

Delivered-To: dlve@wilkshire.net
WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, MAY 28, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(MON) Chicago, IL commuter rail operator METRA took delivery of the first of 26 new Highliner Class, bi-level, electric multiple unit cars. The new cars, built by Sumitomo Corporation of America and partner Nippon Sharyo, will be used on METRA's former Illinois Central commuter rail service operated between Chicago's Randolph Street Station and suburban University Park, IL. A total of 165 new Highliner cars will be delivered through February, 2006, which will replace the current fleet of Highliners, some of which have been in service since 1970. The new cars also include lavatories, which the current cars do not have. Also on Monday, a METRA spokesman announced that it would allow bicycles on all its commuter rail lines – weekend trains, off-peak weekday trains and reverse-commute weekday trains only – starting June 1. (ffd: Chicago Tribune, Progressive Railroading)

(MON) Washington, DC commuter rail operator Virginia Railway Express announced that it would acquire 11 new bi-level cars from Sumitomo Corporation of American and partner Nippon Sharyo. A VRE spokesman said that building contract includes an optional procurement of 50 additional cars. The spokesman added that the cars will have a seating capacity of up to 144 passengers and will replace older, single-level cars currently in the VRE fleet. (ffd: Railpace)

(MON) Duluth, MN sponsored a week-long test of morning and evening commuter rail service. The service was operated by the Duluth Transit Authority, in conjunction with the Duluth & North Shore Scenic Railroad, using one of the railroad's self-propelled Budd cars. The service operated over a 6-mile route between suburban Lester Park, MN and the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. A DTA spokesman said that passengers, each of who paid a \$1 fare, were generally enthusiastic about the test, although the spokesman added that there were no immediate plans for further service. (ffd: Duluth News Tribune, wire services)

(MON) France and Germany announced that they would start a new TGV-type passenger rail service between their countries by 2007. A spokesman for the French state railway, SNCF, said that the new service would include 5 trains daily between Paris and Frankfurt and 4 daily between Paris and Stuttgart. The spokesman added that travel time between Paris and Frankfurt would be cut from the current 6 hours to approximately 4 hours. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) The Alaska Railroad dedicated its new Fairbanks Intermodal Facility And Depot. The facility, which refers to intermodal passenger services, will be used by the railroad's passenger trains and by conjoining bus services. An ARR spokesman said that the facility cost approximately \$23.7 million and is designed to support 3 times the number of passengers that used the old facility, which the spokesman added will accommodate ARR's projected passenger growth occurring during the next 30 years. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) The New York City Transit Authority discontinued the No. 9 subway route on its IRT West Side Line. The No. 9 was started in 1989 to provide "skip-stop" service on the line, the usefulness of which, according to NYCTA President

Lawrence Reuter, diminished over time for reasons including that more riders began using skipped stations. "Skip-stop service on the line is an idea which today doesn't make sense for our operations or our customers," Mr. Reuter said. Service on the line, one of the subway system's busiest, will continue to be provided by No. 1 local trains and No. 2 and 3 express trains. (ffd: New York Times)

(TUE) Officials of Sacramento, CA's Regional Transit District announced that the first phase of its line extension to suburban Folsom, CA would be opened on June 19. A SACRT spokesman said that service over the extension will initially be operated between its Sunrise and St. Rose of Lima Park stations. The spokesman added that service over the remainder of the extension, from St. Rose of Lima Park into Folsom, will begin in October. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) The Association of American Railroads announced a new voluntary partnership between the Environmental Protection Agency and major U.S. freight railroads aimed at reducing locomotive fuel consumption and emissions. Known as "SmartWay," the agreement establishes incentives for fuel efficiency improvements and greenhouse gas emissions, aiming to reduce annual fuel consumption by the major railroads by as much as 150 million barrels of oil and emissions by as much as 66 million metric tons of carbon dioxide and 200,000 tons of nitrogen oxide. An AAR spokesman said that the agreement includes 3 key elements: partnerships between EPA, freight transportation companies and shippers to improve the environmental performance of freight operations; reduction of engine idling; and increased efficiency and use of rail and intermodal operations. (ffd: AAR)

(WED) A report released by the American Trucking Association says that there are 1.3 million truck drivers on the road today, 20,000 short of the number needed to meet current demand. The report went on to state that the driver shortage may increase to as much as 110,000 by 2014. "The driver market is the tightest it has been in 20 years," said ATA President Bill Graves. "It's critical that we find ways to tap a new labor pool, increase wages and recruit new people to the industry." The report was prepared for the ATA by Global Insight, an economic consulting firm. (ffd: Railway Age)

(THU) The Illinois Governor's office announced that it had struck a tentative budget agreement with key leaders of the Illinois legislature that will provide at least \$46.7 million in state funding for the Chicago Transit Authority, allowing the CTA to make up a projected mid-year operating deficit that would have otherwise compelled significant fare hikes and service cuts. "If all goes as planned, this is a big deal for people who ride the CTA," said Deputy Governor Bradley Tusk. "Services should remain the same and fares should remain the same." A spokesman for the governor's office said that the funding will be provided as part of an overall plan to fill a projected \$1.2 billion state budget deficit, with the primary source of funding being the withholding of some payments into the state worker pension system this year and next. (ffd: Chicago Sun-Times)

(THU) Secretary of Transportation Mineta released a letter sent to Amtrak President David Gunn expressing concern over Mr. Gunn's May 12 testimony before a Senate subcommittee. Noting Mr. Gunn's statement that Amtrak would likely end Fiscal Year 2005 with a \$20 million positive cash flow, Mr. Mineta said that this was an assumption that Amtrak would be getting \$60 million set aside by law to "pay for directed service in the event Amtrak ceases operations." "It is irresponsible to project a positive cash balance based on an assumption about reserve funds, when without those dollars, Amtrak's cash position before September 30 could be as much as \$40 million in the red," Mr. Mineta stated. Later in the week, a spokesman for the National Association of Railroad Passengers termed Mr. Mineta's correspondence "a strange letter" and accused Mr. Mineta of intending "to minimize a crisis into justification for his creating a crisis." (ffd: NARP, Newsday)

(THU) Boston, MA's city council introduced a bill banning "ultra-hazardous" rail cargoes within 2.5 miles of the city's Copley Square neighborhood unless a special permit is obtained from the Boston Fire Department. "In our day and age, when we're trying to make the city safe from terrorist activity, I think homeland security on our rail system has to be of paramount concern," said Boston City Councilman Stephen Murphy. Boston now becomes the third city to begin debating a city ordinance banning some or all hazardous rail shipments, following Cleveland, OH and Washington, DC, the latter's enacted ban still being litigated in federal court. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) Norfolk Southern confirmed that it had changed its operating rules following the Graniteville, SC derailment and hazmat release that killed 9, injured hundreds and required the evacuation of more than 5,400. A NS spokesman said that the new train operating procedure requires train crews to give train dispatchers specific information about main line switches being clear for traffic; the old procedure only required crews to notify dispatchers about switch changes. Later in the week, a judge approved a proposed class-action settlement against NS related to the Graniteville derailment. Under the settlement, NS will pay \$2,000 per household within 1 mile of the accident site for inconvenience, as well as \$200 per day, per person, for those who were evacuated and not hospitalized. The settlement does not cover victims who died or were hospitalized, who are being litigated in separate lawsuits. (ffd: The Columbia State, wire services)

(THU) A spokesman for RailPower Technologies said that Norfolk Southern had now agreed to test one of RailPower's Green Goat hybrid locomotives at the beginning of August. "What is significant about this event," said RailPower President Jim Maier, "is that with the Norfolk Southern demonstration...all of North America's Class 1's will have tried our technology." The Green Goat hybrid locomotive uses both a diesel engine and battery power recharged by the diesel engine to provide tractive effort. (ffd: wire services)

(FRI) The House and Senate each extended the current Transportation Equity Act, now for the seventh time, and this time through June 30 of this year. Each chamber has passed its own version of replacement TEA legislation, but of differing funding amounts, both of which are now being reconciled by a joint congressional conference committee. (ffd: APTA, NARP)

(FRI) The Arizona Railway Museum in Chandler, AZ announced that it would relocate to another location within Chandler by next month. A museum spokesman said that the museum will relocate from the city's Armstrong Park section to its Tumbleweed Park section. The spokesman said that the relocation will allow the museum to expand from a 2-acre site to a 6.5-acre site. The museum's collection includes 32 pieces of historic rail equipment, along with numerous historic photographs and related rail artifacts. (ffd: Trains)

(FRI) In what may be the first of its kind for a U.S. commuter railroad, Northern California's Caltrain announced that it would hold a singles night on board one its regularly scheduled commuter trains operating between San Francisco and Menlo Park. Designated "Romance on the Rails" and planned for Tuesday, June 14, a Caltrain spokesman said that it would reserve space aboard one of its cars for up to 80 singles registering for the event, which will include receptions at both the beginning and end of the ride. "As some people have met their future spouses while riding public transit, many others have missed out on meeting the person of their dreams because they were too shy or didn't have a good way to break the ice," the Caltrain spokesman added. (ffd: Caltrain, Table For Six, Peninsula Traffic congestion Relief Alliance)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending May 21, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 30.7 billion ton-miles, down 3.5 percent from the comparable week last year. Also for the week, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 3.5 percent, up 2.0 percent in the East, but down 8.1 percent in the West. In reporting the week's results, an AAR spokesman noted the continued effect of derailments disrupting coal traffic out of the Powder River Basin. Notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 16.2 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel up 12.8 percent, and stone, clay and glass products up 7.7 percent; notable traffic decreases included coal down 13.6 percent and coke down 10.3 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 3.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 3.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 1.5 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 0.1 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 13.1 percent.

For the period January 1 through May 21, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 634.8 billion ton-miles, up 2.9 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.1 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 2.3 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 9.6 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(FRI) For the week ending May 21, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 23.6 mph versus 24.8 mph; Canadian National, 25.9 mph versus 24.6 mph; Canadian Pacific, 24.4 mph versus 24.3 mph; CSX, 18.2 mph versus 19.6 mph; Kansas City Southern, 21.0 mph versus 27.5 mph; Norfolk Southern, 22.0 mph versus 22.5 mph; Union Pacific, 20.9 mph versus 21.3 mph.

Also for the week ending May 21, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time per car was as follows: BNSF, 10.5 hrs versus 10.6 hrs; Canadian National, 12.8 hrs versus 13.7 hrs; Canadian Pacific, 29.0 hrs versus 27.8 hrs; CSX, 31.3 hrs versus 29.3 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 24.0 hrs versus 23.1 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 23.2 hrs versus 22.0 hrs; Union Pacific, 27.1 hrs versus 30.8 hrs.

(Note: Concerning the above statistics, AAR comments that "one railroad's performance metrics cannot meaningfully be compared to another railroad's, due to differences in the carriers' calculation methodologies, operational strategies, network characteristics, terrain, traffic mix and volume, length of haul, extent of passenger operations, and other factors, such as weather.")

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) CSX filed to extend the temporary discontinuance of part of its automatic block signal system on its Jacksonville Division-Sanford Subdivision line. In its filing, CSX states that the line's No. 2 main track has been restored to service after having been severely damaged by the several hurricanes that struck Florida last summer, but that the line's No. 1 main track is still being repaired and remains out of service. (ffd: FRA)

(MON) CSX filed to downgrade the existing traffic control system on its Huntington Division East-Cowen Subdivision line, specifically, over the 42 miles between Grafton, WV. and Adrian, WV. The proposed change includes conversion of all power-operated switches to hand-throw operation. In its filing, CSX states that the current traffic density on the line does not warrant retention of the existing signal system. (ffd: FRA)

(MON) Norfolk Southern, the New York, Susquehanna & Western, and the Central New York jointly filed to downgrade the existing traffic control system over approximately 123 miles of line between Port Jervis, NY and Binghamton, NY. The proposed change includes conversion of all power-operated switches to hand-throw operation. In its filing, the railroads state that the current traffic density on the line does not warrant retention of the existing signal system. (ffd: FRA)

(MON) Union Pacific filed to downgrade the existing traffic control system on its Gila and Phoenix Subdivision lines, specifically, over the 91 miles between Wellton, AZ and Arlington, AZ. (ffd: FRA)

(WED) The Kiski Junction filed to acquire, from Berkman Rail Services, and operate approximately 5 miles of the Schenley Industrial Track in Armstrong County, PA. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Regional and shortline conglomerate Genesee & Wyoming announced that they had reached agreement with Rail Management Corporation to acquire RMC's 14 short lines for approximately \$243 million. The short lines acquired are the 96-mile AN Railway, the 3-mile Atlantic & Western Railway, the 108-mile Bay Line Railroad, the 70-mile Copper Basin Railway, the 12-mile East Tennessee Railway, the 38-mile Galveston Railroad, the 220-mile Georgia Central Railway, the 58-mile KWT Railway, the 79-mile Little Rock & Western Railway, the 15-mile M&B Railroad, the 14-mile Tomahawk Railway, the 10-mile Valdosta Railway, the 5-mile Western Kentucky Railway, and the 3-mile Wilmington Terminal Railroad. A G&W spokesman said that the newly acquired lines would be managed through its Rail Link subsidiary. (ffd: G&W Corp., Progressive Railroading)

(THU) Norfolk Southern granted BNSF Railway temporary overhead trackage rights between CA Jct., MO and Maxwell, MO, totaling approximately 9 miles. The purpose of the trackage rights is to allow BNSF to bridge its train service while its own nearby line is out of service for "blitz" maintenance. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) METRA made the inaugural run of its locomotive newly renamed for the late Ollie Tibbles. A resident of Downers Grove, IL, Ollie recently passed away at Age 7 from a brain tumor. Shortly before his passing, he rode the head-end of a locomotive through the efforts of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. "He was completely and utterly fascinated by the whole aspect of trains," said his mother. The designation was the first time METRA had renamed a locomotive in honor of a child. (ffd: Chicago Tribune)

(TUE) North Shore Railroad appointed Brigid Rich Manager-Marketing & Car Accounting. Ms. Rich has been with North

Shore, which operates several short lines in Central Pennsylvania, since 1999. (ffd: Progressive Railroad)

(THU) Kansas City Southern appointed Paul Weyandt SVP-Finance & Treasurer. Mr. Weyandt joined KCS in 2001, having previously been with BNSF for 23 years. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(THU) Tom Franklin was presented with this year's John H. Chaffee Award for Environmental Excellence, the railroad industry's top environmental award. Mr. Franklin is the manager of Union Pacific's North Little Rock, AR locomotive facility and was recognized for achievements that included developing regulators that prevent fuel spills for automatic shutoff equipment and developing an environmentally safe storage mechanism for locomotive toilet chemicals. (ffd: AAR)

(FRI) Canadian Pacific renamed a junction point in honor of the late Cheng Ging Butt. Mr. Butt was one of thousands of Chinese laborers who helped construct the CP Railway during the late 19th Century. "Cheng Ging Butt is representative of the extraordinary people who withstood hardships to not only help build a railway, but a nation as well," said CPR VP Paul Clark. The junction, which will now be known as Cheng Interchange, locates just east of the train station in Kamloops, BC. (ffd: CPR Corp.)

* * *

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

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA