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Orders Due: 2-18-11  
ETA: September 2011

# GP7 - GP9



Photo Credit: Ray Whitaker, Strapac Collection.

In 1939, the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors introduced the FT, the first road freight diesel locomotive. The success of the FT and the post-war successors, the F2 and F3, made EMD the largest locomotive builder by 1949. But in early 1949, there was a threat to EMD's lead. The other builders were all offering a new type of locomotive, the road-switcher. As the name implies this was a locomotive that combined the features of a switch engine with those of a road freight engine. EMD's first attempt at a road switcher, the BL-2, was not successful. The BL-2 was essentially an F3A with front and rear steps and walkways and had the upper parts of the car body sloped inward to improve visibility to the rear. EMD needed something better. In early 1949, the F3 series was upgraded to the F7 series. In October 1949, EMD introduced the GP7. The GP7 was powered by a 16-cylinder, 1,500 horsepower 567B diesel engine driving a D12 generator, which powered four D27 traction motors, exactly like the F7. The basic design, like almost all road switchers, followed the design of diesel switchers with the addition of a short hood instead of an end-cab. EMD also made the hoods full height to better accommodate the diesel engine and all of the mechanical and electrical components of a road engine.

The first versions of the GP7 were more switchers than road units as they came with smaller fuel tanks and were not equipped with dynamic brakes. In 1951, the second version was introduced with options like several sizes of fuel tanks, dynamic brakes, and steam generators. Fuel tank sizes included 800 gallon, 1,200 gallon, and 1,600 gallon tanks. When water tanks to supply the steam generators were added, there were options for tanks for 800 gallons of fuel and 800 gallons of water or for 1,100 gallons of each. These larger tanks required moving the air reservoirs to the roof to provide space for the tanks. These units became known as "torpedo boats." Early GP7s had taller engine doors. On the Phase 2 engines with dynamic brakes, the doors under the dynamic brakes were shortened by four inches, leaving one tall door in front of the dynamic brakes. The Phase 3 engines used the shorter doors for all of the engine access doors regardless of dynamic brakes. Another variation was the cabless GP7B built for Santa Fe. GP7 production lasted from October 1949 until May 1954. There were 2,615 GP7s built for U.S. railroads, 112 for Canada, and 2 for Mexico. Major buyers of the GP7 were Santa Fe (244 and 5 GP7Bs), New York Central (218), Missouri Pacific (208), Chesapeake & Ohio (180) and Atlantic Coast Line (154). Other roads buying more than 100 units included Frisco (129), Seaboard Air Line (123), Chicago & Northwestern (121) and Rock Island (113).