Short-lived
A contrail that forms and disappears as the plane moves along. Although its length remains about constant it may be very short, or it may span a large fraction of the sky. Generally it is very thin.

Persistent
A thin contrail that remains in the sky after the plane has disappeared. These contrails are not much wider than the short-lived contrails and are thinner than 1 finger held at arm’s length.

Persistent Spreading
A thick contrail that remains in the sky after the plane has disappeared. They are wider than 1 finger held at arm’s length. These contrails can grow to resemble natural cirrus clouds.

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