Intermodal Terms to Know

Accessorial Charges: Charges for a wide variety of services and privileges that are made available in connection with the transportation of goods. Includes all charges other than the freight charges.

Availability Time: The time the equipment is grounded and available for pick up by the customer.

Backhaul: Traffic for the return movement of a car or container towards the point where the initial load originated or to handle a shipment in the direction of the light flow of traffic.

Bad Order: A freight car or container loaded improperly, mechanically defective, or it has safety violations

Beneficial Owner: The actual owner of the lading that is being shipped. The IMC negotiates transportation services and rates on behalf of the beneficial owner.

Bill of Lading: A shipping form which is both a receipt for property and a contract for delivery of foods by a carrier. There are a number of different types of bills or lading, including: a straight bill of lading; a shipper’s order bill of lading; an air waybill; a clean bill of lading; and a claused bill of lading.

Block: A group of railcars destined to the same location

Bridge Move: A railroad movement involving at least three roadhaul carriers at which the intermodal provider is neither the first or last carrier.

Car Location Message (CLM): That part of the fleet system which deals with providing the fleet operator with information on car movement data for all cars in the fleet (see fleet). This information comes in the form of a periodic (usually daily, sometimes hourly) message or report which contains the latest movement data on all cars from the fleets that are on a particular rail line.

Car Scheduling: A system of assigning a “trip plan” that is based primarily on waybill data. Cars are scheduled to the first available train that may carry the specific type of traffic into which they are categorized.

Cartage: Pick up or delivery of freight within commercial zone of a city by local carrier acting as agent for a shipper or over-the-rail carrier.

Circus Ramp: Stationary or portable end loading/unloading ramp which requires a truck tractor to drive a trailer onto or off of rail flatcars.
Container on Flat Car (COFC): The movement of a container on a railroad flat car. This movement is made without the container being mounted on a chassis.

Common Carrier: A transportation line engaged in the business of handling persons or goods for compensation and for all persons impartially.

Connecting Carrier: A carrier that has a direct physical connection with another or forming a connecting link between two or more carriers.

Consignee: The individual or organization to which freight is shipped. Freight is shipped by the consignor to the consignee.

Consignor: The individual or organization shipping freight to a consignee

Container: A receptacle that resembles a truck trailer without wheels (chassis) that is lifted onto flat cars. Containers are designed for all modes of intermodal transport. Most containers are 20, 45, 48 or 53 feet in length.

Container Yard (CY): A yard used for storage of containers when not in use. Container yards can be railroad or privately owned.

Conventional Car: A single platform flat car designed to carry a trailer or container. Containers can only be single stacked in a conventional car. Conventional cars are equipped with one or two stanchions, depending on length, for shipment of one or two trailers.

Crane: A large machine that straddles the railroad track for the purpose of loading and unloading containers and trailers to and from railcars.

Crosstown (XTWN): When a drayman or railroad delivers a container or trailer from one railroad to another for continuance of the move.

Customs Broker: A company or individual licensed by the Treasury Department to act on behalf of importers/exporters in handling U.S. customs transactions.

Cutoff Time: The time a container or trailer must be ingated at the terminal to meet a scheduled train loading for departure. Also be referred to as Gate Cutoff Time (GCO).

Deadhead: When a drayage firm is required to move empty equipment a long distance to pick up a load.

Dedicated Train: A train that by design transports a dedicated commodity or type of cars. In the case of intermodal, a dedicated intermodal train only carries trailers and/or containers.
Detention: A charge made on trailers/containers held by or for a consignor/consignee for loading or unloading, forwarding directions, or any other purpose.

Displacement Light: The weight of a vessel without cargo, fuel or stores.

Diversion: A change made in the route of a shipment in transit.

Division: The amount of revenue apportioned to each rail carrier participating in a given route, where the customer is invoiced on a through-rate basis.

Door to Door: A movement of lading from the customer’s front door (dock) to the receiver’s front door (dock).

Door to Ramp: A movement of lading from the customer’s front door (dock) to the destination intermodal ramp closest to the receiver. The receiver makes arrangements to have the lading picked up from the ramp and delivered to their door (dock).

Double Stack: The movement of containers on articulated railcars which enable one container to be stacked on another container for better ride quality and car utilization.

Drayage: The movement of a container or trailer to or from the railroad intermodal terminal to or from the customer’s facility for loading or unloading.

Drayman: A person employed to pick up or drop off a container or trailer at an intermodal terminal.

Driver Assist: When a drayman is required to assist in the loading/unloading of a container or trailer.

Drop & Pull: Drayman drops loaded or unloaded unit at shipper or receiver and hooks up to a unit which was previously dropped and returns it to the ramp.

Dry Run: When a drayman goes to the ramp to pick up a container and for some reason leaves without one. Or when a drayman takes a unit out to a shipper or consignee to load or unload and it is refused.

Dunnage: The material used to protect or support freight in containers or trailers.

Embargo: To resist or prohibit the acceptance and handling of freight. An embargo may be caused by acts of God such as tornadoes, floods, inclement weather, congestion, etc.

EMP: A domestic interline container service offered by the Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern railroads. Also included in the program are agent railroads such as the Iowa Interstate, Kansas City Southern, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific. EMP provides a fleet of 48’ and 53’ domestic containers and chassis nearly that move...
throughout a large network. This equipment cannot be moved on railroads that do not participate in this program (CSXI and BNSF).

**FAK**: Freight of All Kinds

**Flatcar**: a freight car having a floor without any housing or body above. Frequently used to carry containers and/or trailers or oversized/odd-shaped commodities. The three types of flat cars used in intermodal are conventional, spine, and stack cars.

**Flip**: When a container is picked up off of the ground and mounted on a chassis for street or highway transport.

**Flip Charges**: Charges assessed to a shipper when the railroad is required to provide an unnecessary or extra flip. An example of this is when a private container is grounded off of a train and no chassis is available at that time. A flip charge is assessed because a flip is required at a time after the train is unloaded.

**Foreign Equipment**: Any car not belonging to the particular railway on which it is running.

**Foreign Carrier**: A term used by a carrier in making references to all other carriers collectively.

**Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)**: The FRA deals specifically with transportation policy as it affects the nation’s railroads and is responsible for enforcement of rail safety laws.

**Free Time**: The period allowed the owner to accept delivery before storage or detention charges begin to accrue. Can also be used when indicating the amount of time the consignor or consignee have to load and/or unload the container or trailer before the drayman must be paid extra compensation.

**Freight Forwarder**: One who assembles small shipments into one large shipment which is then tendered to a regulated over-the-road carrier. Upon reaching destination, the shipment is separated into small shipments and delivered.

**Gate**: A point at an intermodal terminal where a clerk checks in and out all containers and trailers. All reservations and paperwork are checked at the gatehouse.

**Gatehouse**: A structure at the gate where a clerk inspects and clears the entrance and exit of all containers and trailers.

**Gateway**: A point through which freight commonly moves from one territory or carrier to another.
**Haulage**: A legal agreement between two rail partners. The owner of the agreement is referred to as the “Haulage Rights Carrier.” The other partner is referred to as the “Haulage Movement Carrier.” The agreement requests the movement carrier to move equipment over an agreed segment of track, but to outside parties it appears as if the rights carrier is doing the work.

**Headhaul**: Rail or truck term used to define the highest revenue generating shipping lane from shipper to receiver.

**Inbond**: When the bill of lading clears customs at the ultimate destination instead of at the border.

**Ingate**: The process of checking a container or trailer into the intermodal facility.

**Inland Carrier**: A transportation company which hauls export or import traffic between ports and inland points.

**Interchange**: The exchange of railcars between connecting railroads or between the rails and the drayage carriers.

**Interchange Agreement**: Agreement between a railroad and a drayage company that allows a specific drayage company to drop off or pick up railroad or private intermodal equipment at the said railroad’s facilities. Also known as an Equipment Interchange Agreement.

**Interline Freight**: Freight moving from point of origin to destination over two or more transportation lines.

**Intermodal**: Transport of freight by two or more modes of transportation. Examples are Truck-Rail-Truck or Ship-Rail-Truck.

**Intermodal Terminal**: A railroad facility designed for the loading and unloading of containers and/or trailers to and from flat cars for movement on the railroad and subsequent movement on the street or highway.

**Intermodal Marketing Company (IMC)**: IMC’s purchase rail and truck transportation services, utilize equipment from multiple sources and provide other value-added services under a single freight bill to the ultimate shipper.

**Intermodal Association of North America (IANA)**: An industry trade association representing the combined interests of intermodal freight transportation companies.

**Interior Point Intermodal (IPI)**: Imported traffic movement from an origin port to an inland point on an ocean bill of lading.
**J-1**: A report filled out during the ingate and outgate process. The J-1 details damage to the unit, container information, shipping information, drayman involved and time of ingate/outgate.

**Lading**: That which constitutes a load. The freight in or on a railcar, container or trailer.

**Landbridge**: Containerized marine traffic that is routed via rail across the United States on traffic between the Far East and Europe/Canada in lieu of all water routes.

**Live Load**: When a drayman stays with the container or trailer while being loaded or unloaded.

**Load Shift**: The term when the contents of a container or trailer are shifted inside the unit sometime after it leaves the actual origin and before it arrives at the final destination.

**Local Move**: A railroad move in which only on road haul carrier participates. The one carrier serves both the origin and the destination station.

**Maintenance of Way**: The process of maintaining roadbed (rail, ties, ballast, bridges, etc.) These materials are hauled in special maintenance of way cars, which also include cars that are equipped with heaving equipment, such as cranes and tie replacing machines.

**Mini-Landbridge**: Imported traffic movement from an origin port to a destination port on an ocean bill of lading via land transportation.

**Notify Party**: The party that is notified at the time a container or trailer is grounded from a train.

**Off Junction**: Location where interchange to another carrier takes place.

**Outgate**: The process of checking a container or trailer out of an intermodal facility.

**Pacer Special Quote (PSQ)**: A private contract issued to the Pacer StackTrain Intermodal customers that lists rates for specific origin and destination pairs for a specific customer and/or specific commodity. Also includes restrictions and provisions for the application of those rates.

**Packer**: A moveable piece of heavy machinery used to lift rail containers or trailers on/off railroad flatcars at an intermodal facility. Also known as a piggybacker.

**Packing List**: A detailed specification as to goods packed into a container or trailer.

**Pad**: An area within a parking lot or intermodal terminal designated for a particular type of container or trailer, such as loaded outbound.
**Paper Ramp**: A rail-truck or truck-rail movement in which the rail has combined the rail and drayage into a single transportation package for rail owned containers. Containers are shipped via rail from one terminal to another. After that, a contracted drayage firm drays the container to the paper ramp operator’s lot for customer pickup. The process also works in reverse as well; shipment can originate with the truck movement and then move to the rail portion of the movement.

**Per Diem**: Charge based on a fixed rate per day which a carrier makes against another carrier or customer for use of its containers or trailers.

**Piggyback**: Transportation of a trailer on a railroad flatcar.

**Pigs**: A railroad term for trailers loaded on flatcars.

**Placard**: A sign affixed to a rail car or truck, which indicates the hazardous designation of the product being transported in that vehicle.

**Pool**: An assigned group of containers, trailers or cars used to satisfy the transportation requirements of a customer.

**Port Charge**: A charge for services rendered at ports.

**Port Mark**: A term used in foreign shipping which denotes final destination – not the port of entry unless such port is the final destination.

**Port of Entry (POE)**: A port at which foreign goods are admitted into the receiving country. Ports of entry are officially designated by the government.

**Premium Service**: Highest level of service available on the railroad.

**Private Equipment**: Equipment whose ownership is vested in a person or company that is not engaged in the service of common carriage.

**Proportional Price**: Price from or to an intermediate point. Rate is to be used in combination with another carrier’s proportional rate to make an interline rate.

**Pup**: A 28’ trailer, used mostly in less than truckload business.

**Ramp**: Slang word for an intermodal terminal where trailers and containers are lifted on and off departing and arriving railcars.

**Ramp to Door**: A movement of lading from the intermodal ramp closest to the customer to the closest intermodal ramp to the receiver.

**Ramp to Ramp**: A movement of lading from the intermodal ramp closest to the customer to the closest intermodal ramp to the receiver.
**Rail Cost Adjustment Factor (RCAF):** An index published quarterly by the AAR showing the average change in railroad costs.

**Reconsignment:** 1. Any change, other than a change in route, made in a consignment before the arrival of goods at their billed destination. 2. Any change made in a consignment after the arrival of goods at their billed destination. When the change is accomplished under conditions which make it subject to the Reconsignment rules and charges of the carrier.

**Rubber Wheel Interchange:** Containers or trailers that are interchanged between two railroads by means of drayage.

**Rule 11:** A railroad accounting term which refers to a customer shipping their freight “pre-paid” to an intermediate point and “collect” beyond that intermediate point to the final destination.

**Run-Through:** A train which originates on a different railroad that it terminates and does not get reclassified at interchange but rather “runs-through” to a point on the second railroad before the train is broken up.

**Specific Commodity Quote (SCQ):** A private contract issued to the Union Pacific Intermodal customer that lists rates for specific origin and destination pairs for a specific customer and/or specific commodity. Also includes restrictions and provisions for the application of those rates.

**Seal:** A device for fastening or locking the doors of a railcar, container or trailer. This is done for security and integrity of the shipment.

**Slack:** The elongation which occurs between railcar couples because of their spring-loaded design.

**Slot Utilization:** The method of utilizing every space available on a double stack car. A slot includes the space above a container when another container can be double-stacked. A five platform double stack car has 10 slots available for loading. If all 10 slots are loaded, you have 100% slot utilization.

**Spine Car:** A lightweight articulated car with a middle bar or “spine” used specifically to haul trailers or containers.

**Stack Car:** An intermodal flatcar that was specifically designed to place one container on top of another for better utilization and economics. Also referred to as a well car because the cars are depressed in the center to allow clearance of the double stacked containers when moving under low-lying structures.
Stanchion: The hitches used to support the nose end of trailers when they are mounted on a flatcar. There are two types of stanchions: collapsible and fixed.

Standard Transportation Commodity Code (STCC or Stick Code): The STCC system is a 7-digit coding structure designed to classify all commodities or articles which move or may move in freight transportation.

Steel Wheel Interchange: Containers or trailers that are interchanged between two railroads while on the railroad flatcar.

Storage Charge: A charge assigned to the shipper or consignee for holding containers or trailers at an intermodal terminal beyond the free time allotted to them.

Street Time: The time a container or trailer is away from the possession of the railroad. Applies to rail owned equipment only.

System Equipment: Equipment owned or leased by a railroad. Each railroad considers their own equipment as system equipment.

Tare Weight: 1. The weight of a container and the material used for packing. 2. As applied to a car/trailer, the weight of the car/trailer exclusive of its contents.

Tariff: A legal listing of rates used when moving regulated traffic by rail.

Through Rate: A rate applicable from origin to destination over two or more rail carriers

Trailer on Flatcar (TOFC): A rail trailer or container mounted on a chassis that is transported on a rail car. Also known as piggyback.

Trailer: A rectangular shaped box with permanent wheels attached for the transport of goods on rail, highway or a combination of both.

Transload: To physically transfer product from one transportation vehicle to another.

Universal Machine Language Equipment Register (UMLER): A computer readable file of vital statistics for each railroad car in service. It applies to all railroads, types of cars, and data processing machines.

Uniform Intermodal Interchange and Facilities Access Agreement (UIIA): A standard equipment interchange contract used by the intermodal industry that has been developed by water, rail and motor carriers and is administered by IANA.

Van Grounding: The event when a container or trailer is taken off of the train and placed on the ground for a customer pickup. At this time, the container is mounted on a chassis and the notify party is notified.
**Vessel’s Manifest**: Statement of vessel’s cargo, revenue, consignee, etc.

**Waybill**: A document covering a shipment and showing the forwarding and receiving station, the names of consignor and consignee, the car initials and number, the routing, the description and weight of the commodity, instructions for special services, the rate, total charges, advances and waybill reference for previous services and the amount prepaid.

**Well Car**: An intermodal flat car that was specifically designed to place one container on top of another for better utilization and economics. Referred to as a well car because the cars are depressed in the center to allow clearance of double stacked containers when moving under low-lying structures.