

# The Continental Trailways Fleet Numbering System Explained

By Joe Richards

Before we get too involved with the Eagle production records we need to have a look at how Continental's fleet numbering system worked. The vast majority of Eagles made went to Continental (later Trailways Inc.) so it's good to know how the system worked in order to better follow each coach around during it's time on the system. There were actually three different systems over time and we will look at each one in detail.

The first system was in effect from 1943 to 1957. It really wasn't a system, just a collection of numbers. Continental grew by purchasing other companies. Each of these companies had their own numbering systems before becoming part of Continental. At first, each company keep it's own system. This worked for a while but it wasn't long before there were two or more buses wearing the same number in Continental's fleet. That was solved by adding a letter prefix that told which division owned each bus. This list may not be all-inclusive but it gives a good idea of how the system worked.

## The First System, 1943-1957

Prefix Letter	Owning Division
A	American Buslines (single system for the five divisions)
B	Not Used
C	Central Lines, ex-Santa Fe
CR	Crescent Lines
CS	Southern Lines
CSS	Carolina Scenic Stages
D	Dixie-Sunshine Lines
E to L	Not Used
M	Midwest Buslines
N-O	Not Used
P	Panhandle Lines (half owned by Continental, the rest by the Hecket family)
Q	Queen City
R	Arkansas Motor Coaches
S	Safeway Trails
SM	Smokey Mountain Stages
T (Original)	Tennessee Lines
T (Later on)	Tamiami Trail Tours
TC	Tennessee Coach
TN	Trailways of New England
U	Not Used
V	Virginia Stage Lines
W	Western Lines, ex-Santa Fe
X	Southern Stages

Y	Not Used
Z	Service Coach Lines

Note that Continental Bus System (Former Bowen Lines) never had a prefix letter  
Also note that KG Lines which was half owned by Continental was not included but they used the prefix KG for their Eagles. Greyhound owned the other half.

## **The Second System, 1957-1969**

This was the first Continental-wide fleet numbering system. The letter prefixes were dropped and replaced by a four digit numbering system that showed the owning division, the type of bus and the unit number in that order. As the system had a size limit, some of the companies that Continental owned such as Queen City and other carriers in the southeast were left out and continued as before.

### **First Digit: Owning Division**

Digit	Owning Division
1	Continental Bus System, Continental Rocky Mountain Lines, Union Bus Lines
2	Dixie Lines
3	Central Lines
4	Western Lines
5	Southern Lines
6	American Buslines
7	Arkansas Motor Coach, Panhandle Lines
8	Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo Motorway; Denver, Salt Lake and Pacific Stages
9	Midwest Bus Lines

### **Second Digit: Bus Type**

1	GM 4104
2	GM 4106 (Continental never bought these new but some companies that they bought already had them such as Safeway, Virginia and Tamiami)
3	All ACF Models
4	All Fixible Models
5	Everything else not listed
6	Silver Eagle (2 <sup>nd</sup> Overflow Series)
7	Silver Eagle (Original Series)
8	Golden Eagle
9	Silver Eagle (1 <sup>st</sup> Overflow Series)

### **Third and Fourth Digits: Individual Bus Number**

Two or three operating companies were grouped under the same first digit for 1-5-7-8. This shows how the numbers were broken out by division.

1701-1759: Continental Bus System, Oldest group of 01 Eagles  
1901-1959: Continental Bus System, Next group of 01 Eagles used when 1700's were taken  
1601-1659: Continental Bus System, Last group of 01 Eagles used when 1900's were taken

1760-1779: Rocky Mountain Lines, Oldest group of Eagles  
1960-1979: Rocky Mountain Lines, Next group of Eagles used when 1700's were taken  
1660-1679: Rocky Mountain Lines, Last group of Eagles used when 1900's were taken

1780-1799: Union Bus Lines, Oldest group of Eagles  
1980-1999: Union Bus Lines, Second group of Eagles used when 1700's were taken  
1680-1699: Union Bus Lines, Last group of Eagles used when 1900's were taken

5701-5759: Southern Lines, Oldest group of Eagles  
5901-5959: Southern Lines, Second group of Eagles used when 5700's were taken  
5601-5659: Southern Lines, Last group of Eagles used when 5900's were taken

5760-5779: Crescent Lines, Oldest group of Eagles  
5960-5979: Crescent Lines, Second group of Eagles used when 5700's were taken  
5660-5679: Crescent Lines, Last group of Eagles used when 5900's were taken

5780-5799: Tennessee Lines, Oldest group of Eagles  
5980-5999: Tennessee Lines, Second group of Eagles used when 5700's were taken  
5680-5699: Tennessee Lines, Last group of Eagles used when 5900's were taken

7701-7759: Arkansas Motor Coach, 7900's and 7600's not needed

7761-7799: Panhandle Lines, 7900's and 7600's not needed

8701-8750: Denver, Colorado Springs & Pueblo Motorway, 8900's and 8600's not needed

8751-8799: Denver, Salt Lake and Pacific Stages, 8900's and 8600's not needed

Division Numbers 2-3-4-6-9 were not split like the above divisions were.

During the mid-60's it became obvious that some of the divisions would soon be running out of numbers as Eagle production increased. Continental's acquisitions between 1957 and 1969 kept their original numbers just as had happened in the original system.

This system did not take into account the Model 05 Eagles that were introduced in 1968. They got the same 7, 9 or 6 prefix that all older Eagles received. That was changed in the 1969 system.

Example: Fleet number 6713

The 6 is for American Buslines. The 7 shows that it's an Eagle. The 13 shows that it was the 13<sup>th</sup> Eagle delivered, new or used, to American.

## The Third System, 1969-1987

This was the final system used. It had plenty of space for expansion as many more owning divisions were added and standardization on Eagle coaches reduced the number of types. Oddly enough, Continental consolidated several of its divisions with others later on so the total number of divisions actually got smaller in the mid-70's.

### First Two Digits: Owning Division

Digits	Owning Division
11	Continental Bus System
12	Dixie Lines
13	Central Lines
14	Western Lines
15	Southern Lines
16	Crescent Lines
17	Tennessee Lines
18	Denver, Colorado Springs & Pueblo Motorway
19	Midwest Lines
20	Not Used
21	Rocky Mountain Lines
22	Union Bus Lines
23	Arkansas Motor Coaches
24*	Denver, Salt Lake and Pacific Stages. Merged into 21, Rocky Mountain
25	American Buslines Los Angeles Division
26	American Buslines Southwest Division. Merged into 25 in 1981**
27	American Buslines Mid-A Division. Merged into 25 in 1981**
28	American Buslines Cheyenne Division. Merged into 25 in 1981**
29	American Buslines Eastern Division. Merged into 25 in 1981**
30	Not Used
31	New England Lines
32	Safeway Lines
33*	Edwards Lakes to Sea System. Merged into 32, Safeway Trails
34	Virginia Stage Lines
35	Queen City, Later Southeastern Lines
36*	Smokey Mountain Stages. Merged into 35, Southeastern Lines
37*	Carolina Scenic Stages. Merged into 35, Southeastern Lines
38	Number reserved for Southern Stages but never used. See 41.
39*	Tennessee Coach Lines. Merged into 17, Tennessee Lines
40	Not Used
41*	Atlantic Lines, including Southern Stages. Merged into 45, Tamiami
42	Panhandle Lines (50% owned by the Hecket family)
43*	Gray Line of Charleston, SC, no Eagles assigned
44*	Western and Pacific Lines. Merged into 14, Western Lines
45	Tamiami Trail Tours
46	Service Coach Lines, jointly owned by Continental, Virginia Stage Lines

	and Carolina Trailways
47-48-49-50-51	Not Used
52	Randolph Field Bus Company, No Eagles assigned

\* Division later merged with another.

\*\* See note near end of this article.

A number of Trailways affiliate carriers also used the five digit system after it started but they didn't normally follow the bus type numbering. These included Michaud (10), Seashore (58), Adirondack (62) Pine Hill (72), Blue Ridge (77), Trans-Texas (80), Carolina (85), Colonial (95) and Capital of Alabama (99). There were others as well. Panhandle Lines (42) numbered it's Model 10's on top of it's existing Model 05's in the 425 series for whatever reason.

### Third Digit: Bus Type

Digit	Bus Type
1	GM 4104, later Eagle Model 10
2	GM 4106, later Eagle Model 15
3	Golden Eagles
4	401-450: Flixible, 451-499: Everything else, including some GMC New Look Sub-urban coaches. Later, 400 to 419 were assigned to the only batch of Eagle Model 10S coaches in the Trailways fleet. Safeway Lines also leased or bought a small number of used GMC PD 4903 or 4905 coaches and they were numbered starting with 32451.
5	Eagle Model 05
6	Eagle Model 05 overflow
7	Eagle Model 01
8	Eagle Model 01 overflow
9	Golden Eagles converted to Silver Eagles but some kept their 300 number. Also, 32900's were later reused to integrate Edwards Model 05 Eagles into the Safeway fleet as only 32696 to 32699 were still available. There was no special number series for 'Combo' coaches that had a large compartment for package express at the rear of the passenger deck. They kept their original numbers after being converted.

### Fourth and Fifth Digits: Unit number

With one minor exception, numbering in this system always started at 01 and not at 00 (XX501 and not XX500) as was done by a few divisions in the 1957 system. Another point is that XX599 was usually followed by XX600 but the number 600 was skipped a couple of times. Same for XX799 to XX800. A few numbers got reused when no more space was available. 15701 to 15705 were reused because all the 15700 and 15800 numbers had been taken. By the time it happened there was no chance for confusion as the first 15701 to 15705 were 1958 models and were long gone. The exception was the Model 10S buses, which were numbered 32400-32419 for some reason and not 32401-32420.

When divisions were merged, the merged buses got the next higher vacant number in the

gaining operator's fleet. That often meant that older buses had higher fleet numbers than newer ones. This also included some 1968 05's that were built with 01 bodies. Because of a long strike at Safeway, most if not all of its 05's were renumbered as Virginia buses. At the end of the strike they got their original Safeway numbers back.

Many buses got moved from one division to another for various reasons such as seasonal traffic patterns or passenger demand. Some got moved several times. This will be shown in the frame number listings later. In some cases when a new division was added, other divisions were tasked to provide some of their buses for it.

Example: Fleet number 26713

The 26 shows the bus belongs to American's Southwest Division. The 7 shows that the bus is a Model 01 Eagle. The 13 shows that it was the 13<sup>th</sup> Model 01 Eagle for American Southwest. American was an exception when the 1969 system started. American's divisions were not shown under the 1957 system. Someone had to take all of American's buses and divide them out by division when the 1969 system started, oldest first.

**\*\***When the Model 10 was introduced, all of the American Buslines divisions went away as far as new buses were concerned but the 05's kept their original fleet numbers. What happened was that the number for the Los Angeles Division, 25, was applied to all of American's Model 10's from then on. There were no Model 10 buses with fleet numbers starting with 261, 271, 281 and 291. The existing Model 05 buses kept their original numbers from each of the five divisions. Don't be fooled by coaches 27101 and 27102. These were actually Model 05 buses that had the Model 10 look from the factory but were in fact 05's. Same for 15101, 17101-02, 25101-02 and 45101-04. This group of 11 coaches were the last 05's made and were built in 1980. All of them got Model 10 fleet numbers even though they were really Model 05's. Over time a number of Model 05 Eagles in Continental's fleet got the Model 10 look but it was just the look and none of technical improvements. They were listed as CE, for Capped Eagle, on the Trailways fleet roster.

One thing I do not know is if the divisions bought their own buses with their own earnings or if that was done centrally at Dallas, Continental's HQ. The same for deciding which division got how many buses each year. I also don't know if the fleet numbers were applied at the factory or at Houston where all new buses were received from Germany and Belgium.