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No Use for HOMASOTE ...



I WON'T BEAT AROUND the bush, I personally don't have any use for homasote on a model railroad. On my Siskiyou Line layout, I don't have one scrap of Homasote anywhere. Never have liked the stuff – and frankly, never will have it on my layout.

First, I swear the Homasote company saw the model

railroaders coming, since Homasote sells at almost \$30 for a 4'x8' half-inch sheet! By comparison, a half-inch sheet of drywall runs just \$10 for a 4'x8' sheet.

So I went with a plywood / drywall sandwich on my layout's flat areas. I talked to an architect who is also a model railroader and

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asked him which will expand less in the presence of moisture – Homasote or drywall? He said without question drywall will expand less in moisture than Homasote will.

In fact, I've taken to using scraps of drywall as working boards for my projects. It works especially well for doing my Poor man's turnout jig method (see the September 2011 issue of MRH model-railroad-hobbyist.com/magazine/mrh-2011-09-sep/jig-built_turnouts for more). The drywall holds small track spikes just fine. I just wrap some duct tape around the edges of these scraps and voila! Instant soft workboards for my projects!

Cutting drywall is a snap, literally. Similar to working with styrene, as long as the edge is fairly straight, you can just score it with a sharp utility knife then snap it. Cut through the paper on the other side of the snap and you're done – no mess!

Have you ever cut Homasote with a saw? Prepare for heaps of dust on everything! Yes sir, cutting drywall was never this messy!

I think it was Linn Westcott from *Model Railroader* who first promoted its use. It seems to have become a given that Homasote is the stuff you want for your roadbed and large flat areas for things like yards.

Isn't it about time we kill the Homasote myth as a product that's required in model railroading? The stuff is costly, messy and subject to dimensional changes when exposed to moisture.

Myself, I use hardboard spline for my roadbed, laying the track straight on the spline with grey latex caulk. For large flat areas, using a drywall-plywood sandwich works just fine. My pocket book certainly appreciated the relief.

At this point, my layout's going to be 25 years old in 2016. There's not a scrap of Homasote on the layout anywhere, and I've not missed it, even a tiny bit!