

COMMON RAILROAD TERMS AND ACRONYMS

- 3PL**
Third-party logistics company
- AAR**
Association of American Railroads
- ASLRRRA**
American Short Line and Regional Rail Association
- Bond**
A certificate of debt issued by a government or corporation guaranteeing payment plus interest.
- Brownfield**
Commercial or industrial site that has real or perceived contamination.
- Building trains**
Assembling sorted cars in proper sequence for outbound departure.
- Bulk**
Train made up of a single “bulk” commodity and car type. Bulk commodities include coal, grain, soda ash, and ore.
- Business incentives**
Financial, tax, and technical assistance to help companies expand or locate in a particular place.
- CDC**
Community development corporation, typically a nonprofit organization.
- Certified site**
An industrial site that has been certified through the Iowa Economic Development Authority, ready for quick development.
- Chassis**
The wheels and truck body structure that moves intermodal containers on the highway.
- COFC**
Container on flatcar which is a container that is transported on a rail flatcar. It can be shipped via tractor/trailer using a chassis as the wheel section.
- Containers**
Typically a 20-foot or 40-foot international container leased or owned by an ocean carrier.
- Cross dock**
A facility that provides for unloading materials from an incoming semitruck or rail car and loading these materials directly into an outbound truck or rail car with little or no storage in between.
- Cross overs**
Track that joins two main line tracks. When a train moves from one main track to another, it “crosses over.”

Drayage

The short portions of an intermodal movement at the beginning and ending.

First mile

A logistics term used for the movement of goods (usually by truck) from the origin to a freight hub.

Hazmat

Hazardous material that can corrode, explode, ignite, or create noxious fumes.

Hot shot

A high-priority train that moves ahead of other trains along the network.

Hump yard

A yard where rail cars are sorted via a gravity switching process.

IANA

Intermodal Association of North America

IEDA

Iowa Economic Development Authority, the state agency responsible for strengthening economic and community vitality.

Industrial park

A business development area that may or may not be rail-served.

Intermodal

A transportation option that moves containers or trailers on rail cars for part of a hauling trip. Normally, the first and last mile are carried by truck.

Intermodal terminal

A terminal that provides for transfer of intermodal containers to and from train cars and trucks.

Last mile

A logistics term that refers to the movement of goods between the final distribution node to the end user.

LCL

Less than car load is a logistics term that refers to amounts of cargo that will not fill an entire rail car. The company will usually charge different rates in cases where a shipper cannot fill an entire rail car.

LTL

Less than truck load is a logistics term that refers to amounts of cargo that will not fill an entire truck. The company will usually charge different rates in cases where a shipper cannot fill an entire truck.

Location assistance

The Iowa Economic Development Authority hosts a database of available buildings and sites for business expansion.

Logistics

The management of the flow of goods between the point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet the requirements of customers.

Long-haul trucking

Truck transport of goods outside of a 250-mile radius from origin.

Loop track

A long circular or oval railroad track with a connection to a serving railroad. The loop track allows for unit trains to be loaded, unloaded, and stored without affecting traffic on the serving railroad's line.

Mainline

A principal railroad artery over which through-trains move between terminals and yards in the rail network.

Manifest train

A train made up of mixed rail cars (boxcars, tank cars, flatcars, etc.).

Passing track

A track that allows a train to pass another train or move without being on the mainline.

Power

Another term for locomotive.

Railroad class

Railroads are categorized as Class I, II, or III based on revenue. Class I railroads include the seven largest railroads. Class II railroads are often referred to as regional railroads. Class III railroads include local or switching railroads.

Rail part

An industrial park served by rail.

Reefer

A common informal name for a refrigerated rail car.

Revenue bond

A bond backed by anticipated revenue stream from a specific project.

Run-through

"Point-to-point train service" is when a train that generally is not scheduled to add (pickup) or reduce (set out) rail cars en route.

Shortline railroad

A railroad that may originate or terminate freight traffic on its track, participate in division of revenue, and usually has less than 100 miles of track.

Shuttle train

A group of 50 to 55 rail cars that are loaded at a single location and are going to the same destination.

Siding

A track auxiliary to the main track for meeting or passing trains. A siding is connected to the main track at both ends with turnouts.

Special assessment district

An area designated by a taxing authority to be assessed at a different rate from the rest of the jurisdiction.

Spur track (or stub in)

Short, usually a dead-end, section of track used to access a facility or loading/unloading ramp. It also can be used to temporarily store equipment.

Sustainable development

Development that does not destroy or deplete the location's natural resources.

Switching

Moving cars from one track to another track or to different positions on the same track. This includes moving cars in the make up and break up of trains.

Switching railroad

A shortline railroad whose main business is to provide switching for other railroads.

Tare

The weight of a container. This weight is subtracted from the combined weight of container and product to get the weight of the product.

Team track

A track on which railcars are placed for the use of the public in loading or unloading freight.

Terminal

A railroad facility used for handling of freight and receiving, classifying, assembling, and dispatching trains.

TOFC

Trailer on flatcar is an intermodal option. A semitruck trailer is transported on a flatcar.

Ton-mile

A term denoting the movement of 1 ton of freight a distance of 1 mile. It is used in determining and evaluating rates for freight shipments.

Trackage rights

The right of one carrier to use track owned by another carrier pursuant to an agreement between them and payment of a fee.

Transload facility

A facility that provides for transferring freight to and from trucks and rail cars. Intermodal facilities, cross docks, and team tracks are all examples of transload facilities.

Turnout

A track arrangement that enables a train to diverge from one track to another.

Unit train

A grouping of 100 to 130 rail cars that are loaded at the same place and move to a single destination.

Yard

A system of auxiliary tracks used for the classification of railroad cars according to commodity and/or destination; assembling of cars for train movement; storage of cars; or repair of equipment.