

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

For the week ending SAT, October 18, 2003

By Dave Mears

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

(SUN) A METRA commuter train derailed in Chicago, IL. 45 passengers were injured in the accident, which derailed the train's 2 locomotives and 5 cars. Investigators said that the train was approaching the Rock Island District Line's 47th St. interlocking where it was to cross over to another track at 10mph, but instead proceeded through the interlocking at 67mph. (ffd: Chicago Sun-Times, NARP)

(SUN) Spain began operation of a new high-speed rail service between Madrid and the eastern Spanish city of Lerida. The new service, whose trains will initially reach speeds of 125mph and eventually 188mph, shortens rail travel time between the 2 cities to approximately 3 hours. The service is to be extended to Barcelona by 2005. (ffd: Agence-Presses France)

(SUN) China began operation of its first passenger-only rail line. The new line, construction of which began in 1999, links Shenyang, the capital of northeast China's Liaoning Province, and Qinhuangdao, a port city in northern Hebei Province. Construction is underway to extend the line, which is double-tracked and electrified, into Beijing, China's capital. (ffd: Xinhua News Agency)

(SUN) A Wheeling & Lake Erie freight train halted runners in the Road Runner Akron Marathon being run in Akron, OH. The runners had to wait for the 70 car train to clear the Summit Street crossing before they could continue. "We thought we could get the train across Summit Street prior to the head of the pack reaching there," commented W&LE spokesperson Bill Callison. "We missed by a little." (ffd: Akron Beacon Journal)

(MON) Metro North Railroad began use of a new centralized traffic control system on its New Haven Line. The new system controls switches and signals on the line between Mt. Vernon, NY., where it connects to MNR's Harlem Line, and New Haven, CT. The system is controlled out of MNR's 347 Madison Ave., New York City operations center, where MNR's Hudson and Harlem Lines are also controlled from. A MNR official said that the system was installed over a 10 year period and at a cost of \$125 million. (ffd: New Haven Register)

(TUE) Los Angeles, CA.'s Metropolitan Transportation Authority was struck by its mechanics. The strike idled MTA bus and subway services, although Metrolink commuter rail services continued to operate. The strikers have asked the MTA to contribute more to their health care fund, which the MTA has said has been mismanaged by the mechanic's union. (ffd: NARP)

(TUE) The Railway Association of Canada released its 11th edition of "Railway Trends", an annual report of the RAC tracking the Canadian rail industry's financial and statistical performance. Among the data included in the report is that Canadian railways totaled 321 billion revenue-ton-kilometers last year, compared with 244 billion revenue-ton-kilometers a decade ago and that revenue-ton-kilometers-per-employee had improved 125.7 percent since a decade ago, the result of a 31.7 percent increase in workload handled by a 35.0 percent smaller workforce. Further details of the report are available on the RAC's website, www.railcan.ca. (ffd: RAC)

(WED) Amtrak reported that it carried a record 24 million passengers in FY2003 just concluded, up 2.7 percent from the number carried in FY2002. Amtrak reported that the largest increases were on its western trains, where ridership grew 6.6 percent. Amtrak also reported notable increases on its "Pennsylvanian" operating between Philadelphia, PA. and Chicago, IL., which gained 64 percent, and on its "Texas Eagle", operating between Chicago, IL. and San Antonio, TX., which gained 20 percent. (ffd: Amtrak)

(WED) The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration reported preliminary safety statistics for the first half of 2003. The FRA reported that highway-rail grade crossing fatalities were down 15.2 percent from the comparable period last year to total 178 and that trespasser fatalities were down 17.1 percent from the comparable period last year to total 267. However, the FRA also reported that train accidents increased 6.2 percent to total 1,637. (ffd: FRA)

(WED) The Canadian Railway Hall of Fame recognized this year's inductees at a ceremony in Edmonton, AB. The Hall of Fame awarded recognition in 4 categories: leaders, heroes, communities and technologies. Also recognized at this year's ceremonies was singer Gordon Lightfoot for his "Canadian Railroad Trilogy." Later in the week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution endorsing (but not funding) the setting up of a U.S. Railroad Hall of Fame in Galesburg, IL. (ffd: RAC, Progressive Railroading)

(THU) The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum received a \$500,000 federal grant to assist in the reconstruction of its Baltimore, MD. museum. The museum's roundhouse collapsed last February under the weight of a record Baltimore snowfall. The grant was presented by Maryland's 2 U.S. senators, Barbara Mikulski and Paul Sarbanes. (ffd: WBAL Television)

(FRI) Officials in Carnforth, England reopened their former rail station as a city heritage center. The station, which has been unused for many years, is notable as the set location for the late Sir David Lean's 1945 film, "Brief Encounter", one of the most famous of all films featuring trains. The facility's restoration included restoring and remounting the station's original exterior clock, which was featured prominently in the film. (ffd: wire services)

(SAT) A memorial service was held for the late L. Stanley Crane in Philadelphia, PA. The service and the reception afterwards in memory of Mr. Crane, who had been the former Conrail's chairman in the 1980's and who earlier headed the Southern and Norfolk Southern Railways, was attended by his family and also by many former Conrail employees. Also attending was Norfolk Southern's current CEO, David Goode. Mr. Crane passed away last July at Age 87.

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending October 11, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.9 percent, up 2.9 percent in the East, but down 0.8 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included coke up 51.3 percent, grain up 13.9 percent and waste and scrap materials up 9.9 percent; notable traffic decreases included metallic ores down 16.8 percent and coal down 2.2 percent. Also for the week ending October 11, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 37.5 percent (reflecting the U.S. West Coast docks strike at this time last year), Canadian carload rail traffic was up 6.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 4.3 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 6.7 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 11.6 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through October 11, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.2 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.7 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.8 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 7.1 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 1.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 17.1 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Alabama Great Southern Railroad, a wholly owned subsidiary of Norfolk Southern, filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of line in New Orleans, LA. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Almono Corp. filed to abandon its entire line of railroad between the MetalTech plant on the north side of the Monongahela River and its interchange with CSX in Hazelwood, PA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) CSX filed to abandon approximately 6 miles of its Woodland Subdivision between Rossville Jct., IL. and Henning, IL. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) CSX filed to abandon approximately 12 miles of line between Glenshaw, PA. and Bakerstown, PA. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(TUE) Edward "Ned" Breathitt passed away at Age 78. Mr. Breathitt was a former governor of Kentucky who later served as head of Norfolk Southern's Public Affairs Department, having been hired by an NS predecessor railroad in 1972 and later retiring as NS's SVP-Public Affairs in 1992. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(FRI) The Railway Supply Institute announced the following appointments: Gable Enterprises President John Gable as its chairman; ASF Keystone North American SVP-Marketing and Sales William O'Donnell as its vice-chairman; and Standard Car Truck Chairman and CEO Richard Mathes as its secretary-treasurer. (ffd: Railway Age)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly, usually on Sunday or Monday, to the rail and transit industries and those interested in them. Send an e-mail to weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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