

UNCOVERING A COVERED SOLUTION

TrinityRail's newest covered hopper — the 5,809 — serves as an example of the company's holistic approach to product development

At *TrinityRail*®, the team approach rules. And the word “team” is inclusive; the team includes every link in the supply chain. Especially customers.

Soliciting feedback from customers — listening to it and responding accordingly — is paramount on the product development front.

“It’s about understanding customers’ needs and finding them solutions,” says Georgia Rokas, Senior Vice President of Sales, Agriculture Team. “That’s the beauty of our platform — we can help our customers on all fronts. We have all the resources you might need.”

TRINITYRAIL



TrinityRail's family of side sill covered hoppers, designed with greater capacity for maximizing shipper's loads, are available with multiple options to meet customer needs.

For shippers of agricultural and related commodities, *TrinityRail* offers a line of side-seam, mid-range covered hoppers. The lightweight cars offer optimized car length and capacity for greater efficiencies in unit-train operations.

Less length, more capacity

TrinityRail's newest offering — the 5,809-cubic-foot covered hopper — is a perfect example of the company's holistic approach to product development. “We have a very robust process that evaluates projects in the queue,” says New Product Development Manager Amy Brown.

The road to the 5,809 began with *TrinityRail's* launch of the horizontal side-seam family (aka the Series 9 family) in 2019.

“It’s been about reducing car length, carrying more tonnage, and optimizing all the different aspects,” says Director of Design Engineering Andrew Brown, who’s been with *TrinityRail* since 1993.

The engineering team has built more efficiency into each new offering. So far, the company has built about 10,000 cars in the Series 9 line, Andrew Brown says.

“The beauty of the line is we have so many,” adds Rokas, who joined the *TrinityRail* team in 1994 as an accountant, and whose passion for helping customers problem-solve led her to the commercial side of the business, and her current post in 2023. “When you have such a broad range of offerings, it makes it easier to understand what the optimal car type is for your customer’s needs.”

In recent years, soybean meal shippers have told *TrinityRail* what they wanted in an optimal car: something shorter, something with more capacity. In April 2025, the company's new product development, engineering, sales and marketing teams went to the drawing board, using the Stage-Gate® project management process, says Amy Brown, who started her Trinity career in the marketing group in 2012 and has been in the product development realm for about a decade.

“We hold ideation meetings to spur thoughts, things that are affecting our customers,” she says. “Our field support team, commercial team and technical team are constantly in front of customers — what are we hearing from them? Are they looking for more capacity? Is it longer trains? Do we need to make a shorter covered hopper in order to make unit trains more efficient? It all goes into our process.”

When the process begets a specific solution, Amy Brown's team builds a business case for it.

The solution *TrinityRail* elected to pursue in this instance? The 5,809.

“The 5,809 buys you additional carrying capacity and reduces train length,” Andrew Brown says.

By late 2025, the car was ready for field trials. Customers have been happy with the results. Team *TrinityRail* can't wait for more feedback to roll in. And it will.

“Field trials always bring ideas from customers,” Andrew Brown says.

Just the way the *TrinityRail* product development team likes it. And needs it.

“This is the value of our platform,” Chief Commercial Officer Charley Moore says. “Providing customers with that end-to-end experience — living every step with them — is what enables us to develop the solutions they need to meet their own customers’ needs. And, ultimately, to move more freight by rail.” ■