

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE 7 DAYS ENDING FRI, APRIL 11, 2008

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(SUN) New York media noted the 100th anniversary of the completion of tunnel boring for the two rail tunnels built by the Pennsylvania Railroad under the Hudson River between Manhattan and Northern New Jersey. The two tunnels, in operation since completion of the PRR's multi-year New York Terminal Project in 1910, are now used each weekday by 104 Amtrak trains, 337 New Jersey Transit revenue trains, and 39 NJT non-revenue trains. Later in the week, various organizations, including the National Association of Railroad Passengers, called attention to a recent change in plans to build two additional rail tunnels between New York and New Jersey. NARP urged reconsideration of the change, which will have the tunnels terminating in Manhattan at a separate and smaller station at 34th Street, instead of also connecting with existing Pennsylvania Station terminal trackage. (ffd: NARP, New York Times)

(MON) The New York state legislature failed to approve a congestion pricing plan approved the previous week by the New York City Council. The plan would have allowed for the electronic collection of fees of between \$8 and \$21 for each vehicle entering Manhattan below 60th Street at peak hours on weekdays. The fees collected would have gone toward city and regional transportation improvement projects. Numerous public leaders expressed disappointment at the legislature having turned down the plan, including U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters, who went on to say that "New York's mounting traffic and congestion woes point to congestion pricing as an inevitable solution, even if not in the next few months or with the assistance of federal dollars." (ffd: New York Times, Railway Age)

(MON) Canadian Minister of Transport Lawrence Cannon announced that his Transport Canada agency would launch a "rail freight review" to "...identify service problems and their impacts and make recommendations to improve Canada's rail freight logistics system." The minister went on to state that the review "...will focus on services provided to Canadian shippers and customers by Canadian National and Canadian Pacific within Canada, including to and from ports and border crossings." He added that the review will address the impact on service of shipper size, car supply, demand forecasting, peak movements, operating practice, and the relationship between CN, CPR and their shortline railroad partners, the latter now originating 25 percent of all rail traffic in Canada. (ffd: Railway Age)

(WED) The Maryland Transit Administration announced that it would purchase 26 rebuilt Class GP-40 locomotives for its MARC commuter train services. An MTA spokesman said that the locomotives were being purchased from the Utah Transportation Authority and rebuilt by Motive Power of Boise, ID. (ffd: MARC)

(THU) Amtrak announced that it would resume ticketing passengers for its "Coast Starlight" train for all points between Seattle, WA and Los Angeles, CA. Amtrak had earlier been forced to suspend the train's operation as a result of an extensive landslide on the train's route on the Union Pacific north-south coastal main line near Oakridge, OR on January 19. Although the UP has recently reopened the line to a limited number of freight trains, it is not yet okayed by them for passenger service, and an Amtrak spokesman said that a bus bridge would be provided for ticketed passengers between Eugene, OR and Klamath Falls, OR, and in both directions. (ffd: wire services)

(FRI) Norfolk Southern announced the debut of a new e-commerce tool available through its website. Known as "Thoroughbred Pacesetter," an NS spokesman said that it would offer functions designed to help customers directly manage freight car orders and releases, increase real-time car pipeline visibility, and access a detailed local car inventory. The spokesman added that it would feature what it said was an "industry-first, service-based demurrage system" that directly links NS service to demurrage credits. (ffd: NS Corp., Progressive Railroading)

STATS – "BIG 7" TRAFFIC

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Canadian traffic includes that on the U.S. operations of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific.)

(THU) For the week ending April 5, 2008, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 34.3 billion ton-miles, up 4.6 percent from the comparable period last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was up 3.6 percent, down 1.3 percent in the East, but up 7.5 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included grain up 27.1 percent, food and food products up 19.8 percent, and metallic ores up 10.8 percent; notable traffic decreases included motor vehicles and equipment down 18.5 percent, primary forest products down 17.9 percent, and lumber and wood products down 15.8 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 1.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.8 percent, Mexico's Kansas City Southern de Mexico's carload rail traffic was up 9.0 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was up 45.6 percent.

For the period January 1 through April 5, 2008, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 465.8 billion ton-miles, up 2.5 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.3 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 3.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 4.6 percent, KCSM's carload rail traffic was down 3.6 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was up 12.8 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" (EXCEPT CN) OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Earlier this month, Kansas City Southern combined operating performance data for its domestic (Kansas City Southern) and Mexican (Kansas City Southern de Mexico) operations. As a result, correct comparative data for KCS for last year is not available at this time.)

(WED) For the week ending April 4, 2008 versus the comparable week last year (except for KCS), average total cars on line was as follows: BNSF, 229,745 cars versus 226,958 cars; Canadian Pacific, 83,355 cars versus 82,738 cars; CSX, 221,620 cars versus 225,617 cars; Kansas City Southern, 49,900 cars; Norfolk Southern, 200,654 cars versus 207,503 cars; and Union Pacific, 310,229 cars versus 309,150 cars.

Also for the week ending April 4, 2008 versus the comparable week last year (except for KCS), average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 24.5 mph versus 23.7 mph; Canadian Pacific Railway, 22.8 mph versus 22.6 mph; CSX, 20.1 mph versus 20.0 mph; Kansas City Southern, 25.7 mph; Norfolk Southern, 21.7 mph versus 20.9 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.6 mph versus 22.2 mph.

Finally for the week ending April 4, 2008 versus the comparable week last year (except for KCS), average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 25.3 hrs versus 24.6 hrs; Canadian Pacific Railway, 23.1 hrs versus 24.5 hrs; CSX, 22.3 hrs versus 24.1 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 19.4 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 21.0 hrs versus 22.4 hrs; and Union Pacific, 24.7 hrs versus 25.1 hrs. (ffd: AAR)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Iowa Pacific Holdings's Permian Basin Railways announced that it had purchased the Mount Hood Railroad from a group of local and regional investors. The 102 year-old MHRR provides freight rail service on a 22-mile line between Hood River and Parkdale, OR and offers several excursion and dinner trains from April through December. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, Trains)

(TUE) Union Pacific filed to abandon approximately one-half mile of its Santa Monica Industrial Lead in Los Angeles, CA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway filed to discontinue the signal system over approximately four miles of its Syracuse Main and Utica Main out of Binghamton, NY. In its filing, the NYS&W noted that approximately 40 miles of its Utica Main has been out of service since June, 2006 due to track and infrastructure damage from extensive flooding, and that these four miles of line are now used as a storage spur. (ffd: FRA)

(FRI) The U.S. Department of Energy formally filed with the U.S. Surface Transportation Board to build a new rail line, approximately 300 miles long, to access its Yucca Mountain, NV nuclear waste repository. The new line, which has been opposed by the State of Nevada, would run between the Union Pacific line at Caliente, CA and Yucca Mountain. (ffd: Railway Age, STB)

(FRI) Union Pacific filed to discontinue the block signal system on its Granville Industrial Lead between Wisconsin, WI and Granville, WI, totaling approximately seven miles. In its filing, the UP stated that the signal system is no longer needed for safe train operation. (ffd: FRA)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(WED) The National Industrial Transportation League, whose membership includes numerous rail shippers, appointed Bruce Carlton its new president. Mr. Carlton, was most recently assistant administrator of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration, succeeds John Ficker, who resigned as president last January, and Annette Sandburg, who had been serving as acting president since Mr. Ficker's departure. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) BNSF appointed Charles Shewmake its VP-Law & General Counsel and Vince Cruz its Associate General Counsel. BNSF noted that Roger Nober continues as its EVP-Law & Secretary. (ffd: BNSF Railway)

(FRI) Florida East Coast Railway appointed Wayne Blalock its GM-Intermodal Operations and Tommy Rountree its GM-Transportation. Mr. Blalock was most recently responsible for FEC's operations in South Florida and Mr. Rountree was most recently responsible for FEC's operations in North Florida. (ffd: FEC Corp., Railway Age)

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Weekly Rail Review (WRR) is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, rail and transit. Send an e-mail to weeklyrailreview@aol.com to <<mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com>>receive it, with my compliments.

BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

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