

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, JULY 9, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(SUN) Philadelphia, PA's SEPTA came under criticism for commuter rail service problems occurring during and after the previous day's Live 8 concert, which drew several hundred thousand spectators to the city's Art Museum area. SEPTA was criticized for running its regular Saturday schedule with cars added to trains, which caused greater loading and unloading times and, in turn, systemwide delays averaging an hour or more. Later in the day, some scheduled SEPTA trains did not pick up passengers inbound into Philadelphia so that they would more quickly be available for outbound loading. However and noting that the day's 133,000 passenger trips exceeded the system's 106,000 weekday average, a SEPTA spokesman commented that "the system worked flawlessly at ultimate capacity with no breakdowns. It was one of the proudest days SEPTA has ever had." (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News)

(MON) A Canadian National freight train derailed 51 tank cars near Prescott, ON. A CN spokesman said that the tank cars were empty, but that they contained some residual diesel fuel that was being contained. The derailment, which occurred on CN's main line between Montreal, PQ and Toronto, ON via Brockville, caused VIA to reroute its Montreal-Toronto passenger trains via Ottawa. The line was reopened to passenger and freight trains on Wednesday. Still later in the week, a CN spokesman said that a heat kink in a rail had likely caused the derailment. (ffd: London Free Press, National Press, Trains, VIA Rail Canada)

(MON) Seattle, WA's Seattle Monorail Project Board announced that it was abandoning plans to extend the city's monorail line 14 miles between West Seattle and Ballard. The effort had come under public criticism for a funding proposal that would have resulted in \$2 billion in construction costs and then \$9 billion in interest payments over a 50-year period. The city's existing monorail line was built at the time of the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. (ffd: Seattle Times)

(TUE) BNSF suffered an on-duty employee fatality. Chris Jones, Age 27, was killed while switching a soybean processing plant near Emporia, KS. A BNSF spokesman said that Mr. Jones, who had been employed by BNSF since January, 2005, became pinned between a covered hopper car and a tank car he was switching. (ffd: WIBW-TV)

(TUE) A review committee of the New York state legislature rejected the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority's proposed \$21.1 billion 5-year capital plan. A committee spokesman said that it was rejected because key points of the proposal could not be agreed upon prior to a related legislative deadline. However, the spokesman added that the veto was "a short-term delay that would not have a long-term effect." The proposed plan had recently been scaled back to \$21.1 billion, having originally totaled \$27.7 billion when first proposed last October. (ffd: New York Times, New York Daily News)

(TUE) Despite the House of Representative's vote the previous week to fund all Amtrak train services for Fiscal Year 2006, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta continued speaking out against Amtrak. In an appearance in Anchorage, AK, Mr. Mineta referred to the Alaska Railroad as "the only passenger railroad in the nation that doesn't require operating subsidies." However, Mr. Mineta's critics were quick to point out that the Alaska Railroad has received \$372 million in federal grants since 1996, that the majority of its traffic is rail freight, and that it operates only 1 passenger train a week during much of the year. "If the Alaska Railroad is a model in the drive to reform Amtrak, reform may mean shrinking Amtrak's national network to a single 350-mile-long route," said National Association of Railroad Passengers Executive Director Ross Capon. (ffd: Anchorage Daily News, USDOT)

(WED) San Francisco, CA's Bay Area Rapid Transit announced that it had reached a tentative agreement with unions representing approximately 2,300 BART employees. A BART spokesman said that the agreement had been reached approximately 2 hours before a strike deadline and following 4 days of round-the-clock bargaining. A spokesman for one of the unions said that the new agreement would promote health care standards for workers and included "affordable pay increases." (ffd: wire services)

(WED) A Union Pacific spokesman said that repairs to the line it shares with BNSF accessing Wyoming's Powder River Basin low-sulfur coal fields may restrict the number of UP coal trains operating over that line through November and possibly into next year. The joint line had deteriorated due the combined effect of coal dust debris, record snows and rains, culminating in 2 back-to-back derailments on the line May 14 and 15. Industry observers noted that mainly UP trains have been affected by the repairs, as BNSF has sole use of another route out of the Basin. (ffd: Omaha World-Herald)

(WED) The Transportation Communications Union announced that it would merge into the International Association of Machinists. An IAM spokesman said that the addition of the approximately 11,000 rail workers represented by the TCU would increase to 140,000 the total number of rail and airline workers represented by the IAM. The TCU includes such former craft unions as the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, the Order of Railway Telegraphers, the American Railway Supervisors Association, and the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen. (ffd: IAM)

(WED) A federal judge again dismissed a lawsuit filed against several large corporations, including several North American railroads, that sought reparations for the descendants of African-American slaves who labored for predecessor companies of these corporations. In a 104-page opinion, U.S. District Judge Charles Norgle said that the horrors of slavery were undeniable, but that the plaintiffs failed to show that they "personally suffered a concrete and particularized injury" as a result of the defendant's conduct. Among the railroad defendants in the lawsuit were Canadian National, CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Union Pacific. The lawsuit was first dismissed in 2004, but was refiled. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Terrorists bombed London, England's transit system. 1 bomb exploded on a London transport bus near Tavistock Square and 3 exploded in the "Tube": 2 on the Circle Subway Line and 1 on the Piccadilly Subway Line. The attacks, which occurred between 8:51AM and 9:47AM GMT, killed at least 50 persons and injured over 700 others. A group, self-identified as "The Secret Organization of al-Qaida in Europe," claimed responsibility for the attacks. In the U.S., the Department of Homeland Security raised the threat level to Orange-High for U.S. transit systems, prompting special police patrols and related security actions on those systems, as well as on commuter railroads and on Amtrak. Also, the Association of American Railroads announced that U.S. freight railroads had stepped up railroad police patrols, which an AAR spokesman said was "a precautionary step that is part of the industry's security plan." (ffd: AAR, NARP)

(THU) The Department of Homeland Security announced that it had awarded a contract to Epsilon Systems Solutions to design, manufacture and install a system to enhance security along railroad lines that pass through Washington, DC. The contract is valued at approximately \$9.8 million. A company spokesman said that the new system would include intelligent video and radio frequency identification and detection. "We anticipate that this system will become a valued piece of the overall railroad security infrastructure and a candidate for enhancing security along metropolitan rail lines across the country," the spokesman added. (ffd: AAR)

(FRI) Officials in San Diego, CA dedicated the new \$506 million extension of the city's Green Light Rail Line. The new line extends the system from Mission San Diego to La Mesa via San Diego State, totaling approximately 6 new miles of line. A city spokesman said that the line will offer free rides on Saturday, July 9 and that revenue service will begin on Sunday, July 10. (ffd: RT&S)

(FRI) The National Mediation Board debuted a new feature on its website, the "NMB Knowledge Store." An NMB spokesman said that the "store" now contains more than 40,000 National Railroad Adjustment Board arbitration records and that it will eventually contain details of every arbitration award since the time of the 1934 inception of NMB arbitration under the Railway Labor Act. The website's URL is <<http://www.nmb.gov/>><http://www.nmb.gov/>. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(SAT) Hurricane Dennis escalated to a Category 4 storm in the Gulf of Mexico and headed for landfall on the Florida Peninsula. Preparations for the storm included New Orleans closing the city floodgates at 6PM Saturday, which prompted CSX to cancel train operations in and near the city that morning. Norfolk Southern and Amtrak similarly curtailed train operations out of the path of the storm. Later on Saturday, the hurricane dropped to a Category 3 storm and made landfall near Pensacola, FL. (ffd: Amtrak, CSX, Norfolk Southern)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending July 2, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 32.1 billion ton-miles, up 2.2 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for the week, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.9 percent – up 1.3 percent in the East and up 0.5 percent in the West – U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.1 percent, and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.2 percent.

For the month of June, 2005, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.1 percent, compared with June, 2004. Also for the month, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 1.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 0.4 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 3.1 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 0.1 percent.

For the 2nd Qtr., 2005, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.9 percent, compared with the 2nd Qtr., 2004. Also for the quarter, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 2.0 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 9.9 percent.

For the first half of 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 825.4 billion ton-miles, up 2.5 percent compared with the first half of 2004. Also for the half, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.7 percent. Notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 11.8 percent, crushed stone and gravel up 8.0 percent and coal up 2.7 percent; notable traffic decreases included waste and scrap materials down 5.6 percent and motor vehicles and equipment down 3.5 percent. Also for the half, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 2.5 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 0.7 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 7.2 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(WED) For the week ending July 2, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 22.6 mph versus 25.1 mph; Canadian National, 26.3 mph versus 24.5 mph; Canadian Pacific, 24.4 mph versus 24.6 mph; CSX, 19.1 mph versus 18.6 mph; Kansas City Southern, 21.3 mph versus 24.2 mph; Norfolk Southern, 21.4 mph versus 22.7 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.0 mph versus 21.6 mph.

Also for the week ending July 2, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 10.2 hrs versus 10.1 hrs; Canadian National, 12.2 hrs versus 14.4 hrs; Canadian Pacific, 26.2 hrs versus 25.3 hrs; CSX, 29.6 hrs versus 32.0 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 24.2 hrs versus 22.4 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 22.7 hrs versus 21.6 hrs; and Union Pacific, 28.2 hrs versus 31.4 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:

(WED) The BG & CM Railroad filed to acquire, from Great Northwest Railroad, and operate the following line segments: approximately 70 miles between Lewiston, ID and Kooskia, ID; approximately 1 mile in and near Spalding, ID; and approximately 4 miles between Orofino, ID and Konkolville, ID. (ffd: STB)

(WED) The Providence & Worcester Railroad filed to abandon approximately 5 miles of line in and near East Providence, RI. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The Florida Northern Railroad filed to lease, from CSX, and operate approximately 70 miles of line between High Springs, FL and Red Level Jct., FL. (ffd: Trains)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Kansas City Southern appointed Francisco Javier Rion as CEO of its Mexican railroad subsidiary, Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana. Mr. Rion was previously the president of Bombardier's Rail Control Solutions Division in London, England. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(WED) Iowa Interstate Railroad announced the following appointments: Jeff Jansenius as Chief Mechanical Officer; Cathy Smith as Assistant Controller; and Sherry Sanchez as Director-Finance. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

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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

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