

# Conrail Train Symbols

An Informal, Nerdological Review

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Photo by Carl Weber



2024 First Quarter  
Membership Meeting



# Train Symbols?

Everything on the railroad needs a name. Trains are no different.

Railroads typically have a consistent system for naming or numbering their trains.

Symbols are used not only by the transportation department but also other company activities (like sales).



# In The Beginning...

CONRAIL®



CONSOLIDATED  
RAIL  
CORPORATION  
FREIGHT SCHEDULES

ISSUED BY  
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT  
TRANSPORTATION  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Latest Supplement  
Issued April 1, 1976

?  
?  
?  
The train symbols  
made no sense!  
?  
?

ALLENTOWN, PA.

Baltimore		BL-5
Bethlehem	Florence Local	
Conway		JH-1
Coxton		JN-5
East Penn	E. Penn Local	
Edge Moor		BL-5
Elizabethport		HJ-2
Florence	Florence Local	
Frontier		JB-3
Harrisburg TrailVans		JH-1
Haselton		AH-1
Mehoopany		JB-3
Niagara Falls		JN-5
Northampton & Bath	Aux Ore	
Oak Island		NJ-6
Phillipsburg		STA
Potomac Yard		BL-5
Reading		JH-1
Rutherford		JH-1
Sayre		JN-5
South Plainfield		NJ-6

# And today?



?  
Train symbols still  
make no sense!\*



?  
Y101  
Q317  
Q686  
Q138

?  
07T  
21Z  
42A  
562

\*unless you're super nerdy





**But for about 21  
years...**

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**ALL WAS RIGHT WITH THE WORLD  
TRAIN SYMBOLS MADE SENSE!  
...OR DID THEY?**

(Mike Danneman photo via Mike Froio)



# In 1978...

- Conrail must have gotten some better computers!
- 4-letter Alpha system started May 1, 1978
- Locals still used old-style format

## ALPI

AL = Allentown

PI = Pittsburgh

### CLASSIFICATIONS MADE AT VARIOUS YARDS 5-1-78

#### ABRAMS, PA.

Allentown	GES-1/WAAL B/WAAL A
Baltimore	ALWA
Bethlehem	GES-1
Chester	RUDC
Conway	DCPI
Downington	AD-1
Edge Moor	ALWA
Lansdale	AL-2
Manville	XM-6
Morrisville	PCI-2/PCI-4
Nicetown	AP-12
Norristown	AN-2
Oaks	ACP-1
Philmont	PCI-2/PCI-4
Phoenixville	ACP-1
Port Kennedy	AP-1
Port Reading	XM-6
Potomac Yard	ALWA
Rutherford	DCPI

#### ADIRONDACK JCT., QUE.

Massena	MCSY
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#### AKRON, OHIO

Avon	MYCO
Cnaton	AC-4
Chicago-Clearing	MEBR
Columbus	MYCO
Conway	AC-4
Ferrona	MV-62
Fort Wayne	MEBR
Gibson	MEIH
Harding	MO-61
Marion, Ohio	MO-61
Massillon Coal	AC-4

#### ALLENTOWN, PA. (EAST)

Bison	ALSA
Elizabethport	RUCC
Frontier	ALBU
Mehoopany	ALSA/ALBU
Niagara	ALBU
Oak Island	ALOI/RUSE
Phillipsburg	AE-2
Pittston	ALSA
Sayre	ALSA/ALBU
Selkirk	RUSE
South Plainfield	ALOI/RUSE

#### ALLENTOWN, PA. (WEST)

Abrams	AP-12
Baltimore	ALWA
Catasauqua	CF-1/CF-3/CF-5
Cementon	AL-1
Conway	BEPI/CCRU
Easton	AB-2
Edge Moor	ALWA
Elizabethport	RUCC
Emmaus Jct.	ALG-1
Hazleton	AH-1
Lehighton	AH-1
Nicetown	AP-12
Northampton & Bath	AUX-1
Palmerton	AUX-1
Port Richmond	AP-12
Potomac Yard	ALWA
Pottstown	AP-12
Reading	AP-12
Read Valley	ARV-2
Rutherford	CCRU/SERU
Selkirk	RUSE
West Falls	AP-12





# Train Symbol Formats

- Manifest: AABB-9C 1978
- TV & MAIL: TV1, MAIL3, Pre-1976
- RoadRailer: RR123 1990
- Multilevels: ML123 1994
- SuperVan: SV1 Summer/Fall 1994
- Unit Trains: UAB ZAB XAB etc. 1976...
- Locals: Spring 1980
- Several other types...





# Six Character Limit

A	L	H	B	0	A
T	V	3	0	1	X
R	R	2	8	1	
M	L	4	4	0	X
E	N	B	U	8	D
X	N	S	2	0	1
U	C	G	5	2	D
D	I	M	3	0	1
O	C	S	2	0	1





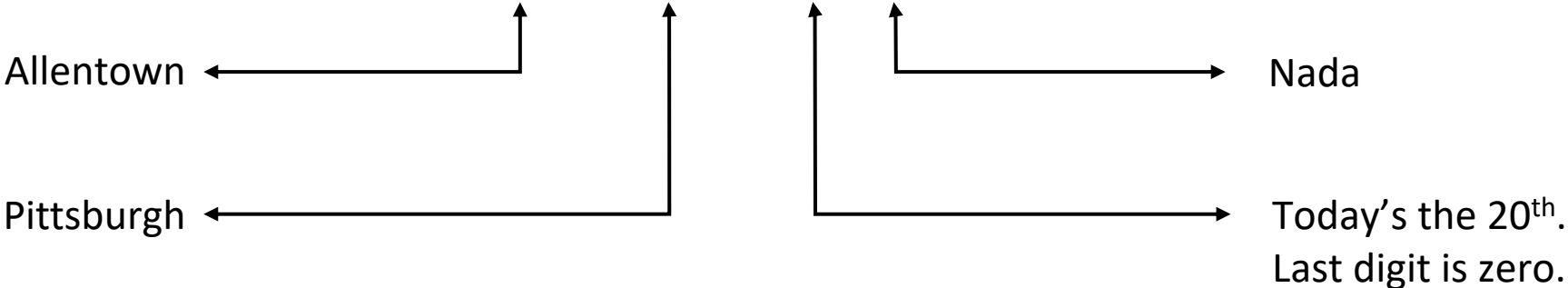




# The easy part

Let's try it...

# ALPI-0

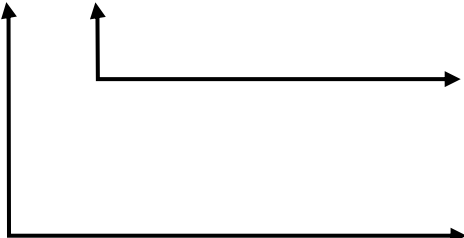
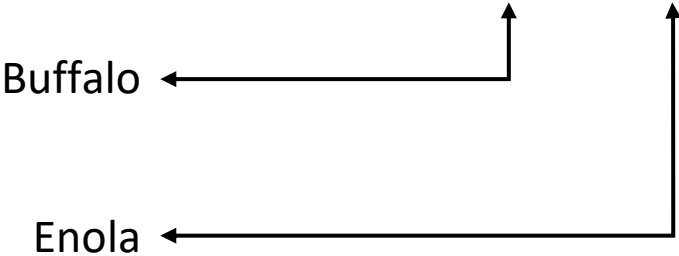




# The easy part

Let's try it again

# BUEN-ON



N for Nada? What?

Today's the 20<sup>th</sup>.  
Last digit is zero.





# Not always easy

Over the 21 years, lots of symbols came and went. Some corresponded to the name of the nearest city:

**AL****AT****BE****SY****PI****IN**

Some corresponded to the name of the yard:

**ED****EL****MY****OI****SE****ST****PY**

Some sorta don't really make any sense at all...\*

**CC****ES****PX****PW****LM/ML**

It still could get confusing... AT? AL? Which one is Altoona?



# Changes over Time

- Conrail couldn't decide to use the yard name or the city
  - WA > PY
- Routing changes
  - PY > CS / NS
- Yard closings
  - EN > HB
- On-again off-again routings
  - AB (Abrams) CC (Chemical Coast)
- On-again off-again train combos
  - OPNS OICG BAEL CAEL



# Other patterns

For larger cities having multiple yards, Conrail often used a two-letter system, e.g. DN = “Detroit North”\*

**DJ**

**DN**

**DR**

**DW**

(Detroit Junction – Detroit North – Detroit Rouge – Detroit Windsor)

Philadelphia had a similar thing going:

**PF**

**PG**

\* but Sterling Heights was ST, not DS... go figure





# Interchanges

Over the years, Conrail moved towards using railroad initials to designate foreign road interchanges:

<b>CN</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>UP</b>	<b>EJ</b>	<b>TR</b>
<b>SF</b>	<b>CP</b>	<b>SR</b>	<b>BN</b>	<b>BR</b>	<b>IH</b>

Early on, some corresponded to the name of the destination:

<b>MC</b>	<b>LU</b>	<b>PY</b>	<b>OI</b>	<b>SE</b>
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And some stayed that way

<b>NP</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>MC</b>
-----------	-----------	-----------



# The Suffix

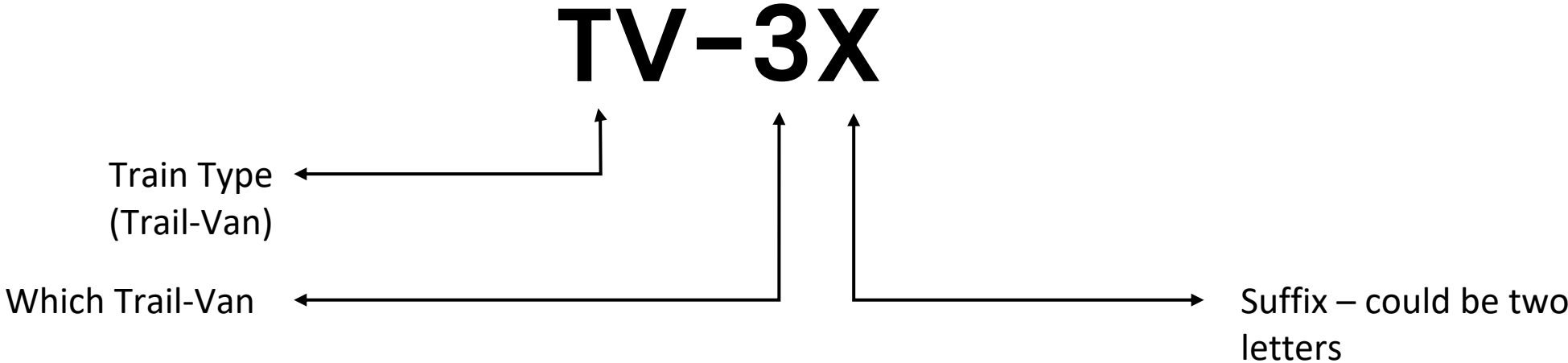
Last Letter	Meaning	Examples
A, B, and sometimes C	First, second, third scheduled section	ALHB-8C, ENPI-3A
D	Dimensional	OIIH-7D, SESL-3D
F	Dana Truck Frames – higher clearance	ALPI-8F
N	Via Northumberland, PA	BUEN-2N
T	Trilevels	ENBU-8T
W	Worked? (Did most of the P/U & S/O)	ENPI-5W
X, Y, Z	First, second, third extra section*	ELTO-1X

It's worth noting that the extra sections usually got the next day's date even if they originated before the regular scheduled train. Not sure if the management was playing numbers games...



# Intermodals

Intermodal trains (we're including RoadRailer and Multi-Level trains) followed this format...







# Intermodals – Train Types

We covered this already, but... let's recap.

- TV & Mail used pre-Conrail
- SuperVan (SV) used briefly in late 1994 for some premium TV trains... former NYC term.
- Multi-Level (ML) introduced in 1994
- RoadRailer (RR) introduced in 1990-ish
- The date of origin was not included in the symbol



# Intermodals – Train Number

- Odd/Even #'s = Westbound/Eastbound direction
- RR trains were always 200-series – compatibility with NS numbers? (Sometimes)
- ML trains were always 400-series
- TV/SV premium trains were 1-2 digits, usually
- 3-digit trains often (always?) connected to another RR
  - TV-233 & 234 renumbered to TV-211 & 212 to coincide with NS
- 3-digits often used for doublestack trains



# Intermodals - Suffix

Last Letter	Meaning	Examples
E	Baretable "Empty" train	TV-2E, TV-3E
Other	Alternate Section	TV-2H
X, Y, Z	First, second, third extra section*	ML-401X

- Often, a letter was used to designate an alternate section of a schedule, e.g. TV-10B to Boston, TV-1/2H to/from Harrisburg, Mail-9K to Kearny, NJ
- Exceptions like TVLA or TVPI, TV-2HK; the late 1990's also spawned TV-0 and TVLT



- You could get combinations like TV-2HX or TV-2ME

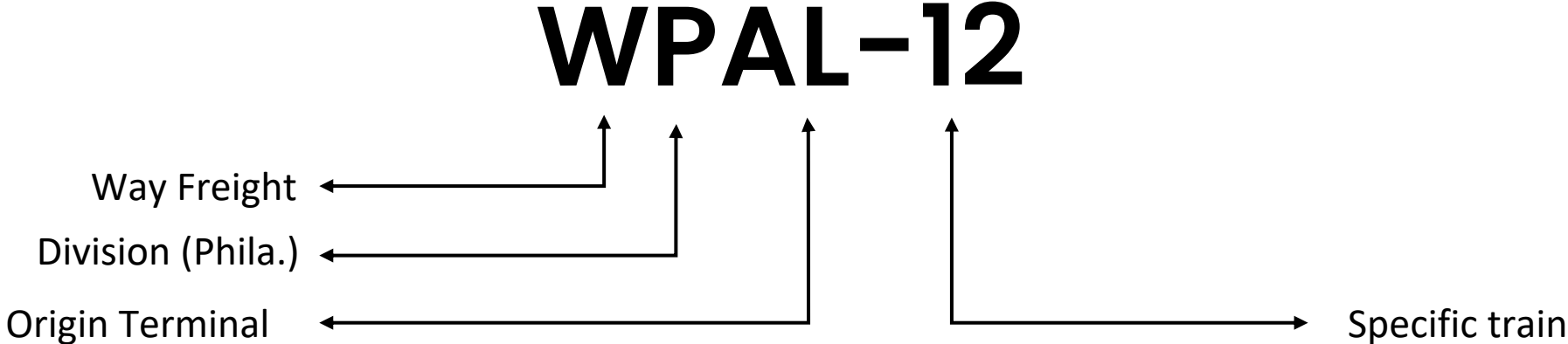






# Locals & Yard Jobs

These were symbolled with a W or Y prefix (**W**ay Freight = Local vs **Y**ard Job)





# Locals & Yard Jobs

## Division Codes 1986 vs 1996

CENTRAL REGION

- ALLEGHENY DIVISION
- PITTSBURGH DIVISION
- YOUNGSTOWN DIVISION

A  
I  
Y

EASTERN REGION

- HARRISBURG DIVISION
- NEW JERSEY DIVISION
- PHILADELPHIA DIVISION

H  
J  
P

NORTHEASTERN REGION

- BUFFALO DIVISION
- MOHAWK - HUDSON DIVISION
- NEW ENGLAND DIVISION
- SOUTHERN TIER DISTRICT

B  
V  
N  
E

SOUTHERN REGION

- COLUMBUS DIVISION
- SOUTHWEST DIVISION

U  
S

WESTERN REGION

- CANADA DIVISION
- CHICAGO DIVISION
- CLEVELAND DIVISION
- MICHIGAN DIVISION
- TOLEDO DIVISION

Q  
C  
R  
M  
T

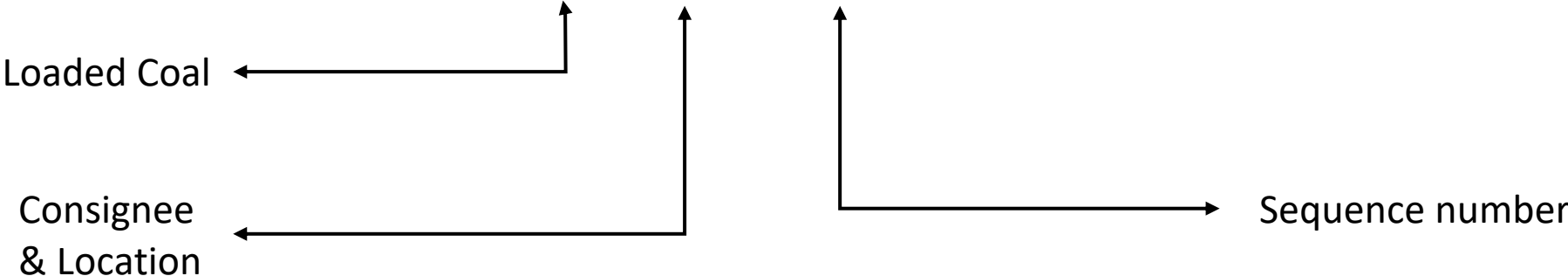
<u>Division</u>	<u>Code</u>
Albany	A
Dearborn	D
Harrisburg (until 1995)	H
Pittsburgh	I
Indianapolis	S
Philadelphia	P



# Unit Trains: Loaded Coal

Loaded unit coal trains were symboled based on their destination and consignee along with a sequence number. Best bet for these is to look them up in the CR Freight Schedules.

## UBT-1



*List of consignee codes:*

<https://conrailphotos.thecrhs.org/symbols>



# Unit Trains: Empty Coal

Empty Conrail-owned coal train sets were symbolized with the following info:

- Destination coal terminal
- Car Type
- Set ID
- Set size

# XDG-35A

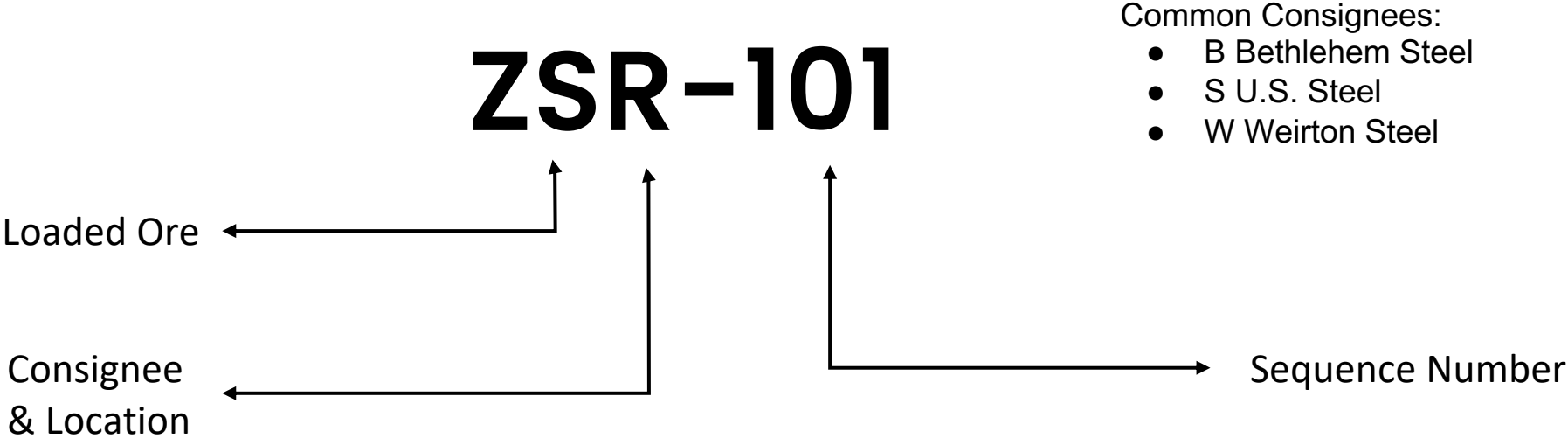
X	D	G	-35	A
<i>Empty Hoppers</i>	<i>Dickinson, WV</i>	<i>Coal Gondolas</i>	<i>Set 35</i>	<i>75 cars long</i>
Empty Hoppers	Destination:	Car Type:	Train set ID #	Train size:
	A Avonmore	G Coal Gondolas		A 75 Cars
	D Dickinson	Q Quad Hoppers		B 90 Cars
	C Cresson	H Triple Hoppers		C 105 Cars
	F South Fork	M Mixed Hoppers		D 130 Cars
	K Keating	L Leased Hoppers		E Exception
	M Mingo Jct.			
	P Conway			
	S Shire Oaks			
	T Thomson			
	W Waynesburg			





# Unit Trains: Loaded Ore

Loaded unit ore trains were symboled based on their destination and consignee along with date (like manifests and coal)



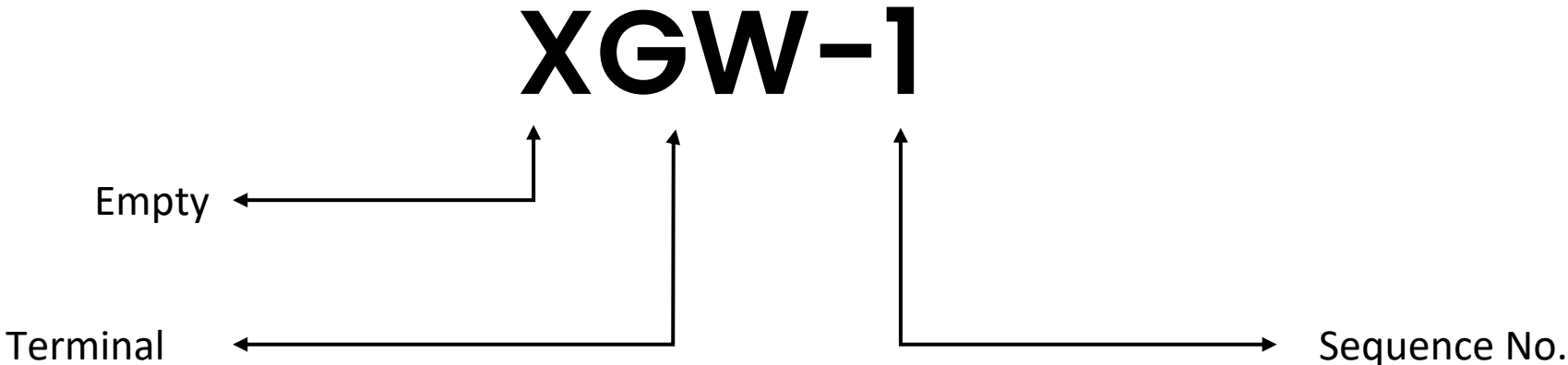
*List of consignee codes:*

<https://conrailphotos.thecrhs.org/symbols#unit-ore>



# Unit Trains: Empty Ore

Empty ore trains were symboled based on their destination terminal with a sequence number



*List of consignee codes:*

<https://conrailphotos.thecrhs.org/symbols#unit-ore>



# Unit Trains: Loaded Stone

Introduced in the later 1990's...

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>Consignee</b>
UAP	Pavonia, NJ	Tarmac
XAN	empty UAP to Annville, PA	
UEL	Elkhart, IN	White Rock
XEL	empty UEL to Martin, OH	
UTW-W	Twinsburg, OH	Martin Marietta
XWO	empty UTW-W to Woodville, OH	
UTW-M	Twinsburg, OH	White Rock
XMA	empty UTW-M to Martin, OH	
UWP	White Pidgeon, MI	No Consignee Specified
XWP	empty to Martin or Woodville, OH	



# Miscellaneous Unit Trains

And miscellaneous symbols to go with 'em!

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Pattern</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Example</b>
Loaded Grain	GRx-#	GR = Grain, 3rd letter = Destination	GRD-4 to Dover, DE
Empty Grain	Jxx-#	J = Empty Grain, 2nd & 3rd = Destination	JLC-1 to Lilly Chapel, OH
Orange Juice	OJT-#	Orange Juice Train	OJT-6
Pulpwood	HPA-1	HPA = Hammermill Paper	HPA-1 Loads/2 Empties
Coil/Slab Steel	abb-1 / bba-2	For loads, one letter for origin, two for destination. Flip it for empties.	PDL-03 Phila-Detroit Livernois Slab Loads DLP-04 Empties
Liquid Detergent	PAG-01 & PAG-02	Procter and Gamble	Yep.





# Other Symbols

Symbols and numberings of these irregular trains may vary

Typically the three letter code is followed by a three number code.

When a three number code is used, the first number often represents the originating division of the train.

1XX	Philadelphia Division
2XX	Harrisburg Division
3XX	Albany Division
4XX	Pittsburgh Division
5XX	Dearborn Division
6XX	Indianapolis Division

BAL-XXX	Ballast Trains	MWX-XXX	Maintenance of Way Extra
BCX-XXX	Ballast Trains	OCS-XXX	Office Car Special
BNS-XXX	Ballast Trains	RAI-XXX	Welded Rail
CIR-XXX	Circus Trains	SHP-XXX	Shop Equipment
DET-XXX	Foreign Railroad Detour	SPL-XXX	Special Move
DIM-XXX	Dimensional Trains (Hi & Wide)	SPL-7XX	Manifest Freight Special Move
ENG-XXX	Intra-Division Light Engines	SPL-8XX	Unit Train Special Move
ENS-XXX	Inter-Division Light Engines	SPL-9XX	Automotive/Multi-Level Special Move
HLP-XXX	Helpers	TES-XXX	Track Geometry Train
HOS-XXX	Hospital (dead equipment) move	WOR-XXX	Maintenance of Way Work Train
MIL-XXX	Military	WRE-XXX	Wreck Cleanup

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# Foreign Trains

We ran out of time to get into this.

- Amtrak
- D&H Alpha Symbols & later CP trains a la “DH556”
- CN, NS sometimes getting their own a la “CN333”
- CSX sometimes keeping their own “Q123”

Detours were a separate thing.  
This is DET-103.





# CR Symbols In Modeling

Using proper Conrail symbols add another level of immersiveness to your layout.

It's an easy way to increase the "Conrail Factor" and establish the place and time you're modeling.

NCR LOCAL - NCR LINE NORTH AND SOUTH OF WINDSOR ST YARD

CREW SYMBOL: WHYK-10 SIGN UP TIME: 08:00 CODE: 814

THIS LOCAL JOB PROVIDES INDUSTRY SW... WINDSOR ST YARD IN YORK PA TO NEW F...

WHYK-10 - NCR Local

York PA	MPA Interchange
York PA	Agmark LPG Terminal
York PA	Duke Street Yard
York PA	York Warehouses
York PA	Ohio Blenders
New Freedom PA	Stewartstown RR Interchange
Etters PA	Cold Storage Company (Mt Wolf)
Mount Wolf PA	Georgia Pacific (Mt Wolf)

WHYK-20 - York IT Local

York PA	York Container
York PA	Grain Dealer
York PA	Steel Fabricator
York PA	Perlite Company
York PA	Quaker Chemical
Wrightsville PA	Martin Marietta Materials

WHYK-40 - Frederick Secondary Local

Spring Grove PA	PH Glatelter Paper
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YKCS - Chessie System Interchange

Chessie System	Interchange Train
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YKMM - Maryland Midlant Interchange

Maryland Midland	Interchange Train
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Trains Serving Windsor St Yard, York PA

PYSE - Potomac Yard to Selkirk

Frontier Yard	Buffalo NY
Selkirk Yard	Albany NY

SEPY - Selkirk to Potomac Yard

Potomac Yard	Alexandria VA
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BAEN - Baltimore to Enola

Enola Yard	Harrisburg PA
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ENBA - Enola to Baltimore

Bayview Yard	Baltimore MD
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BAEL - Baltimore to Elkhart

Altoona Yard	Altoona PA
Conway Yard	Pittsburgh PA
Buckeye Yard	Columbus OH
Elkhart Yard	Elkhart IN

ELBA - Elkhart to Baltimore

Bayview Yard	Baltimore MD
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WHEN LEAVING WINDSOR ST YARD, THE OHIO BLENDERS CARS SHOULD BE NEXT BY MPA INTERCHANGE; AGMARK; DUKE THE CABOOSE.

CUSTOMER

1. AGMARK - CONTACT FOREMAN BEFORE BE PULLED ARE READY. MULTIPLE INSTRUCTIONS FROM FOREMAN LEFT STANDING FOR MORE THAN SPOTTED CARS.
2. MPA INTERCHANGE - PAPERWORK INTERCHANGE WILL BE FOUND 1. ONLY MOVE CARS DESIGNATED PAPERWORK FOR INTERCHANGE TRACK 1.
3. DUKE ST YARD - LEAVE SPACE ENSURE ROOM FOR CLOSING
4. OHIO BLENDERS - CONTACT OF INBOUND CARS AND C
5. YORK WAREHOUSE - CON PERMISSION TO USE COPY RUNAROUND MOVE.



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# CR Symbols In Modeling

If you're modeling a specific location, you may want to recreate specific trains.



← GEs & boxcars from the southeast mean PYSE



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# CR Symbols In Modeling

You can include your own locations in the symbols you're using to establish place.



WHYK-10 in York PA.



YPFJ-41 in Bridesburg, Philly.





# CR Symbols In Modeling

If you don't have room for a layout, you can always use an individual train as a modeling project to help focus your efforts.





# Research Resources

A blue Conrail passenger train, numbered 10, is shown traveling on a track through a wooded area. The train is moving from left to right. The background consists of dense trees and foliage, suggesting a rural or forested setting. The train has a blue body with white accents and the Conrail logo is visible on the side.

- It used to be 1-800-228-4661. Touch Trace!
- Why, the CRHS, of course! <https://conrailphotos.thecrhs.org/symbols>
- Multimodalways: [http://www.multimodalways.org/docs/railroads/companies/CR/CR Freight Schedules/](http://www.multimodalways.org/docs/railroads/companies/CR/CR%20Freight%20Schedules/)
- Alex's searchable freight schedules: <http://jalexlang.com/crsched/index.html>
- Flickr! searches for particular train symbols
- Railpictures.net
- Trainorders.com
- If you're nitpicky (like us) the specific year is important
- Former employees (is ZBB from Zoo tower?)
- The CR Freight Schedules aren't necessarily gospel though...
- Conrail Commodities by Jeremy Taylor



**What's your favorite symbol?**

**PIES?**

**Mmmmm!**







# And of course...

No presentation on alphanumeric symbols is complete without mention of Pronounceable Trains:

- PIES
- SEEN
- CAPI
- TOST
- COLT
- COIN

And then the more creative possibilities:

- Buffalo to Rouses Point: BURP
- Port Orange to Oak Point: POOP
- Baltimore to Ann Arbor: BAAA
- South Hamburg to Industrial Terminal: I think you see where this is going...