

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2012

BY DAVE MEARS

(NOTE: In case it is helpful to anyone who may not have received the last edition sent due to it possibly having been caught in or deleted by a spam filter, please know that it was sent July 25 for the week ending July 6.)

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

(MON) Amtrak updated its long-term plan for the further development of high-speed rail service on the Northeast Corridor. The updates call for \$151 billion in spending to improve NEC high-speed rail service over a 30-year period, much of which would come from unspecified private investment. For NEC service between New York and Washington, the plan hopes to double the current number of Acela-type high-speed trains by 2020 and for train speeds of up to 220mph by 2030. (Ref: Bloomberg News, Philadelphia Inquirer)

(MON) Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed legislation to provide for \$1.6 billion in funding for transportation improvement projects in the state. The funding provides for sufficient state contribution to finish 15 CREATE rail improvement projects in the Chicago area that altogether total \$370.4 million, which would come from federal, state, local and railroad sources. (Ref: Chicago Tribune)

(MON) New Jersey Transit announced that its River Line light rail operation between Camden and Trenton, NJ had resumed service as it was prior to Hurricane Irene more than 10 months ago. Track damage caused by the hurricane, including to a passing siding near Bordentown, NJ, had limited service frequency on the line until recent repairs were completed. (Ref: Railway Age)

(WED) Representatives of U.S. railroads announced an industrywide initiative to hire 5,000 military veterans in 2012. The representatives noted that a similar number of military veterans were hired in 2011. The head of the Association of American Railroads noted that "...roughly 23 percent of [today's] railroad workforce is eligible to retire by 2015..." and that veterans going to work for railroads represents "...a great mesh of their characteristics and leadership learned in the armed forces." (Ref: AAR, NARP)

(WED) A Norfolk Southern freight train derailed several cars near Columbus, OH. Among the derailed cars were several carrying ethanol, which then exploded and burned. Due to the extreme visual nature of the explosions, the accident was a lead news story on several national television news programs later that day. (Ref: wire services)

(WED) CSX announced the completion of their 2012 "Maintenance Jamboree." The project, which concentrated on key routes between Shelby, KY and Abbeville, SC, and between Bostic, NC and Elmwood Junction, SC, included replacing or installing 176,000 ties, dumping 2,500 rail cars of rock ballast, and replacing 233,000 feet of mainline rail. More than 900 CSX m-of-w employees were involved in this year's project. (Ref: CSX RR)

(WED) Metro North Railroad said that it would this summer begin testing of passenger ticketing displayed on smartphones. During the testing, railroad employees acting as passengers will be able to download the test app and then use it to display various kinds of ticketing for inspection by train crews. A Metro North spokesman said that, should the testing be successful, the railroad will look to open smartphone ticketing to its riders. (Ref: CNET, MTA)

(WED) Miami officials announced that the 2.4-mile extension of the Miami subway system to Miami International Airport will open on July 28. Trains serving the new Metrorail Orange Line will take passengers to all stations between Dadeland South and Earlington Heights, and then continue west to the new airport stop, which is the subway system's 23rd station. (Ref: Miami Herald)

(FRI) The Federal Railroad Administration issued a safety advisory to remind railroads and other track owners of the importance of proper continuous-welded rail procedures and inspections. The FRA said that it was issuing the advisory "...to heighten awareness of potential consequences of an unexpected track buckle, particularly considering the unusually high, and prolonged, record-breaking temperatures that have affected much of the U.S. in recent weeks." (Ref: FRA, Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) Dallas Area Rapid Transit announced that its new Orange Line light rail operation would open on July 30. The new 5.4-mile line will run from Buchman Station to Irving Convention Center Station and add three new stations to the DART light rail system. The Orange Line is to be extended to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) in 2014. (Ref: Trains)

STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) The Association of American Railroads reported that, for the week ending July 7, 2012 and ranked with the comparable week last year:

-U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 245,156 units, down 1.0 percent

-Notable U.S. carload traffic increases included petroleum products up 54.8 percent, motor vehicles and equipment up 52.7 percent, and food and kindred products were up 11.1 percent; notable decreases included iron and steel scrap down 29.6 percent, primary forest products down 24.1 percent, and non-grain farm products down 23.6 percent

-U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 203,362 units, up 5.6 percent

-Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 73,661 units, up 2.4 percent

-Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 48,436 units, up 2.1 percent

-Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 14,345 units, up 10.3 percent

-Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 9,062 units, up 3.0 percent

For the period January 1 through July 7, 2012 and ranked with the comparable period last year:

-U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 7,567,974 units, down 2.8 percent

-U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 6,253,092 units, up 3.4 percent

-Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 2,068,358 units, up 3.4 percent

-Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 1,357,269 units, up 7.2 percent

-Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 378,414 units, down 1.8 percent

-Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 249,441 units, up 18.4 percent

Note: Canadian traffic totals include that traffic on U.S. operations of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways.

STATS CONTINUED – SAFETY:

(FRI) The Federal Railroad Administration reported the following safety data for U.S. railroads, for the period January through April 30, 2012 and ranked with the comparable period last year:

- Reportable train accidents totaled 517, down 26.0 percent
- Highway-rail crossing crash fatalities totaled 83, up 7.8 percent
- Trespasser fatalities totaled 134, up 12.6 percent
- On-duty employee fatalities totaled 3, down 57.1 percent
- On-duty employee non-fatal injuries totaled 1,185, down 12.5 percent

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

None of note this week.

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(FRI) Watco Companies appointed Gary Vaughn its Senior Vice-President for Regulatory Relations and Compliance. Mr. Vaughn has been with Watco since 2003. Watco also appointed Joe Via as Director of Switching for its West Region. Mr. Via was most recently with Union Pacific and was earlier with the Utah Railway. (Ref: Watco Companies)

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Have a Railroad Safe Day,

Dave Mears