

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, March 9, 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 United Transportation Union confirmed that it had instituted a brief work stoppage against Canadian National/Illinois Central the previous Thursday. A UTU official said that the strike was called when a CN/IC employee acting as a union official was prohibited from marking off work to conduct union business. The strike, which was called off later that day, did not affect Amtrak or commuter rail operations on CN/IC. (ffd: UTU)

(MON) Boston, MA. commuter rail and transit operator Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority began soliciting bids for a new five year contract to operate MBTA's commuter rail services. The services are presently operated by Amtrak, whose contract with MBTA expires in June of 2003. Efforts in 1999 to shift to a non-Amtrak operator met substantial opposition and were unsuccessful. (ffd: Boston Herald)

(MON) Economic Planning Associates released its forecast for 2002 rail freight car deliveries. EPA stated that 20,100 rail freight cars would be delivered this year, the lowest number since 1987. (ffd: EPA Inc.)

(TUE) Metro North suffered an on duty employee fatality. Jeffrey Pieger, Age 36 with approximately 1 year's service, was killed at MNCR's New Haven, CT. shops when he became trapped between a cutting machine and a locomotive he was servicing. (ffd: Connecticut Post)

(TUE) U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ernest Hollings (D-SC.) proposed legislation appropriating \$1.3 billion to continue Amtrak operations and repairs this year. Senator Hollings's bill also includes \$35 billion in loan guarantees for development of high-speed rail corridors outside the northeastern U.S. Also on Tuesday and in one of his last official appearances as Amtrak's president (see below), Amtrak President George Warrington announced that Amtrak was now carrying more passengers between New York, NY. and Washington, DC. than were the airlines. "This is the first time ever in the history of Amtrak that we are dominating that market," Mr.

Warrington said. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers set up informational pickets at a CSX board of directors meeting in New Orleans, LA. and at several other CSX locations. The BofLE pickets alleged potential safety hazards of new locomotive remote control technology, which a CSX spokesman said that the company is introducing at approximately 100 system locations. (ffd: BofLE, Montgomery Advertiser)

(TUE) The National Transportation Safety Board issued its report on the runaway train crash near Cumberland, MD. in January, 2000 that killed 1 resident whose house was destroyed when the train finally derailed. The NTSB said that train's locomotive dynamic brake had failed without the engineer's knowledge and that the train's air brake could not then slow or stop the train. The NTSB report also identified 44 U.S. railroad grades that it said potentially needed slower speed limits. (ffd: FedNews)

(WED) Norfolk Southern suffered an on duty employee fatality. David Fleischauer, Age 47, was killed when the rail tank car he was repairing shifted and pinned him between the car and its wheel assembly. The accident occurred at NS's Frankfort, IN. yard. (ffd: Indiana State Police)

(WED) Chicago, IL. commuter rail operator Metra began rehabilitation of Chicago's Randolph Street Station. The \$15 million project will include larger station concourse, new ticketing areas and other improvements. The station is the downtown terminal for Metra's Lakefront Electric and Indiana's South Shore commuter rail services. (ffd: Chicago Daily Southtown)

(THU) In congressional testimony, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation Michael Jackson suggested that a U.S. rail passenger network would require between \$2.5 billion and \$3.0 billion annually to optimally function. Mr. Jackson added that the Bush Administration did not, at the present time, embrace calls to break up or privatize Amtrak, but also said that state funding and passenger revenues should play an important part in maintaining services. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Officials of California's Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority said that the Authority's \$2.4 billion Alameda Corridor was nearing completion and would begin operation on April 15. The Corridor provide a new rail freight line, grade separated, between the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles and rail yards near Los Angeles's Union Station. (ffd: ACTA)

(FRI) Burlington Northern Santa Fe said that it would drop its plan to build a new 13 rail line to the Bayport chemical complex near Houston, TX. if Union Pacific would allow BNSF improved access to Bayport over UP's tracks. Houston media have noted increasing opposition to the new line in communities along its route. A UP spokesman said the company would study BNSF's proposal. (ffd: Houston Chronicle)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending March 2, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 4.0 percent, down 5.1 percent in the East and down 3.1 percent in the West. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.7 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.9 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the month of February, 2002, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.9 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 3.2 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.3 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 13.0 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 35.2 percent, all when ranked with February, 2001.

For the months of January and February, 2002, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 2.6 percent. Comparing with January and February, 2001, notable traffic increases included motor vehicles and equipment up 8.8 percent and notable traffic decreases included coal down 2.4 percent, chemicals down 3.2 percent and metallic ores down 15.9 percent. Also comparing with January and February, 2001, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 0.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 5.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 1.0 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 3.9 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 10.0 percent. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The West Texas and Lubbock Railroad filed to proceed with a joint relocation project with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Under the plan 1) WTLR will build a connection with the BNSF in Lubbock, TX. 2) BNSF will grant WTLR approximately 5 miles of trackage rights on its line and 3) WTLR will abandon approximately 6 miles of its line through Lubbock. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of

its Virginia Branch in St. Louis County, MN. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(THU) George Warrington resigned as president of Amtrak, a position he had held since December, 1997. Mr. Warrington said that he was leaving Amtrak to become head of New Jersey Transit, where he had earlier worked as head of its commuter rail services. An Amtrak spokesman said that Mr. Warrington would remain at Amtrak for up to 60 more days to help transition an interim successor and that Amtrak had begun a search for a permanent replacement. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Indiana Harbor Belt appointed John Szamatowicz Senior Manager-Business Development. Mr. Szamatowicz has been with the IHB since 1989 and was earlier with the former Illinois Central Gulf. (ffd: IHB Corp.)

(FRI) CSX appointed James Adams Resident Vice President-State Relations-Kentucky. Mr. Adams succeeds Jay Westbrook in this position, Mr. Westbrook having become CSX's AVP-Operations Planning and Performance. (ffd: CSX Corp.)

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Weekly Rail Recap is edited from public news sources and published weekly, usually on Monday or Tuesday, 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,
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