

Re: Santa Fe's Postwar TDF/TLA Freight Train

JThomp1945@...

To all:

I will try to update our initial report on the TDF train, now including its successor TLA train:

Train: ATSF's TDF & TLA. Its symbol changed from TDF to TLA on Dec. 13, 1954. It became Train 508 in 1970-71.

Direction: Westbound only. (The eastbound version was the CTX train.)

Description: TDF = Texas Daily Forwarder. TLA = Texas-Los Angeles. A high-priority, redball freight from Texas to LA. Informally called "That Damned Freight."

Origin: Texas.

Destination: Los Angeles via San Bernardino.

Railroads Represented: ATSF (including SFRD), railroads from the Southwest and Midwest, and some from the Northeast, tank cars from UTLX, Shell (SCCX), Shell Chemical (SCMX), Union (UOCX), Associated (AOX), and Richfield (ROX).

The foreign road cars tended to be from northeastern, midwestern, and plains-states RRs with big car fleets -- PRR, NYC, B&O, CNW, MILW, C&O -- and from RRs that fed westbound traffic to the Santa Fe east of the Rockies -- MP, SL-SF, CB&Q, RI. Southern and IC would have also been represented, owing to the size of their freight car fleets, but otherwise there wasn't a lot of traffic from the southeast or from the RRs like the L&N and GM&O that were mainly oriented to north-south traffic. There weren't a lot of UP or SP cars either.

Most stock rode in Santa Fe stock cars, but cars from connecting lines like the MP, T&P, C&NW, D&RGW, and CB&Q were also represented. And there was some westbound reefer traffic -- tree fruit, cheese, and beer from Wisconsin, for example -- which often traveled in NWX, MDT, FGEX, BREX, ART, or IC reefers.

Products: General freight from Texas and points east, and sometimes 5-10 cars of stock. Some corn oil and vegetable oil came west in tank cars, as did carloads of chemicals that weren't manufactured on the west coast,

Train Length and Weight: Feb. 13, 1948: 43 loads, 18 empties, 3268 tons. If the same as the CTX: In 1948, the average length was about 70 cars, with an average of 24 empties (roughly 1/3 of each train consisted of empties). Average weight was about 3000 tons. In 1956 a typical length was 90 cars, including 24 empties, and a weight of 3770 tons.

Car Types: Boxcars, Tank cars, Stock cars, Reefers, Gondolas, Flat cars, possibly others. The more prevalent car types were XM boxcars. Machinery, structural steel, bridge girders, etc. were in gondolas or on flat cars.

Typical Schedule: 1949: arrives Barstow at 8:00 am, LA at 9:00 pm. Typically passed Summit about mid-day. TDF published schedule: Barstow arrive 8:00am, leave 11:00am; San Bernardino arrive 3:30pm, leave 5:00pm; Los Angeles arrive 9:00pm.

1955-56: TLA arrives at SB at about 4:00 pm (but varies a lot). The TLA train (schedule) left Clovis, NM at 3:15pm, Barstow 5:00am 3rd day, arriving San Bernardino at 10:30am, Los Angeles at 4:00pm.

Road Power: 4-unit freight FT sets, until 4-unit freight F3/F7 sets arrived in 1948-53.

Helper Power: 2-10-2s, 4-8-2s, 2-8-2s, also FT sets (full or partial), until GP7s arrived in 1950-53, and GP9s in 1956-57. Number of helpers west from Victorville depended on train weight, normally at most one helper.

Operations Details:

Westward trains could experience major delays enroute, so could show up at Barstow at any time.

TLA carried loads and special empties destined Barstow and beyond. A example of a special empty would be a special-equipped boxcar or similar, such as an airplane car. These trains would return these special empties more quickly than other westward freights.

These manifest trains carried auto and aircraft parts and high class merchandise and consisted mostly of newer (often steel sheathed) XMs and XAPs, as well as XARs loaded with makes and models of new autos and light trucks that weren't assembled in the LA area.

Standard operating procedure was for hot manifest trains carrying symbols 43, 53, 533, TLA, and QLA to make setouts in Fullerton and Pico Rivera before arriving at Hobart (when they still terminated at First Street yard they also made a set out at Hobart). Road switchers assigned at Fullerton and Pico Rivera would then switch cars destined for their territory out of the setouts from the east and spot them where needed.

TLA daily had 5 or 10 cars of stock. Buena Park was a pretty regular stop to unload three to five cars of dairy stock.

Modeling the Train: One-fourth to one-third of the cars should be ATSF (including SFRD). For the foreign road cars, we could capture the flavor of the Texas origin by having Southwest railroads well represented (MP, Frisco, T&P, MKT, etc.). And we could include a few cars from the Midwest and from the Northeast. Any loaded stock cars would go on the front of the train.

Please review this, and I will make your changes as needed.

Thanks for your help,
John Thompson