

By Luc Po

In this guide, we show how to paint and weather tracks found on active civil equipment. By looking at reference photos we can see that civil tracks can differ substantially from tracks on AFV's both in terms of design and in how they tend to show wear. Depending on conditions, there is often more exposed burnished metal to be found on civil tracks, which necessitates a different approach to painting and weathering them than is typically applied to AFV's.



1. To start, the tracks are primed with a dark black-brown primer coat, which also serves as the base colour for chipping effects. In addition, the dark colour of the primer provides a dark base for the upcoming metallic coat. If a different primer colour is used, a separate layer of dark paint is needed before proceeding.



2. Next we spray metallic silver over the parts of the track that see the most wear, such as the outer track shoes and on the surfaces of the linkage assembly that touches the roller and guide wheels. For this we use AK's Xtreme Metal matte aluminum (AK488) as we do not want too bright of a shine. It is important to use lacquer based paint in this step as this will resist the chipping and wear imposed in future steps.

3. Next, we mix up a colour to represent oxidation of the steel. For this we use AK Real Colours NATO black (RC082) and NATO brown (RC081) (at a ratio of 3:2). The paint is thinned 50:50, and is lightly sprayed over then entirety of the tracks. For this step it is important to use a paint that can be removed with isopropyl alcohol, as is the case with AK Real Colours.



4. As in reality we will wear away the oxidation colour to expose the burnished metal beneath. For this, we use isopropyl alcohol diluted with water to around 50:50. With a soft brush we start to work away the oxidation colour on sections that tend to see more wear such as the track shoe surface and parts of the linkages. If the mixture is too strong we add more water to dilute the alcohol and slow the wearing effect. If it is too weak, we add alcohol to increase the wearing effect. We leave some of the oxidation colour in areas that are less prone to burnishing such as those near the cleats and on the underside of the track shoes. If we remove too much in some places, we can simply go back and touch up with the oxidation colour.

5. On civil equipment we often see the track assembly painted in the same colour as the entire vehicle when new. This coat of paint quickly wears off of most of the track, but in a few places such as the outer parts of the linkages, we can still see some of the original colour. To achieve this effect, we first mask off the parts we do not want the color on. We then apply two light layers of chipping fluid (e.g. AK089) to the unmasked areas. Once dry, we spray on the desired colour – in this case, a custom mix of AK Real Colours to approximate a pale yellow found on many civil vehicles (Maize Yellow RC008, Light Stone RC040, and Portland Stone RC041).







6. The masking can now be removed, and the yellow colour is wetted and chipped using a damp brush. We can use reference photos to understand where the paint remains on the tracks and the degree of chipping that can be found.



7. Once dry, we can pick out the shadows and hint at some subtle rust tones using AK track wash (AK083), and AK Africa Korps wash (AK066) on the yellow. Track wash applied sparingly to the oxidised areas of the track shoes can also create additional tones and interest.



8. At this stage we must consider how much dust or mud we wish to apply to the tracks. Because we have taken the care to show the previous steps in detail, we will only add dust and areas of dirt accumulations to this example. Using AK light dust deposits (AK4062), we mix with light coloured pigments (e.g. light dust (AK040) or European earth (AK042)) and apply to the interface between the underside of the track shoes and the track linkages. Using a splattering technique, we can lightly apply some of this mix to the underside of the track shoes as well, but being careful not to overdo it.



9. Accumulations of dirt can often be seen adjacent to the cleat on civil tracks. To replicate this effect, we create a dry mix of the appropriate pigment colours, fine sifted dirt for texture, and plaster as necessary. With the track on a flat horizontal surface, we apply this dry mix to the area of the track shoe adjacent to the cleat, and near the bolt heads. We can manipulate the accumulation while it is dry using a small clean brush. Once satisfied, we first apply a drop of odourless spirit which wicks into the mix and temporarily fixes it to the track. Further adjustment can be made if necessary, and then when satisfied, the accumulation is fixed with a pigment fixer (e.g. ABTP249). Larger accumulations may require a stronger means of fixing, such as AK Interactive's gravel and sand fixer (AK118).



10. To finish the tracks, we can go back with steel pigments (AK086) and highlight or reinvigorate burnished areas that were obscured by the dust application. For this, we use a silicone brush to allow for accurate placement of the pigments.

