

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, JANUARY 22, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

(Editor's Note: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item represents "for further details" and suggests a reference source for further related information.)

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

(MON) Railroads battled severe winter weather across most of Canada. Canadian National experienced weather-related problems over several main lines, including blowing snow and extreme cold on its routes between Saskatchewan and Northern Ontario, which forced it to divert some traffic over its route south of the Great Lakes. Both Canadian National and Canadian Pacific said that weather-related delays would increase many shipment transit times by 24 or more hours. (ffd: JofC)

(MON) Union Pacific railroad police discovered 29 illegal immigrants from Mexico stowed aboard a boxcar in El Paso, TX. The boxcar was in a freight train enroute from Dallas, TX. to Los Angeles, CA. at the time the illegals were detected. None of them required medical treatment before being turned over to the U.S. Border Patrol for repatriation back to Mexico. A Border Patrol spokesman said that, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 44 illegals had been discovered stowed aboard freight trains operating in and through El Paso. (ffd: El Paso Times)

(MON) The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration posted cumulative safety statistics for January through August, 2004. During this period, FRA-reportable train accidents totaled 2,577, up 4.5 percent from the comparable period in 2003. Also during this period, fatalities resulting from crossing accidents totaled 310, up 13.6 percent, and fatalities resulting from trespassing totaled 397, down 7.2 percent. (ffd: Railway Age, USDOT)

(MON) Alaska Railroad said that it would build a new systems operations center in Anchorage, AK. A spokesman for the railroad said that the new center would consolidate several key operations, including dispatching, into a single building. The spokesman added that the new center would be a three-story building and was expected to cost approximately \$9.5 million to build and equip. (ffd: Anchorage Daily News)

(TUE) Union Pacific said that they now expected to partially reopen their Coast Line route north of Los Angeles, CA. on or about January 24, as well as their line between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City, UT. through Las Vegas, NV. The 2 lines remain out of service due to numerous mudslides and washouts, the result of torrential rains in Southern California and Southern Nevada that concluded the previous week. A UP spokesman said that an embargo on shipments to UP destinations in the Los Angeles area would remain in effect for the time being. Relatedly, Amtrak said that it was now targeting resumption of its Coast Line passenger service between Los Angeles and Goleta, CA. for February 8 and between Goleta and San Louis Obispo, CA. for February 28. (ffd: NARP, UP Corp.)

(TUE) Canadian National instituted a new reservation process for all export container traffic handled through its Brampton intermodal terminal near Toronto, ON., CN's largest intermodal facility. A CN spokesman said that the new process, which specifies an ingate time and denies containers that are late or have improper paperwork, was necessary because the terminal was getting more traffic than it can handle, "creating terminal inefficiencies and a deteriorating level of service." The spokesman said that CN would extend the reservation policy to its Montreal, PQ. intermodal terminal by February. (ffd: JofC)

(TUE) Amtrak opened a new station serving Milwaukee, WI.'s General Mitchell International Airport. An Amtrak spokesman said that the station, which was built with \$6.8 million in federal and state funding, locates on the Canadian Pacific line south of Milwaukee and would be served daily by 7 Hiawatha Service trains operating between Chicago, IL. and Milwaukee. The spokesman said that the new station is the fourth Amtrak station directly serving a U.S. airport, the others being the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport station in California and the BWI and Newark International Airport stations on its Northeast Corridor Line. (ffd: Amtrak)

(TUE) New York Governor George Pataki proposed a 5-year capital program for the state's Metropolitan Transportation Authority totaling \$15.2 billion. MTA had originally proposed a \$27 billion capital program for 5 years, which was then rejected by key state legislators, after which it proposed a more limited \$17 billion program that would "keep the system in a state-of-good-repair," but which would then put on hold more ambitious projects, such as Long Island Rail Road East Side Access and the Second Avenue subway line. The governor's proposal also specifies funding for only the first 3 years and suggests higher taxes and user fees to fund \$3 billion of the total. (ffd: New York Times, Railway Age)

(WED) 50 mayors attending the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Washington, DC. requested that their cities be notified when hazardous rail shipments are routed through their communities. The request was conveyed to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge, who was a speaker at the conference. "We need to know what is coming, where it is going and when it is coming," said August, GA. Mayor Bob Young. Added Columbia, SC. Mayor Bob Coble, "We need a national notification system that would be another tool for our first responders." (ffd: Baltimore Sun, wire services)

(WED) Amtrak said that its Thames River bridge in New London, CT. had been stuck in the down position for about a week. A U.S. Coast Guard spokesman said that the problem was delaying boats which are more than 30 feet above the water line, which includes a coal barge and a ferry waiting to get through. An Amtrak spokesman said that its bridge maintenance personnel were attempting to make a temporary repair. Amtrak had earlier referred to the Thames River bridge and another bridge as among the 2 most deteriorated structures on its Northeast Corridor Line between New York, NY. and Boston, MA., and has been attempting to gain sufficient funding to replace both bridges. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) Canadian National and Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced 2 new routing agreements. Under the agreements, traffic from the Canadian prairies will be consolidated at the Noyes, MN. interchange when moving to the western U.S. and at the Superior, WI. interchange when moving to the central U.S. and Texas. Also under the agreements, traffic moving to and from the south central U.S. will be interchanged at Memphis, TN. and New Orleans, LA., which a spokesman for the railroads said would avoid congestion at Chicago, IL. "This will create a more seamless service for our customers and generate new capacity for railroads," said CN EVP-Marketing & Sales James Foote. (ffd: BNSF Corp., Railway Age)

(WED) Railway Age reported that railroads and private fleet owners placed orders for 70,626 new freight cars in 2004, up sharply from the 47,249 ordered in 2003 and the 17,714 ordered in 2002. Covered hoppers were the car type most ordered, with 20,040 of them ordered, followed by intermodal cars, with 15,625 of them ordered. Also in 2004, 46,971 new freight cars were delivered, with a year-end backlog of 58,677 on order and undelivered. (ffd: Railway Age)

(WED) Canadian Pacific Railway announced that a new work agreement had been ratified by 4,500 t&e employees represented by the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference. A CPR spokesman said that the new agreement includes wage, pension and benefit improvements, as well as work-rule changes "that will generate increased productivity." (ffd: CPR Corp., Railpace)

(WED) New Jersey Transit outlined their preliminary \$1.4 billion budget for FY2006. The new budget includes an average 13 percent increase in NJT bus and rail fares, an increase in the Newark City Subway and River Light-Rail Line base fares to \$1.25, and an increase in the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line base fare to \$1.75. An NJT spokesman said that public hearings on the proposed fare increases will be held starting in February. (ffd: NJ Transit, Progressive Railroading)

(WED) VIA Rail Canada announced a new series of fare plans entitled "Flexi Fares." "Flexi Fares allow our passengers to choose the fare plan that is best for them," said VIA VP-Marketing Steve Del Bosco. "We've reduced the advance purchase time required to qualify for our highest discounts and passengers no longer need to travel round-trip to get a discount. We invite our passengers to mix and match these fare plans on different legs of their trip according to what works best for them." A VIA spokesman added that the new fares are immediately available and are applicable to economy class travel. (ffd: VIA Rail Canada)

(FRI) Amtrak was awarded extensions for 2 commuter rail operating contracts. Amtrak will continue to operate Caltrain services south out of San Francisco, CA. for another 3 years. Amtrak will also continue to operate MARC's Penn Line service between Washington, DC. and Baltimore, MD. Amtrak provides operations, maintenance, dispatching and crew services to both operators. (ffd: NARP)

(FRI) Union Pacific, which recently relocated into a new headquarters building in Omaha, NE., announced that it would hold an auction to dispose of furniture and other property remaining in its former headquarters building. A spokesman for Prime Time Auctions, which will be conducting the auction, said that approximately 70 percent of the furnishings remain in the old building, totaling approximately 10,000 items to be auctioned. The auction will be held February 10 through 12 at Omaha's Doubletree Hotel, with no minimum bids. (ffd: Omaha World-Herald)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending January 15, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 2.2 percent from the comparable week last year, up 3.5 percent in the East, but down 6.5 percent in the West – the latter reflecting the many weather-related line closures and related service disruptions in and around Southern California. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included crushed stone, sand and gravel up 16.0 percent, coke up 11.4 percent and non-grain farm products up 10.0 percent; notable traffic decreases primary forest products down 9.2 percent, nonmetallic minerals down 8.8 percent and grain down 6.6 percent. Also for the week ending January 15, U.S.

intermodal rail traffic was up 7.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.2 percent, Mexico's Transportation Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 6.3 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 8.0 percent.

For the period January 1 through January 15, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.5 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 8.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.6 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 0.8 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 1.2 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 8.7 percent. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Norfolk Southern filed to discontinue freight service over approximately 6 miles of the Boonton Line between Newark, NJ. and Kearny, NJ. and over approximately 4 miles of the Newark Industrial Track in and around Newark, NJ. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board approved Norfolk Southern's earlier request to abandon approximately 34 miles of line between Burkeville, VA. and Pamplin City, VA. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe filed to acquire and operate approximately 370 miles of line in and around South Dakota. The line segments were originally those of the old Milwaukee Road and are currently owned by the State of South Dakota. Through a series of operating agreements with the state, the most recent of which was signed in 1986, BNSF and its predecessor Burlington Northern have provided freight service over these lines since 1981. In its filing, BNSF states that it has, under the terms of the 1986 agreement, the right to acquire these line segments from the state. (ffd: STB)

(WED) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board approved the Superior & Ishpeming Railroad's earlier request to abandon approximately 9 miles of its Republic Subdivision between Humbolt Jct., MI. and Republic Mine, MI. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Norfolk Southern filed to abandon approximately 9 miles of line between Converse, IN. and Hartford City, IN. (ffd: STB)

(WED) The Sioux Valley Regional Railroad Authority, a noncarrier, filed to acquire overhead trackage rights, from the State of South Dakota, over approximately 22 miles of line between Elk Point, SD. and Sioux City, IA. (ffd: STB)

(WED) The Tennessee Railway filed to abandon approximately 14 miles of line between Nick's Creek, TN. and Devonia, TN. (ffd: STB)

(WED) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board granted Wisconsin & Southern's earlier request to acquire, from Union Pacific, and operate approximately 14 miles of UP's Kohler Industrial Lead between Sheboygan, WI. and Plymouth, WI. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Texas Pacifico Transportation announced the resumption of freight service on the southern portion of the former South Orient line between San Angelo Jct., TX. and Presidio, TX. The line, which had been out-of-service since 1998, was jointly purchased in 2001 by the Texas Department of Transportation and Grupo Mexico, the parent company of Ferromex and Texas Pacifico. (ffd: Trains)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(MON) Railway Age Magazine named Norfolk Southern Chairman and CEO David Goode "Railroad of the Year." In making the award, the magazine commented, "In 2004, a year characterized by record traffic and revenues – but spotty performance by railroads coping with the difficulties and expenses of handling such enormous volume – Norfolk Southern was the best-performing of the U.S. Class 1's." (ffd: Railway Age)

(THU) Anacostia & Pacific's Chicago, South Shore & South Bend Railroad appointed Henry Lampe President. Mr. Lampe, a 33-year industry veteran, was earlier with Burlington Northern Santa Fe and was most recently an independent consultant. Mr. Lampe succeeds H. Terry Hearst, who retired at year's end. (ffd: CSS & SB RR.)

(THU) The Belt Railway of Chicago appointed Michael Paras GM-Transportation. Mr. Paras was most recently at the Union Pacific, where he served as General Manager-Safety Initiatives. (ffd: Progressive Railroad)

(THU) Rail manufacturer and supplier Bombardier announced the appointment of Laurent Beaudoin as President and CEO, replacing Paul Tellier, who recently resigned. Bombardier also appointed Richard Bradeen as SVP-Strategy, replacing Michael Denman, who also recently resigned. (ffd: Railway Age)

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(CORRECTION: In noting the 100th anniversary of the opening of Enola Yard near Harrisburg, PA. in last week's WRR, I typed that the yard had been opened in 2005. Of course, the yard was actually opened in 1905, 100 years ago.)

Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, the entities of 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

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