

[N-Circle Railroad Update 20 – November 22, 2024](#)

Having completed the twenty-one vehicles in last month's N-Circle Update 18, and the fifteen more in Update 19, the weather was still warm enough to work in the garage before putting away the paints, so I queued up another eleven vehicles to build and finish!

Building More igmakes 3-D Printed Truck Kits

First up were four more 3-D printed trucks from igMakes: two flatbeds, a stake bed truck and a van truck. These were all purchased new recently, with the ones in Updates 18 and 19. Again, no assembly is required with these kits, they are printed as all one piece. And thus they present the same challenges to paint as the tank trucks discussed in Update 18.

Here we see the finished three variations on flatbed trucks with Ford C cabs.

[N-Circle_24-11-07_igmakes_FlatBedTrucks_1_Cropped](#)



[N-Circle_24-11-07_igmakes_FlatBedTrucks_2_Cropped](#)



The painting on the wood beds looks better in real life than captured in these photos, I used a mix of a dark and light brown paints thinned with water to daub on the multi-colors.

The white paint on the van did not cover well after multiple brushed coats of Polly-Scale Reefer White, but I will leave it for now, as I may eventually redo the box and decal it for a business.

[N-Circle_24-11-09_igmakes_VanTruck_1_Cropped](#)



[N-Circle_24-11-09_igmakes_VanTruck_2_Cropped](#)



Building stukamilov Resin Molded Trucks

Years ago, I purchased a number of truck kits on eBay from a vendor “stukamilov.” They still are selling on eBay today. These are plastic resin molded kits, some I purchased as individual first-run kits, some were in grab bags of mold defects parts, so I got those for about a dollar each. I decided to try building a few of them now, to determine whether to do more of them eventually another day.

The bodies have fairly rough surfaces and a lot of flash on the edges. I thought I would need to use a Dremel tool to clean out the wheel wells on a couple of the “defect” bodies, but the plastic is soft enough that with some patience it could be carved out with a sharp hobby knife.

The plastic is quite slippery, I suspect acrylic paints would not adhere well if I had not applied Vallejo surface primer first.

I did not take any “before” photos of the kits, as they are just common resin mold pieces. The wheels, fuel tanks, etc. come as separate pieces, so they can be trimmed and painted before assembly. Because I had purchased bags of extra wheels and detail parts, I was able to choose the style of wheels and fuel tanks I wanted for each truck.

One of the grab-bags contained a Ford van which was a single-piece mold, with no separate wheels or other parts to prepare. This van is a bit smaller than scale when placed next to other N-scale vehicles, but if placed on an open road not too close to other vehicles, it should be okay for use on the layout.

[N-Circle_24-11-09_stukamilov_FordVan_1_Cropped](#)





For the wheel hubs of the four igmakes trucks above and four large stukamilov trucks here, I used a mix of Silver and Mud paints, watered down a bit. This produces a “dirty” look on the wheels. I didn’t want them all shiny chrome like the hub caps on most of the cars I have done.

I just did gray windows, I did not attempt adding reflective highlights to the surfaces, as they have not worked well in previous attempts. But I applied Micro-Scale Kristal Klear to the surface of all windows, even though they were not open. It gives a bit more of a shiny glass look and disguises imperfections in the painting edges at the borders of the windows.

These stukamilov kits require a lot of work to trim excess plastic flashing and make sure parts will fit together correctly before gluing. I neglected to check the fit of the wheels into the wheel wells before finishing the models, which ended up requiring carving out the wheel wells with a hobby knife after the bodies had been painted and detailed, which you would prefer to avoid.

This city bus body was in the grab bag of defective truck parts. I painted it with a color scheme similar to the Classic Metal Works GMC buses I use for 1950s operations, which is close to what I remember for city buses in Montpelier, Vermont when I was young, though I don’t have any pictures to prove it! But a dark Polly-Scale “Vermont Green” lower half and tan upper half.

N-Circle_24-11-09_stukamilov_CityBus_1_Cropped



N-Circle_24-11-09_stukamilov_CityBus_2_Cropped



N-Circle_24-11-09_stukamilov_CityBus_3_Cropped



I later added a destination sign board decal to the front that I found leftover from the CMW busses which adds a nice touch, but I haven't taken another photo.

Next up are two garbage trucks with Freightliner cabs. The larger one was purchased as a kit, the smaller one I assembled from parts from the grab bags. For the smaller one, the chassis started out as longer with a semi-trailer hitch, which I shortened and trimmed. The detailing on these came out pretty good, and I added some dirt washes on the back as one would find on a working garbage truck.

N-Circle_24-11-12_stukamilov_GarbageTrucks_1_Cropped



N-Circle_24-11-12_stukamilov_GarbageTrucks_2_Cropped



The last of the four large trucks was a propane truck, again assembled from pieces from the grab bags. I finished this kit to a point, but more work will be required before it goes on the layout for 1980s operations. I need to come up with decals for the tank and add some hoses and details. But I will leave it like this for now and take it up again in the spring.

[N-Circle_24-11-12_stukamilov_PropaneTruck_1_Cropped](#)



[N-Circle_24-11-12_stukamilov_PropaneTruck_2_Cropped](#)



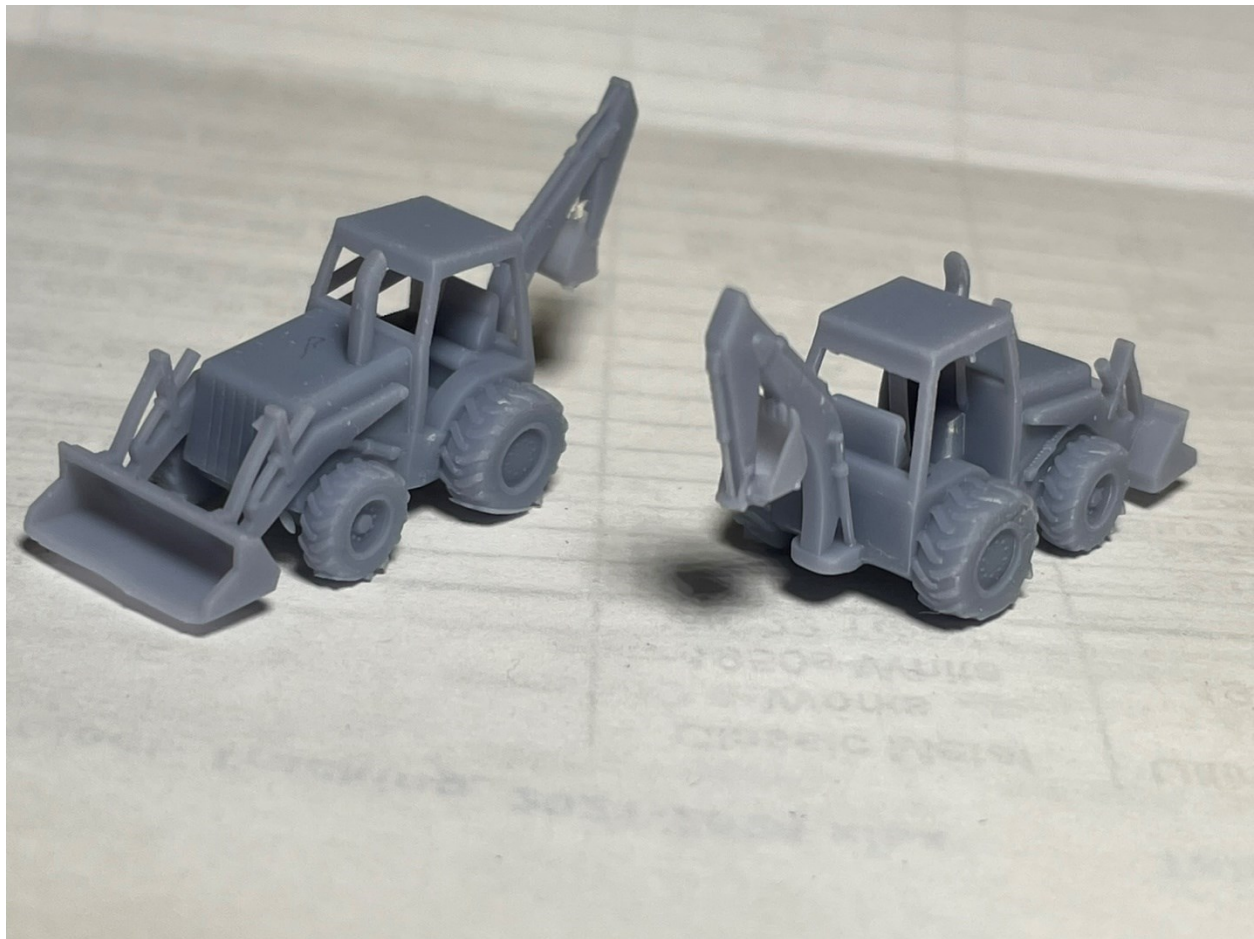
These stukamilov kits require a fair amount of extra time and effort to produce a reasonable final product. But I still have a lot of truck chassis, cargo bodies, wheels and detail parts from the grab bags, so they may provide opportunities for creative projects in the future.

These last two sets of truck kits in this Update have provided a direct comparison of finishing older style resin molded vehicles kits versus the latest 3-D printed vehicles. As discussed previously in Update 18, the quality of the surfaces and details is much better with the 3-D printed, but it is much easier to paint the individual pieces of molded kits, then assemble them after. I have seen a few products recently where the major components are 3-D printed separately, but all attached to one block, like the pieces on sprues in a styrene plastic kit. They then can be painted separately before final assembly. This seems like the ultimate way to go; we will see if the manufacturers agree!

Skyline Creations 3-D Printed Backhoes

While doing these kits, I purchased a pair of 3-D printed backhoes from a new company, Skyline Creations. They are quite modern versions, with full rollover cabs and four-wheel drive, as seen here.

[N-Circle_24-11-02_SkyLineCreations_Backhoes_Before_1](#)



Having all the tools and paints out, and some ideas for modifications, I put them on the workbench immediately. To convert one to a 1950s version, I cut off the cab using plastic sprue cutters and the front wheels using a hobby knife, as safety cabs and four-wheel-drive were not common in the earlier days. I replaced the front wheels with automobile wheels left over from the resin car kits built previously (again, always keep extra parts!).

After gluing on the smaller front wheels (long after the glue had set...), I realized that I should have built a front axle to place them away from the body – as they are, they could not turn. But that's how they were on the original model, so they wouldn't turn on their modern version either.

The large, fixed bench seat would not rotate to operate the backhoe like on a real excavator, so this model is not prototypical, but they should look okay in a construction scene with other vehicles and details. They also did not have steering wheels, so I added these using box car brake wheels, again from the parts box. A little dirty paint wash on the buckets completes the scene.

[N-Circle_24-11-12_SkyLineCreations_Backhoes_1_Cropped](#)



[N-Circle_24-11-12_SkyLineCreations_Backhoes_2_Cropped](#)



As a final thought on all these vehicles: while the up-close photos show a lot of imperfections in the final products, this more distant photo of a collection of the same recently completed vehicles puts things more in perspective.

[N-Circle_24-11-09_Collection_Cropped](#)



At the viewing distance on a model railroad layout, with the vehicles surrounded by other vehicles and scenery, the imperfections recede, and the vehicles become part of a modestly realistic scene.

It took 21 hours to complete these last eleven vehicle kits – higher than the average for previous vehicles kits because the stukamilov models required a lot of preparation and multiple rounds of painting of detail parts and then assembly, and the igmakes and Skyline Creations kits required a lot of details painting too.

So, I finished forty-seven 1950s and 1980s vehicles kits in 73 hours since mid-September, thus 1.3 hours per vehicle on average, pretty good productivity! There are now only 54 kits left in inventory to complete; of these, only 14 vehicles for the 1980s are marked as “priority” to complete in the spring. Some of them are pewter metal construction vehicles, so they will be a challenge when the time comes!

New Construction Scene Panel

With the completion of multiple 1950s construction vehicles, I got inspired to create a small, simple scene to display them in the vacant NW corner of the layout. The scene is centered around a small plate of thin styrene, shaped to fit into the curve of the mainline tracks as they approach the North Yard. The styrene provides a surface to glue details to, much better than the copier paper surface of the PowerPoint scenery panels.

I painted the piece a mud brown, then glued on a piece of Styrofoam shaped with a hobby knife to form a pile of dirt for the backhoe. I sprinkled a layer of small brown ballast ground cover over the whole piece, adhered with white scenic cement. This gives the appearance of recently excavated earth.

Here we see attaching a couple of human construction workers using white glue – the two metal clips worked well to hold them upright until the glue dried. Along the way I also added a driver for the backhoe, after cutting the lower legs off from a seated figure to make him fit. I don't know how long the two standing figures will last upright; this little scene will definitely require gentle handling! But they can be reset easily with a drop of white glue.

[N-Circle_24-11-22_SkyLineCreations_Backhoes_1](#)



In the final scene, the Central Vermont Railway maintenance foreman has just arrived to inspect the site, pulling a trailer with a load for the job. The worker with the pickaxe on the right stops to take a drink while the boss is distracted!

[N-Circle_24-11-22_Construction_Vehicles_1](#)



The Central Vermont pickup truck is a Classic Metal Works 1954 Ford F-350, purchased on eBay and custom detailed by "The Personal Touch." His matching trailer is one of the three recently complete for Update 18. The cement truck is a commercially purchased Mack B from Athearn.

However, the rest of the scene assembles pieces built over the past couple of years:

- The 1950s backhoe from this Update 20 is the center of the scene.
- The welding truck from the recent Update 18 has arrived to make some repairs. I added a couple more gas cylinders found in a parts box since completing Update 18.
- The 1954 Mack B three-axle dump truck was built in Update 15.

The distant background in this photo is not sharply focused, but nonetheless we can make out more projects from previous N-Circle Updates being put to use:

- The farmhouse from Update 09 behind the shed, center-right.

- The grey trailer with open load from the recent Update 18 in front of the shed.
- The horse trailer behind the Ford F1 pickup truck, both from Update 15.
- The Wayne Feeds truck kit-bashed in Update 12 heading out to the farms.

So, though the scenery panels are still temporary prints from Power Point, the detail elements are beginning to come together from all of this kit building to make scenes!

Eventually this whole end section will be worked into a dairy farm scene. But until the barn gets built and that comes together, this construction scene fills in what was previously bare plywood!

No area of the N-Circle layout has magazine-quality scenery, but the N-Circle is a stage, where the scenery is evolving, and new pieces can be placed and enjoyed until the scene changes. Next, I am thinking of building a yard tower for the open area just to the left of this photo, as this is the west entrance to the North Yard. With that completed, there will be initial scenery panels for this whole west end of the yard, as this is frequently the background for videos of trains entering the yard. So, stay tuned for the next update!

Now I really will get to running my collection of 1940s wood boxcars and milk cars, before converting the N-Circle Railroad over for 1950s Louisiana operations!