Trackside Realism

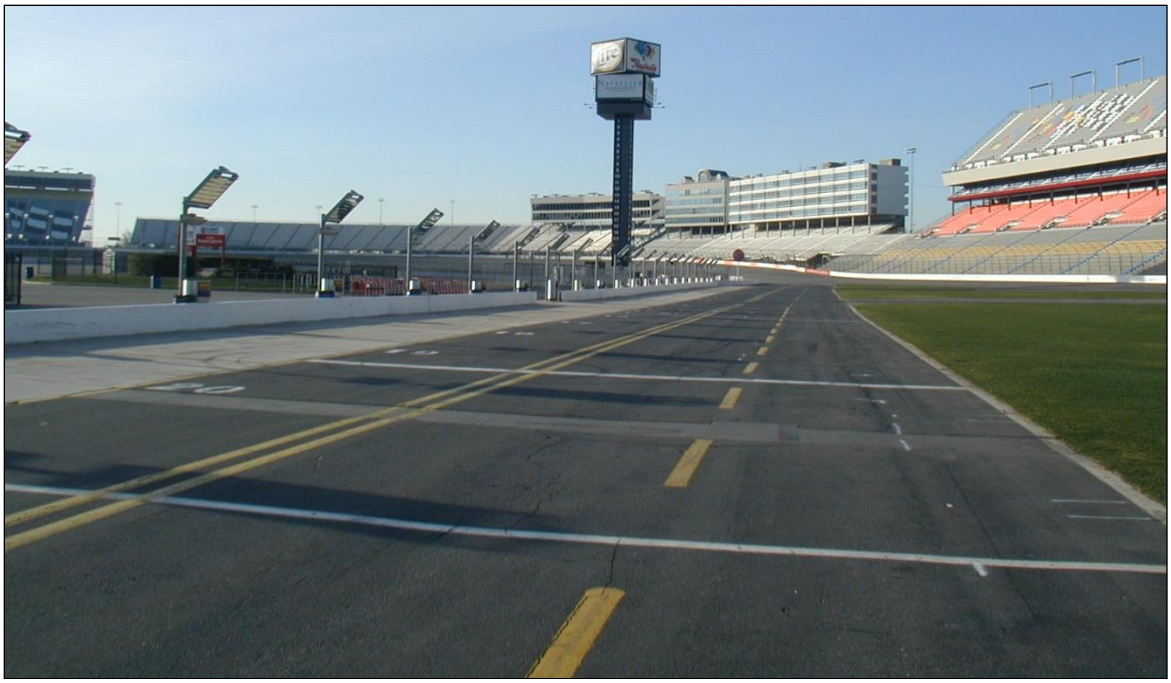
The start of the 2001 LeMans. Only in France can you get so close to the action. FCA photographic.

Ask any Woman and they will tell you 'accessories' make the costume. Well, the same can be said for your slot car layout. I'm not going to tell you how to build structures and scenery, there are plenty of hobby (primarily train) books for that. I'm just going to take you behind the scenes, and show modern trackside examples. Note; there are no hay bales, chalk pit boards, or pit stop buildings.

<u>Structures</u>

Talladega Tip #21. Leave some room in or around your slot car layout for structures found at a typical real race track.

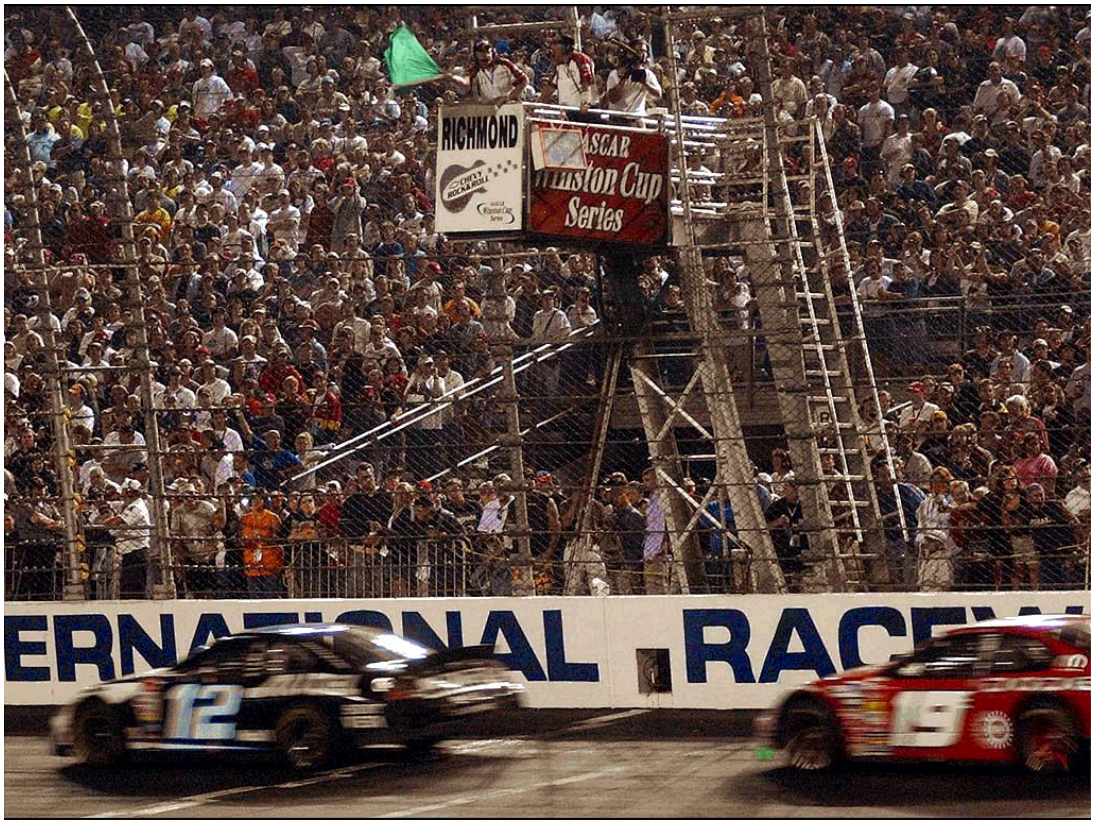
- Pit Road
- Flag Stand
- Victory Circle
- Grandstands
- Garages
- Fueling Station
- Scoring Tower
- Media & Medical Centers
- Pedestrian Overpasses or Infield Access Tunnels
- Campgrounds and RV Parking



Pit lane at Charlotte (Lowe's) Motor Speedway. Note double solid yellow lines to separate in/out traffic. Pit boxes are numbered and there are timing marks (white lines) to check pit lane speeds.

The pit wall is typically 10 inches thick and just under waist high.

The fantastic filming over the pit stall is handled by this camera on a shuttling cable at top of picture. Note support structure. The camera just above the pit wall helps NASCAR Officials determine who won the race off pit lane. Note pit wall increases in height at end of pit lane.



Flag stand (above) at Richmond, VA from night race 2003. Hole in wall near "R" of raceway is for high speed video camera, (photo finish). Note height of fencing, steps (ladder) and structure. The event (race) name is posted on the flag stand, note the banner style (below) from Las Vegas, 2002. Our man Sterling Marlin takes the checkered. Note hand out the window for a victory wave. He is so cool! Jayski photo.

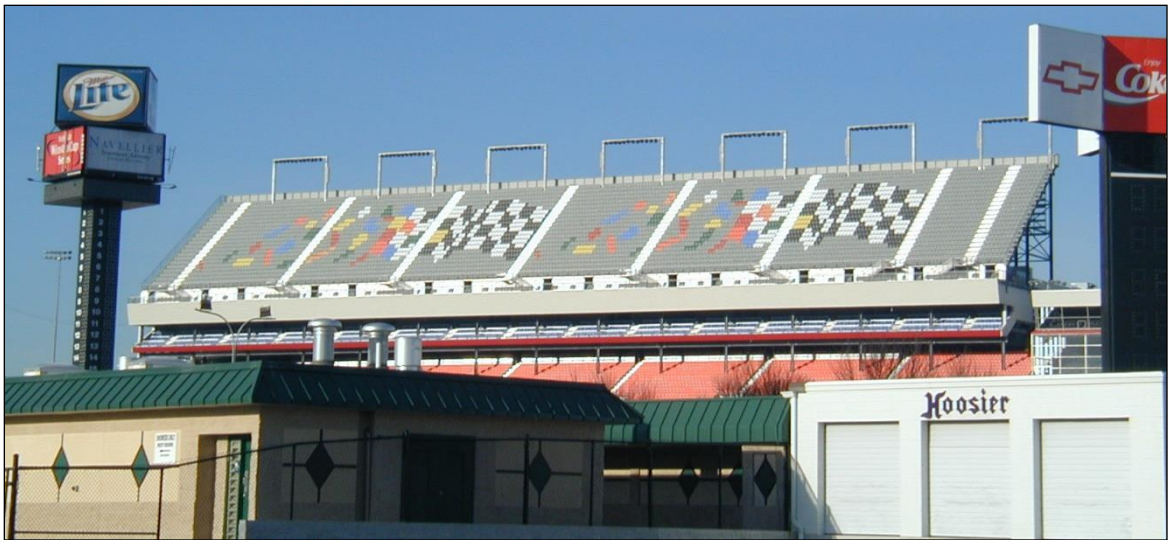
Checkered finish line at LeMans. FCA photographic.

Texas has a more elaborate start/finish line with track logos and lettering. Note flag stand protrusion relative to fencing. This was one of the many 2nd place finishes for Kasey Kahne in his rookie year in Cup, 2004. Jayski photo.

One of the nicer Victory Circles, Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Note that you need to be able to drive up and through Victory Circle, as seen from the ramp at Talladega.

Grandstands can have checkered or color coded seating sections like these at Daytona (above) or Talladega (below). Structures add to the "picket fence" speed effect.



Charlotte (Lowe's) Motor Speedway has even more sophisticated graphics in their bleachers.

A line of Chryslers at LeMans, 2000. Grandstand suites overlook pit action at left. Note these grandstands are covered, since road races are run rain or shine. Carrera makes grandstands and pit buildings similar to these. FCA photographic.

Typical long garage structure, bay doors on both sides. NASCAR often uses a bay at one or both ends for inspection, particularly to measure car weight and height. Bathrooms are typically at one end only. Rolling tool boxes are positioned at the nose of each car, and there is enough room for an isle running the full length down the center of the garage. It might be neat to make a scale garage with clear or no roof so you can easily see all the action inside. Note billboards in background.

Daytona has extensive garage stall labeling for each car/team, due to the week-long event. Others just post the car number.

Note color partitioned bays and measurement tape on floor. Tool box is so big it has brakes!

The garage is one busy place! Fill yours with cars (a good excuse to add to your collection), people and tools. The defending Champion gets the first stall, then the current points leader, and so on…

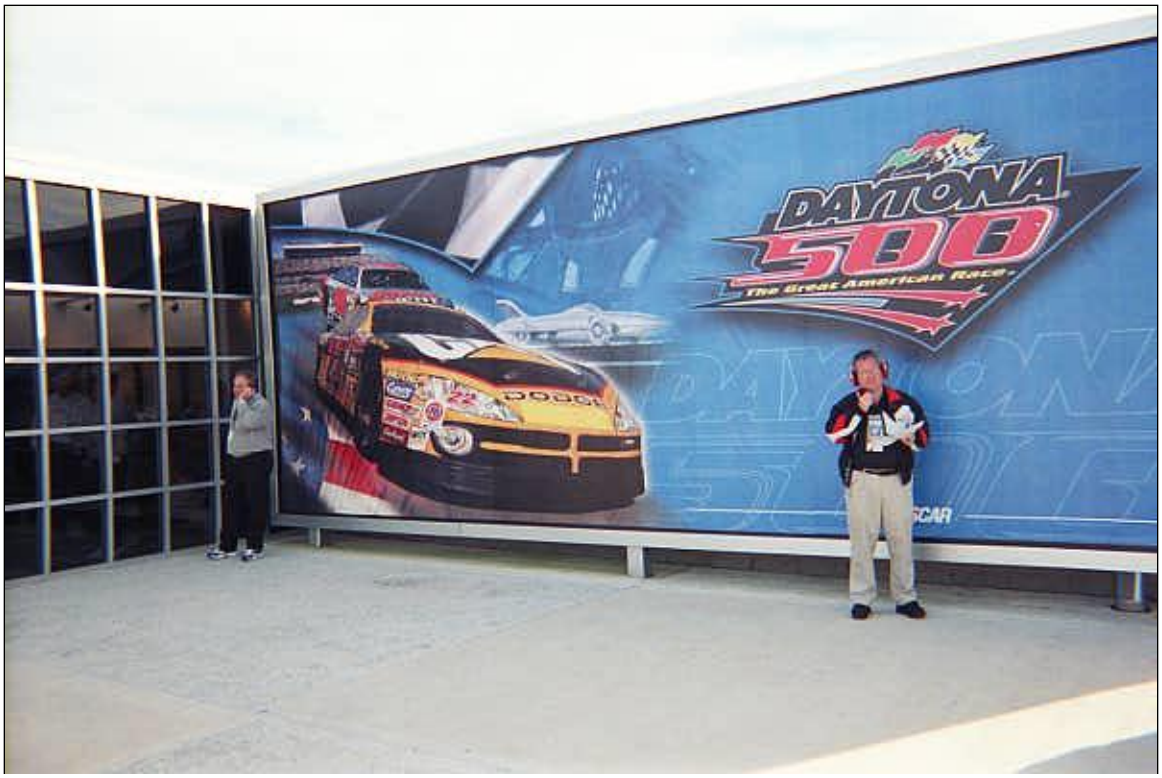
Tool box, jack & stands. Team and sponsor decals are on everything. Note tape outline of front of vehicle on floor for Kodak car. Isle running down center of garage is painted red and lined on either side by tool boxes.

Have people in the garage checking/changing tires, taping off different parts of the grille, staring helplessly at computer screens (as I often do), or staring at the engine compartment wishing for more power. This was a test, thus the truck has minimal lettering and we had the whole garage to ourselves. Rick Talbot (red shirt) was the Engine Development Engineer of our group, located at Arrington Mfg. in Martinsville, VA.

Real race cars run on gas. It will be a sad day when we race full size electric cars! This is one of the most gas station like infield refueling stations I've seen. Most are just pumps with a nearby office. It is located near the pits, because during the race the Teams must use this as the single point source for refilling their fuel cans.

The Atlanta scoring tower displays the lap number at top, then the running order of the top 20 cars. The lower two displays cycle through the rest of the field. It is currently showing the 93 car in 41st place, and the 47 car in 42nd place. Ok, so maybe the scoring tower would be a bit much for a 2 lane layout.

Media Center, often the nicest structure in the infield. Much nicer bathrooms than in the garages. I'd recommend trying to get in even if you don't have the proper credentials. No one usually checks except on race day.



When you win at Daytona, you get your picture along side the Media Center. Ward Burton, Tommy Baldwin, Terry Elledge and the whole Bill Davis Racing team made Dodge look smart!

Access tunnel at Talledega, infield view.

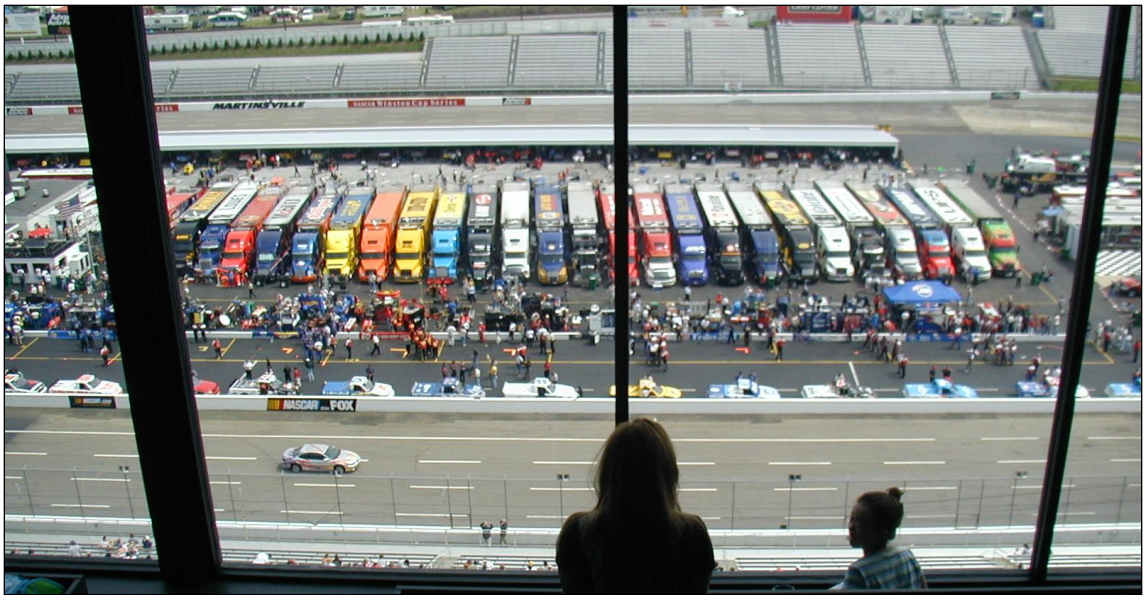
Infield RV parking for the Team Owner's and Driver's. Note Richard Petty being interviewed beyond blue Durango. Petty carts in fore ground.

Big RV's are often parked along the perimeter of the larger tracks.

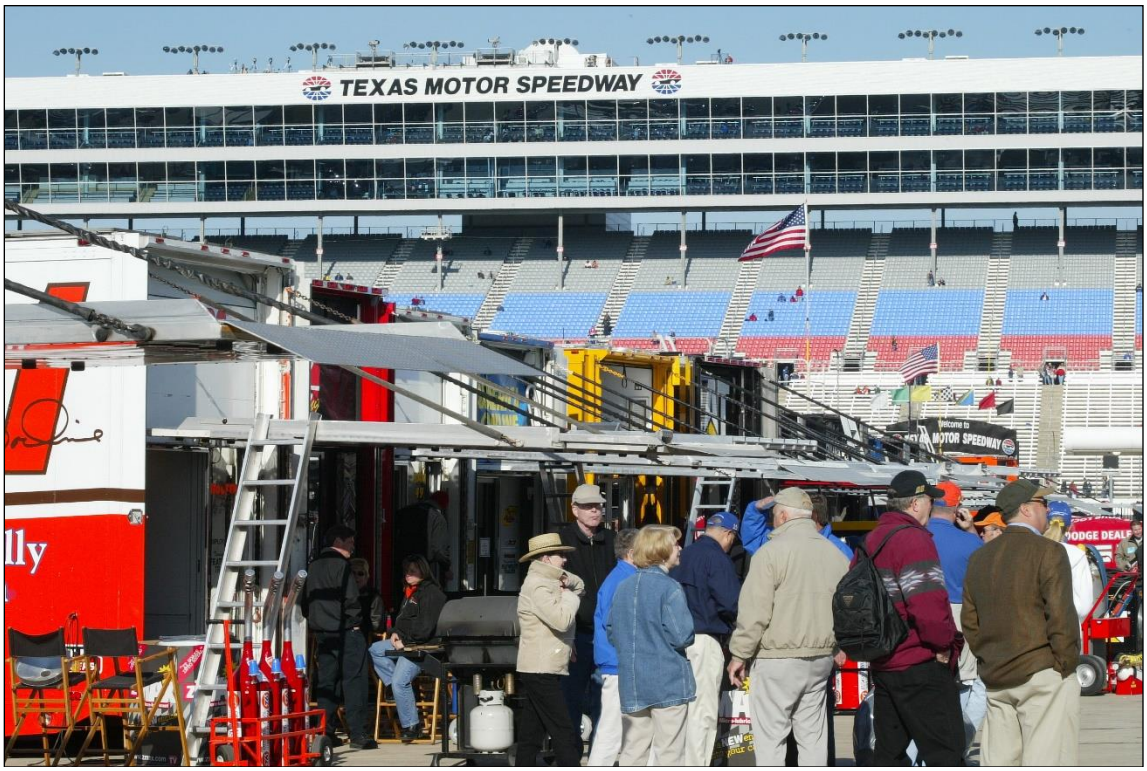

Campgrounds are often just as close to the track as regular parking lots, and more interesting to look at.

<u>Accessories</u>

- Car Haulers
- War Wagons
- Tires
- Gas cans/carts
- Jacks/air tools
- Pit signs
- Food vendors/garbage cans

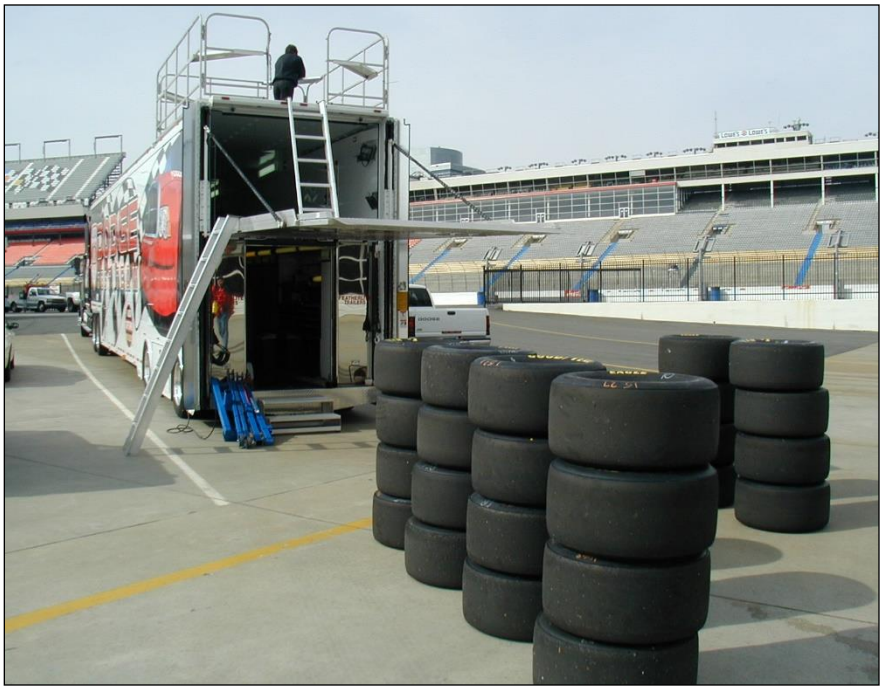


Car haulers are always located near the garages. A view from the FOX suite at Martinsville, VA. My Wife and oldest Daughter think this is how I always attend races. In reality, I spend most of my time during the race behind one of the Dodge pit boxes, in the way of the Crew Members. I try to pick a pit with view of the "Jumbotron". A stack of tires is nice to lean on unless it is a really hot day.



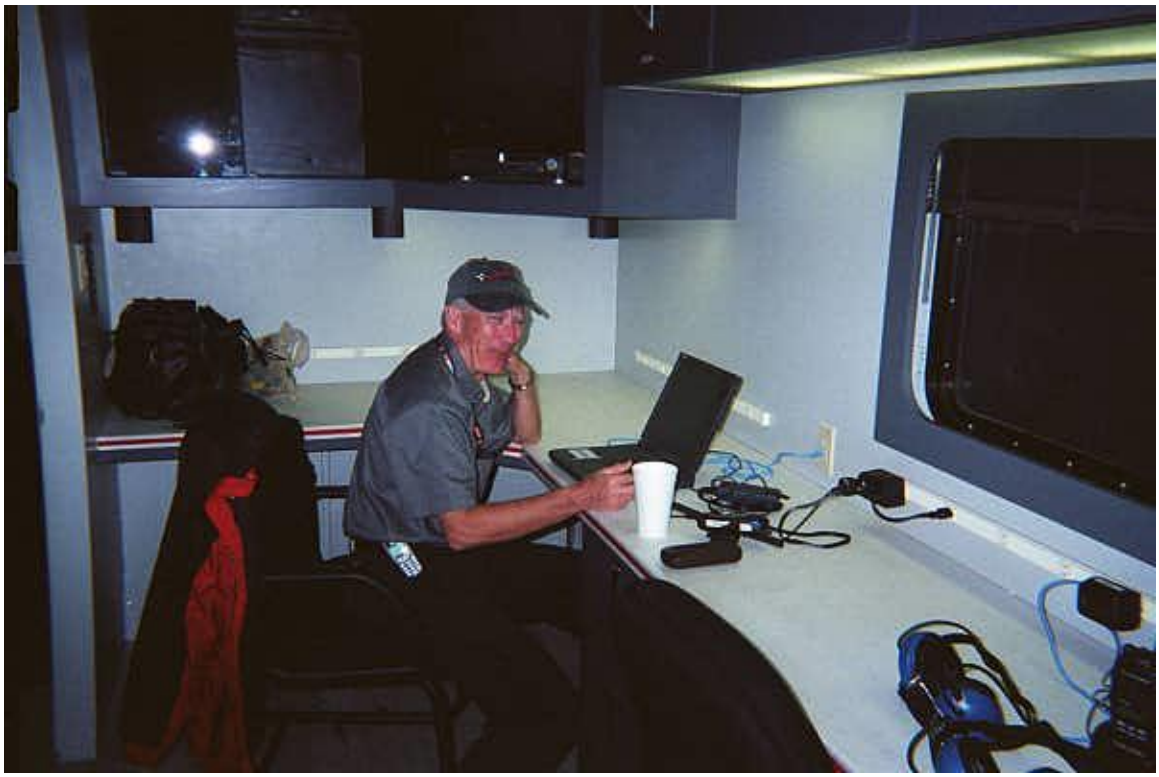
Typical row of haulers at Texas Motor Speedway. Note ladder to ramp, Director's chairs, gas can cart, gas grill (in close proximity to each other), and people milling about. Not in view are the big coolers for beverages, hero card holders, and crews running between hauler and garage.

The car ramp is often left in the top position to serve as a platform for viewing practice sessions. Note railing around top rear of hauler and short access ladder from car ramp. The haulers are sometimes arranged in a 'V' like here at Daytona.



This is our test team hauler for NASCAR Craftsman Truck support. Some of the nicest and most organized people I have ever met are the guys that drive the car haulers. This is where the old guys check lap times with a stop watch. I prefer to look at the Pi computer system data after it is downloaded from the test.

Around lunch time you are most likely to find us in the Engineering hauler. The bland white haulers ahead of ours are the GM and Ford Motorsports haulers.


An interior shot of our Engineering hauler. John Wehrly was my first Manager at Chrysler, and I worked for him again in the Motorsports group up until he retired (2005) after 43 years. Note the Racing Radios head sets are blue with black head bands and foam, (the other popular color is red). Most everyone associated with the event is wearing a blue or red head set.

Typical hauler graphics include team (Ultra Motorsports), driver (Jason Leffler), and sponsors.

This is the one hauler you don’t want to get called into, (unless you enjoy a good reaming!).

I have only been in the NASCAR hauler once, and that was in Daytona to look at a heavily modified restrictor plate intake manifold that Robby Gordon tried to get through tech inspection. (Side note: The "cheated" intake was made by one of my best friends!) The side of the NASCAR hauler (near the door) has event schedules, meeting notices, qualifying lists, etc posted for the Competitors. An example of one of the more interesting postings (Goodyear Tire Notes) is shown below:

THE RACE: *Pocono 500*

Nextel Cup Race #14 of 36 for the 2005 season

Updated: often, leading up to the race

Race: Sunday, June 12, 2005 in Long Pond, PA

GOODYEAR TIRE NOTES

Tire: Goodyear Eagle Speedway Radials

Number of Tires: Left-side -- 1,200; Right-side -- 1,200

Tire Codes: Left-side -- D-6860; Right-side -- D-6862

Tire Circumference: Left-side -- 87.4 in; Right-side -- 88.7 in.

Technical Inspection Inflation:
Left Front -- 26 psi; Left Rear -- 26 psi
Right Front -- 36 psi; Right Rear -- 36 psi

Minimum Recommended Inflation:
Left Front -- 18 psi; Left Rear -- 18 psi;
Right Front -- 33 psi; Right Rear -- 30 psi

Estimated Pit Window: Every 34-36 laps, based on fuel mileage.

Notes: This is the first year Goodyear has brought this specific combination of left- and right-side tires to Pocono . . . this is the second of four races in which Nextel Cup teams will run this tire set-up in 2005 . . . teams ran this exact combination earlier this season at Las Vegas and will run it again at Pocono in July and at Bristol in August . . . as on all NASCAR ovals one mile or greater in length, teams are required to run inner liners in their tires at Pocono . . . air pressure in those inner liners should be 12-25 psi greater than that of the outer tire.

Goodyear Quote: Mark Keto, lead engineer, stock car racing: "This is the same tire set-up as Cup teams ran earlier this year at Las Vegas, and it was developed in a test out there with Greg Biffle and Casey Mears last Fall. Comparing these tires with those we ran last year at Pocono, this year's set-up features a new left-side construction and a new compound on both sides."

The little interface that I have had with NASCAR inspectors has been fine…they are just trying to do a job and make sure everyone is playing to the same set of rules. Everyone works so hard at the race shops that getting a win is a really big deal. I've been at Ray Evernham's engine shop from 7:15AM – 11:00 PM, and I wasn't the first one in or the last one to leave. After 10 days I was toast. Most people have no idea of the sacrifice that is made by Racers day after day, week after week.

Talladega Tip #22. There are typically 10 support people at the race track for each car. They are going to be in the pit area during the race. Their focus is going to be on watching the car from the War Wagon, and having tires and gas ready for the next pit stop.

The King – Richard Petty – on the "War Wagon" pit box. Behind the pit box are plenty of tires, tools, air hoses, and people. Have plenty of duplicate items for true realism. Gas cans on carts in foreground.

The back side of the pit box houses everything needed, including a monitor to review the pit stop, strategy notes, (see pages taped to inside of panel), and emergency tools including the ever present "200 mph tape".

Tires are $1500.00 a set. A race can consume $18K in tires. Some tracks are very abrasive.

The paint is wire brushed off the lug nut area so that glue will hold the lugs in place. Note directional arrows and car number on each wheel.

For ultimate realism have stacks and stacks of tires. Four tires to a stack and a tire carrier near by.

Ray Evernham's "Dew Crew" on the pit lane wall, wired for sound, tools and tires, ready to go!

Pit signs and pit lane action at Pocono. As you can see, some are Sponsor related and others car number.

You can always tell an Engineer because they carry their lap top everywhere they go! Alona Pehrson is our Russian refugee, posing in front of a typical infield vendor food area. I didn't mean to imply that food vendors and garbage cans are related, but they do go together. I didn't want to get caught taking pictures of garbage cans, so you'll just have to trust me that they are steel drums typically painted red (as above), blue, or black/white checkered.

Scenery

- People
- Fences
- Ground cover like shrubs, grass, flowers, and plenty of black top.
- Flags

Talladega Tip #23. Have some people doing things, rather than just standing around or seated watching the race. Ten thousand people on cell phones would be appropriate.

Inspectors are at every race track, and there are loads of them in the infield. Geez, do they think *our* Teams would have to resort to cheating?

Measuring wheelbase. These NASCAR Inspectors have a template or gauge for everything!

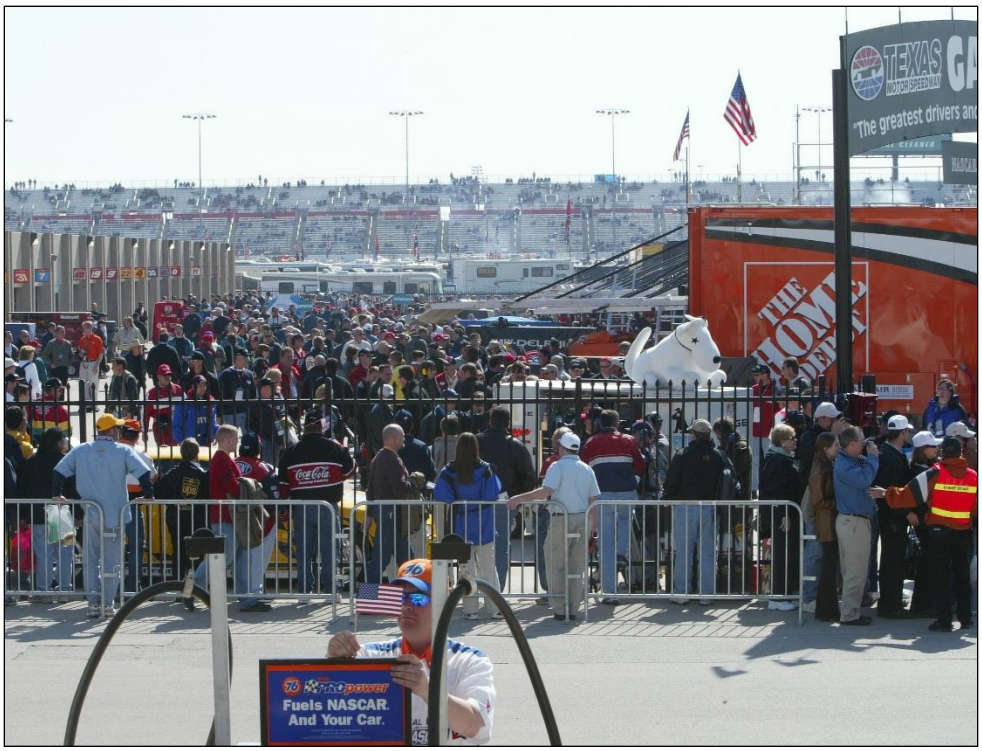
Making sure the profile of this Penske Ford is within the template specifications. Many of the Dodge and Ford body templates are nearly identical, which eased the decision by Penske to switch to Dodge in 2003.

There are always a lot of crew members that are always with the car. Note check list taped to quarter panel.

Rolling the car between the various tech inspection areas is always a trying time for the crew.

Talladega Tip #24. Fences are to keep people out of certain areas. At every fence opening, there are multiple guards to check credentials.

Can you believe this security guard is giving *me* a hard time? Something about Henry "Smokey" Yunick doesn't match the name on my Driver's license.



Typical early race morning crowd within the garage area, and those looking through the fence to catch a glimpse of their favorite Driver. This is why NASCAR has created a "Hot Pass" to thin the crowd during practice and the race.

Note walk lane along fencing to keep us “safe” from the Marketing guys driving carts and SUV’s.

More modern race tracks have beautiful infield ground cover.

Slot Racing Accessories makes these scale canvas sponsor banners and flags. I made my own flag poles from aluminum tube to display the flags. Plan to mount some banners on a RP grown foot bridge.

Note you can use areas around your track and even under the edge of your layout for dioramas or useful storage. The garages are Carrera with roll-up doors. The door bell button left of the SCCA sticker operates the flag man. I made a solenoid activated lever system to activate the flag. We start races when the flag man waves…pretty cool!

You can see, there are many things to consider before embarking on your CNC Track Design. The more you plan up front, the less difficulty you will have implementing trackside realism in the form of structures, accessories, and scenery elements into your layout.