

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, MARCH 25, 2006

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(MON) The New York Civil Liberties Union announced that New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority had agreed to stop threatening people with arrest for taking pictures in New York area subway and train stations. A NYCLU spokesman said that, additional to threatening arrest, MTA police had told photographers that they must obtain a permit and have insurance in order to film or take pictures, despite the fact that MTA has no permit scheme or insurance requirement for noncommercial photography. "Neither a legal ban nor an unwritten rule should stop New Yorkers from exercising their first-amendment-protected right to take photographs on the MTA system," commented NYCLU Executive Director Donna Lieberman. (ffd: NYCLU)

(TUE) Metro North Railroad announced what it said were its most extensive service changes in nearly 20 years. Effective with its April 2 timetable change, MNRR will add 19 weekday and 11 weekend trains, totaling 625 weekday trains and representing a service increase of 2.7 percent. A MNRR spokesman said that, in response to ridership between 5:30AM and 7:00AM having increased 23 percent in the last 5 years, the railroad is adding "early-bird" inbound trains that will arrive at Grand Central Terminal between 8 and 25 minutes earlier than the current timetable, with the first train arriving at 5:40AM. (ffd: NYMTA, Progressive Railroadng)

(WED) United Parcel Service announced that it was transferring some package shipments from rail back to truck. A UPS spokesman said that the changes will allow improved transit times to and from 11 major U.S. cities. The spokesman noted that UPS still spent \$750 million for rail transportation services in 2005, mostly for shipments of more than 750 miles. (ffd: The Virginian-Pilot)

(WED) Amtrak announced that it would require Canadians traveling into the U.S. aboard Amtrak trains to provide passport numbers and their expiration dates before buying tickets. An Amtrak spokesman said that the new requirement complies with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, which is set to go into effect December 31, 2007 for land border crossings between Canada and the U.S. An Amtrak spokesman said, "We do what U.S. Customs and Border Protection tells us to do...Right now, U.S. law requires that Canadians provide both proof of citizenship and proof of identify, and the best way to provide those things is with a valid passport." (ffd: Toronto Globe and Mail)

(WED) The Association of American Railroads announced that it would sponsor a town hall meeting April 5 in St. Louis, MO to give freight car owners and other interested parties an update on the industry's Advanced Technology Safety Initiative (ATSI) and Equipment Health Management Systems (EHMS). An AAR spokesman said that attendees will receive an update on what has happened since ATSI, a program that emphasizes predictive maintenance based on new technology rather than waiting for a freight car component to fail, and EHMS were implemented in October, 2004. The spokesman added that the meeting will be held from 2:00PM to 5:00PM at the Renaissance Grand Hotel in St. Louis and that no registration was necessary to attend. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) BNSF CEO Matt Rose warned of a coming crisis in the nation's ability to move goods because of aging and increasingly congested transportation networks. "In 10, 15 or 20 years, there is a crisis coming in how we move commerce...I just don't see how that's going to be avoided," said Mr. Rose. Mr. Rose went on to say that BNSF service, "isn't what it ought to be," acknowledging that "customers are frustrated." Mr. Rose added that BNSF's efforts to improve network velocity include tying incentive compensation for nearly one-third of eligible employees to the improvement of BNSF average train speeds by 5 to 10 percent over 2005. (ffd: Dallas Morning News)

(THU) Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta announced the successful test, earlier in the day, of a new rail passenger car Crash-Energy Management System. The test took place in Pueblo, CO. The new system includes crush zones that absorb the force of a crash to better protect the parts of a train where passenger sit. "You can't just punch numbers into a computer, run a few programs and promise people will be safer," said Mr. Mineta. "[But] by crashing a few trains in the desert, we hope to find new ways to keep million of commuters safer every day." (ffd: USDOT)

(THU) The Nevada State Railroad Museum unveiled plans for a Chinese Workers Museum proposed for Carson City, NV. The occasion of the unveiling also included a reception honoring the memory of 19th century Chinese laborers who helped build America's western railroads. "The recognition given today tells the people of China that America is very thankful," said Wei Yang, president of the Chinese Association of Northern Nevada. (ffd: Reno Gazette-Journal)

(FRI) Philadelphia, PA area commuter rail operator SEPTA announced that it would purchase 104 Silverliner Class 5 commuter rail cars. The cars will be purchased from United Transit Systems LLC for \$244.2 million. A SEPTA spokesman said that, after the cars are received over the next 4 years, SEPTA will use them to replace and then retire 73 Silverliner Class 2 and 3 cars, which have been in service since the 1960s. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

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 March 18, 2006, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 32.9 billion ton-miles, down 1.2 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.9 percent, down 2.3 percent in the East and down 1.7 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included non-grain farm products up 21.9 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel up 16.2 percent, and food and food products up 6.4 percent; notable traffic decreases included nonmetallic minerals down 32.0 percent, coke down 13.9 percent, and primary forest products down 13.8 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 7.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 6.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 1.9 percent, Kansas City Southern de Mexico's carload rail traffic was up 1.9 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was up 1.2 percent.

For the period January 1 through March 18, 2006, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 361.5 billion ton-miles, up 1.7 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.5 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.3 percent, Canadian intermodal

rail traffic was up 3.9 percent, KCSM's carload rail traffic was down 5.6 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was down 6.1 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(NOTE: Effective October 1, 2005, railroads that had been furnished operating performance statistics to the AAR 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 March 17, 2006, average total cars on line was as follows: BNSF, 223,092 cars versus 221,145 last week; Canadian Pacific, 80,700 cars versus 80,296 last week; CSX, 223,600 cars versus 223,561 last week; Kansas City Southern, 25,083 cars versus 25,853 last week; Norfolk Southern, 205,253 cars versus 205,634 last week; and Union Pacific, 330,140 cars versus 330,130 last week. (Comparative totals from last year are not yet available.)

Also for the week ending March 17, 2006 and versus the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 22.2 mph versus 23.5 mph; Canadian Pacific Railway, 25.2 mph versus 21.6 mph; CSX, 20.1 mph versus 19.0 mph; Kansas City Southern, 23.5 mph versus 23.6 mph; Norfolk Southern, 20.9 mph versus 22.2 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.6 mph versus 21.2 mph.

Finally for the week ending March 17, 2006 and versus the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 24.6 hrs versus 23.1 hrs; Canadian Pacific Railway, 20.7 hrs versus 30.4 hrs; CSX, 25.3 hrs versus 29.0 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 23.8 hrs versus 23.2 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 23.7 hrs versus 23.7 hrs; and Union Pacific, 29.4 hrs versus 28.7 hrs. (ffd: AAR)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) BNSF granted temporary overhead trackage rights to Union Pacific over approximately 6 miles of BNSF line between Lake Yard, OR and Portland Jct., OR. The purpose of the temporary trackage rights is to allow UP to perform "blitz" trackwork on its line. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) The Surface Transportation Board granted Nebkota Railway's earlier request to abandon 43 miles of former Chicago & Northwestern line between Rushville, NE and Merriman, NE. (ffd: STB)

(WED) ENSCO opened a new rail maintenance facility in Biglerville, PA. The new facility, which an ENSCO spokesman said will serve the company's East Coast customers, locates on the Gettysburg & Northern Railroad. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) Atlantic & Pacific Railroad filed to discontinue service over approximately 4 miles of line, owned by the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad, between Chase, KS and Silca, KS. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Norfolk Southern said that it had reached agreement to transfer the former Pennsylvania Railroad's Hollidaysburg Car Shop in Hollidaysburg, PA to the Blair County [Pennsylvania] Development Corporation. The car shop was closed by NS shortly after its 1999 takeover of the former Conrail with CSX. A spokesman for BCDC said that it is planning to redevelop the car shop, one of the world's largest, into a commercial-industrial-open space complex. (ffd: RT&S)

(FRI) BNSF granted temporary overhead trackage rights to Union Pacific over approximately 32 miles of BNSF line between Grand Ave. in St. Louis, MO and Pacific, MO. The purpose of the temporary trackage rights is to allow UP to perform "blitz" trackwork on its line. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The Federal Railroad Administration appointed Jo Strang Associate Administrator for Safety. Ms. Strang, who has been acting in this capacity since October 30, 2005, previously served as the FRA's deputy associate administrator for railroad development. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Railinc announced that its current president, James Gardner, will retire effective April 7. A Railinc spokesman said that its current, VP-Business Services, Allen West, would serve as acting president while the company conducts a CEO search. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) Railway Age Magazine presented Rich Timmons with its Railroader of the Year award for 2006. The magazine said that it made the award for his having "guided his association and his industry onward" and for accomplishments that included the enactment of the smaller railroad federal tax credit in 2004, which the magazine called "one of the most significant pieces of railroad legislation in the quarter-century since passage of the Staggers Act." Mr. Timmons, a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General and former Norfolk Southern VP, has been president of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association since 2002.

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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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