



Soy Transportation Coalition • 1255 SW Prairie Trail Parkway • Ankeny, Iowa 50023

Why do we no longer see cabooses at the end of trains?

Cabooses are non-revenue cars, yet they are a source of additional weight to the entire train. The incentive is to not utilize them, if possible. Cabooses served a number of functions but were ultimately rendered unnecessary by technology, labor laws, and train size.

- Cabooses would often house a brakeman and a flagman. The advent of automatic braking systems eliminated the need for a brakeman to manually set the train's brakes. Similarly, electric track circuits would automatically activate signals to stop any approaching trains – eliminating the need for flagmen.
- As trains became longer and rail cars became taller, the caboose's cupola could no longer provide the vantage point to monitor train weight distribution or smoke from overheating.
- New labor laws reduced the length of time for train crews. Cabooses were no longer necessary for lodging the conductor or other personnel.