

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, November 30, 2002

By Dave Mears

(NOTE: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item means "for further details" and usually represents what I believe to be the most helpful news resource if a reader wants more information on a particular item.)

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

(MON) The Chicago Transit Authority began use of its farecard to supplement fare tokens. A CTA spokesman said that the card, called "The Chicago Card" and which can be bought in varying values, has a 4 year life and greater durability than the magnetic strip cards used on other city transit systems. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced that they were postponing indefinitely the scheduled opening of the JFK Airport AirTrain elevated line. The new line, which will first link the airport with the Howard Beach subway station and, later, with the Long Island Rail Road's Jamaica train station, was to have begun operation later this year. The postponement follows a testing accident on the line which killed a test train operator. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) Canadian National announced that it would cut approximately 5 percent of its workforce. A CN spokesman said that the cuts would come mainly through attrition and retirement. "We take no joy in announcing these permanent job reductions, but CN must leave no stone unturned in this productivity initiative," said CN CEO Paul Tellier. (ffd: CN Corp.)

(TUE) The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board called for improvements in U.S. Department of Transportation data collection programs. The NTSB said that it was calling for the improvements in order to "better monitor accident risks, support the analysis of risk factors and evaluate the effectiveness of accident prevention strategies." The NTSB's call stemmed from a special study undertaken to examine data quality issues within the government's transportation agencies. (ffd: USDOT)

(WED) A key New York State official criticized Amtrak for delaying projects and demanding too much money from the state. In a letter to Amtrak that was released to the New York Times, State Transportation Commissioner Joseph Boardman cited actions that included Amtrak's refusal to accept for service several recently rebuilt Turbotrains targeted for Empire Corridor Service. Mr. Boardman noted that New York State had so far invested more than \$100 million for high-speed rail service in that corridor. An Amtrak spokesman declined immediate comment. (ffd: New York Times)

(WED) Railroads began curtailing freight operations for the Thanksgiving Holiday. Of special note, Burlington Northern Santa Fe said that it would curtail all but its most critical rail operations between 10AM and 2PM on Thanksgiving Day, in order to give employees a chance to share Thanksgiving dinner with their families. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(FRI) A coalition that included passenger rail advocates, state transportation officials, rail suppliers, the United Transportation Union and representatives of the rail freight industry announced the results of a joint meeting held November 15. The coalition, representing organizations from New England to Texas, called for a 4 point plan that they said must be part of future federal transportation funding legislation. The 4 points are 1) a dedicated, multi-year capital-funding program patterned after the existing federal, highway, airport and mass-transit funding programs 2) a specific agency within USDOT devoted exclusively to overseeing the funding, management and policy development of a national passenger rail system 3) preservation of the current nationwide interconnected passenger rail system and its improvement and expansion 4) full funding of Amtrak so that it can effectively manage, market and operate the national passenger rail system. (ffd: National Corridors Initiative website)

(FRI) Virginia state officials announced that the first phase of rehabilitation of Richmond, VA.'s Main Street Station was nearing completion. The officials said that Amtrak passenger trains would begin serving the former Chesapeake & Ohio station, which is close to downtown Richmond but was closed in 1975, beginning in April, 2003. The officials added that a second phase of improvements, which will increase track capacity at and near the station, was expected to be complete by 2005. (ffd: Richmond Times Dispatch)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending November 23 - and largely due to the Thanksgiving Holiday last year falling on the comparable

week - U.S. carload rail traffic was up 23.6 percent from that comparable week last year, up 35.0 percent in the East and up 16.0 percent in the West. Also for the week ending November and ranked with the comparable week last year, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 36.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 5.6 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 29.2 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 27.9 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 8.7 percent.

For the period January 1 through November 23, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.6 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 10.9 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 3.3 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 8.4 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(WED) Union Pacific filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of line between Lakewood, CA. and Long Beach, CA. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(WED) Robert Grindrod was appointed president of the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railroad, which has purchased the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad and affiliated companies and will begin operating them December 31. Mr. Grindrod was previously the Wisconsin Central's AVP-Equipment Management. (ffd: Railway Age)

(WED) Richard Grayson passed away at Age 81, in St. Louis, MO., from complications following open heart surgery. Mr. Grayson was CEO of Burlington Northern from 1980 through 1985. He started his railroad career in 1941 as a brakeman on the Frisco Railway, which BN acquired in 1980. (ffd: Railway Age)

\* \* \*

Weekly Rail Recap 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 djmservices@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,  
Dave Mears  
Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA