

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, JUNE 4, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(Note: This news week includes the Monday, May 30 Memorial Day Holiday.)

(SUN) The New York City Transit Authority's N Line resumed service to the Coney Island subway station, now newly rebuilt. The resumption of N Line service to Coney Island marks the restoration of full subway service to South Brooklyn for the first time since late 2001, with some portion of D, F, N and Q Line service suspended during that time to allow for station reconstruction. The new station, which cost approximately \$300 million, includes a 75,000-square-foot glass canopy made up of 2,730 solar-energy panels, which a NYCTA spokesman said will generate approximately 236,000 kilowatt hours of power a year, enough to cover about 15 percent of the electrical energy used by the station. (ffd: New York Times)

(TUE) In a notable change of position, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce called for higher taxes to help fund the rehabilitation of the U.S.'s transportation infrastructure. A Chamber national spokesman said that higher taxes and greater use of tolling would help compensate for shortfalls in government infrastructure spending. The spokesman went on to state that federal funding will soon cover only half of the nation's transportation needs and that, without action, the performance of the nation's surface transportation system will continue to deteriorate, and transportation users, the economy and the nation's global competitiveness will suffer. (ffd: Traffic World)

(TUE) The New York State Department of Transportation announced that it had agreed to pay Super Steel Schenectady \$5.5 million to terminate the scheduled rebuilding of 7 former Rohr Turboliner trainsets. Only 3 of the trainsets were rebuilt, all of which were taken out of service by Amtrak, which said that they were not suitable for continued revenue service. A NYDOT spokesman said that the settlement was contingent on an independent audit of the entire New York-Albany high-speed rail project, which the spokesman said was started about 2 weeks ago. A \$477 million lawsuit launched by NYDOT against Amtrak related to that project is still being litigated. (ffd: Albany Times-Union)

(TUE) Union Pacific rejected plans to extend Northern California's Capitol Corridor passenger rail service from its current eastern terminus at Auburn, CA over the Sierra Nevada Mountains to Reno, NV. "Future growth projections for freight traffic make the possibility of Union Pacific ever putting [that] passenger service on the track...extraordinarily unlikely," said a UP spokesman. The service, which currently runs between the Bay Area to Sacramento and Auburn, is funded by the State of California and operated by Amtrak. (ffd: Auburn Journal)

(THU) Brownsville, TX officials announced the completion of a 32-year project to relocate rail yards out of the city and eliminate most city grade crossings. A city spokesman said that the project, begun in 1973, was officially completed attendant with the expansion of Union Pacific's rail yard in nearby Olmito. The spokesman added that the project closed or rerouted 79 of Brownsville's 93 grade crossings and the remaining crossings were planned for removal through a future project. (ffd: Brownsville Herald)

(FRI) A spokesman for Acela trainset manufacturer Bombardier said that replacement trainset brake rotors would be shipped to Amtrak later this month. "We think that we will progressively start to put the trains back in service in June and we will put all the trains back in service probably during the summer," said Bombardier President Andre Navarri. The new parts will replace brake rotors discovered to have cracks, forcing all 20 Acela trainsets out of service on April 15. Countering Mr. Navarri's optimism, an Amtrak spokesman cautioned that, "Bombardier may be telling...when they'll be delivering [the brake rotors] back to us. But that would not be our timetable...we have to go through a very rigorous testing process...and only when we are one hundred percent sure they're absolutely safe will they be returned to service." (ffd: Montreal Gazette)

#### STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending May 28, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 32.7 billion ton-miles, up 1.9 percent from the comparable week last year. Also for the week, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.3 percent -- up 1.4 percent in the East and up 1.3 percent in the West – U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 3.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.6 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 1.6 percent.

For the month of May, 2005, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.1 percent compared with May, 2004. Commenting on May's results, Association of American Railroads VP Craig Rockey noted, "A pair of weather-related derailments in May on tracks used to transport enormous amounts of coal out of the Power River Basin in Wyoming disrupted normal traffic flow. That disruption is largely responsible for the decline in coal carloadings in May and for the corresponding decline in overall U.S. rail traffic." Also for the month, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.8 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 0.8 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 5.8 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 6.3 percent.

For the period January 1 through May 31, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 667.6 billion ton-miles, up 2.8 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.0 percent. Notable traffic increases included crushed stone, sand and gravel up 8.0 percent, metallic ores up 7.3 percent and coal up 3.4 percent; notable traffic decreases included waste and scrap materials down 5.2 percent and motor vehicles and equipment down 3.7 percent. Also for this period, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.0 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 1.6 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 9.1 percent. (ffd: AAR)

#### MORE STATS – "BIG 7" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(Note: Average train speed and average terminal dwell time for the week of May 28 were unavailable at the time WRR went to press this week.)

#### EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Canadian National announced that it was putting up for sale approximately 200 miles of its Kinghorn Subdivision, specifically, between Thunder Bay, ON and Longlac, ON. No trains have operated on that line segment since May 15. (ffd: Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal)

(TUE) CSX filed to downgrade its traffic control system on its Huntington Division East-Kanawha Subdivision line, specifically, over the 28 miles between Cabin Creek, WV and Charleston, WV. In its filing, CSX noted that the proposed change related to a major pole line elimination and signal rationalization project on this line. (ffd: FRA)

(WED) The Surface Transportation Board approved Union Pacific's earlier request to abandon approximately 15 miles of its Thornton Industrial Lead between Flint, IA and Thornton, IA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Union Pacific granted Canadian Pacific-Soo Line temporary overhead trackage rights over approximately 2 miles of UP's National Avenue Industrial Lead near Milwaukee, WI. The purpose of the temporary trackage rights is to allow CPR to access the Jones Island Yard while its main lines are out of service for program maintenance. (ffd: STB)

#### APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(SUN) Ben Biaggini passed away in San Francisco, CA at Age 89. Mr. Biaggini worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad for 47 years, rising through the ranks to become its president, from 1964 until his retirement in 1983. In their obituary for him, the San Francisco Chronicle called him "one of the last of the old-time railroad chief executives, who ruled his huge company with an iron hand." (ffd: San Francisco Chronicle)

(TUE) Kansas City Southern appointed John Foster VP & Chief Mechanical Officer. Mr. Foster, who was previously KCS's Assistant Chief Mechanical Officer, replaces James Fisk, who has taken a position as a VP of Electro Motive Diesel. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

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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

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA