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WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, JANUARY 14, 2006

BY DAVE MEARS

THE WEEK'S TOP RAIL AND TRANSIT NEWS (in chronological order):

(MON) The Department of Energy announced that BNSF and Union Pacific were able to ship approximately 85 percent of scheduled trains out of Wyoming's Powder River Basin in 2005, noting that the joint BNSF-UP line out of the PRB was out of service for rebuilding during part of the year. A USDOE spokesman added that approximately 385.5 million tons of low-sulphur coal had been loaded out of the PRB through December 24. The spokesman estimated that an additional 100 million tons of coal annually will be required out of the PRB by 2010. (ffd: Billings Gazette, Trains)

(MON) Chicago, IL area commuter rail operator METRA announced that it would notably expand services by the end of the month. A METRA spokesman said that service on its Union Pacific West line would be extended 8 miles from Geneva to Elburn on January 23. On January 30, its North Central line will begin serving 4 new stations – Franklin Park, Belmont Avenue, Schiller Park, and Rosemont – and increase weekday trains from 10 to 22 daily. Also on January 30, its South West line will increase weekday trains from 16 to 30 daily, with 2 rush-hour trains serving a new 12-mile extension between Orland Park-179th Street and Manhattan, IL. The spokesman added that this was METRA's most significant service expansion since 1996. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, Trains)

(MON) Kansas City Southern announced that it would launch a new management training program on January 16. The new program will include rotation to the company's Kansas City headquarters, its Shreveport, LA offices, and the National Academy of Railroad Sciences at Overland Park, KS. A KCS spokesman said that the trainees will be required to learn certain objectives in each area of study, keep a journal of their experiences, and later design an improvement project for presentation to KCS executives. Management training programs were earlier common to most larger railroads, but fell into disuse beginning in the 1970s with the wave of mergers and consolidations, and with many trainees leaving the programs during or after completion to work in other industries. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(MON) Boston, MA area commuter rail and transit operator MBTA set the date for phase-out of its token fare system for buses and subways. A MBTA spokesman said that token use would be phased out by early 2007 in favor of a farecard system already being installed. An MBTA spokesman said that Boston's "T", the nation's 5th largest transit system, was following the lead of other cities, noting that farecards cut down on fraud, allow the flexibility to charge different fares for different length trips, allow the collection and aggregation of trip information, and reduce turnstile maintenance by eliminating moving parts. (ffd: The Boston Channel)

(MON) Officials in Illinois noted that they had recently arrested and arraigned several individuals for setting up phony railroad police departments. Authorities said that the schemes allowed individual to obtain railroad police identifications for various special advantages, such as the carrying of weapons and to obtain police license plates. Officials said that one of those arrested had created at least 50 fake gold badges bearing the name "Comrail Railroad Police," a takeoff on the legitimate Conrail. (ffd: Chicago Sun-Times)

(TUE) Mudslides threatening Seattle, WA area rail lines continued to force the cancellation of Amtrak intercity and Sounder commuter rail services serving Seattle through the week. An Amtrak spokesman said that its "Empire Builder" train would turn at Everett, WA, its "Coast Starlight" train would turn at Portland, OR, and its Cascade services between Seattle, Portland and Vancouver, BC would be canceled, with bus service substituted. BNSF announced that, although Amtrak and Sounder passenger services were suspended, it would continue to operate freight service over the affected lines as the weather permitted. By week's end, Seattle had seen its 27th consecutive day of rain, 6 short of the 33-day record set in 1953. (ffd: NARP, Washington Herald, wire services)

(TUE) Maryland commuter rail operator MARC said that it would close 4 little-used stations on its Brunswick and Camden lines effective March 6. The stations are at Boyds, Dickerson, Jessup and St. Denis. A MARC spokesman said that the stations, although served since the 1800s, have an average daily combined ridership of only 41 passengers and that each is within 4 miles of another MARC station. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) An American Indian tribe filed suit against BNSF, Union Pacific and 6 other entities alleging that they stole land in vast stretches of the American West in violation of an 1860s treaty. The civil lawsuit, filed on behalf of the Western Shoshone National Council, seeks a declaration that the Western Shoshone nation holds title to land, mineral and water rights in so-called "checkerboard" lands the government granted to railroads in the 1860s. The action seeks "past and future damages for waste and trespass" and calls for the companies to "disgorge all monies and things of value" obtained as a result of controlling the lands. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) The Bring Back New Orleans Commission, charged with devising a blueprint to reconstruct the city following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, recommend that the city rebuild existing and create new light rail lines totaling 53 miles of line. The new light rail system would crisscross the city, linking neighborhoods with the airport, downtown and other commercial centers. The commission also recommended that commuter rail service be started between Baton Rouge, LA and New Orleans. (ffd: New York Times)

(WED) Amtrak announced that it will start replacing its 87-year-old Thames River Bridge on its Northeast Corridor Line between New London, CT and Groton, CT. The project, which will cost \$76 million, will replace the existing bascule hinge-type bridge with a vertical lift bridge. The project's final stages will include busing train passengers around bridge replacement work for 4 days in Fall, 2007. The bridge is considered one of the weakest links in the Northeast Corridor rail infrastructure, frequently becoming stuck in the open or closed position. (ffd: Amtrak, wire services)

(THU) The Railway Supply Institute's American Railway Car Institute Committee reported freight car order and delivery totals for 2005. The report noted that 68,657 freight cars were delivered in 2005, a 46.5 percent rise

over 2004's 46,871 deliveries. 2003 and 2002 deliveries totaled 32,184 and 17,714 respectively. 80,703 freight cars were ordered in 2005, a 14 percent rise in orders over 2004. The report also noted that the year-end backlog of orders totaled 69,408 freight cars, a 13 percent rise over the 58,677 backlogged on December 31, 2004. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, RSI)

(THU) Kansas City Southern announced that it had several changes to reduce cross-border trains times between the U.S. and Mexico. A KCS spokesman said that improvements included making operational a second main track between the Sanchez and Nuevo Laredo export yards. The spokesman added that KCS had also started applying a \$300 surcharge to freight with Laredo, TX incorrectly listed as the final destination instead of the actual Mexican destination point, noting that incorrect waybills often cause cars to sit at Sanchez Yard until the actual Mexican destination is determined. (ffd: KCS Corp., Progressive Railroading)

(THU) The Association of American Railroads announced that its 22nd annual edition of "Railroad Ten-Year Trends" is now available. The edition, which presents data for the years 1995 through 2004, provides an economic overview of the U.S. rail freight industry, including Class 1 industry performance, traffic, financial statistics, employment, plant and equipment, and operations. Copies are available for \$100 to non-AAR members and \$50 to AAR members and may be ordered via the AAR website, aar.org. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) Philadelphia, PA Mayor John Street endorsed the idea of renamed Amtrak's 30th Street Station as "Ben Station" to mark the 300th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin, one of the country's founding fathers. The station has been known as 30th Street since it was opened by the Pennsylvania Railroad in the 1930s. An Amtrak spokesman said that the name change was under consideration. A spokesman for Pennsylvania Governor and former Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell said that he "could live with Ben Station," but added that he "doesn't think the city should spend a lot of energy on this." (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer, wire services)

(FRI) Washington, DC area bus and subway operator METRO said that it would build a new \$22 million system control center in Landover, MD. A METRO spokesman said that the present system control center, located in METRO's Washington, DC headquarters, would thereafter be used as a backup. The spokesman added that it would also spend \$4 million to upgrade its underground radio system, including installing a backup antenna for the DC fire department radio system, and replacing aging signal equipment and tunnel amplifiers. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) Chicago, IL officials said that a new city ordinance going into effect Monday bans smoking at all Chicago passenger rail and transit facilities, including train platforms. A city spokesman said that the ordinance prohibits smoking at public transportation facilities, including station, ticket, waiting and boarding areas. "Our legal staff looked into it very closely and carefully, and the train platforms are definitely covered," said METRA spokesman Judy Pardonnet. (ffd: Chicago Tribune)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending January 7, 2006 – which this year included the New Year Holiday, but which the comparative week last year did not – U.S. rail volume grand totaled 30.2 billion ton-miles, down 0.3 percent from the comparative week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.5 percent, down 7.3 percent in the East, but up 3.4

percent in the West. U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 6.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 6.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 4.5 percent, Mexico's KCSM's carload rail traffic was down 11.9 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was down 14.0 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(NOTE: Effective October 1, 2005, railroads that had been furnished operating performance statistics to the Association of American Railroads began applying a new standardized definitional framework, aimed at eliminating differences in calculation methodology. Concurrent with but unrelated to these changes, Canadian National elected to no longer furnish these statistics.)

(WED) For the week ending January 6, 2006, average total cars on line as follows: BNSF, 214,559 cars; Canadian Pacific, 82,551 cars; CSX, 226,539 cars; Kansas City Southern, 26,694 cars; Norfolk Southern, 206,288 cars; and Union Pacific, 322,900 cars.

Also for the week ending January 6, 2006 and ranked with the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 23.8 mph versus 24.7 mph; Canadian Pacific, 26.6 mph versus 24.7 mph; CSX, 20.1 mph versus 21.6 mph; Kansas City Southern, 23.6 mph versus 26.2 mph; Norfolk Southern, 21.9 mph versus 22.6 mph; and Union Pacific 22.2 mph versus 20.9 mph.

Finally for the week ending January 6, 2006 and ranked with the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was follows: BNSF, 24.7 hrs versus 24.0 hrs; Canadian Pacific, 21.7 hrs versus 24.0 hrs; CSX, 28.2 hrs (last year not available); Kansas City Southern, 23.9 hrs versus 27.9 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 24.9 hrs versus 24.6 hrs; and Union Pacific, 29.7 hrs versus 31.7 hrs. (ffd: AAR)

STILL MORE STATS:

(MON) The Federal Railroad Administration released preliminary safety statistics for January through October, 2005. For that 10-month period, FRA reportable train accidents were down 11.3 percent compared with the first 10 months of 2004. The rate of accidents caused by human factors was down 17.5 percent, those caused by equipment defects were down 20.6 percent, and those caused by signal problems were down 17.1 percent. Also, the employee casualty rate was down 13.9 percent and the grade crossing accident rate was down 8.2 percent. (ffd: FRA)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The New Mexico Department of Transportation filed to acquire, from BNSF, approximately 297 miles of line

between Belen, NM and Trinidad, CO. The line sale, earlier agreed upon by New Mexico and BNSF, supports the state's forthcoming startup of commuter rail service serving Albuquerque, NM. (ffd: STB)

(WED) The City of Alameda, CA filed to acquire the line of railroad owned by the Alameda Beltline Railroad. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The Chicago Port Railroad filed to acquire approximately 1.3 miles of line owned by the Ozinga Transportation Company. The line consists of the Calumet River Yard and the transloading facility trackage located adjacent to the Calumet River in Chicago, IL. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The North Carolina Board of Transportation approved the North Carolina Railroad's and Norfolk Southern's plans to double-track the 9-mile line between High Point, NC and Greensboro, NC. The line had been double-tracked until one track was removed in the 1970s. The state and its North Carolina Railroad will provide the \$20 million in necessary funding for the project and NS will provide "engineering expertise." (ffd: RT&S)

(FRI) The Iowa Northwestern Railroad filed to abandon approximately 17 miles of line between Lake Park, IA and Allendorf, IA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Gregory and Connie Cundiff, CGX Inc, and Ironhorse Resources Inc jointly filed to acquire the Caney Fork & Western Railroad. The CFWR operates in Tennessee. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The Vicksburg Southern Railroad filed to lease, from Kansas City Southern, and operate the line between Vicksburg, MS and Redwood, MS and, also, the line between Cedars, MS and the KCS connection, altogether totaling approximately 22 miles of line. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The Surface Transportation Board confirmed the resignation of Chairman Roger Nober effective January 3. An STB spokesman said that, until a new STB chairman was appointed, STB Commissioner Douglas Buttrey would serve as acting chairman and STB Commission Frank Mulvey would serve as acting vice-chairman. (ffd: Traffic World)

(MON) Kansas City Southern appointed J. Daniel Freeman AVP-Strategic Analysis. Mr. Freeman was previously KCS's General Director-Strategic Analysis. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(WED) Washington DC area bus and subway operator METRO announced that its General Manager and CEO Richard White would resign on or before March 31. A METRO spokesman said that Dan Tangherlin, the director of Washington, DC's Department of Transportation and a METRO board member, would serve as acting GM until a permanent replacement

for Mr. White is searched for and found. (ffd: Railway Age)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, rail and transit. Send an e-mail to <<mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com>>weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,

Dave Mears

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA