

## The Big Train Project Status Report (Part 26)

It's been over a month since the EnterTRAINment Junction opened, and so far customers have been very impressed. There have been anywhere from 300 to 700 customers per day. Surveys with ratings on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being best) have averaged 8.5 for the entire facility and 9.5 for the layout. Bill Balfour's experience with Kings Island indicates a survey rating of 6.5 to be quite good, so EJ has done extremely well. Don Oeters has personally interviewed a number of the customers and gotten very positive comments from them. The responsibility for that success rest primarily on the volunteers, whose outstanding work on the layout has made possible what's been done so far. Their efforts and the work of new volunteers will be needed to continue to improve the layout over the coming months and years.

Now that customers are in the layout area on a daily basis, access to work on the layout has to be with a bit more caution, both to keep the customers out of trouble and to minimize us getting in the way of their ability to view and enjoy the features of the layout. So far, we've climbed over the plexiglass barriers, removed single panels, and climbed under the tables to enter the layout through access holes. And, we've continued to make progress though at a bit more leisurely pace than the hectic and hurried efforts just before the opening.

Here are some examples of small changes that we've made since the opening. We've added exhaust stacks to the roundhouse and a water tower in the Middle Era Engine Servicing Facility (Figure 1).

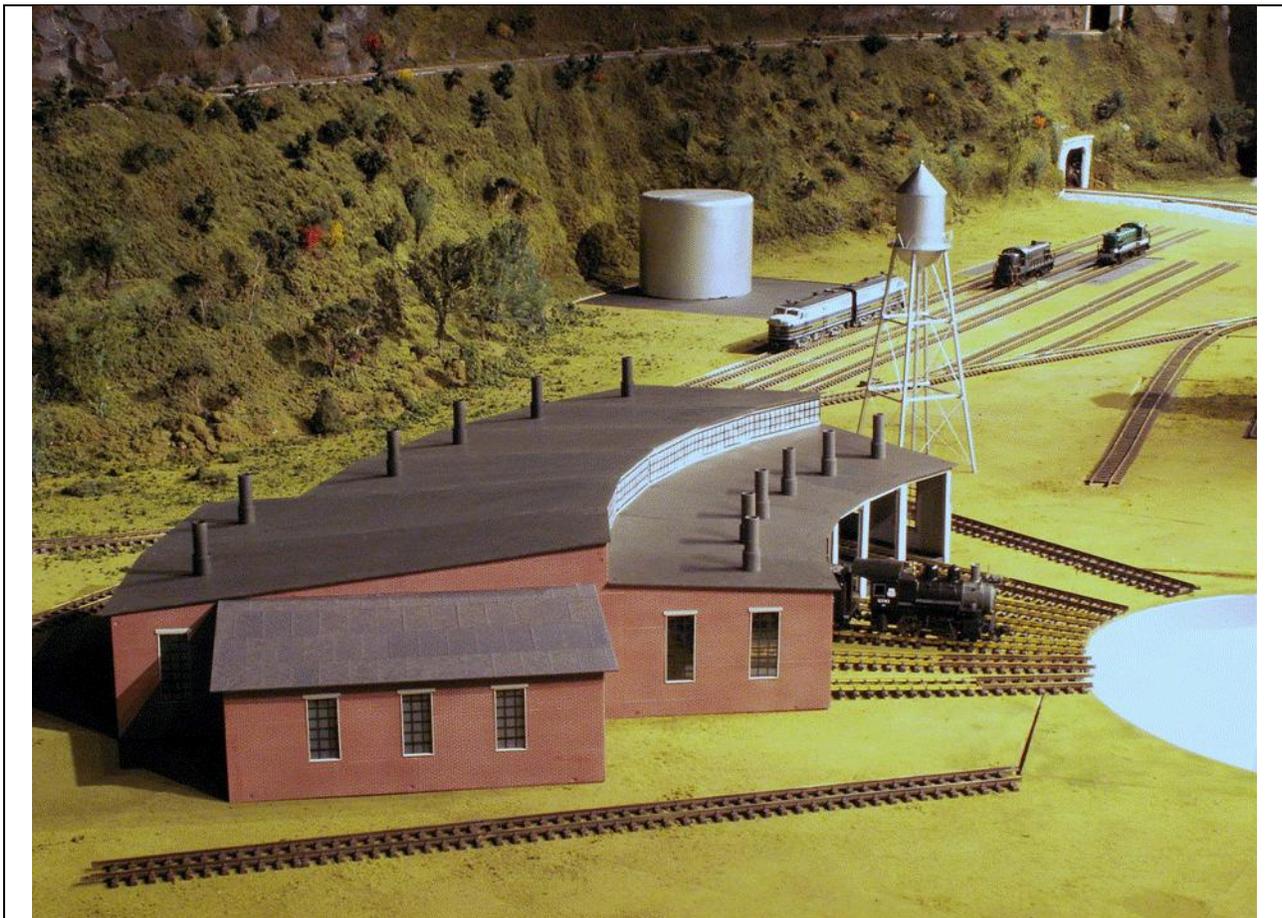


Figure 1 Roundhouse and Water Tower

In the Modern Era Yard, we've added a road bridge at the top edge of the mirror, which lines up with the walkway that can be thought of as a road on the mountainside at the back of the yard (Figure 2). The objective of the bridge is to hide the upper edge of the mirror. Interestingly, though there is no mirror above the bridge, there appears to be more mountainside visible above the bridge. It's actually a reflection in plexiglass barrier of the mountainside on the other side of the aisle from the yard. This makes the mirror concept work very well when viewed from the aisle level.



Figure 2 Modern Yard Road Bridge

Figure 3 shows the bridge as seen from the Mezzanine. From this view the extending effect of the mirror is quite striking, but the darkness above the bridge makes it look like there is an opening in the wall into which the yard extends. Perhaps, we'll explore adding another mirror above the bridge. Time will tell.



Figure 3 Modern Yard Seen from the Mezzanine

As I mention in each of these articles, a lot remains to be done, especially in the area of scenic details, which need to be added throughout the layout. Opportunities for continued volunteer work abound. Your participation is still needed. Join us to help make this fabulous layout even better.

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MVGRS Big Train Project Coordinator