

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, FEBRUARY 25, 2006

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(TUE) The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey began testing its new SmartLink fare card, which allows riders to pass through its PATH subway system turnstiles with a wave of their wallet. A Port Authority spokesman said that riders who register their SmartLink cards will be able to replenish their accounts automatically by linking them to bank accounts, much like the E-Z Pass toll collection system. Riders will also have the option of buying and refilling cards with cash. The spokesman added that the SmartLink card was developed by a consortium of transit agencies with the hope that it will eventually allow a single fare payment system that will work on buses, subways, commuter trains, and ferries. (ffd: New York Times)

(TUE) Amtrak debuted a new Spanish-language version of its website, espanol.amtrak.com. An Amtrak spokesman said that Spanish-speaking customers will have complete access to online reservation capabilities in Spanish and that Amtrak will also continue to provide telephone customer service in Spanish. Later in the week, Amtrak announced that it had awarded Yankee Holidays of Beverly, MA the contract to manage Amtrak-Vacations travel packages. The previous operator of Amtrak-Vacations went bankrupt about 2 years ago. (ffd: Amtrak)

(WED) Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta visited Omaha, NE to recognize Union Pacific's Fuel Masters energy conservation program. Under the program, locomotive engineer fuel performance is measured against fellow engineers in the same territory. A two-month snapshot of each engineer's fuel consumption performance is used to calculate individual average consumption rates, and each month engineers in the top 15 to 20 percent in each territory are awarded \$100 fuel cards for personal use. "What is most impressive about the UP Fuel Masters program is that the company and its employees have together found a way to cut fuel consumption and save money," said Mr. Mineta. (ffd: UP Corp.)

(THU) The Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority announced that use of Southern California's Alameda Corridor had increased. Use of the corridor, a new multi-mile rail link between the Port of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the rail classification yards east of downtown Los Angeles, much of which is below grade, increased from over 14,000 trains in 2003 to over 17,000 trains in 2005. The 2005 number represents an average of 47 trains daily. (ffd: AAR)

(FRI) The Maryland Transit Administration announced that it had completed its most recent project to double-track its light rail line serving Baltimore. An MTA spokesman said that, attendant with the project's completion, service to Hunt Valley and 3 others would resume this Sunday. The spokesman added that 90 percent, about 9.4 miles, of the line is now double-tracked. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The Central Arkansas Transit Authority announced that it had begun the project to extend its River Rail light rail line about 1 mile to serve the new Clinton Presidential Library and Heifer International headquarters. The line was opened in 2004. The line, which totals about 2.5 miles in length, presently operates between Little Rock and North

Little Rock. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) Nashville, TN's Regional Transit Authority announced that they expected to begin commuter rail service to and from the city by late summer. An RTA spokesman said that 6 stations are under construction, at Nashville's Riverfront and in Donelson, Hermitage, Mt. Juliet, Martha, and Lebanon. The spokesman added that the service will be known as the "Music City Star." The service will operate over a line acquired by the state from the former Louisville & Nashville Railroad in 1986. Freight service over the line has been operated since then by the Nashville & Eastern Railroad. (ffd: Trains)

(SAT) New Jersey Transit opened 2 new stations on its Hudson-Bergen light rail line. The 2 new stations are at Bergenline Avenue in Union City and at Tonnelles Avenue in North Bergen. An NJT spokesman said that patronage of the line has increased notably over the last few years and now averages approximately 24,000 riders each weekday. (ffd: Jersey Journal)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(NOTE: The Canadian carload and intermodal rail traffic mentioned below includes both the Canadian and U.S. operations of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway.)

(THU) For the week ending February 18, 2006, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 31.8 billion ton-miles, down 5.4 percent from the comparable week last year. An AAR spokesman suggested that the traffic decline was due at least in part to the severe winter weather in the Eastern U.S. Also for the week, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 6.3 percent, down 6.0 percent in the East and down 6.6 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included non-grain farm products up 5.4 percent and lumber and wood products up 4.4 percent; notable traffic decreases included nonmetallic minerals down 31.9 percent and coke down 19.8 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 2.5 percent, Canadian carload rail was down 6.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail was up 1.9 percent, Mexico's Kansas City Southern de Mexico's carload rail traffic was down 11.2 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was down 0.8 percent.

For the period January 1 through February 18, 2006, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 229.3 billion ton-miles, up 3.1 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.8 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.5 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.9 percent, KCSM's carload rail traffic was down 3.8 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was down 9.9 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(NOTE: Effective October 1, 2005, railroads that had been furnishing 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 February 17, 2006, average total cars on line was as follows: BNSF, 221,766 cars versus 220,342 last week; Canadian Pacific, 79,487 cars versus 79,848 last week; CSX, 225,358 cars versus 225,047 last week; Kansas City Southern, 27,763 cars versus 28,762 last week; Norfolk Southern, 205,356 cars versus 205,700 last week; and Union Pacific, 329,965 cars versus 328,507 last week. (Comparative totals from last year are not yet available.)

Also for the week ending February 17, 2006 and ranked with the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 21.6 mph versus 24.2 mph; Canadian Pacific, 25.2 mph versus 21.7 mph; CSX, 19.4 mph versus 19.2 mph; Kansas City Southern, 21.0 mph versus 24.1 mph; Norfolk Southern, 21.6 mph versus 21.3 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.1 mph versus 21.4 mph.

Finally for the week ending February 17, 2006 and ranked with the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was follows: BNSF, 25.4 hrs versus 23.5 hrs; Canadian Pacific, 20.9 hrs versus 30.5 hrs; CSX, 26.7 hrs versus 30.0 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 29.0 hrs versus 23.2 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 24.5 hrs versus 26.1 hrs; and Union Pacific, 29.3 hrs versus 29.4 hrs. (ffd: AAR)

STILL MORE STATS:

(WED) The Transportation Safety Board of Canada reported that Canadian railroads altogether had 13.04 accidents per million train miles in 2005, up from 12.29 accidents per million train miles the previous year. The annual average for 2000 through 2004 was 11.69 accidents per million train miles. In 2005, Canadian National reported 103 accidents on main lines in Canada, up 76 from the previous year, and Canadian Pacific Railway reported 66 accidents on main lines in Canada, up from 63 the previous year. (ffd: Toronto Star)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Canadian National-Wisconsin Central filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of line serving the ore dock in Ashland, WI. (ffd: STB)

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

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Genesee & Wyoming appointed Gerry Gates VP-Safety & Compliance for its rail system. Mr. Gates is the former president of the Terminal Railroad of St. Louis, and was earlier a VP for CSX and for the former Conrail. (ffd: G&W Corp.)

(TUE) The National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association elected Jon McGrath chairman, Manny Ramirez vice chairman, and Jim Perkins secretary-treasurer. Mr. McGrath is with McGrath Construction, Mr. Ramirez is with Mass Electric Construction, and Mr. Perkins is with Loram Maintenance-of-Way. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine appointed Corey Hill to serve as Acting Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. Mr. Hill replaces Karen Rae, who was recently appointed Pennsylvania Deputy Secretary of Transportation. (ffd: DRPT)

(WED) Canadian Pacific Railway announced that CEO Robert Ritchie would retire following the company's annual meeting on May 5th, 2006. Mr. Ritchie has been CPR's CEO since 1995. A CPR spokesman also announced that the company's board intended to appoint President Fred Green as CEO following Mr. Ritchie's retirement. (ffd: CPR Corp.)

(WED) Tim O'Toole, head of the London "Underground" subway system, was named an honorary Commander of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II. Mr. O'Toole, who may now style himself "Tim O'Toole CBE" whenever in Britain, was one of 20 transit and emergency workers recognized by the queen for their meritorious conduct during the July 7, 2005 attacks on London's public transit systems. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

(FRI) Boston's commuter rail operator, the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad, appointed Steven Brereton Chief Mechanical Officer. Mr. Brereton was a CMO of CSX. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The Raritan Central, New Jersey & Northern, and Pennsylvania & Southern Railways appointed Eric Moffett SVP-Marketing & Sales. Mr. Moffett was most recently VP-Intermodal for the Vermont Railway System. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

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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

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