

The Big Train Project Status Report (Part 47)

Last month we introduced the open air subway station. It's right next to the aisle, just past the tunnel leading from the Middle Period to the Modern Period in the EnterTRAINment Junction layout. We had just finished installing one of the two platforms, and it was still bare of any details. This month, we highlight some of the details of the completed platforms. Figure 1 shows the whole station as it was on of Aug 16, 2010. This view sets the "stage" for some of the details that follow.

We have recently begun to put "characters" onto the platform to give the scene some life. The ones selected were chosen because they were distinctive, or told little stories. Most were deliberately modified and painted by a group of very creative and talented ladies who try to make the figures as unique as possible, so that they all don't look as much alike as they do when they come from the factory.



Figure 1. The Open Air Subway Station

The first detail you see, as you approach the station from the tunnel from the Middle Period, is the pair of elevators at the ends of the platforms (Figure 2). Their purpose is to take passengers to a tunnel below the subway rails in order to shuttle passengers from one platform to the other. This pair of elevators has both elevator cars at the top, ready to unload and load its passengers. Each pair of elevators are intended to go up and down together to minimize the chances that passengers will have to wait in the tunnel below the tracks. In the model, the elevator cars are fixed in place. Credibly animating them would be very difficult indeed.

Also shown in Figure 2 is a very common scene on such platforms, passengers studying the subway system map trying to figure out how to get to their destination. Meanwhile, on the far platform, a couple with a baby sit on one of the benches and attract the attention of not only the medical staff worker sharing the bench with them but also the lady walking by in the background (Figure 3).



Figure 2. The Elevators



Figure 3. The Baby Gets Attention

At the tunnel from the hospital, a lady with a walker is making her way slowly across the platform, while a lady with a briefcase and a large flower waits for the elevator (Figure 4). Despite the fair number of passengers on the platforms, the signs, the trash cans, and the newspaper vending machines, the overall scene still lacks little details. Very common items in today's landscapes are soda cans. They normally show up in trash cans, in people's hands, and standing on surfaces waiting to be picked up again by their owners; and we needed to add some to the scene.

Did you ever wonder how big (or small) a 12-ounce soda can is in 1/24th scale? Probably not; but we did, because we needed to make them, and they needed to be instantly recognizable as well as the correct size. Figure 5 shows how small they really are, sitting on dime. They're less than a quarter inch tall, and half that in diameter. Thanks to museum putty, the cans stayed in place while being photographed. With the help of today's computer technology, it's easy to decorate simple shapes like that in order to replicate common items in a smaller scale. It doesn't take a lot of materials, but big fingers do make assembly a bit of a challenge, especially when the glue sticks better to the finger than to the item being modeled.



Figure 4. The Lady with the Walker



Figure 5. Soda Cans

We continue to look for ideas for details and scenes to add interest. Sometimes just a brief mention of a concept is enough to set the volunteers to work creating the needed elements, and the results will eventually find their way onto the layout. We'll look at some more of such details next time.