

IN THE AGGREGATE SPACE, TRINITYRAIL IS TRIPLED DOWN

A new triple hopper car design will provide customers with yet another menu option to meet their evolving equipment needs

For *TrinityRail*®, the aggregate space is a growth market. It's also a market in transition. Federal infrastructure funding in recent years has led to new roads, new buildings and other new construction, and "all of it requires rock," says Mike Frey, *TrinityRail*'s Senior Vice President of Energy, Construction and Metals.

So do energy and e-commerce related products. There's also been "a big push for more data centers, which is a new realm for the aggregate space," says *TrinityRail* Director of Sales Brad Krocheski. "Millions of tons of product are needed for this space. Once we start to see housing come back, there's going to be even more growth."



TrinityRail's 2,403-cubic-foot rapid discharge triple hopper is equipped with three pneumatically operated discharge gates, featuring a transverse design to support versatile and efficient unloading operations for aggregates.

Aggregate shippers' equipment needs also vary widely. And as their rail cars age, they're seeking new equipment solutions.

Enter solution-focused *TrinityRail*.

"We take a holistic view of the supply chain to see how we can fill any voids and gaps," Krocheski says.

One recent gap-filling solution: a new triple hopper car design that provides aggregate shippers with another option to help them meet their evolving requirements.

"Customer feedback is a big reason we decided to stay hyper-focused on the triple hopper," Krocheski says. "We've got a triple hopper car that works well, but we thought: 'What can we do to make it better for our customers and the industry?'"

TrinityRail has a long history of asking such questions, particularly in the aggregate space.

In 1961, the company introduced Rapid Discharge® (RD) open hoppers for coal and woodchip service. A decade or so later, the RD's versatile transverse discharge door system was adopted by sand, rock and minerals shippers in the form of the RDL™.

"The gate was longitudinal, and fewer gates meant less maintenance," says Frey, who joined *TrinityRail* in 2015 after stints with Norfolk Southern Railway, food shipper Redgold Inc. and chemical company Celanese Corp.

With the 2008 unveiling of the 2,402-cubic-foot longitudinal RDL-A™ Hopper, *TrinityRail* applied the technology for aggregate shippers. Available in all-steel or hybrid designs, the RDL-A provides touch-pad control and quick discharge.

"The RDL-A staked our claim in the space," Frey says.

TrinityRail also offers the 2,403-cubic-foot Rapid Discharge Triple Hopper. Equipped with three pneumatically operated discharge gates, the car features a transverse design to support versatile and efficient unloading operations. Like the RDL-A, the cars offer touch-pad control. Operators also enjoy safer, hands-free operation, which eliminates manual intervention and streamlines the unloading process even more.

But aggregate shippers have a range of needs. Many don't have the capacity to handle high-volume cars.

"They want a safe, lightweight, high-capacity design, and the new triple hopper design provides the solution," Frey says.

The *TrinityRail* product development team began working on the new triple hopper design last year.

"We took what we learned with the RDL-A and optimized the underframe using different materials," says Senior Design Engineer Daniel Cortez. "We're also optimizing around the center sill to gain more [cubic feet] without widening the car." The new triple hopper design will offer a capacity of 2,430 cubic feet.

TrinityRail plans to unveil the new triple hopper this year. It will join an array of equipment solutions the company has developed over the years, including the A-Gon, a 42-foot gondola suited for customers that don't have the flexibility to unload into a pit; and cut-down cars (coal cars "cut down" to create a reduced capacity car).

The point: Whether aggregate shippers unload into a pit or with an excavator, *TrinityRail* has a menu of options to meet their needs, says Frey, who has made listening to customers and acting upon what he hears a priority during his time with *TrinityRail*. Krocheski has, too.

"We're not going to say, 'Here's a car, accept it,' he says. "It's about listening to feedback from customers and thinking about what we can do to help them — and to make the industry better. The new triple hopper design is a testament to that." ■