

1:50 – The Preferred Scale for ‘Streets Trucks, Buses and Big Rigs

The author has converted a number of buses, trucks, and tractor trailers in 1:43, 1:48 and 1:50 scales. That has led him to conclude that there is little if any reason to choose one scale over the other on the basis of the work required or project cost. Despite that the author *strongly* recommends 1:50 for buses, trucks, and heavy construction and military vehicles converted to Streets, even though he has settled exclusively on 1:43 for cars and light pickups (whether for ‘Streets conversions or just as models parked on streets, etc.) on his layout.

The choice of 1:43 scale for *cars* is because there is a bigger selection of cars available in 1:43 than in 1:48 or 1:50, and because a bump in scale helps smaller vehicles be seen against the backdrop of a layout. Still 1:50 is recommended for larger vehicles because of:

Selection: A wide range of cars may be available in 1:43, but trucks and buses available in that scale are few and far between. By contrast, a wide range is available in 1:50 scale.

Availability of ‘Streets parts that work at that scale: The *only* ‘Streets wheels that fit and look good on a majority of 1:43 buses and trucks are those from the short school bus: out of production since 2011 and increasingly hard to find and expensive to purchase. There is no choice if a realistic look is desired but to use wheels that big – none. By contrast, 1:50 trucks and tractor trailers look fine using wheels from the panel van – still in production and easy to find.

Size and “road fit:” In either scale, a tractor-trailer rig or bus dominates 1:43 cars, looking as it should: *very big*. The 1950s Corgi 1:50 Mack B-60 tractor trailer at the top of Figure 15 hulks over a 1:43 Pontiac Chieftain station wagon, a big car of that period; it looks impressively big next to cars and pickup trucks. Yet it is far smaller than the New Ray 1:43 model of what is basically the same tractor trailer, shown in the lower image. Either scale works well for conveying to the eye that the big rig is *big*, but



Figure 14: Top: 1:50 Mack B-61 tractor-trailer from Chapter 9 looks big enough with respect to 1:43 Brooklin 1956 Pontiac Chieftain to establish that it is a big, big rig. Bottom: 1:43 Mack B-60 dwarfs it, though, and is so big it creates clearance problems running on a layout.



Figure 15: Corgi Mack Truck in Figure 14 is itself drafted by a Corgi 1:50 scale Kenworth W925 and low-boy trailer. Despite this road having been widened at the center so the lanes are farther apart than normal, these two trucks barely miss one another.

the 1:50 model fits on ‘Streets roadway without creating nearly as many operating problems for its owner. The 1:43 model in Figure 14 has a trailer longer than the 1:50 model (and would be even if they were the same scale since it is a model of a slightly longer trailer) but both can be converted within wheelbase limits discussed earlier and made so they run well. What is a problem though, is that the 1:43 model’s trailer is *wider*. It is just 3/32 inch narrower than a ‘Streets roadway lane. That model’s greater length *combined* with that width means it is almost certain to knock aside traffic in an adjacent nested lane, and to bump into nearby scenery when going around corners. The 1:50 model, while “big enough to be big,” creates fewer and less serious problems, although it may have minor overhang issues, too.

Figure 15 shows that Corgi 1:50 Mack tractor trailer from Figure 14, now converted to

‘Streets, passing a Corgi 1:50 model of an even bigger rig on the author’s layout. The roadway shown has been widened by inserting a 1/4 inch basswood strip between lanes (see ‘*Streets for O-Gauge Model Railroads*, Chapter 7 for how), yet these two trucks miss each other by only 3/16 inch. Were they 1:43, even with added space between lanes, they would bang into each other on this straight road.

While the author much prefers 1:50, the choice of scale to run is entirely up to each modeler: Chapter 9 shows how to convert both big rigs shown in Figure 14. Buses and tractor trailers in the larger scale are impressive to watch running on a layout. It is best, however, to let a 1:43 big rig have the road to itself, and to anticipate that scenery, figures, parked cars, and buildings alongside or near curves may have to be relocated in order to satisfy the vehicle’s appetite for clearance.