

## Simple and foolproof asphalt streets

By Dan Dossa

When I started model railroading as a teenager, my go to material for roads was a roll of 1/16" cork. I would cut it to shape and paint it, usually too uniformly and much too dark. It works, but is fragile and prone to break while being formed and placed. I read about other techniques, styrene, joint compound, shingles with the stones sanded off (ouch!), etc. I suppose they all work fine but I wanted something like my old cork, only better.

Fast forward to modeling as an adult. I happened to be wandering through an Auto Part store, and came across a material for making high temperature gaskets. It comes in a roll, and looks a bit like thin grey cardboard, only it is much more flexible. The color is a nice dark grey and the surface slightly mottled. It occurred to me it just could work.

If you look at asphalt streets, except when they are first rolled out, they weather to a very light grey. In the Midwest where I live they also are prone to expansion cracks from our lovely winters, and are cracked, pothole laden, and stained from wheels, exhaust, dirt and of course salt.

I wanted to elevate the look of my streets as I model older industrial areas where the streets don't get much repair. What I discovered to my delight is the gasket material works beautifully. It is easy to cut and shape, takes paint and weathering well, and isn't fragile like cork. Best yet, the technique is embarrassingly simple and uses only a few basic materials and steps. You can add powdered chalks and details as you prefer.

### MATERIALS:

High Temperature Gasket Material (Available from Amazon or local auto parts stores)

Rustoleum rattle can paint in "Perfect Grey" and Smokey Beige"

Tamiya Flat Clear spray also in a rattle can

1/16" pinstriping in yellow and white

A fine tipped black roller pen

White glue

Modeling paste

Powdered chalks in grey and brown

I first measure and cut the sections of gasket material I need for a particular street. I fit those cutting and modifying as need be. Once I have the shapes cut out I mark them on the backside so I can reorient them correctly when I install them on the layout.

Mist the paint over the gasket material. I do a heavier mist of Perfect Grey and let dry for a few minutes. If it looks too dark, hit it again. Try not to make it too uniform though. Then I come

back and do a light misting of Smokey Beige over top. Once this is dry I install the pieces on the layout with white glue.

At this point (or before installing) you can mask and paint stripes or lines if you prefer. I used a stencil to mark rail crossings. You can also add details like sidewalks and manhole covers at this time. You can drill the material if you are careful. I used a flat faced drill bit and added metal manhole covers.

Let the magic begin:

I mask off and spray my road fairly heavily but not evenly with Flat Clear. This adds a subtle mottled white coloration that looks like salt stains characteristic of rustbelt and Northern city streets.

Next I use pinstriping to add lines. The striping doesn't always adhere well and you may need to work with it to get it down. Oh and don't even try to put it down before the Flat Clear (ask me how I know). Once the stripes are down I take my roller pen and gently draw cracks on the surface. I really like this part of the process. Vary the pressure you put on the pen. Light lines simulate older cracks and darker lines newer cracks. Cracks meander and often break off in different directions. The most typical pattern to the cracks is along the crown of the road, and extending from the crown at about 90 degrees to the edge of the road. Our midwestern streets take a beating and this captures the effect. Don't forget that the cracks don't respect our beautiful striping so feel free to extend the cracks right through them.

Once the cracks are drawn to your satisfaction give the entire road another coat of flat spray. If you didn't get enough of the salt stained effect now is the time to hit it again.

To better affix the striping, brush a light coat of modeling paste over the stripes. It dries flat and becomes invisible once done.

Last, add some tire trails with gentle application of grey and dark brown weathering powders.

And that's it. Easy peasy and the roads look worn and correct.

Give it a try and see.

Happy modeling,

Dan