

# Building The Norfolk Southern 50' Combination Door Box Car

by Michael Heonis and Thom Anderson

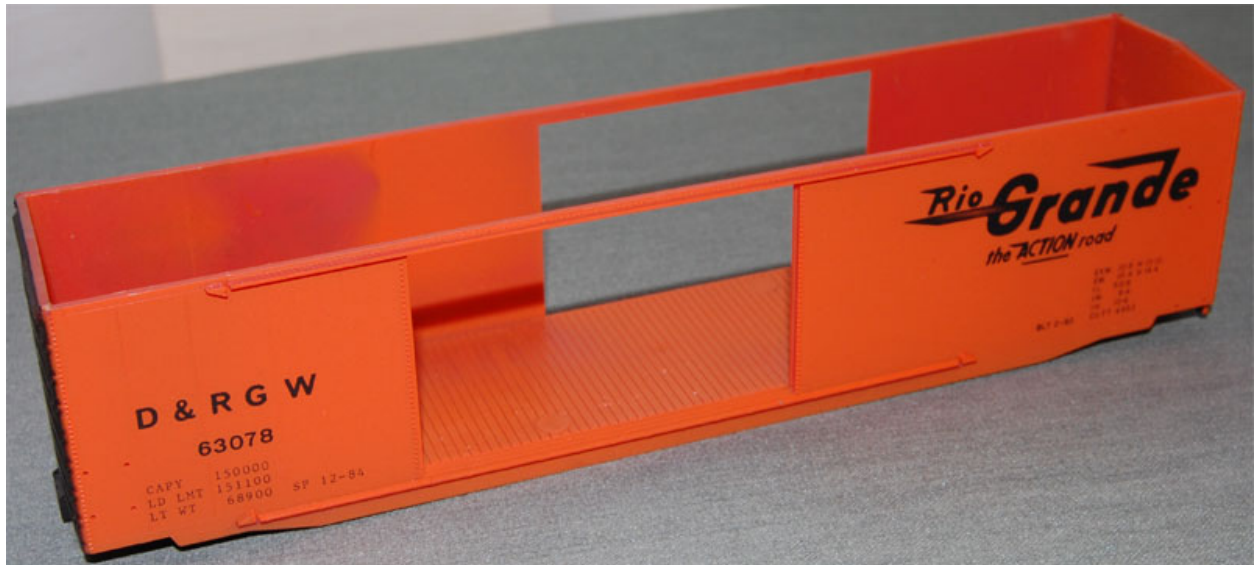


It looks like these Norfolk Southern 50' Combination Door box car were the only railroad with this design arrangement. Built in 1959, in 1971 they had 247 on their roster. Great Northern had some similar, though not identical cars. GN 36000-36249 have a slightly different side sill and an overhanging diagonal-panel roof. Some cars from this series were renumbered to 36750-36773. GN 36250-36749 were home built by GN and have similar features to the other group, but have riveted side seams.

It looks like most all 50 ft combination door box cars available have a small plug door and a large sliding door. (see HLCX image below) Or a large plug door and a large sliding door. The original Norfolk Southern (before the 1974 Southern merger) 50 ft combination door box car had a large plug door and a small sliding door.



The 5100 Front Range 50' (welded side) Double Door box car kit is the best choice for this project. We choose these box cars with separate detail ladders and grab irons plus the Kadee 50' Apex Running Board roof walks on two of our project cars.



50 ft double door box car shell (above).



Testing doors (above).



(above) The Front Range 50' double-door boxcar has a shouldered door opening to permit plug doors to be mounted flush with the side of the car. Begin the conversion by inserting a piece of Evergreen #128 .020X.188 styrene strip the length of the vertical edges on both the left and right sides of the door opening.

On Michael's models I then placed a piece of Evergreen #108 .010x.188 styrene strip on top of the other piece the entire distance between the top and bottom door runners on the left side to simulate the reinforced areas on either side of the door opening. Another piece measuring approximately .188 wide extending scale 9" is glued to the side sill below the strip between the door runners. I subsequently discovered that Evergreen makes a sheet of .005 styrene sheet. In retrospect, I think a piece of .005 cut to .188 wide for the overlay would be closer dimensionally to the prototype. If you opt for that you will have to cut a strip .188 wide from a larger sheet.

The door as it comes off of the sprue is a bit too high to fit into the plug opening on the carbody. I carefully filed away some of the door material from the bottom, being careful not to damage the door track rollers, and also from the top until the door fit without bowing inward or out.

Install a Front Range 8' wide plug door next to the styrene strip on the left side of the door opening. Position - but do not glue at this time - an InterMountain Pullman-Standard 6' Youngstown door next to the right edge of the plug door. Attach a piece of .010x.188 styrene strip next to the right edge of the 6' door the entire distance between the top and bottom door runners on the left side. As with the one installed on the left side, another piece measuring approximately .188 wide extending scale 9" below the door runner is glued to the side sill between the door runners. Once that piece is in place, the Youngstown door can be attached to the car.

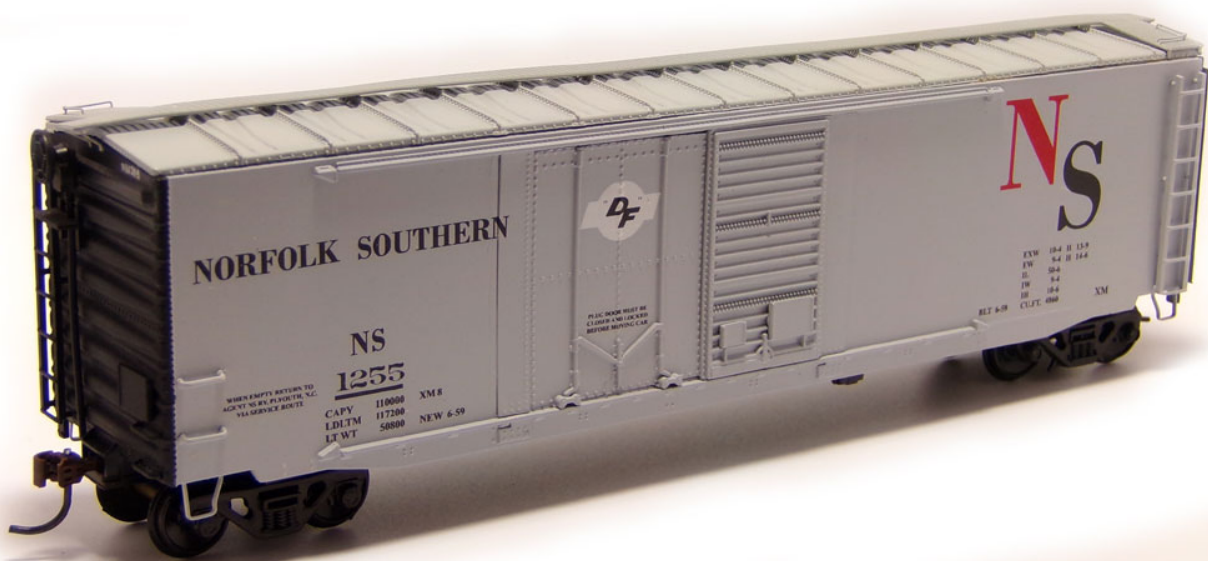
I used Archer rivet decals from set #AR88025 for the rivet strip that appears next to the edge of the door opening on the left side, and also for the area at the bottom of the reinforced areas at the lower corners on both sides of the door opening. I followed the instructions included with the decals and applied them directly to the unpainted plastic. I was dubious about applying them to unpainted plastic, but they worked as advertised.







1. (above) Norfolk Southern 1274 as first delivered in 1959.



2. (above) Norfolk Southern 1255 as repainted in the gray paint scheme with black ends.



3. (above) Norfolk Southern 1385 as repainted in their last paint scheme with silver roof, yellow lettering and sliding door. This box car had short ladders and no roof walk.

Detail End Views:

