

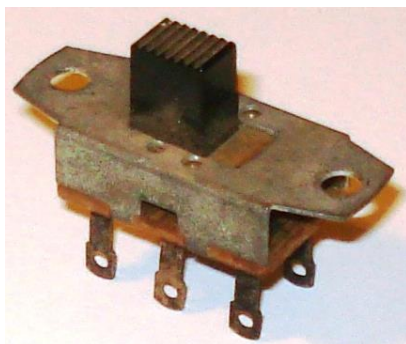
NTRAK Camouflaged Slide Switches

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When an NTRAK module has sidings branching off one or more of the main lines, the modeler often wants to be able to turn power to these siding on and off, or, if the siding serves two main lines, the modeler may wish to select which power source serves the siding. Historically this has been done with electrical switches that are mounted in various positions on the module. Sometimes they are behind the skyboard (as shown below), sometimes on the front fascia board and sometimes on the module top.



The problem with electrical switches that are not mounted on the module's top surface is that they are not easily accessible if the operator is on the wrong side of the module. Even with DCC, the power load is low enough that double-pole, double-throw (DPDT) slide switches (below left) can easily and safely handle the voltage and the current. The beauty of these switches is that they can be mounted right alongside of the tracks they serve and can be camouflaged so that they are totally inconspicuous, i.e. they're hiding in plain sight! (below right).



It's a simple, five-step process that can be done when the module is built or added at any time to an existing, completed module:

1. If the sliding button has a rounded and/or ribbed top, sand it flat so it is rectangular.
2. Solder sufficiently long wire leads onto the bottom of the switch and label them since it will be difficult to do so later.
3. Cut a rectangular hole in the surface just large enough for the switch body to fit in the hole and so the switch face sets flush with the surface of the module. Once in place, check to be sure the switch slides freely and completely.
4. Glue the switch in place with AC and then ballast around and over the switch, being sure not to get glue or ballast on the sliding mechanism. It's a good idea to work the switch periodically as the glue is drying.
5. Paint the button and slide mechanism with aluminum colored paint.

The result is that you have a switch that looks like a trackside electrical box and that adds to the scenic effect rather than detracts from it (photos below). Also, operators have easy access to the switch whether they are in the infield of the layout or on the outside. Note that it is still wise to identify on the back side of the skyboard what the switch controls.



Other modelers may also have come up with this idea, but in Oklahoma, this concept was developed and first used in the late 1980's by Marc Montry of the NEONS (North East Oklahoma N-Scalers).

Author

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