

UP's WB Vegas Shorts Freight Train - Final Report

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To all:

I haven't received any feedback from the Classic-UP group so far, so I'll go ahead and make a final clean-up edit to the trains, not just small blocks within larger trains, so I'm wording the report that way. I wonder if these trains used to carry cement-carrying cars from points east.

Train: UP's VGS (1949-1952+) and IMX (1955). Also IMS in the 1960s.

Direction: Westbound only.

Description: "Vegas Shorts" (symbol VGS) in 1952 and "Intermountain Special" (symbol IMX) in 1955 and "Intermountain Shorts" (symbol IMS) in the 1960s. Drag loads and empties for intermediate points before LA.

VGS - Las Vegas Shorts - All short traffic accumulating or received at Las Vegas from ACB, AKC, CB and KC destined for Barstow, San Bernardino, Colton, and intermediate points.

IMX - Traffic assembled or received from connections at Salt Lake destined for Milford, Caliente, Las Vegas, and points short of Los Angeles.

Origin: Las Vegas for VGS, Salt Lake City for IMX and (in 1960s) for IMS.

Destination: Intermediate points before Los Angeles.

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.

Products: Low-value loads (cement, sand, ore, lumber, steel, etc) as well as empty cars.

Train Length and Weight: Around 80 cars and 3000 tons (typical). (These symbols appear to be entire trains, not just short blocks within a larger train, but that is not certain.)

Car Types: Any car types that carry cement, sand, ore, lumber, steel, etc., as well as empty cars of any type.

Typical Schedule: One to three VGS or IMX trains per day.

1949: (first year it was listed in the UP schedules)
VGS - Ar SB 6 PM, Ar LA 10:30 PM.

1952:
VGS - Lv Yermo 10:30 AM, Ar SB 4:30 PM, Ar Colton 5:30 PM, Ar LA 9:30 PM.

1955: (IMX not listed in 1957)

IMX - Dep Yermo 10:45 PM, Ar SB 3:45 AM.

1964:

IMS - Dep Yermo 1:30 PM, Ar SB 8:00 PM, Ar Colton 8:20 PM, Ar LA 11:30 PM.

Road Power: 4-6-6-4s into 1947. Once the diesels arrived in 1947, the normal road power was Alco FA ABBA sets, sometimes EMD F3 ABBA sets. It was probably GP9 sets that took over the train in 1954 from the FA and F3 sets.

Helper Power: One helper was often used from Victorville to Summit. There were some steam helpers at first 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 there was 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:

The "drag" trains carried low-value loads (cement, sand, ore, lumber, steel, etc) as well as empty cars. These symbols also changed over the years, but you'll see symbol "IMX" (the Intermountain Special, SLC to LA) and the "VGS" (Las Vegas Shorts, LV to LA). Note that in the 1960s, the SLC-LA train was known as "IMS" (Intermountain Shorts). You would see 1-3 of those trains over Cajon during a typical day. These would run pretty much anytime.

Traffic for Los Angeles from Co. Bluffs, Kansas City, Denver and Pocatello would flow through to Ogden / Salt Lake City and enter the yards there. As is always the case in railroading, the number of cars from each origin would vary daily, with something in the range of 20-100 cars daily coming from each origin.

Ogden / Salt Lake City yards would consolidate the arriving trains and send them south (timetable "west") toward Las Vegas & LA. Traffic from Pocatello was added to the trains that had come through from the east, with the yards attempting to build trains as closely as possible to the optimal size, about 85 cars (if too large they were slow and unreliable; if too small they weren't economical).

As trains were combined at SLC and other points en-route (Green River, etc), they would retain the symbols that they'd carried through from origin. This helped dispatchers, clerks, management & others track the movement of cars across the RR.

As an example, using 1955 symbols, on a given day SLC may have had enough traffic to build five westbound trains, with symbol "ACB/AKCLAF" departing first, followed by "FAP", then a "CB/KCLAF/ADP" next. A little later, "DLS / DP" would leave, with the "IMX" bringing up the rear of the parade. (Note that the IMX appears to be an entire train, not a set of smaller blocks.)

Westbound trains were routed through the A Yard at San Bernardino to stay out of passenger tracks at the station.

Modeling the Train: Use a mix of boxcars, gons, flatcars, covered hoppers, and empties of all types. Use cars from 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.

If you can add to this, please let us know.

Thanks,
John Thompson

