the outer oval.

As time and resources allow, add the second inner oval, the passing siding, the two reverse loops, and the two spur tracks for accessories. The fun never ends! **CTT**



Putting this layout in a corner, while it seems natural, will make access to this back corner difficult

Lionel no. 62709 Rico station

Plasticville no. 1500 diner

The direction of both spur tracks can be revised to branch off from the inner ovals on the front of the layout

MTH no. 30-9110 operating transfer dock

Town features MTH no. 30-9106 operating Esso gas station and MTH no. 30-9018 hardware store

A train using a reverse loop can also run 180 degrees through an inner oval before returning to the outer loop in the opposite direction

Long passing siding allows two trains to alternate on the outer loop

Both reverse loops require straight sections cut down to 8 1/4" to connect diagonal track

Lionel no. 2324 operating tower monitors track switches on both sides of the layout

Start construction with this inner oval and one sheet of plywood. The reverse loop and the accessory spur can be added at a later date. After that, use a second sheet of plywood for the outer loop. Then save up for additional O-31 track switches to build a second inner oval and finally the passing siding and reverse loops.

SUGGESTED ACCESSORIES

LIONEL

Number	Product
2324	operating switch tower
4158	no. 352 icing station
9220	milk car platform
12713	gate man and shed
12916	no. 138 water tower
12943	illuminated station platform (3)
24102	no. 193 water tower
22997	no. 2300 oil drum loader
62709	Rico station

MTH

Number	Product
30-9018	hardware store
30-9106	operating Esso service station
30-9110	operating transfer dock
30-90046	granary

PLASTICVILLE

Number	Product
1500	diner

SALUTING A FEW GREAT COMPACT LAYOUTS

Story by Roger Carp

■ **FROM THE EARLIEST ISSUES OF CLASSIC TOY TRAINS** and especially over the past 15 years, smartly designed and beautifully landscaped compact O and S gauge railroads have been regularly showcased. The proliferation of digital cameras and smartphones has invited readers to provide great photos of their work, and we've been happy to share their outstanding and inspiring modeling. Here are eight of the finest compact layouts presented, each of which has something to offer anyone thinking about building a display, regardless of hobby experience or age.

Robert Fisch's 8½ x 11-foot O gauge layout

In less than 100 square feet, modeler Robert Fisch brought back memories of Lionel trains and accessories from the years right before World War II curtailed toy production. He wired some of the best operating accessories available in 1940 by combining plastic structures and details from the modern era to create an exciting and colorful display in which to operate original and reissued Lionel streamlined outfits.





Scott Smith's 9 x 9-foot O gauge layout

Challenged to find space at home for an O gauge layout, Scott Smith chose to modify his office to accommodate a spiraling display. Then he made certain not to overlook any of the detailing, so every scene contained visual elements guaranteed to grab the attention of viewers and inject more entertainment into his railroad. An impressive structure, trees with fruit, and a grazing rabbit enhance this area.



Mario DiFede's 5 x 9-foot O gauge layout

Some of the most pleasing compact layouts to look at and then operate are those developed with more than a single level of activity. O gauge enthusiast Mario DiFede wisely added an elevated line to his home railroad so his roster of newly built steam engines could punch their way to the top after navigating along the primary level. He made great use of Lionel's FasTrack sections with their plastic roadbed. Of course, what else make Mario's little world come alive are the many neat details, notably the human figures, he thoughtfully arranged.



John Grams and Terry Thompson's 4 x 8-foot O gauge layout

Two of the stalwarts of Milwaukee's O gauge community wonderfully combined ideas and talents in 2009 to develop a compact layout with roots in the postwar era. What John Grams and his friend Terry Thompson nicknamed the Retro Railroad definitely hearkened back to the action-packed operating displays Lionel once built for retail accounts. Their model railroad featured several classic accessories and vintage sets.