

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, August 10, 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):

(SUN) A Norfolk Southern freight train derailed 30 cars near Sheffield, AL. There were no injuries to the crew. The cause of the derailment was still under investigation at press time. (ffd: Florence Times Daily)

(MON) The Washington Post revealed the results of a national poll which showed broad public support for Amtrak. Results of the poll included that 49 percent inclined toward increasing Amtrak funding, 31 percent inclined toward cutting funding, 7 percent inclined toward continuing funding at current levels and 13 percent had no opinion. The survey also revealed pro-Amtrak sentiment strongest in the northeastern U.S., but also solid in the remainder of the U.S. (ffd: Washington Post)

(MON) The membership of the Union Transportation Union ratified a 5 year national agreement with U.S. railroads. Among other benefits, the agreement provides for a 4 percent general wage increase retroactive to July 1, 2002 and related annual wage increases through December 31, 2004. (ffd: UTU News)

(MON) VIA Rail Canada announced that it would restore overnight sleeping car service between Ottawa, ON. and Toronto, ON. The service, which had been discontinued in 1990, will utilize sleeping cars purchased by VIA from aborted English Channel Tunnel overnight services. The overnight trains will also connect with VIA's "Canadian" transcontinental train. (ffd: Ottawa Citizen)

(TUE) Amtrak announced that it would reduce Acela Express service on its Northeast Corridor Line due to chronic problems with the new Acela Express trainsets. An Amtrak spokesman said that all 18 trainsets needed repairs and modifications, noting that, in July, only 74 percent of the trains reached their destination less than 15 minutes late. The spokesman added that conventional passenger cars and locomotives would be substituted while the trainsets were being rebuilt. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, the governing board overseeing the South Shore commuter rail line operating between Chicago, IL. and Indiana, announced that a new state law requires that a South Shore commuter and a South Shore employee be added to the board. A spokesman for the NICTD said that applications for the 2 vacancies would be accepted through October 1, with Indiana Governor Frank O'Bannon making the formal appointments by November 1. (ffd: South Bend Tribune)

(THU) The first Rohr TurboTrain trainset rebuilt by Super Steel of Schenectady, NY. was returned to Amtrak for testing. The trainset will be tested by Amtrak for at least 30 days before returning to revenue service between Albany, NY. and New York, NY. 7 trainsets are being rebuilt for return to service through the end of 2003. (ffd: NARP)

(FRI) Railway Age announced its Short Line Railroad of the Year to be the Winchester & Western and its Regional Railroad of the Year to be the Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern. A Railway Age spokesman noted that these awards were unique in that they were for the same achievement, an ongoing round-trip of construction aggregates: sand from the W&W to the RBM&N and crushed stone reloaded by the RBM&N for the W&W. The winning entry was submitted by Norfolk Southern's former Conrail marketing manager, Paul Heymann. (ffd: Railway Age)

(FRI) For the first time, Chicago, IL.'s Mayor Daley called for fines against a railroad for blocking a Chicago road crossing for more than 10 minutes and not notifying the city's 911 center, as is now required by law. A spokesman for the mayor said that the fines would be levied against CSX for blocking crossings earlier in the week between 104th Street and 119th Street for a total of 43 minutes. A CSX spokesman denied the accusations. (ffd: Chicago Sun Times)

(FRI) China took delivery of its first magnetic levitation "maglev" train for its new 41 mile line between Shanghai and its suburban airport. A Chinese government spokesman said that the line, whose trains will travel up to 250mph, is expected to open to the public in late 2003. (ffd: BBC News)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending August 3, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 3.2 percent from the comparable week last year, up 2.9 percent in the East and up 3.3 percent in the West. Also for the week ending August 3, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 5.4 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 17.6 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the month of July, 2002, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.5 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 8.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 5.8 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 14.9 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 4.7 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 21.3 percent, all when ranked with July last year.

For the period January 1 through July 31, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.6 percent from the comparable period last year. Notable traffic increases this year versus last year included motor vehicles and equipment up 4.0 percent and crushed stone and gravel up 2.6 percent; notable traffic decreases included coke down 17.4 percent and coal down 4.2 percent. Also for the period January 1 through July 31, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.7 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 3.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 8.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 0.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 16.2 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The Missouri & Valley Park Railroad filed to lease, from Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and operate approximately 2 miles of line between East Valley Park, MO. and West Valley Park, MO. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) R.J. Corman Company filed to acquire, from CSX, approximately 2 miles of CSX's Wooster Industrial Track in Wayne County, OH. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The Sidney & Lowe Railroad filed to acquire, from Progress Rail Services Corporation, approximately 11 miles of line between Huntsman, NE. and Brownson, NE. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Norfolk Southern granted the Squaw Creek Southern Railroad trackage rights over approximately 21 miles of its line between Yankeetown Dock, IN. and Lynnville Mine, IN. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(TUE) Burlington Northern Santa Fe appointed Vann Cunningham AVP-Economic Development. Mr. Cunningham was most recently with Lockwood Greene, a global industrial engineering and construction firm. Mr. Cunningham succeeds Jim O'Neil, who last year was named BNSF's AVP-Property & Facilities Management. (ffd: BNSF 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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