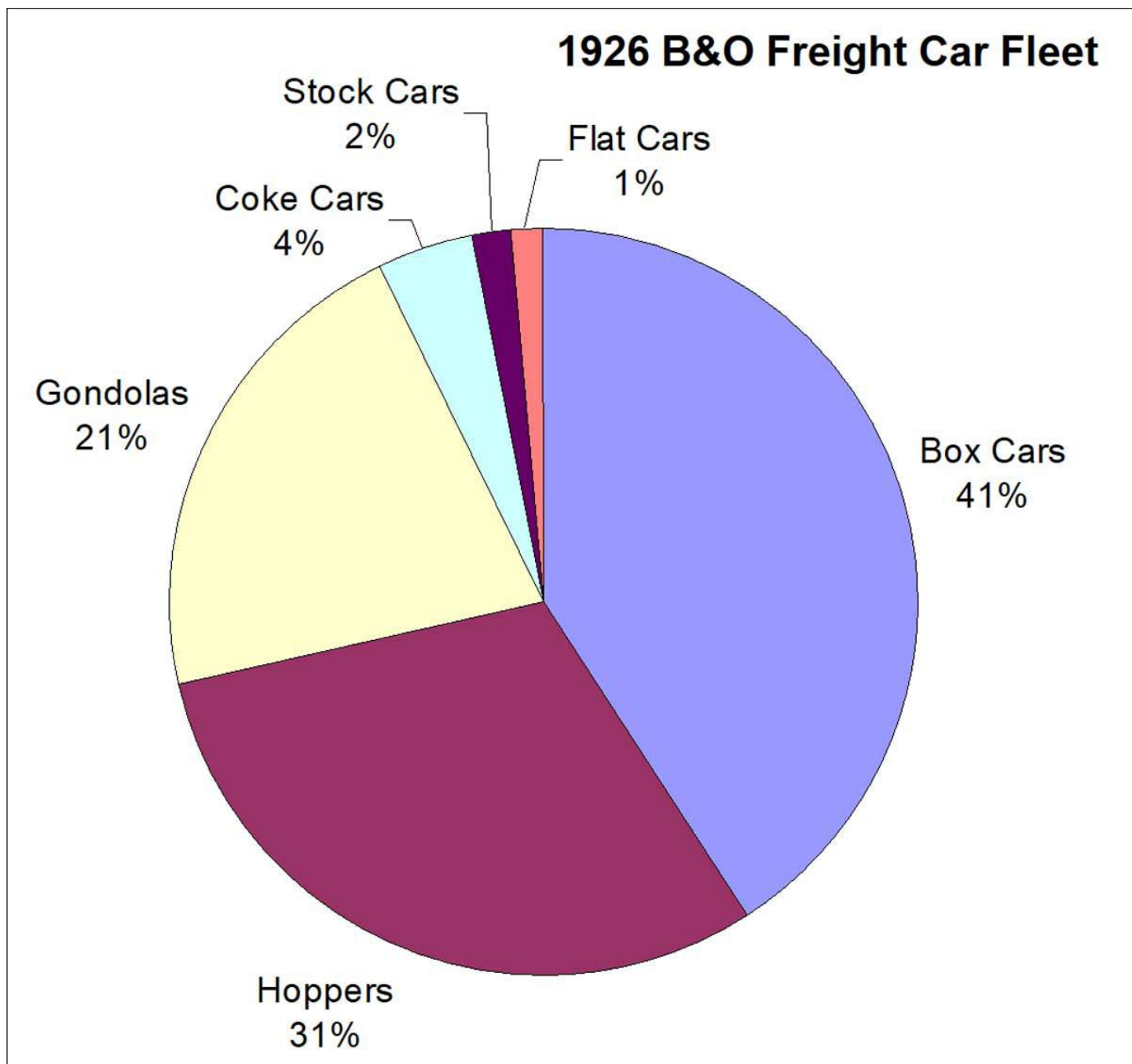


## Baltimore & Ohio 1926 freight car fleet

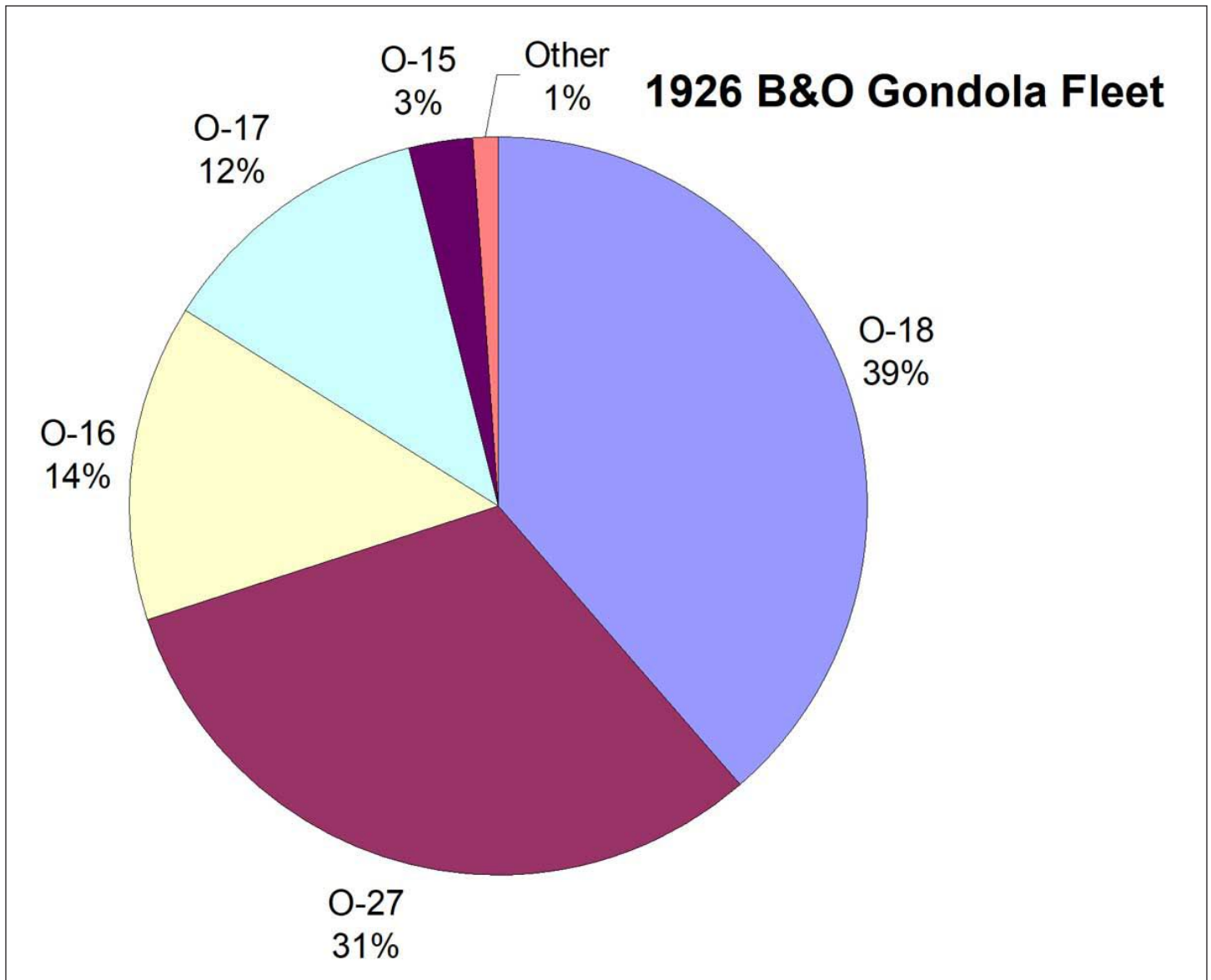
The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad had an interesting freight car fleet in 1926. The October 1926 Official Railway Equipment Register indicates there were 101,227 B&O freight cars in service. These cover a variety of car types and car classes. The pie chart below illustrates the various car designs of the B&O fleet.



Let's take a closer look at the B&O car classes of 1926. This review will focus on the gondola fleet. Boxcars were covered previously and can be reviewed on the [B&O Freight Car Fleet of 1926](#) page of the DesignBuildOp blog. Additional sections on hoppers and other cars in the fleet will be published. These summaries do not cover all of the car classes in service, just those with significant quantities or with a representative HO scale model. This document was completed in March 2018 with details current to that time.

## Gondola Cars

20,730 B&O gondolas are listed in service across 22 car classes and subclasses in a 1926 Official Railway Equipment Register. The following pie chart illustrates the proportion of the gondola fleet for the car classes covered in this summary.



The majority of the B&O gondola fleet was built and installed before World War One. A few thousand of the O-27 subclasses were built in the 1920s. Gondolas are the pick-up trucks of the rails and hauled nearly any load that did not need protection from the elements. Coal and other aggregate materials were very common loads, as were structural steel shapes, scrap, plate steel, cast iron pigs, rough cut lumber, vehicles, equipment, and even manure. All of the major B&O gondola classes covered in this summary were built with steel underframes. All but the O-27 car class rapidly disappeared from in-service duties through the 1920s.

The following data was collected from an October 1926 Official Railway Equipment Register, the July 1926 B&O Summary of Equipment, and B&O Fifty years of Rolling Stock Rosters, 1905-1954. The latter two books were purchased through the [B&O Railroad Historical Society](#). They offer reprints of many official B&O books to assist with your research efforts. Visit their Company Store for more details. The B&O Summary of Equipment books are found under the Equipment link on the Company Store pages.

## O-18 and subclasses

8,023 cars, 39% of the gondola fleet



O-18 at the City of Pittsburgh asphalt plant in 1914, with another O-18 to the right and an O-15 car in the background. (715.144303.CP Pittsburgh City Photographer collection)

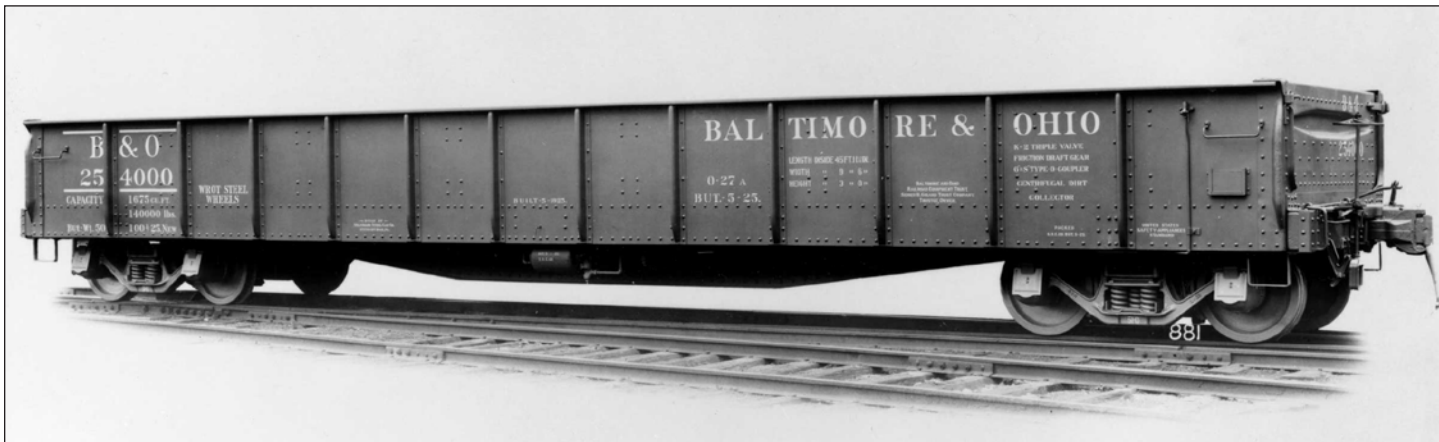
Class	Car Series	Cubic Capacity	Number of Cars	Built	Notes
O-18	139000 - 140999	1818	84	1912	Drop Doors
O-18	236000 - 238121	1818	67	1913	Drop Doors
O-18b	240500 - 241999	1818	997	1912	Wood Bottom
O-18a	336000 - 338121	1687	1757	1922	Wood Bottom
O-18a	339000 - 344999	1687	5118	1922	Wood Bottom

The O-18 steel gondolas had ten side stakes, and a 41-foot, 5-inch inside length. The original cars had drop doors to ease unloading of coal and aggregates. By the mid-1920s, most of the O-18 gondolas had been rebuilt with flat wood floors. The O-18a cars were also reduced four inches in height to a 4-foot, 4-inch interior height, which reduced the cubic capacity. The B&O Summaries of Equipment indicate a 1922 build date for these O-18a cars, but I suspect this was when they were modified and rebuilt.

Currently, there are no HO scale models available for these gondolas and prototype images are difficult to find.

## O-27 and subclasses

6498 cars, 31% of the gondola fleet



O-27a 254000 in a Standard Steel Car Company builder image from May 1925.  
(Keith Retterer photo collection)

Class	Car Series	Cubic Capacity	Number of Cars	Built	Notes
O-27	250000 - 250499	1311	500	1919	USRA assigned
O-27a	250500 - 253499	1311	5998	1922-25	

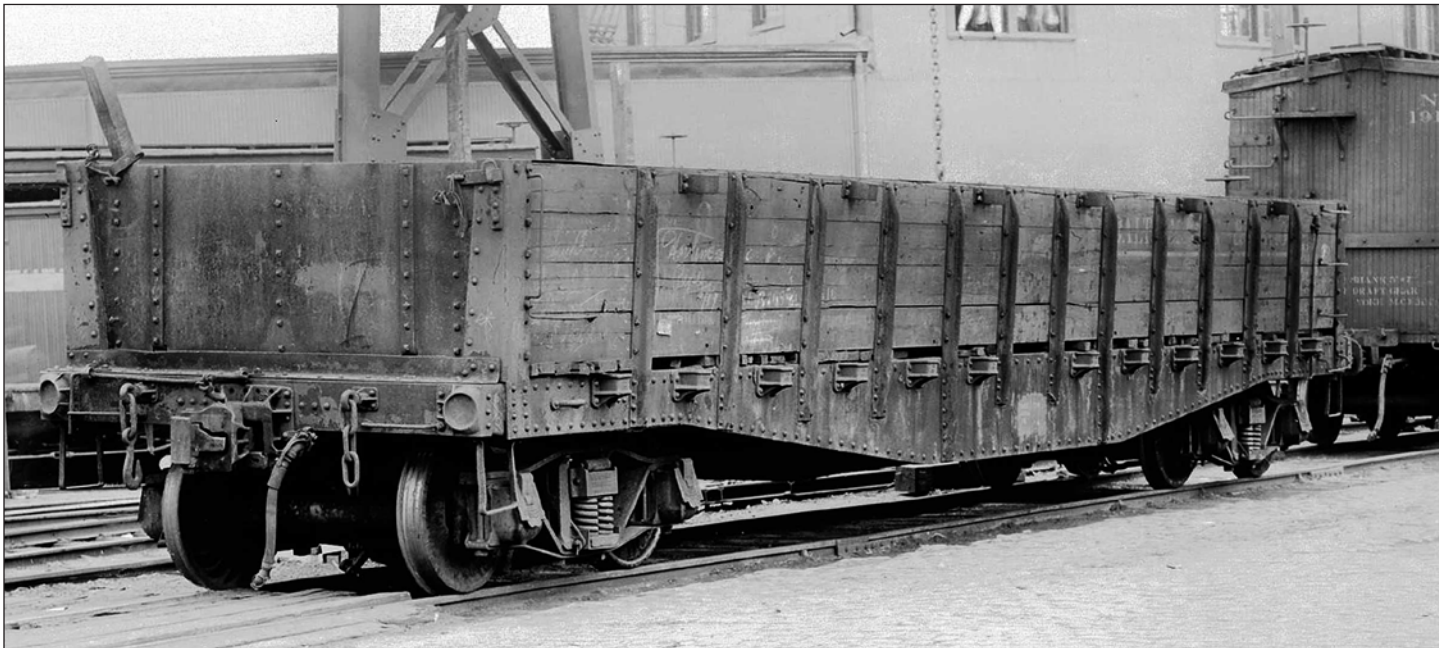
These were the first all-steel, 46-foot interior length mill gondolas on the B&O. The initial 500 cars were built by the Standard Steel Car Company and assigned to the B&O in 1919 by the USRA. These 70-ton capacity flat bottom cars had drop ends to accommodate longer loads. The B&O liked the design and added several thousand similar mill gondolas from 1920-1927.

[Westerfield Models](#) offers an HO scale resin kit for the O-27 that covers a number of subclasses. Walthers has produced a plastic HO scale version.



## O-16 and subclasses

2877 cars, 14% of the gondola fleet



A well-weathered O-16 sits at the DL&W Harlem Transfer. (Steamtown/NPS photo collection)

Class	Car Series	Cubic Capacity	Number of Cars	Built	Notes
O-16	146050 - 147499	1125	1060	1906	
O-16a	147500 - 149499	1155	1246	1911	
O-16b	149500 - 150999	1168	571	1912	

O-16 gondolas were introduced in 1906. Their ten side stakes, wooden sides, and heavy steel fish belly side sill bear resemblance to the Pennsylvania Railroad GR and GRa class gondolas. The B&O was under the control of the PRR when these gondolas were first ordered. The two center side stakes differ slightly in size compared to the PRR GR gondolas. Drop end doors enabled hauling of longer loads.

Currently, there are no HO scale models available for these prototypes. The [Funaro & Camerlengo](#) PRR GR or the [Westerfield Models](#) GRa gondola kits might be used as stand-in models. Prototype images are difficult to find.

## O-17 and subclasses

2543 cars, 12% of the gondola fleet



O-17 137149 in a 1905 Cambria Steel Car Company builder image.

Class	Car Series	Cubic Capacity	Number of Cars	Built	Notes
O-17	136000 - 138999	1658	2307	1906	Hopper drop doors
O-17a	436000 - 438999	1435	236	1923	Wood Bottom

The O-17 car design seems similar to the O-18 cars at a glance, but there are fourteen side stakes on these hopper bottom steel gondolas, compared to ten side stakes on the O-18 cars. The O-17 cars were part of the coal hauling fleet but the B&O was buying more self-clearing hoppers for the coal trade. The O-17a cars have had their hopper bottoms removed and the sides were reduced a couple of inches to a 3-foot, 10-inch interior height.

Currently, there are no HO scale models available for these gondolas and prototype images are difficult to find.

## O-15 and subclasses

547 cars, 3% of the gondola fleet



O-15 145381 sits near Pittsburgh Junction during clean up after a 1913 sewer explosion in Pittsburgh. (715.133873.CP Pittsburgh City Photographer collection)

Class	Car Series	Cubic Capacity	Number of Cars	Built	Notes
O-15	145000 - 146049	844	547	1905	Drop Ends

The O-15 gondolas were introduced in 1905. These gondolas had a straight side sill, fourteen side stakes, wooden sides, a steel fishbelly centersill, and drop end doors to handle hauling longer loads.

Currently, there are no HO scale models available for these prototypes. Many years ago the Rensselaer Model Railroad Society and [Funaro & Camerlengo](#) produced resin kits for these prototypes but they have been long out of production.

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The remaining 1% of the B&O gondola fleet covers 242 cars spread over a handful of car classes. Nearly all of the remaining gondolas came with the acquisitions of two railroads. The Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton became a B&O property in 1917, while the Morgantown & Kingwood became part of the system in 1922. Some cars also came from the Jamison Coal & Coke Company, just before World War I.

- \* O-22 & O-22a - 87 cars, ex-CH&D, original cars built in 1910
- \* O-31 & O-31a - 62 cars, ex-M&K, original cars built in 1905
- \* O-23a - 47 cars, ex-CH&D, original cars built in 1910
- \* O-20 & O-20a - 22 cars, ex-Jamison Coal & Coke, original cars built in 1904
- \* O-25 - 15 cars, ex-CH&D, original cars built in 1910
- \* O-32 - 7 cars, unable to determine original owners

In nearly all of these cases, the subclass represents a modified version of the original car. In general, these are pretty rare cars in a fleet of 20,730 gondolas.

The 1926 B&O freight car fleet summary is project has been on my mind for over a year. Several modelers and historians have assisted with this project. It would not have progressed this far without their assistance. I owe gratitude to James Mischke, Bob Witt, Ed Kirstatter, and Ray Breyer for sharing details, photos, and proofreading as the project has lurched forward over the months.