

UP's LA Special Freight Train - Final Report

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To all:

I held off for a day on posting a final report for this train, hoping that someone here or on the Classic-UP list would answer my questions, but there have been no answers so far.

So I'll just go ahead with this final report:

Train: UP's LA and MLA (blocks of cars within westbound trains).

Direction: Westbound only.

Description: "Los Angeles Special" (symbol LA) and "Morning Los Angeles Special" (symbol MLA).

"LA is an evening connection from the east, handling traffic AOT (arriving on time?), and such traffic can take the schedule of MLA following. However, the train will be generated through from Salt Lake on a schedule outlined to advance traffic from this territory." (1947) LA was an advance block for the MLA.

"MLA is a basic manifest schedule train from the east, and will handle all Eastern traffic for Los Angeles territory to insure 7th morning delivery from Chicago, and 6th morning from St. Louis." (1947)

MLA was the "Morning Los Angeles Special" -- a hot forwarder train from Co. Bluffs to LA.

Origin: Council Bluffs, IA

Destination: Los Angeles via San Bernardino.

Railroads Represented: Union Pacific and many railroads that fed into the UP.

Products: General merchandise of all types. Mostly loads, not many empties.

Train Length and Weight: Around 80 cars and 3000 tons (typical). (Total train, not the LA or MLA block, which was about 20-25 cars.)

Car Types: Mostly boxcars, but also gons and flats. Not many reefers or tank cars or stock cars.

Typical Schedule:

1946:

MLA Los Angeles Special Ar. SB 2:00 PM, LA East Yard 6:00 PM.

LA Los Angeles Special Ar. SB 5:00 AM, LA East Yard 9:00 AM (question on AM vs. PM).

1947:

MLA - leave Yermo at 8:15 AM, arrive San Bernardino at 2:00 PM.

LA - leave Yermo at 2:00 AM, arrive San Bernardino at 8:00 AM.

1948:

MLA #255 Ar. SB 3:30 PM

LA Special #261 Ar, SB 6:15 AM

1949:

MLA Morning LA Special Ar. SB 2:00 PM, LA 6:00 PM

LA Special Ar SB 5:00 AM, LA 9:00 AM

1951: Still listed.

1952: No more mention of these trains, nor in 1955 and 1957

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 MLA originated at Council Bluffs. The MLA did pick up KC traffic at Green River, Wyo. from the MKC (Morning Kansas City Manifest). The MLA ran combined or separated with the MCS (Morning California Special) between Council Bluffs and Ogden with the MCS connecting with the SP to northern Calif.

These were two of the "forwarder / merchandise" trains, which were designed to carry merchandise, auto parts, high-value / priority loaded cars and were "filled out" with other traffic (loads and/or empties) as necessary.

They were often consolidated as they moved west, such that something like 2-4 of these trains would move over Cajon during a typical 24-hour period. Because of delivery schedules & customer commitments, these trains would normally appear in a "fleet" over Cajon in the late afternoon – late evening hours (roughly 6pm to 3am) so that freight could be handled overnight & available for customers the following morning.

The blocks of LA traffic moved on various trains and ended up in Salt Lake City, where they'd switch out the SLC, WP, Clearfield, etc cars. Some of the trains arriving SLC were the "MLA" (the Morning Los Angeles Special), the "LA" (Los Angeles Special), and the "Advance Forwarder". These trains would arrive SLC at various times each day, with each handling different numbers of cars for LA based upon what happened to show up that day.

What SLC did was consolidate the various groups of LA cars that had arrived from the Overland Route, from Pocatello, and from the area into full trains as efficiently as they could, given the situation each day. So the result was various combinations of cars on departing trains each day, with the outcome rarely being the same two days in a row.

Based on dispatcher's reports from 4 different days in 1951, there were four different "forwarder" /

merchandise train combinations operating on those days. November 1, 1951, for example, they ran a "1-Fwdr-28 / 1/2-LA-28 / 1-MLA-28" combo out of LV at 4pm; next up was a "2-Fwdr-28 / 2-MLA-28" combo departing LV at about 8pm; and last in the fleet was a 3-MLA-28 that departed around midnight. Note that they didn't make any attempt to keep the "LA Forwarder" blocks separated from the priority LA traffic on other trains (MLA, LA, etc); they freely consolidated them to make solid trains of priority LA traffic regardless of train symbol or schedule.

Each of those trains would have handled a mix of cars with LA traffic. Other days the train combinations and departure times would have been different. Most often they ran about 3-4 of these merchandise-type trains daily (containing forwarder, merchandise, auto parts, various priority loads), with the trains appearing at various times throughout the day.

Westbound trains routed through A Yard at San Bernardino. There are lots of railfan photos to confirm this, with UP trains at the west end of A Yard, to stay out of passenger tracks at the station.

Modeling the Train: Use mostly boxcars and some loaded gons and flats in each LA block or MLA block. Use cars from the UP and railroads that fed into the UP. Combine the LA or MLA block with other blocks of merchandise cars to make a full train.

Please review this and send any additions or corrections.

Thanks,
John Thompson