

# I Have A Problem

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I have a problem. I can't decide which railroad in this country to model. I like so many different railroads, their paint schemes, their motive power, the parts of the country they operate in, and my history or involvement with them (riding, photographing, etc.).



*So what should I do?*

My solution is to buy motive power for as many of them as suits me, and then to create several different operating scenarios to make such a mix plausible. This can be done by:

- Have one or more junctions or interchanges
- Allowing track operating agreements (trackage rights or haulage rights)
- In modern times, using “leased power” for other railroads' locomotives
- Having a “Union Station” for multiple passenger train operations
- Modeling mergers, buyouts and/or purchase acquisitions of used equipment

On the model railroad I am planning, I will have a primary, or host, operating railroad. This primary railroad could change any day based on my interests, or feelings, or the people that are coming over to operate with me. There are several locations where I

want to have junctions with other railroads to interchange cars. Using this approach, I get to enjoy the colors of the different railroads and their equipment. It also creates more rail car movements and other interesting operations. I enjoy the “colors” of more than a dozen railroads. I like the 1950’s to 1960’s time period, so there are great diesel locomotive paint schemes, or color combinations, to select from (reds, blues, greens, oranges, yellows, silvers, etc). And there were many beautiful passenger train paint schemes also.



### Junctions and Interchange

A basic junction is where two railroads cross. Add a track between the two, and it is possible for the transfer of railroad cars between the two railroads, for a variety of reasons. It could be based on a customer’s needs, sending loaded or empty cars across the country, or a particular route that the car is required to take. This is known as interchange.

A junction also allows some great train watching, due to a tracks crossing (known as diamonds) and train operations due to the dropping off and picking up of cars between railroads. Remember, you will need some type of signaling, and a gate or an interlocking tower for traffic control at the crossing. One story interchange buildings



were typically called “cabins”, while two story interchange buildings were called “towers” by the railroads.



A junction or interchange location could also be created by two railroads operating “side by side” in a community. In this case, a track design needs to be created to allow the movement of cars between the two railroads, even though there are no crossing or diamond.



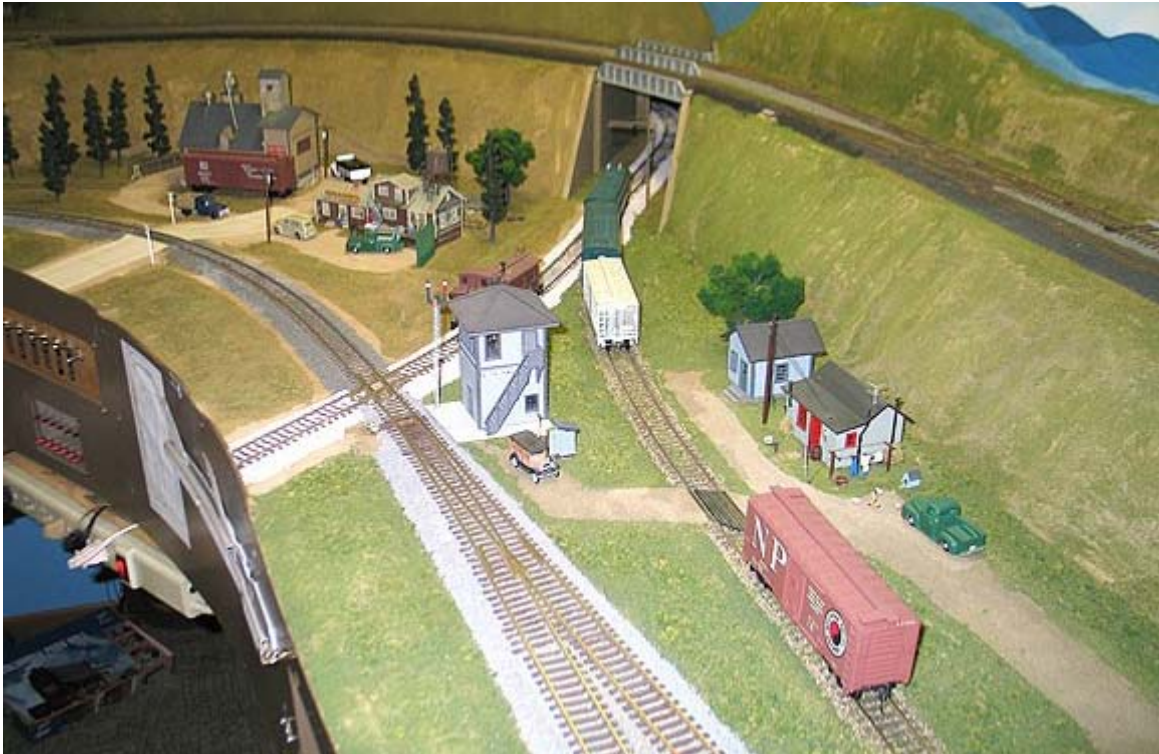
At the interchange there could be a variety of railroad track patterns. It could be as simple as two turnouts that lead to a single common spur track, two turnouts that lead to a couple of common tracks to make switching easier for crews picking up and setting out cars, or it could have a number of tracks (like a small freight yard), if there were enough car movements and operations. Based on your operation and design, you may need several tracks and turnouts, so that motive power has a way to get around the cars it is moving (known as a runaround track).

The great thing about this is you get to make the decisions. Think about how many railroad cars will regularly be involved with transfer operations between railroads, so that you will have enough track storage space. Remember, both loaded and empty railroad cars will be using the interchange tracks. This will also increase operations. Another possibility is that your railroad might be in the business of moving cars between two other railroads instead. In other words, moving cars between two junctions on your model railroad layout. This could be in place of, or in addition to, the most common pattern of moving cars between industries and a yard on your railroad. A good rule to remember about yards is that they are not there to “store” cars. You need them moving in traffic and producing revenue.



Many model railroaders build a “dummy” diamond, where the trains cross only on one of the two tracks. In this way, the diamond is only cosmetic, yet still establishes the location as a junction. This does serve a useful purpose, as there is still an interchange track for car movements. In many cases this track leads to a hidden storage track or yard, to allow railroad cars to move on and off the layout. This hidden track could go behind the backdrop, behind scenery, or behind buildings in a downtown scene. Just remember to provide yourself the ability to get to those cars in case you physically need to move them (handle with your hands) or if there is a derailment.





Remember again, the two different railroads' tracks do not need to cross to create a junction or interchange. They could just be running close to each other to share a common piece of track, or tracks. If you have enough room, you could add an industry or two for the secondary railroad to switch a few cars also in the area, while they travel in to exchange cars at the junction. You could even bring narrow gauge railroading into the operation here with side by side trackage or dual gauge trackage to help move products or loads either way.

### Trackage Rights or Haulage Rights

The ability to operate other railroads on your primary railroad's tracks is another way to get some other trains operating on your layout. You can "negotiate" operating agreements with any railroad that you want to interchange with. Under trackage rights, the tenant (or visiting) railroad operates its trains using its own motive power and crews over the host railroad tracks. Normally, it will not service any industries along the host railroads tracks, it is a train "just passing through".



A variation of this is “detour” traffic, where another railroad runs across the host railroad's tracks due to some issue with their own tracks, such as a derailment. If you are modeling the “modern” era you can have run-through trains which bring other railroad equipment onto a host railroad's tracks. Crews are changed between railroads to operate the trains. In this scenario you will see other railroad equipment (motive power) on a host railroad, or mixed (“pooled”) motive power. This is your chance to run a BNSF coal train on CN tracks, for example.



Using haulage rights, the tenant railroad may negotiate rates or contracts with industries (customers) located along the host railroad's tracks. Here, it is common for the tenant railroad to travel across the host railroad's tracks and switch local industries.

### Leased Power

On today's modern rail-roads it is fairly common to see "leased power", or for other reasons, another railroad locomotive operating on a host railroad. In the last couple of years, I have seen a wide variety of different railroad locomotives running behind a BNSF or UP lead unit when I was working out west. Eastern railroads running with western railroads, old railroad logos and railroad companies that have gone away with the times, and also competitor locomotives running with each other (which always seems strange).





## “Union Stations” for Passenger Trains

Here is your chance to enjoy some of those great colorful passenger trains from the 1950's and 1960's. You have seen photos of major city passenger train stations, with all of the colorful trains waiting to depart (yes, the good old days). Lined up side by side, what a beautiful sight!

Many cities operated with a single train station, where all passenger trains arrived and departed. You would need tracks from other railroads that lead to some common tracks into the passenger platforms, and the station. Or, there could be track operating agreements that would allow different passenger trains or railroads to operate on the tracks owned by the railroad that owns/operates the train station. Of course, there were a number of smaller cities where railroad tracks crossed at a diamond, so a train station was usually located there. With that design, you could see at least two “colorful” passenger trains of different railroads stopping.





### Mergers, buyouts and/or purchase acquisitions

Another reason that you may find mixed road names of locomotives on a model railroad is you could be modeling a period of time when a buyout or a purchase of a railroad is occurring. As an example: when the BN was formed, there was a time period where locomotives from GN, NP, SP&S (and others) would all be operating together. Or the recent purchases by CN of the DM&IR, Wisconsin Central and Illinois Central and others. Another example is the UP purchase of D&RGW, SP, and MP. It takes time to get all of those locomotives repainted. There have been many other acquisitions and purchases/buyouts over the years, if you stop and think about it. It is also possible for a railroad to purchase locomotive equipment from another railroad for a variety of reasons. Again, it may take some time to get equipment repainted. So for a "unknown" amount of time you can enjoy the wonderful colors of other power equipment or passenger cars on your railroad. Of course, some of the great passenger trains over the years used mixed equipment from other railroads in their passenger train consists as a matter of course.

I hope that these ideas will help you solve the problem of which railroad to model, and allow the opportunity to get multiple railroads and their "colorful" motive power or passenger trains on your layout. I know these ideas, concepts, and plans are going to

help me enjoy the railroads and the motive power colors of the GN, NP, SP&S, CB&Q, D&RGW, DM&IR, ATSF, UP and maybe a few eastern railroads also!



For more information on the prototypical modeling and operating of junctions, check out the excellent book from Kalmbach titled "*The Model Railroader's Guide To Junctions*" by Jeff Wilson. Published in 2006, this book has lots of information, photographs and track layout designs.

For information on passenger station operations and track designs, look for another excellent book from Kalmbach titled "*The Model Railroader's Guide to Passenger Equipment And Operation*" by Andy Sperandio, also published in 2006.

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