

7. Ernie Little's Car Cards and Waybills

Rpt. Marks	UTLX
Car No.:	643167
Type:	Ethanol Tank Car
Black	Length 50
Notes:	
When empty, Return to:	

With the completion of the staging yard on my Norfolk Southern Connector railroad I have now progressed to developing the necessary items to have operations sessions. I have been thinking about this since I started participating in operations sessions on fellow division members layouts and going out of the area to participate with the New Jersey Interchange group in the Fall of 2023 and the Long Island Operations group in the Spring of 2024. Participation in these groups allowed me to observe how the sessions were run and different ways of running operations on a layout.

As most model railroaders know, operations is a method for simulating the movement of rolling stock on a model railroad based on real-world, prototypical practices. The goal is to create a realistic and dynamic operating session for the participants. For me to have operations on my layout I had to do some research and determine how I was going to do this. As my layout has two levels with several small yards and industries along a single main track, the question was what type of operations did I want to have. The choices being through trains running from one end of the layout to the other, trains originating either off the layout (using an interchange yard) to industries along the Norfolk Southern

Connector main, or some combination. One restriction I had was the fact that my railroad only has two points where trains can pass or allow reversing the direction of a locomotive. Also, the areas where this can be done can only accommodate five cars due to the length of track. Thus, the first decision was made to have five car trains originating in my staging yard making deliveries and picking up cars in the various industries on the layout and returning to the interchange track.

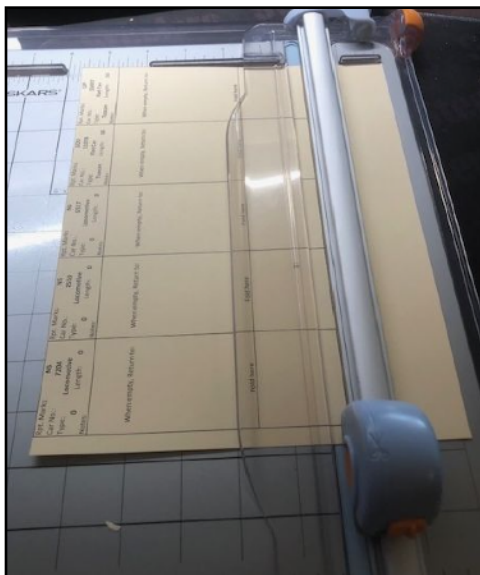
As my layout is single track dog bone design with a second level that is accessed via a wye the next question was how the trains would run. The time for development of an operations plan had come so more than one train could operate at the same time. Due to the layout's limits to conduct switching operations, it could require a locomotive to do a run around to be able to drop off or pick up cars in the yards and the main could be occupied during a switching operation. Development of a train schedule would allow for both.

Then I had to look at how to "manage" the cars as there are various methods such as car cards and waybills or using programs to provide operators guidance on what to do with the cars. Thus, my second decision to use car cards and waybills. In my research, I found critical considerations for private (leased) cars and for general service cars:

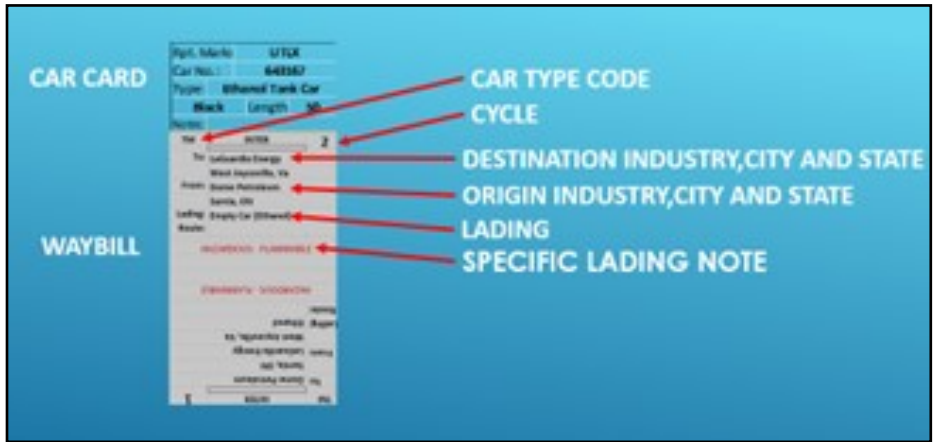
1. Private or leased cars are usually returned direct to their owner or leaser and not reloaded.
2. An empty foreign car should be loaded for a destination to and toward the foreign road that owns the car.
3. If there is no appropriate load or destination exists, the car is returned to the loading origin. If an appropriate load is found on the route the car is loaded and returned to its home railroad. If no appropriate load is found the car is returned to its home railroad as an empty.
4. If the car is in dedicated (captive) service, it would be returned to the loading origin with no stops.

With these considerations in mind, I now had to make car cards and waybills. I had seen several different styles of car card and waybills in my participation in operations on other layouts. All of these provided the necessary information for an engineer/ conductor to follow to get cars and equipment from point a to point b. I was fortunate that since the onset of having a model railroad I have kept a database of the railroad's assets which included reporting marks, type and length or the car or equipment, and other descriptive information. This saved me a significant amount of work in the development of the car cards and waybills. During my research I had found an article on the use of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets in creating the cards and waybills at the following link: <http://vanderheide.ca/blog/2018/01/04/excel-car-cards-and-waybills/>

By downloading the files from the above link and importing the car description information needed from my database, I was able to create car cards for all of my cars and equipment. The file for the car cards allows you to print the cards in a format that is appropriate to allow the insertion of a waybill in it using an appropriate card stock paper. (I used 75-pound stock.) (Photo on previous page.)

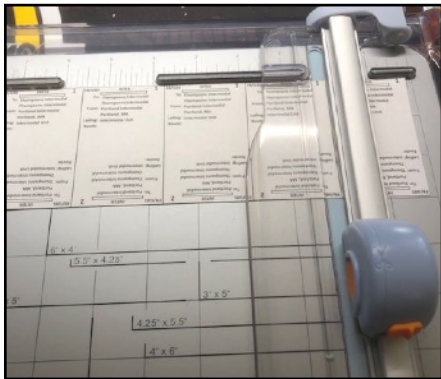


The car cards created on an 8 1/2" by 11" printed sheet and are of a standard size, with the car information at the top, with the most important information (identifying reporting mark and number) in the central place of prominence. Other descriptive information such as type, color and length are included below to assist in visually identifying the car. The Notes field may indicate other special features of the car, or usage restrictions (for example, "Paper service only" on boxcars meant for such). The bottom of the card is designed to fold up and be taped to form a pocket in which the waybill is inserted. There are five cards for five different cars printed which I had to cut out using a paper cutter and then fold and tape to create the waybill pocket (photo left).



I did the same thing with the waybill file. This file had a sheet where I could enter the needed information such as the origin and destination for a car or piece of equipment as well as other needed information which was then placed in the appropriate area

on the waybill. The picture (above) shows a waybill inserted into a car card.



I am using two cycle waybills, and there are five waybills for five different consists printed which I had to cut out using a paper cutter (photo left).

After completing the car cards and waybills I moved onto placing car card boxes on the layout.

I decided to use Micromark car card boxes for card processing on the layout and mounted them at the needed locations on the layout (photo right).

With this work completed, I am getting ready for my first pilot operations session where I will have three or four folks come over and try the operations plan. **Ernie Little, MMR**

