

Northern Virginia NTRAK "How-To" Article

ROUNDHOUSE STACK CAR COUPLER CONVERSION

SEPTEMBER 2017

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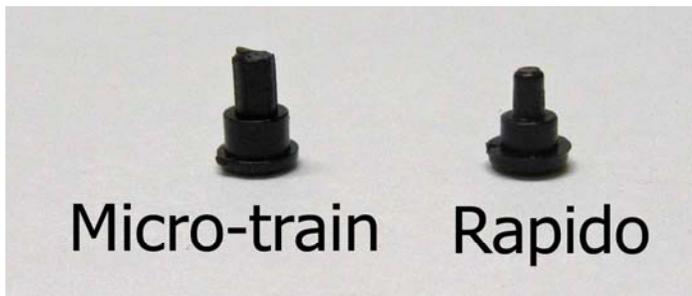
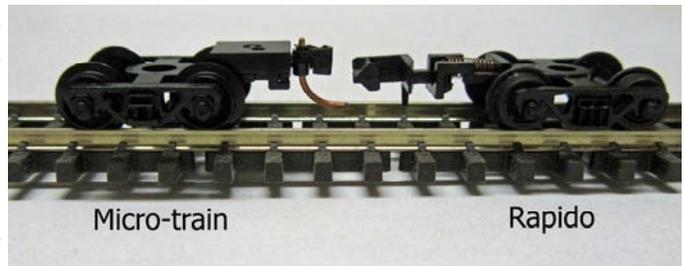
Several years ago, at one of the holiday party gift exchanges, I ended up with a carton of 12 Roundhouse Husky Stack Cars. They had a 48 foot well, were individually numbered, but had Rapido couplers. No one seemed interested in "stealing" them from me so home they came.

Running a few of them on my home layout showed that they liked to go in every direction except where the track went. They went in the "to be fixed" box on a back shelf. Every time I pulled them out, it just seemed too hard to attempt a conversion to Micro-Train trucks.

Recently I decided to either make the conversion work, or throw them out. In my research, I found an article from 1997 on why these cars did not track well and how to do a body mount conversion. Looking closely at the well cars there are several challenges.

The Micro-Train coupler box sits higher than on the Rapido coupler shown on the previous page. With the prototypical low-slung profile of the car, the Rapido coupler just clears the end frame of the car.

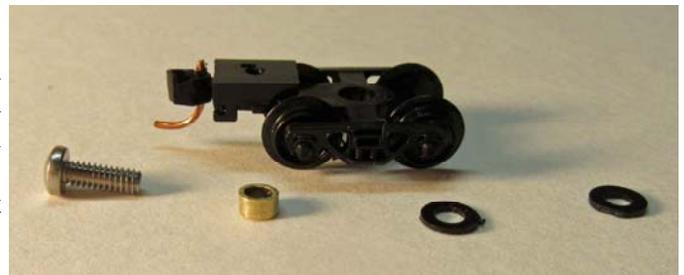
The hole for the bolster pin is smaller on the Rapido truck than on the Micro-Train truck and the hole in the body of the car is smaller.



There is a very thin brace across the end of the well car that causes the interference with the Micro-Train truck. There is not much other support structure there, so cutting the brace out did not seem to be a good option. It would also take a lot of work to build the car up to take a body mount coupler.

With a little test fitting, it turned out that two of the shims that come with Micro-Train couplers would lift the body high enough for the coupler to clear the brace across the end of the car. However, with two shims the bolster pin is not long enough to hold the truck in place reliably. If two shims are used a small bolt or screw would be needed to hold the truck in place.

Searching through the available construction materials produced a piece of 1/8-inch diameter by 0.014-inch thick brass tubing and some short #2 bolts that seemed like they might work. The hole in the Micro-Train truck is 0.130 inches and the bolster pin is 0.121 inches. The brass tubing measured 0.125 inches so it produces a little tighter fit than the bolster pin.



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The inside diameter of the tubing also provides a relatively snug fit with a #2 bolt. Several lengths of tubing, about 1/8-inch long were cut and filed smooth on the ends so the final length is slightly less than the thickness of the hole where the bolster pin fits in the truck.

Now to attack the well car. The fix was either going to work or destroy the well car, but it was of little use the way it was. The bolster hole in the car was reamed out with a NO 50 drill bit (.0700 inches) using a pen vise. The tape on the drill bit was used as a depth guide, since the hole needed to almost reach the deck of the car. A tap was not needed. The plastic is soft enough that the #2 bolt will thread the hole

This picture is a view of the assembly in the car without the truck. By adjusting the bolt, the “wobble” of the truck can be fine-tuned. Tightening it slightly on a couple of cars that wobbled solved the problem.

All 12 cars were modified without destroying any of them. A test run on my home layout went well and they were run for an hour, without derailing, at a train show.

