



THE MIDNIGHT & SOMETIMES LATER CAR CARD SYSTEM

We are proud of our car card system. Having participated in operating sessions at other layouts we found we always had a problem locating the exact car on a switch list. When we did locate the car, determining where to deliver the car was not always easy.

Executive Vice-President Kelly Russell gave considerable thought to this problem and came up with a car card with a picture of the car as shown below. By using a paper clip on the card to indicate the car's location, the train crew can determine where to deliver the car and if a car at a location is ready for pick-up. We presented this system to a workshop at the 2002 San Jacinto Train Show where the system was well received by experienced operators.

The system uses three different cards, a Car Card, a Locomotive Card, and a Train Card. A sample of each is shown below.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">GTW516158</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Grand Trunk Western 40' Box Car</p> <p>#1 Scott Industries #2 Hardwood Furniture #3 Peroia #4 Scott Industries</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Car Card</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">LN 108</p>  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Louisville & Nashville RS-3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Address: 08 F0: Headlight on/off</p> <p>F1: F2: F3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Locomotive Card</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Train: MNSL 201</p> <p>Description: Morning Way-freight Origin: Midnight Yard Destination: Sometimes Later</p> <p>Instructions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work all locations until Sometimes Later 2. Upon completion of work at Sometimes Later, train terminates and becomes SLMN 202 </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Train Card</p>
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The Midnight Yardmaster makes up the trains on the M & SL. When a train is ready the yardmaster assigns a crew to that train. The train crew receives from the Yardmaster, a Train Card, a Locomotive Card, and a Car Card for each car in the train.

In addition to a picture of the car, the Car Card has the car's reporting marks, the type and length of the car, and up to five designations for that car.

The Train Card contains the train name, where the train originates, its destination, and its general orders.

The Locomotive card has the locomotive's road number, the DCC decoder address assigned to that engine and any DCC throttle functions available on the engine's decoder.

Each Car Card in the train has a paper clip around the car's designation as shown here. This paper clip can mean several things depending upon where the car is.



Car Card with Paper Clip

1. If the car card is part of the train, the customer indicated by the paper clip is the delivery location of the car.
2. If a car card at the customer's location has the paper clip on the customer's name, then the car is still being loaded/unloaded and is not ready for pickup.
3. If the car card at the customer's location has the paper clip on the next location on the card, then that car at that location has been loaded/unloaded and is ready for pickup.

Before leaving the Midnight Yard, the train crew examines the cards received with their train from the Yardmaster and determines where they are to deliver the cars in their train

Each customer location has a car card pocket as shown in the picture below. Prior to an operating session the General Superintendent verifies that the card or cards in the card pocket match the cars at the customer's location. In addition, the Superintendent moves the paper clip for each card down to the next customer. For example, the car in the above picture (car CB&Q48203) is at the Hardwood Furniture Company. Prior to the operating session the Superintendent moves the paper clip down to the next customer, which in this case is the Freight House.

When delivering a car to a customer, the train crew must leave the car card from their train in the customer's pocket. When picking up a car at a customer's location the train crew must remove the car card from the customer's pocket and take the car card and car with them. The cards picked up are turned over to the Yardmaster when the train ends at its final destination.

When the train crew brings their train to a customer's location they examine the cards in the card pocket matching the cars at that customer's location.

1. If the paper clip on the card in the pocket for the car at that location does not match that location, then the train crew picks up that car and delivers the car in the train to the customer.
2. If, the paper clip on the card in the pocket matches the customer and there is not room to deliver a car then the train crew keeps that car in their train and takes it and the card back to the yard.
3. If the paper clip on the card in the pocket matches the location and there is room to deliver the car in their train, then the train car is delivered and no car is picked up. For example, if the car card in the Freight House pocket has a paper clip around the Freight House and there is room to deliver the car, then the car from their train is delivered to that customer
4. If the card pocket at the customer location does not have a card in it, then the car in the train is delivered to that customer.



Destination Card Pockets

When delivering a car to a location and the car card at that location still has not had the paper clip moved, that means the location has not completed unloading or loading the car and the car will be moved until the next operation session.

MAKING AND PRINTING THE CAR CARDS

We use Microsoft Word to format the cards and then print them on Avery Insert Refills for Name Badges, (Avery 5392). However, we do not use Word Avery Label formatting for the cards.

To create the cards first set your page to landscape mode with the following margins 0.19" Top, 0" Bottom, 1.13" Left, and 0.23" Right. Ignore the MS Word message saying that the margins are outside the printable area. After setting the page margins, create a three column by a two-row table. Set the row height at 4" exactly and the column width at 3". Set the cell alignment to print at the top of the cell. Six car cards are printed from one sheet of the Name Badge card.

I use a different document (file) for each card sheet. I name my documents Car Card Number ##. I write that document number on the bottom of each card and also store that number in my car database. That way I can easily find the Word file containing that card if I need to change the data or I need to reprint the card.

The Name Badge Insert Refills (Avery #5392) may have to be special ordered from your office supplier. They normally come with the name badges, but not wanting the name badges, I special order the in Insert Refills from my office product supplier.

The car's picture is taken with a digital camera and cropped down so that only the car shows. Most photo's size is set at 0.85" height and 2.48" length, although this may vary with the size of the car and the original picture.

Because the number of cars we can have on the layout at one time is limited, many of our cars are stored off the layout. Between operating sessions the General Superintendent removes some cars and replaces them with cars from storage. This is done through our staging tracks, which we consider an interchange with other railroads. When a car is sent to the staging/interchange area for replacement on the layout, the car card for that car is also removed. Cards for cars off the layout are stored in reporting mark order in a recipe box. Between sessions when the General Superintendent places a new car on the layout he also places that car's card in the proper card pocket.