

Lionel Product Review – Lackawanna Multi Unit Commuter Cars

Write up submitted by Joe Smolinski

Chicagoland Lionel Railroad Club

Picture by Joe Smolinski

In 2008 I started to rebuild my Lionel train collection. As I was planning to retire in 2013 I wanted to have a hobby to help fill my days at home. As a typical youngster in the 1950's I didn't take very good care of the Lionel trains we received at Christmas back then so I knew "rebuilding" was necessary. I also knew once I retired my discretionary income would decrease. Those "Honey what did you buy at the hobby shop last week" would become more frequent once I retired. To avoid those questions I started to stock pile my collection while I was still working.

Living in the south suburbs in Illinois in the late 60's I would take the Illinois Central Gulf Electric commuter train from Riverdale to Pullman to attend high school as a freshman until my junior year. These commuter cars were the original heavy weight passenger cars with the electro pantographs on top of the cars. The ICGRR commuter line ran from the south suburbs to downtown Chicago via the Lake Michigan shore line. Our city founders back then were among our first ecologists as they wanted to keep the shore line clean of pollutants was of great importance to them. The electric trains did not emit the smoke and fumes as compared to their diesel trains counterparts so having a clean air Chicago skyline was key.



One of the sets I always wanted to acquire was the Lionel Commuter Multi Units. These were the same commuter cars that were used in Chicago as well as in New York. I struggled with which line I wanted to purchase since Lionel produced both lines, Illinois Central and Lackawanna. I decided on the Lackawanna Multi Units for two reasons. First, the first engine I received as a youngster was the Lionel Lackawanna Trainmaster. (Note - You can read my product review on this engine on the CLRC website.)

Secondly, I like how the Lackawanna versions have two pantographs on each powered car and on the non-powered cars while the Illinois Central version has a single pantograph on each car. This is just a personal preference on my part as both lines are really cool looking.

The Lionel Lackawanna versions comes in two sets. Set # 6-18304 which was offered in 1991 contains a powered and a non-powered unit. This set has car numbers 2401 for the powered unit and 2402 for the non-powered unit. The features of these cars include the following:

- Directional Lighting
- Magna traction
- Interior illumination
- Operating red marker lights are the end
- Stamped metal pantographs
- Operating die cast knuckler couplers

In 1992, Lionel added an add pack # 6-18305 of two more non powered units. These car numbers are 2400 and 2403. This make all four cars having unique car numbers.

I've run these cars at the Chicagoland Lionel Railroad Club. Many members of the club commented how smoothly this set runs. I agree. I also love how the silhouettes of the passengers come through on these lighted cars. A nice set to have.