

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, NOVEMBER 20, 2004

BY DAVE MEARS

(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):

(SUN) A westbound UP freight train derailed into a stopped eastbound UP freight train at Ames, NE., on UP's Omaha-North Platte main line. 20 cars were derailed on the westbound train and 7 cars were derailed on the eastbound train. No injuries or hazmat material problems were reported. UP reopened one track on the line early Monday and the other track later Monday. (ffd: Omaha World-Herald, Trains)

(MON) The Surface Transportation Board reported Class 1 railroad employment totaled 158,020 workers in September, 2004, up 2.28 percent from September, 2003. The biggest increase was of train and engine personnel, which increased 8.32 percent. However, supervisory personnel decreased during the same period, with executives, officials and assistants down 5.68 percent, professional and administrative down 5.51 percent, and transportation other than train and engine down 1.90 percent. (ffd: Railway Age, STB)

(MON) Famed model train manufacturer Lionel filed for bankruptcy protection. A Lionel spokesman said that the filing was prompted by a \$40.8 million judgment against the company for alleged misappropriation of a competitor's toy train designs by a subcontractor. The spokesman added that Lionel's day-to-day operations would continue as usual during the bankruptcy and that the company would meet all merchandise shipping obligations and new product rollout schedules. (ffd: Trains)

(TUE) The Federal Railroad Administration announced that it had signed a "compliance agreement" with Union Pacific to improve rail safety in the San Antonio, TX. area. Terms of the agreement included significantly increased safety training and testing of UP employees there, as well as assignment of additional FRA safety inspectors. The agreement follows increased public criticism of UP's safety record and of the FRA's oversight of UP, especially in southern Texas, where several rail-related train accident fatalities have occurred this year. (UP also replaced its superintendent in San Antonio, see more on that below under "Personnel Changes and Alike".) (ffd: New York Times, Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced that it would make available to its customers "a fully customizable and personalized Web interface." A BNSF spokesman said that the personalized pages will be available via its bnsf.com website and will include "providing customers with an integrated interface which will provide real-time alerts as shipping information changes." The spokesman added that alerts will now also be available via email on a wireless device, "eliminating the need to logon to the website for shipments status changes." (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(WED) The Illinois state legislature adjourned without appropriating further funding toward closing a projected \$55 million deficit in the Chicago Transit Authority's 2005 operating budget. The following day, Thursday, CTA officials said that the deficit would force them to implement a 20 percent cut in service, including discontinuing several dozen bus routes and all late-night el/subway train service. The CTA officials added that they were continuing to try to find a way to avoid the cuts. "We're still looking for a solution, but we are going to have to implement our gridlock budget," said CTA chairman Carole Brown. (ffd: Chicago Tribune)

(WED) The Transportation Security Administration announced that it would expand testing of its new "Transportation Identity Worker Credential." A TSA spokesman said that testing will now expand to 34 sites in 6 states. The new ID for transportation workers allows identities to be verified by matching physical characteristics, such as fingerprints, handprints or eye scans, and will allow seaports, airports, railroads, public transit systems, energy facilities and trucking companies to control access to restricted areas. The TSA spokesman added that the agency hopes to eventually expand the program to include workers in all modes of transportation, totaling approximately 6 million such workers. (ffd: AAR, wire services)

(WED) The British government announced that it would appropriate \$747 million for a major new maintenance facility in east London, near Stratford, for Eurostar passenger trains. The trains link London, Brussels and Paris via the English Channel rail tunnels. A government spokesman said that the new facility would be ready by 2007, at which time Eurostar will shift its London terminal from Waterloo Station to St. Pancras Station, attendant with the completion of a new high-speed rail route between the tunnel portal in Folkestone and St. Pancras. The spokesman added that Eurostar now carries 68 percent of persons traveling between London and Paris, up 3 percent from last year. (ffd: Bloomberg, wire services)

(THU) Officials of the Port of Los Angeles-Long Beach announced that, for the first time since June, no ships were waiting to dock and unload. "The backlog is officially clear," said Jim McKenna, president of the Pacific Maritime Association. Due to an upturn in Pacific shipping compounded by a shortage of trained dockworkers, the port earlier this year had as many as 90 vessels in the harbor on a daily basis, with about one-third waiting at anchor for a berth. A port spokesman said that about 3,200 part-time workers had been hired and trained since August to help with the labor shortage and that approximately 1,250 of them have since been promoted to full-time workers. (ffd: J of C Online)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced plans to increase its Logistics Park auto and intermodal terminal complex in Alliance, TX. A BNSF spokesman said that the complex would be increased in size by about 327 acres and add a "facility to provide direct rail access for customers who load their own rail cars." Logistics Park was built by the former Santa Fe Railway as an automotive terminal in 1990 and expanded by BNSF in 1994 to include an intermodal facility. (ffd: BNSF Corp., Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The National Association of Railroad Passengers announced that House and Senate conferees had reached agreement to fund Amtrak for FY2005. NARP reported that funding will be approximately \$1.2178 billion, which is approximately the same funding amount Amtrak received in FY2004, and that Amtrak will also be required to repay its \$100 million loan from the Department of Transportation over the next 5 years. Amtrak had originally requested a \$1.9 billion FY2005 appropriation to undertake additional plant and equipment renewal, and had more recently reduced that request to \$1.49 billion. (ffd: NARP)

(SAT) Washington, DC.'s Metrorail subway system opened its new station at New York Avenue. The new station locates on the system's Red Line between its Union Station and Rhode Island Avenue stations. The New York Avenue station is the first to be added past the completion of the system's original 103 miles of line. (ffd: NARP)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending November 13, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.9 percent from the comparable week last year, up 1.2 percent in the East and up 0.7 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included crushed stone, sand and gravel up 14.9 percent, metallic ores up 14.2 percent and nonmetallic minerals up 10.7 percent; notable traffic decreases included primary forest products down 10.1 percent, motor vehicles and equipment down 9.8 percent and grain down 8.5 percent. Also for the week ending November 13, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 11.7 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 4.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 0.7 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 12.5 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 27.8 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through November 13, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.9 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.7 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 7.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 3.7 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 7.7 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway announced a series of trackage rights agreements, which included the following: a slot-sharing agreement for up to 8 CPR trains a week over CN's line between Edmonton, AB. and Coho, BC.; a directional-running agreement from Coho through the Fraser Valley whereby westbound trains run on the CN line and eastbound trains run on the CPR line; a directional-running agreement through Sudbury, ON. whereby eastbound trains run on the CN line and westbound trains run on the CPR line; and a haulage agreement whereby CN traffic will move on CPR's line between Thunder Bay, ON. and the CN connection at Franz, ON., and which will then allow CN to abandon approximately 200 miles of line. (ffd: CN Corp., CPR Corp.)

(WED) Arkansas Midland Railroad filed to lease, from Union Pacific, and operate approximately 40 miles of UP's former Warren Line between Dermott, AR. and Warren, AR. The lease will also include certain equipment repair facilities at UP's McGehee, AR. Yard. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Union Pacific agreed to grant Burlington Northern Santa Fe overhead trackage rights over approximately 225 miles of UP line between Stockton, CA. and Bakersfield, CA. The purpose of the trackage rights, which is limited to 8 BNSF trains daily, is to "improve operating efficiency and flexibility in the area." (ffd: STB)

(THU) Norfolk Southern filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of line in Downingtown, PA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Burlington Northern Santa Fe agreed to grant Union Pacific overhead trackage rights over approximately 45 miles of BNSF line between Rockview, MO. and Lilbourn, MO. The purpose of the trackage rights is "to allow UP to use the BNSF line...for traffic originating from or destined to industries on UP's line between Lilbourn and New Madrid, MO., instead of its existing line between Malden Jct., MO. and Lilbourn, which will enable UP to avoid rebuilding the latter route." (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Rail equipment supplier Union Switch & Signal appointed John Donlon VP-Sales and Marketing. Mr. Donlon's was previous CEO of Image Guide, Inc. US&S also announced the creation of an Advanced Technology Group to research new technologies and their potential application to the rail transportation industry, and appointed Jeremy Hill, most recently US&S's VP-Marketing & Product Management, to head this group. (ffd: US & S Corp.)

(THU) RailAmerica appointed Charles Hunter GM of its New England Central Railroad. Mr. Hunter was most recently Assistant GM of the Connecticut Southern Railroad. (ffd: RailAmerica Corp.)

(FRI) Union Pacific appointed Shane Keller Superintendent of its San Antonio Service Unit. Mr. Keller was most recently Superintendent of UP's St. Louis Service Unit. (ffd: UP Corp.)

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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,

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