

Operator's Guide to Progressive Rail in Minnesota

Introduction

Why change themes (again) to model Progressive Rail—and why now? This latest endeavor, which has been more than a year in the making, further fuels my interest and narrows the focus in the hobby, namely, an operating layout based on:

- An Upper Midwest shortline
- Industrial switching
- Terrific PGR support and research
- (Another) cab ride on the prototype

More than a year of research and renewed acquaintance with Joe Fehr, former PGR employee, went into this project. Joe and I met at Lakeville in fall 2007 and eventually railfanned the Cannon Falls line on a hot July 4, 2013. He also arranged my first PGR cab ride in April 2014, from Northfield to Lakeville. And while I modeled PGR on a couple portable switching layouts while we lived in Harrisburg, SD, as well as made PGR my main theme in Shawnee, Kansas a couple years, my interest piqued when Roger Kujawa of Morton informing me that Athearn plans to release SWI500s #36 and 37 in the MN & S paint scheme Spring 2024 that inspired me to action this soon (again).

This time, however, instead of an 11' x 15' spare bedroom, PGR will fill the 25' x 26' layout room. Here's what's included:

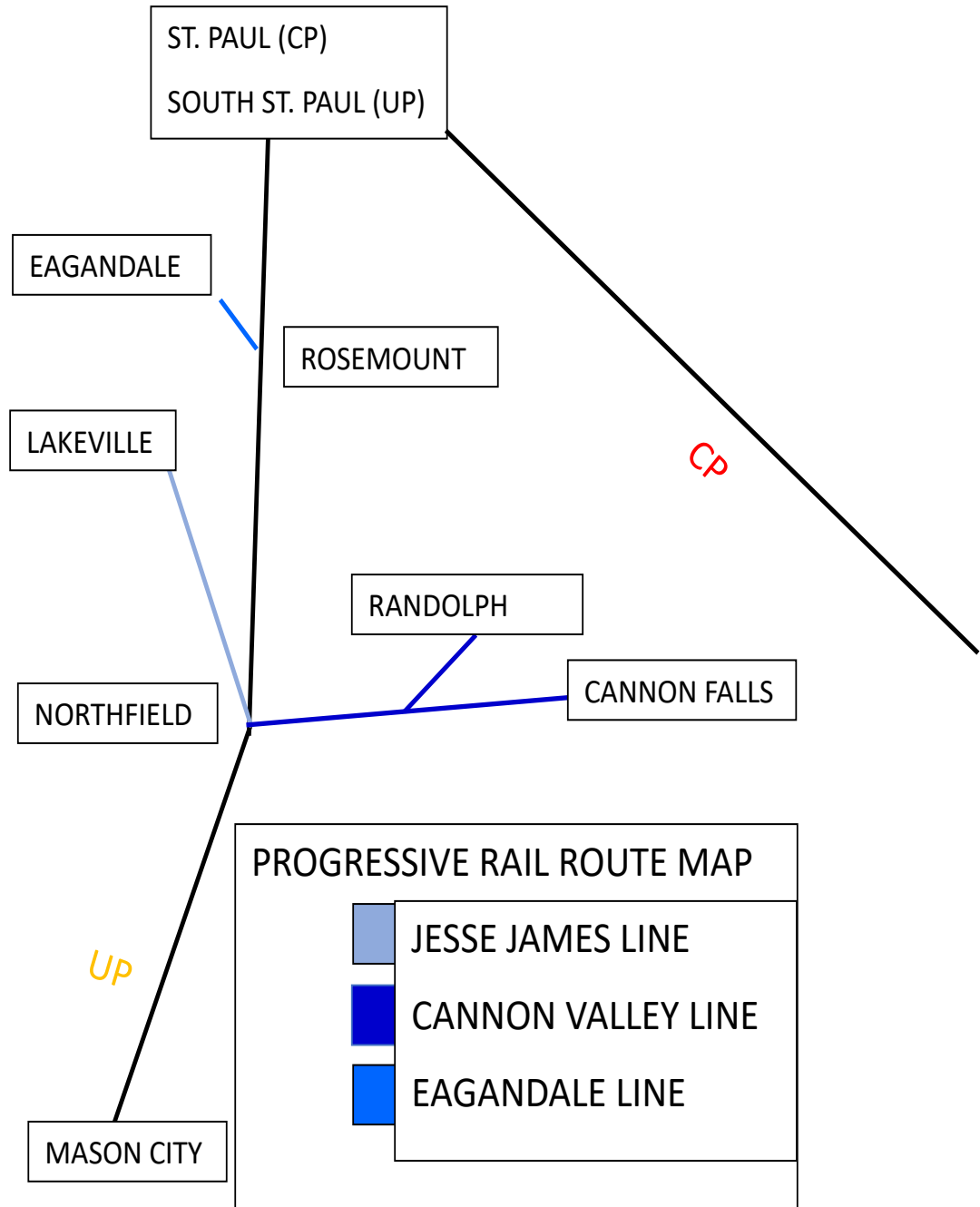
- Cannon Valley Line (Northfield-Randolph-Cannon Falls)
- Jesse James Line (Northfield-Lakeville)
- Eagandale Line (Rosemount-Eagandale industrial park)

What power is on hand? SWI500s form the backbone of the PGR locomotive roster in Minnesota. Below are what I have in service: SWI500 #38, an EMD SD39 #40, SD45 #43 (trailing) as well as SWI500 #34. What's new? SWI500s #36 & #37.



Progressive Rail in Minnesota

Area modeled map



Three PGR routes are modeled on the layout—Jesse James (Northfield to Lakeville), Cannon Valley (Northfield to Cannon Valley) and Eagan-dale Industrial Park. Modeler's license allows me to run both the Jesse James and Cannon Valley lines on the same mainline although they are separate routes on the prototype. Rule number one: it's my layout.

PROGRESSIVE RAIL

CHALK MARK COLOR CODING

NORTHFIELD (MALT O MEAL)



LAKEVILLE NORTH



LAKEVILLE SOUTH



RANDOLPH



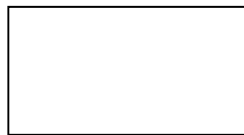
CANNON FALLS



UNION PACIFIC



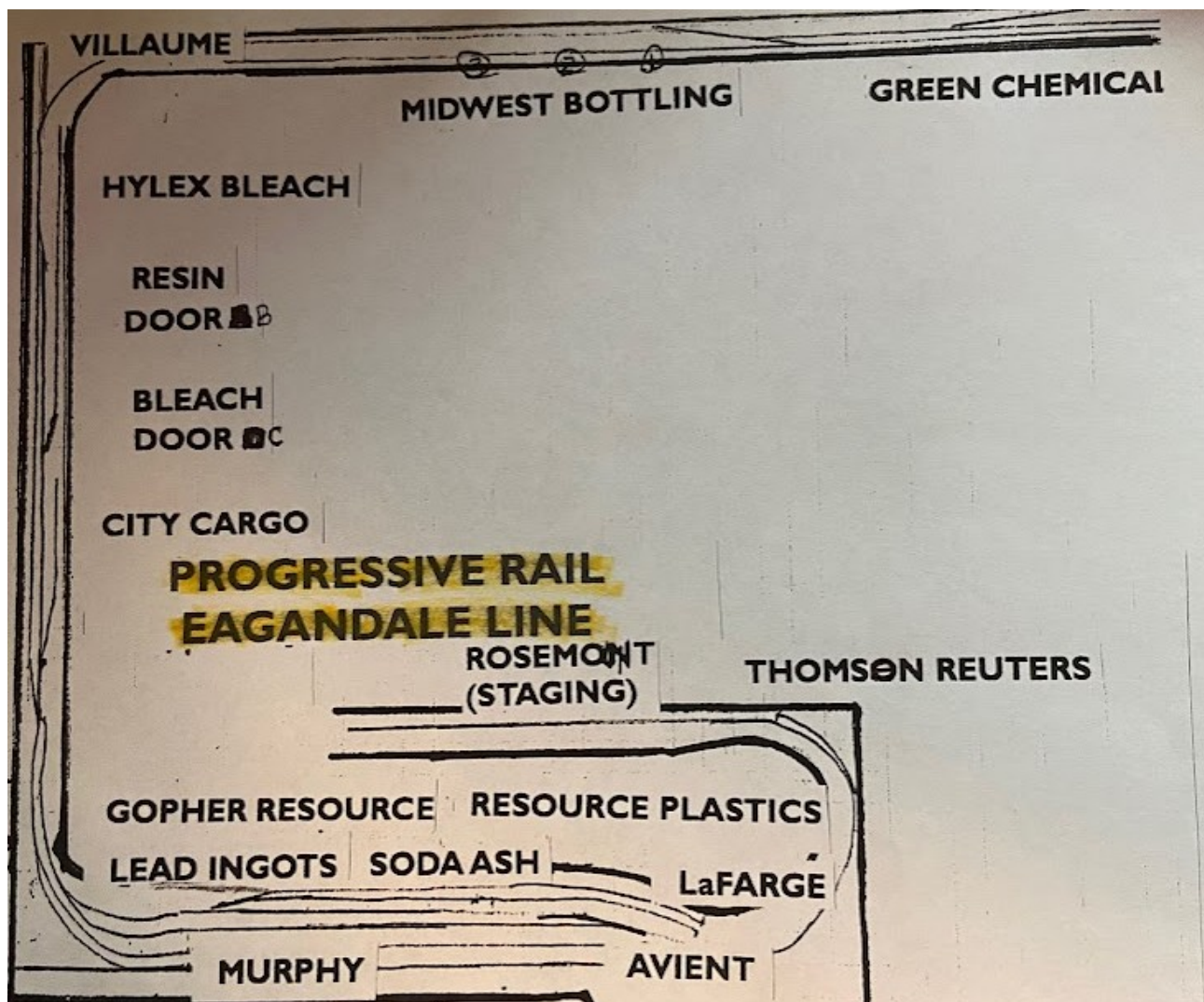
CANADIAN PACIFIC



Eagandale Industrial Park job and diagram

- The Eagandale Industrial Park occupies the previous TCWR route.
- The Eagandale job begins at Rosemount (the river aisle on the layout.) The interchange with CP is staged—the CP has already interchanged cars with PGR at Rosemount.
- There are 14-16 cars on the switch list for Eagandale. They require blocking when the train gets to Eagandale yard.
- The crew makes pickups and setouts from the II industries in the industrial park, then returns to Rosemount and ties up.

The next page shows an aerial of Eagandale and the location of the II modeled industries. The actual track plan snakes its way through the industries, just as this representation shown on the layout diagram.



Eagandale Industrial Park



The eleven industries included on this map comprise the Eagandale Industrial Park switch job. Just as the prototype, the job travels up and down the snakelike route that weaves throughout the park. The layout has, as does the prototype, several areas of double ended track that allow for runaround moves.

For the operating crews on my layout, this job is a departure from the car cards and waybill system used exclusively for car routing since 2019. Instead, each session includes a different switch list, showing the road name, car number, commodity, and destination. Train consists include 14-16 cars in and outbound.

I hope the crews will enjoy the challenge of this latest car forwarding system, and theme, set in the contemporary era circa 2014. It could be here for a long time to come, despite an unnamed source on the call board predicting, "I'll give it two years."