

GSD Layout Tour: The Swamp and Southern Connecting Railroad, version 5.01

The Swamp and Southern Connecting Railroad (SSC) is a fictional short line located somewhere between New Jersey and Georgia. My current layout is the fifth version of the SSC and was completed in the summer of 2025. This version is set in the present day where the SSC is a holding of (also fictitious) Field-Com Logistics. Similar to the real-life Genesee & Wyoming empire, Field-Com has several railroad-related holdings, including the East Coast Transportation Museum, (ECTM), Corridor Rail Leasing (CRL), the Swamp and Southeastern Railway (SSE), and the Regional Independent Transit Authority (RITA).



View of both yards looking west

View of yard leads

The SSC 5.01 is a simple HO scale switching layout. One section of the layout is 5' x 12' and contains two ovals of track. The other section of layout is 2.5' x 10' and contains the yards for each loop. The benchwork is from Sievers Benchwork (Sieversbenchwork.com). I used quarter-inch plywood and 2" pink foam board on

top of the modules. The track is regular (code 100) Atlas. Scenery is mostly stuff salvaged from former layouts.

The inner loop and its two yards are DC only. The outer loop and its yard use a DPDT switch to change between DC and DCC. While the outer and inner loops cross the yard leads, there is no direct interchange between the loops or the yards. In addition, there are no run-around tracks on the main or in the yards, so the loops fulfill this function for switching operations.



Vehicles at ECTM



Old downtown bus terminal

The outer loop and yard represent a long-forgotten part of Conrail Shared Assets Operation (CSAO). The yard and five small industries are switched by GP and SD units from CSX and NS. (NOTE: At the time this was written, the effect of a potential UP takeover on Norfolk Southern's CSAO operations was uncertain.) All trains are run as extras on an as-needed basis. Switch lists are generated using MFRailroad's "OpsBuddy", a switch list protocol designed for smaller layouts (you can find OpsBuddy on Youtube). Run-through freights are sometimes detoured along this line so UP, CN, BNSF, and CPKC power will occasionally show up.

The inner loop and yards are the trackage of the East Coast Transportation Museum. Anything from Northern Pacific GP18s to Maine Central RS2s might be seen. Operation usually consists of excursion trains leaving a museum yard, going out onto the main, and then either backing into the same yard or going head-first into the other yard. RDC units usually run yard-to-yard while locomotive-run trains usually back into their originating yard. And while this is a railroad ... sorry, transportation museum (there are some older tractor trailers on display), there is still one rail-served industry on the ECRM main. Patched CRL, SSC, or SSE switchers usually handle this job, though on occasion the ECRM will send out one of its vintage diesels to do the work. The railfans love it!



Street maintenance



View of ECTM yard