

UP's CU / CUX Clean Up Freight Train - Final Report

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10/20/19 #22188

To all:

The time has come to paste and edit all the notes we've found on this train into a final report, so here goes:

Train: UP's CU / CUX Clean-Up.

Direction: Eastbound only.

Description: CU / CUX is a Clean-Up manifest freight train block, which often combines with a CN block going east. It was a block of cars, not an entire train.

They were originally designed to "clean up" perishable and other cars that had missed the CN and other eastward trains during the day, but many days the Clean-Up trains were little more than drag freights handling eastward cars back to SLC and beyond. These trains used symbols CU (1946-47) and CUX after 1949, scheduled to depart LA around midnight. Later, as of the late '50s, the train was most often a solid string of 104 empty cars for North Platte.

Origin: Los Angeles.

Destination: Salt Lake City and points east.

Railroads Represented: UP and connecting roads like the MILW, IC, Wabash, and especially the C&NW. Also foreign-road cars from the northeastern and midwestern industrial belt, especially PRR, NYC, and B&O, and from GTW, PM, DT&I, AC&Y, and NH.

Products: Manifest freight (products made in So. Calif. and exported to other parts of the country) plus many empties. Perishable loads that had missed the CN blocks. Refinery products from So. Calif. oil companies to wholesalers in the mountain west and northwest.

Car Types: Considerable box car traffic, carrying products made in So. Calif. and exported to other parts of the country, and many empty boxcars returning east. Reefers for perishables. Tank cars from So. Calif. oil companies to wholesalers in the mountain west and northwest. Some gondolas and flat cars. Hopper cars were relatively rare. There were sometimes empty UP, D&RGW, and UCR GS coal gondolas returning east, though UP sometimes used its ballast hoppers as well.

Train Length and Weight: Total train lengths were 70-90 cars (longer in the 1950s than in the 1940s), with 3,000 to 4,000 tons. But each block was maybe about half of the total train length, if combined with a CN block.

Typical Schedule:

1947: CU-CN:

LA lv. 7.00 P, Colton lv. 11.59 P, SB lv. 1.00 A, Yermo ar. 5.45 A, lv 6.45 A.

1952: CUX:

LA lv. 11.30 P, Colton lv. 2.30 A, SB lv. 3.30 A, Yermo ar. 9.00 A, lv. 9.45 A.

1955: CUX:

LA lv. 1.00 A, Colton lv. 4.00 A, SB lv. 5.00 A, Yermo ar. 10.00 A, lv. 11.00 A.

1957: CUX:

LA lv. 1:00 A, Colton lv. 4:00 A, SB lv. 5:00 A, Yermo ar. 10:00 A

Road Power: Early Challengers into 1947, then Alco FAs, sometimes EMD F3s. It was GP9 sets that took over the trains in 1954 from the FA and F3 sets.

Helper Power: There were steam helpers into 1947 (2-10-2s, 2-8-2s, 4-8-2s, 4-10-2s), but the FM H20-44s took over from 1947-1950. Then we had the return of the same steam helpers during 1950-1951, until being replaced by TR5s and GP7s in 1951. In 1954 the TR5s were replaced by GP9 helpers (with the GP7s still in the helper pool too).

Operations Details:

UP typically operated five "through" trains east out of the Los Angeles area daily. These included the CU or CUX, the "Clean-Up" Those symbol "trains" weren't really trains at all, more like groups of cars in most cases. Perishable blocks were assembled at locations east of UP's East LA yard, so the CN symbol was not used out of ELA yard; only at Colton & points east.

So a typical 1950s operation would be that the CU / CUX train would depart LA with (let's say) 50 cars, and it would stop at Colton and pick up a perishable block. At that point, the train would be known as CN-CU or CN-CUX (depending on the year) and it would continue east toward Salt Lake City. Schedules varied for the CN trains over the years, but they were normally to leave Colton between 8 pm and midnight. The train symbol used over Cajon on any particular day depended upon the UP train out of LA that stopped at Colton to pick up the perishable block(s). Examples: CN-UTX, CN-CUX, CU-CN trains.

The 1941 schedule, for example, showed these trains leaving East LA yard for LV along with their remarks from the operating plan:

- * UX 6am "protects basic CN fruit block schedule from Colton",
- * CUX 2pm "handles traffic that misses UX train",
- * MS 1145pm "protects last fruit block from Colton, if it misses UX and CUX".

So using the example times/blocks from above, the 25 cars ready at Colton at 7am would have moved east on UX, the mid-day group of 20 moved on train CUX, and the last "cut-off" group from 9pm went east on the "Merchandise Special" at the end of the day. The whole thing would start over again the next day with a new set of CN blocks. You can see photo evidence of this pattern by looking at Cajon, Cima, etc pics from that era, where many eastward trains have 10-20 or so reefers on the head end, with manifest behind.

It seems the pressing need for the clean-up trains (and that sort of operation) went away due to the increased use of MU'd turbines / diesels in the late 1950s & early '60s. With MU capability, locomotive power could be increased as needed (simply by adding units) based upon the train that needed to be handled. So no need to leave tonnage behind on a regular basis, as was the case in the steam days. The CU or CUX symbol was very common in the steam days but faded away in the late '50s / early '60s, apparently as steam-era operating practices were gradually given up.

1947:

"CU will be clean-up train to handle all traffic loaded and billed previous day, and will protect from Colton all perishables due to depart on 11.59PM schedule. When perishables are available Colton earlier, train, of course, may be operated AOT." [ahead of time]

"At Salt Lake eastern traffic arriving on MS, UX, and CU will consolidate with similar traffic coming from the WP and be handled east to best advantage in solid trains. From Salt Lake, CUX will operate as a clean-up train to take care of bad orders, also eastern traffic assembling this point on late locals. Ogden will handle all clean-up traffic including bad orders assembling that point east on CUX at 1.00AM."

As of 1947, time sheets show that the UP usually ran about 7 trains a day with the Manifest schedule listing three symbol freights; MS (Merchandise Special), UX (Utah Manifest), and the CU-CN (Clean Up- Colton Fruit). The other trains were drags of empties or other lower value freight.

During this time the UP used 3800 series 4-6-6-4s as road power on almost all through freight except the one or two trains that used F3s or FA-1s. The CU-CN ran pretty close to the March 1947 schedule, but the other two symbols are more off schedule, and in several cases have significant numbers of empties in their consist. Comparing the cars reported at Riverside Jct and at San Berdoo will indicate perishables and SP interchange at Colton.

It is surprising the amount of time that was spent at San Berdoo and the amount of traffic that was picked or set out there. They had to add a helper, and crew availability might be a factor, but it seemed that some of the hot trains were there a long time.

As of 1949, CUX, Clean-Up, a perishable & manifest schedule running from Los Angeles to Council Bluffs, handled manifest traffic plus any perishable traffic that missed the cut-off for perishables train CN.

CUX was also the symbol for the "Clean-Up" train that operated from Ogden to Council Bluffs. As the name implies, CUX's main job was to follow the scheduled perishable trains and clean-up any stragglers that were left behind. It would pick up cars that had been reduced due to regular perishable trains being over-tonnage, late cars that had missed connections, bad orders, etc. The train was "filled out" with non-perishable traffic, manifest, and occasionally livestock.

1952:

"CUX -- (Clean up). Operated from Los Angeles, handling merchandise and other manifest as well as perishable assembling Los Angeles and Colton which fail to connect with CN block. This train operates through to Council Bluffs as a clean-up perishable train, handling all perishable of preceding perishable blocks that are set out bad order and not repaired in time for forwarding in preceding perishable blocks. Perishable traffic destined Pocatello or beyond connects with 1-277 at Salt Lake City. Perishable traffic destined Denver or moving through Denver connects at Green River or Laramie with PCF. Perishable destined to points east of Salina sets out at North Platte for connection to SO-CUX."

1955:

"CUX -- (Clean up). Operated from Los Angeles, handling merchandise and other manifest as well as perishable assembling Los Angeles and Colton which fail to connect with CN block. Perishable traffic destined Pocatello or beyond connects with 1-277 at Salt Lake City. Perishable traffic destined Denver or moving through Denver connects at Green River with PCF. Traffic destined to points east of Salina to and including Kansas City or beyond sets out at North Platte for connection with AKF."

The Eastbound trains came up the B Yard in SB, then the wye at West Yard Tower, and ran through the passenger station platform.

Modeling the Train: Use mostly boxcars from UP, C&NW, MILW, IC, Wabash, PRR, NYC, B&O, GTW, PM, DT&I, AC&Y, and NH. Plus some tank cars (Shell, Union, and others), gondolas, and flat cars. And maybe a few empty UP, D&RGW, and UCR drop-bottom gons returning east.

The CU or CUX block of cars was often combined with a loaded CN block of mostly PFE reefers going east from Colton, to fill out the train, and then the full-length train was called CUX-CN, but the loaded reefers should always be on the front.

I'm uncertain about whether the CUX trains were always just blocks within a larger CN-CUX train, or whether they were sometimes or often the entire train. I'll ask the Classic-UP group to review this and correct me.

John Thompson