

## Action Station

Action Station is an example of an urban passenger station which maximizes the play value of 3-rail passenger trains. It contains all the elements found in large, real-life stations, but does so using only six switches. By doubling duties for individual tracks, and by reducing the number of tracks, it can even fit onto an oversized, but compact, sectional module. Recommended track is Atlas O 3-rail, with a minimum radius of 0-45 (which reduces the chance of large cars moving backwards through switches derailing).

Entrance and exit from the station module is via "Track 1". The return loop allows uni-directional trains such as steam locomotives, tail-end "observation" cars, and commuter trains the ability to reverse direction without stopping. Normal direction into the loop is to have an entering train turn right at the switch. Trains would then proceed counter-clockwise around the loop, then back out through the switch onto Track 1.

Moving counter-clockwise, the first part of the loop itself acts like a "tail" track for Tracks 2 thru 5. Just past the Track 5 switch there are vertical high-pressure shower stands (build yourself from construction parts such as "Strawz") on both sides of the track. These are used to power-wash the dirt off passing passenger cars. They also double as a way to cool down animals in passing loaded stock cars (the water sprays through the slats in the sides of the stock cars).

Midway down the loop are steam engine refueling facilities. Note that steam engines are not going to be stored or serviced here, so you won't find an ash pit or engine stall. Because this is a vibrant urban area, the equipment will be both modern and compact, with all the storage being underground. First to be encountered is a water column supplied by a city water hookup, such as the MTH Water Column #30-11007 (or similar). Just past and close beside is a coaling station, such as the Suncoast FM Automatic Coaling Station #SNC9 (or similar). These coaling stations are interesting, in that a resupply hopper car dumps coal directly into an underground storage bin, where the coal is then lifted up and dropped directly into the coaling chute. Often the bin is under a separate service track behind the coaling station, but in our case, it will be under the main line in front of the coaling station. If you don't want to cut a hole in the bench work, you can simulate this bin by placing a bin painting directly under the track. In the unlikely event that you have steam locomotives configured to burn oil, you can also add a fuel oil column (with underground oil storage tank) just past the coaling spot.

A distance further away, on the curved section at the end of the loop (the Track 6 switch side), is where the diesel locomotives and RDCs are fueled. The diesel fuel storage tank is located underground. Here also will be a water hose (city water hookup) for diesel passenger locomotives that are equipped with steam generators. Also in this area will be a sand tower for all locomotives, both diesel and steam. An example of an operating accessory that combines all these features is the Lionel Diesel Fueling Station #415.

Track 1 is the "through" track, where trains which only briefly halt to pickup/discharge passengers normally stop. It also acts as a "tail" track for Track 6. On one side of the track is a platform that leads to a "union" station building, such as the Bachman Union Station #45976 (or similar). The front main entrance side of the building is assumed to face a parking lot situated off the module. The station contains a passenger waiting room, public restroom, ticket booth, and a small news/coffee stand.

Tracks 2 thru 6 are stub tracks, that besides their other normal uses, double as passenger "yard" tracks for making-up and breaking-down trains, and storing cars. Because, unlike freight trains, there is not a lot of breaking-down required for passenger trains, the "road" engine would normally perform yard duties for their train.

Track 2 is the "Pullman" track. Here is where sleeping (hotel) cars are vacuumed and parked, as well as where sleeping cars could be loaded early by passengers waiting for a midnight pickup by their passing train. The very end of this track also makes a good place to park an observation car from whose rear platform a dignitary wants to give a public speech. There is a station platform on both sides of this track. At the end of the platform near the switches between Tracks 2 and 3 is a Pullman laundry building, such as the MTH Power Station #MTH3090003 (or similar), containing washers and dryers, bed sheet/towel mangle and folding tables, shelves for storing consumables such as hand soap and toilet paper, and space for a laundry cart (just like their counterparts at motels). The Pullman laundry also has a contract to wash dining car table linens.

Track 3 is the "local" track where shorter trains that layover briefly normally stop. It is also used as a makeup track and as a supplementary Pullman track. On the side of the track between Tracks 2 and 3 is a platform (with the Pullman laundry building).

Track 4 is the "intercity" track where longer trains that layover briefly stop. It is also used as a makeup track where trains are reshuffled, typically to add/remove a sleeping car or dining car. On the side of the track between Tracks 4 and 5 is a platform, on the end of which near the switches is where the "red cap's" baggage carts are gathered.

Track 5 is the "express" track. The head of the track near the switch is normally left open for use as a locomotive "pocket". The far end of the track butts up against a ramp (build yourself), so end-loading cars can be loaded/unloaded "circus train" like. When not needed for this purpose, the end of the track can be used for parking extra express cars. The Track 4 platform abuts the middle portion of this track, so this abutting area could be used if necessary for loading/unloading express items onto station baggage carts. The opposite side of this track middle portion has a large "union" Express packages sorting depot with a public counter (where people can send or pickup their own packages), and a small US-mail truck-to-rail transfer building. Build these yourself from building flats, or combine pre-built buildings. Note that delivery trucks are assumed to have loading docks for them on the building side facing the module rear.

Track 6 is the "diner" track. Although the hopper car that supplies the fuel coal can be unloaded quickly right on the main line, the resupply tank cars for fuel oil, diesel fuel, and dry sand can not be unloaded as fast, so they must use a siding. At the head of Track 6 are filling pipes (build yourself) leading to these holding tanks, and this is where the resupply tank cars will be spotted. The middle of the track is where dining (restaurant) cars are restocked and/or parked. On the left side of this area is a dining car commissary building, such as the MTH Manchester Train Depot #MTH3090400 (or similar), with walk-in refrigeration and liquor/dry-goods storage to supply dining cars, lounge/bar cars, and snack cars. The commissary also has a contract with the Pullman company to resupply their cars. Inside are also shelves for replacement cups and plates, an employee break room, locker room and toilet, and the station office. Outside is a propane refueling tank (like those found at gas stations). Reefers and other cars will make regular resupply visits. The end of the track is the "rip" area. Here is where a passenger car would be placed so minor repairs that are impractical on a platform track (such as, for example, a sink replacement) can be performed. When not in use as a rip track, this is the preferred area for longer-term car storage. On the right side of this area, where there is a clear view of all the station switches, is a switch tower, such as the Atlas Signal Tower #ATO6900 (or similar). The lower floor is a storage area and workshop for the rip track and station facilities maintenance. The upper floor is where all of the stations switches can be seen and remotely controlled.

Unfortunately, due to the fact that the loop must be so large, it is not possible to fit this track plan onto an unmodified 80" wide X 30" deep door. Instead, you will need four doors, which you will connect sideways so that the 30" dimensions butt together to form the full module width. You will then even-up the back side of the 80" depth (where the Express buildings are), and using a saw, trim off the extra length extending forward beyond "through" Track 1. It will now be possible to transport these four module sections just like your other track modules, inside of your Van, Stationwagon, or SUV.

### Options

If you plan on having a lot of commuter traffic, it would make sense to add a Track 7 "coach" track. An O-45 switch should be inserted into the main line immediately to the left of the Track 6 switch (still to the right of the diesel fueling area), with a curving spur extending from the switch into the center of the loop behind the commissary building. The coach track is used to hold commuter coaches and RDCs that are not in use during the afternoon and night time hours, but which are necessary for the morning and evening commuter rushes. Alternatively (although it is usually parked at a division engine terminal because of the readily available motive power) this additional Track 7 could instead/also be used for parking a quickly dispatched "wrecker" train (crane, spare-rail flatcar, etc.), standing-by for derailment emergencies.

The return loop can form a corner module, if you replace one of the curve tracks in the loop with an outward pointing O-45 switch. Typically you would substitute a front section curve track lying between the steam and diesel fueling areas.

## The Trains

The kinds of foreshortened ready-to-run passenger equipment commonly available to 3-railers (i.e., "madison" coaches and "streamline" pullmans) almost dictates a freelance approach to simulating passenger traffic. A believable consist would be as follows:

**Regular overnight service** (evening departure, morning arrival). This is the way for most people to travel from city to city. Real life consists would typically be (moving backwards from the engine) an Express reefer, a Railway Post Office, a Baggage car, several Coaches, a Diner, several Sleeping cars, and an Observation lounge/buffet combine. We can simulate them compactly using baby-madison cars consisting of a Baggage car (or an Express boxcar), a Coach, a Diner, a Pullman, and an open-ended Observation car [5 cars total].

**Premium overnight service.** This is the luxury way to travel from city to city. Real life consists would typically be (moving backwards from the engine) a baggage/Dormitory combine, a Diner, several Sleeping cars, and an enclosed Observation lounge (*do not* confuse observation with "dome"). We can simulate them compactly with foreshortened streamline cars consisting of a diner, 2 pullmans, and an observation car; or 3 pullmans and an observation car ("set-out" service) [4 cars total].

**Regular day service.** Less common (and less prestigious) than overnight service, these trains were also city-to-city trains, but traveled during daylight hours, and usually only to nearby cities. Real life consists would typically be (moving backwards from the engine) an Express reefer, a Railway Post Office, Baggage car, and several Coaches. We can simulate them compactly using baby-madison cars consisting of a Baggage car (or an Express boxcar), and 3 Coaches [4 cars total].

**Premium day service.** Some railroads also ran premium daytime service geared towards tourists. These can be simulated with foreshortened streamline cars consisting of a baggage car, and 2 vista-dome coaches (morning service); or a diner and 2 vista-dome coaches (afternoon service) [3 cars total].

**Commuter weekday service** (mostly in the late morning and early evening). Real life consists would typically be all Coaches, and might even be self-propelled or bi-level. We can simulate them compactly using 2 baby-madison Coaches; or one Rail-diesel-car.