

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, June 29, 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) Amtrak announced that, effective July 1, it would limit passengers to 2 pieces of carry-on luggage. An Amtrak spokesman said that the new policy was to "ensure that carry-on baggage does not pose a safety hazard for passengers." Amtrak also said that it would further require identification tags on nearly all carry-on items. (ffd: Amtrak)

(MON) A passenger train ran away downgrade and back into a freight train behind it in the southeast African nation of Tanzania. The resulting crash killed 281 persons and injured hundreds of others. Preliminary findings indicated that the accident was the result of a the train's brakes either malfunctioning or being improperly set. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) Burlington Northern Santa Fe and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers signed a new labor agreement. A BofLE spokesman said that the contract notably replaces the traditional railroad labor discipline process with a new process emphasizing "workplace coaching, counseling and retraining" to promote a safer work environment. (ffd: BofLE)

(TUE) Boston, MA.'s Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority began serving 2 new stations on its commuter rail line between Boston and Worcester, MA. The new stations locate in Southborough, MA. And Westborough, MA. Another new station on the line, at Ashton, MA., is scheduled to open in August. (ffd: Railway Age)

(WED) Fires in the area of California's Cajon Pass temporarily trapped a Union Pacific freight train. The fires also caused the temporary rerouting of passenger and freight trains away from the pass and onto alternate rail routes. The trapped train and its crew were later allowed to proceed through the pass to safety. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers announced that it had reached agreement with Burlington Northern Santa Fe, CSX, Kansas City Southern, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific over a set of procedures for upcoming arbitration hearings over the use of remote control locomotives. A BofLE spokesman said that the union hoped to have the arbitration hearings concluded by year's end. (ffd: BofLE)

(WED) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board issued a one month stay related to the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern's filing to acquire and operate the I&M Rail Link System. The delay was sought by rail unions in order to attempt settlement of labor issues related to the proposed acquisition of I&M Rail Link. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe introduced new service level designations for its intermodal rail services. The highest designation is "E", representing extremely time-sensitive shipments with 24x7 destination availability, followed by "P" for premium service with or without weekend availability, followed by "V" for value service, which is for special products in selected markets with fluctuating availability needs. The new designations will be incorporated into BNSF train symboling. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(THU) The parent company of the now defunct British rail infrastructure owner/operator Railtrack said that it would accept a government buyout of \$760 million. A government spokesman said that Railtrack will then be dissolved and replaced by a nonprofit government corporation, Network Rail, which will also absorb Railtrack's \$10.8 billion debt. (ffd: wire services)

(FRI) U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta announced an agreement with Amtrak's Board of Directors to provide \$270 million in funding that will allow Amtrak to continue operation until the start of FY2003 on October 1. Amtrak's President David Gunn had earlier said he would be forced to suspend service around mid-July without at least an additional \$200 million for the remainder of the current fiscal year. Mr. Mineta said that the funding would come through a direct \$100 million loan from the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program and from a likely congressional appropriation of \$170 million endorsed by the Bush Administration. The agreement also requires Amtrak to improve its financial reporting and to develop further potential operating efficiencies. (ffd: USDOT, wire services)

(FRI) In a reversal of earlier developments, the New York State legislature passed a budget that included a reduction in rail property taxes in the state. Covered under a measure known as the "Rail Infrastructure Act," it will phase in a 45 percent reduction in rail property taxes over the next 7 years, while also providing a state aid program of approximately \$70 million in 10 years to local governments to offset their resulting revenue losses. New York Governor Pataki is expected to sign the measure into law. (ffd: Albany Business Review)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending June 22, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.2 percent from the comparable week last year, down 3.4 percent in the East, but up 3.3 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 35.5 percent, non-grain farm products up 22.2 percent, nonmetallic minerals up 7.5 percent and lumber and wood products up 7.2 percent; notable traffic decreases included primary forest products down 9.2 percent, coke down 5.2 percent and coal down 4.1 percent. Also for the week ending June 22, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.5 percent (which included a record 142,455 containers), Canadian carload traffic was down 0.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 8.6 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 8.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 8.6 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through June 22, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 2.5 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.7 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 2.6 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 5.2 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last period. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(THU) Norfolk Southern purchased approximately 22 miles of private rail lines and spurs in southwest Indiana from Peabody Coal Co. and Yankeetown Dock Co. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(FRI) Canadian Pacific Railway announced that it would offer for sale 11 miles of its Cardston Subdivision Line between Raymond, AB. and Magrath, AB. and approximately 28 miles of its Radville Subdivision Line between Bengough, SK. and Willow Bunch, SK. (ffd: CPR Corp.)

(FRI) Montana's Butte-Silver Bow County filed to abandon approximately 11 miles of its Missoula Gulch and Butte Hill Line near Butte, MT. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(MON) Washington State's Sounder Transit appointed Marty Minkoff Director-Commuter Rail Services. Mr. Minkoff replaces Lee Bullock, who has resigned but will remain until Mr. Minkoff assumes the position, no later than September 3. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) The Maryland Transit Administration appointed Robert Smith Chief Administrator. Mr. Smith was most recently with the Chicago Transit Authority. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) CSX Intermodal appointed Joseph Pirozzi AVP-North American Domestic Sales and Fred Weber Director-Sales-Western Region. (ffd: CSX Corp.)

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