

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, AUGUST 26, 2006

BY DAVE MEARS

(NOTE: "ffd" indicates a reference "for further details.")

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

(SUN) The Alaska Railroad reopened its main line following severe flooding and washouts on the line between Talkeetna, AK and Denali, AK that rendered it out of service since Friday. On Monday, the railroad ran a special "flag-stop" train between Talkeetna and Hurricane, AK to pick up travelers who had been stranded at remote locations. (ffd: Trains)

(MON) Florida East Coast experienced an on-duty employee fatality. Kim Allen Rogers, Age 45, was killed while switching cars near Viera, FL. Mr. Rogers was reportedly on the end of a cut of cars being backed across a crossing at an industrial site when he was struck by a truck making the crossing. A Florida state trooper reported that there were no warning devices or signs at the crossing. Later in the week, FEC experienced a side collision near the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport. A total of 36 cars were derailed on the two trains. An FEC spokesman said that no one was injured in the accident, which closed the FEC main line until the next day. (ffd: Florida Today, Miami Herald)

(MON) The Transportation Security Administration announced changes to its transportation worker identification card program. A TSA spokesman said that, under the changes, facility and vessel owners and operators will not need to verify biometric data contained in ID cards during the program's initial phase. Also under the changes, the TSA and Coast Guard will hold off indefinitely on requiring that card readers be installed at points of entry for shipping businesses at ports. The plan also presently requires that transportation and shipping industry workers have to pay for their cards, at a unit cost of about \$140. (ffd: Govexec Dot Com)

(MON) The Federal Railroad Administration reported that Amtrak has been able to restore 24 stored Amfleet 1 coach cars and will position them in New Orleans, LA in case the city requires them for evacuation. A FRA spokesman said that the cars have been restored thanks to \$700,000 in special federal funding, which also includes the costs of deadheading them to New Orleans. The spokesman added that the cars will likely be returned to storage at the Amtrak Passenger Car Shops in Bear, DE after the hurricane season ends. (ffd: Cox Newspapers, NARP, Trains)

(MON) The owner of the New London, CT train and bus station is threatening to evict Amtrak and Greyhound if the City of New London does not provide him financial assistance. Todd O'Donnell bought the station in 2002 and refurbished it, but anticipated office tenants have not materialized, which Mr. O'Donnell said was due to a shortage of parking and the constant activity of buses and taxis making the building unattractive to prospective tenants. NARP reported that state and local officials have said that they "are willing to work with Mr. O'Donnell on a solution. (ffd: NARP, wire services)

(MON) North Carolina's Triangle Transit Authority announced that it would remove its proposed Triangle Regional Rail Project from the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts Program due to recent changes in federal funding criteria. A TTA spokesman said that the project may not be able to meet the new criteria, which is based on a cost-effectiveness formula that takes projected ridership and project cost into account. The project proposed a 28-mile passenger rail line connecting downtown Durham, Research Triangle Park, Morrisville, Cary, North Carolina State University, and downtown Raleigh. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, Raleigh News & Observer)

(MON) A rear-end collision between two Egyptian passenger trains killed at least 58 people and injured at least 140 others. Egyptian officials said that it appeared that one of the trains ran a stop signal, collided with the other train at over 50mph, and that a fire then started that spread to both trains. The accident occurred in a cornfield outside the town of Qalyoub, about 12 miles north of Cairo. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) New York State's Public Transportation Safety Board said that it would examine the safety of excessive gaps between high-level platforms and trains at Long Island Rail Road and Metro North Railroad stations. The study follows the death August 5 of a passenger attempting to board a train at LIRR's Woodside Station in Queens, who fell into the gap and was then struck by another train. A board spokesman said that the gaps are sometimes as much as 15 inches and occur where the platform and track are on a curve. (ffd: Newsday)

(TUE) In an unusually pointed press release, the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern lashed out at Rochester, MN coalition groups opposed to the railroad's plans to expand into the Powder River Basin coal fields. The groups, who are opposed to the expansion, say that it will result in DM&E running a greater number of trains through Rochester with diminished safety. In a release entitled, "Rochester Coalition Reveals Desperation; Poll Pushes Respondents With Inaccurate Statements," the railroad said that the groups had "released a survey that paints an inaccurate picture by pushing...misleading information." The release suggested the groups "stop false attacks and sit down with DM&E and have a public dialogue." (ffd: DM&E Corp., wire services)

(TUE) BNSF and CSX hosted events in recognition of "National Truck Driver Appreciation Week," August 20 through 26. BNSF's events, promoted under the banner "Going The Extra Mile Together," including offering lunch and refreshments to drivers at its major intermodal terminals. CSX's events included hosting cookouts for drivers at its intermodal terminals in Bedford Park, IL and Little Ferry, NJ. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell suggested that the state's proposed "Schuylkill Valley Metro" commuter rail service was no longer a possibility. "Schuylkill Valley Metro...[is] gone...that isn't going to happen," said Mr. Rendell. "We'll never get the funding." The service was proposed between Reading, PA and Philadelphia. The governor went on to suggest that the project likely won't materialize due to its \$2.1 billion estimated cost, which involved building and electrifying a passenger-only track adjacent to Norfolk Southern tracks on the 62-mile route between Reading and Philadelphia. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

(WED) A Mexican conglomerate proposed construction of a new \$150 million, 62-mile rail line linking the U.S. and Mexico through the Laredo gateway. "Railroad traffic through Laredo is very saturated," said a spokesman for Monterrey-based Grupo Poreza, the parent company of Toyota supplier Metalsa. The spokesman noted that about 30 percent of the freight moving through the Laredo gateway moves by rail and that such traffic is growing at a rate of

approximately 9 percent annually. (ffd: The Express News)

(WED) The New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority said that census data had revealed that ridership on its buses, subways and commuter trains had been growing more rapidly than the population of New York City and its suburbs. A MTA spokesman said that, from 1995 to 2005, ridership on city buses and subways grew by 36 percent, compared with a population gain for the city of 7 percent. The spokesman added that ridership on Long Island Rail Road and Metro North Railroad commuter trains grew by 14 percent, compared with a suburban population gain of 6 percent. (ffd: New York Times)

(FRI) Canadian passenger rail operator Via Rail Canada announced that it had recently begun selling a monthly commutation pass that allows purchasers to take an income tax credit. A Via Rail spokesman said that the pass was developed in response to recent changes in the Canadian tax code which makes those who use public transportation on a daily basis eligible for a tax break. The spokesman added that purchasers will be eligible for a tax credit of 15.25 percent of the value of their pass. (ffd: NARP)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending August 19, 2006, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 34.5 billion ton-miles, up 2.7 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.0 percent, down 0.7 percent in the East, but up 2.4 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included grain up 13.4 percent, metals and metal products up 10.1 percent, and coal up 5.8 percent; notable traffic decreases included coke down 20.6 percent, primary forest products down 15.3 percent, and lumber down 12.3 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 3.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 7.3 percent, Mexico's Kansas City Southern de Mexico's carload rail traffic was up 0.4 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was up 14.3 percent.

For the period January 1 through August 19, 2006, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 1.10 trillion ton-miles, up 2.7 percent. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.5 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.4 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.0 percent, KCSM's carload rail traffic was down 5.2 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was down 5.7 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(NOTE: Effective October 1, 2005, railroads that had been furnished operating performance statistics to the Association of American Railroads began applying a new standardized definitional framework, aimed at eliminating differences in calculation methodology. Concurrent with but unrelated to these changes, Canadian National elected to no longer furnish these statistics.)

(WED) For the week ending August 18, 2006 and versus the previous week, average total cars on line was as follows:

BNSF, 224,204 cars versus 224,877 cars; Canadian Pacific, 80,095 cars versus 80,167 cars; CSX, 225,139 cars versus 225,137 cars; Kansas City Southern, 26,587 cars versus 26,917 cars; Norfolk Southern, 202,712 cars versus 202,795 cars; and Union Pacific 319,347 cars versus 319,197 cars.

Also for the week ending August 18, 2006 and versus the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 22.6 mph versus 22.6 mph; Canadian Pacific Railway, 25.7 mph versus 21.0 mph; CSX, 20.0 mph versus 19.3 mph; Kansas City Southern, 24.0 mph versus 23.4 mph; Norfolk Southern, 22.0 mph versus 22.6 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.2 mph versus 21.6 mph.

Finally for the week ending August 18, 2006 and versus the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 23.1 hrs versus 24.7 hrs; Canadian Pacific Railway, 20.4 hrs versus 23.0 hrs; CSX, 24.8 hrs versus 28.9 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 20.7 hrs versus 22.7 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 20.8 hrs versus 21.5 hrs; and Union Pacific, 26.3 hrs versus 27.2 hrs. (ffd: AAR)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern filed to abandon approximately 2 miles of its Minersville Running Track in Norwegian and Cass Townships in Schuylkill County, PA. (ffd: STB)

(MON) The former Grand Traverse Dinner Train was sold to a consortium that planned to use it for excursion trips in Oklahoma. Concurrent with the sale, the train was moved from Traverse City, MI to Oklahoma. Service out of Traverse City was discontinued in 2005. (ffd: Trains)

(FRI) Canadian Pacific Railway posted the following six lines for possible abandonment: approximately 63 miles between Rathwell and Page, Manitoba; approximately 4 miles between Aldersyde and High River, Alberta; approximately 83 miles between Stoughton and Whitemore, Alberta; approximately 54 miles between Mossbank Jct. and Hodgeville, Alberta; approximately 29 miles between Luseland and Macklin, Alberta; and approximately 18 miles between Hatton and Golden Prairie, Saskatchewan. Under provisions of the Canada Transportation Act, lines slated for abandonment must first be offered for sale to short lines and then to governments before a railroad may abandon them. (ffd: Railway Age)

(FRI) CSX, Norfolk Southern and the Conrail terminal company jointly filed to abandon its tracks to and from the Pier 124 coal dock in South Philadelphia, PA. In its filing, the companies stated that no traffic had moved to or from the pier in at least the last 2 years. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) CSX, Norfolk Southern and the Conrail terminal company jointly filed to serve approximately 8 miles of the former Staten Island Railway, now owned by the City of New York. The intent of the filing is to allow the companies to serve new intermodal facilities on the line being constructed on the western end of Staten Island under the auspices of the Port of New York and New Jersey. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(MON) Union Pacific announced the following appointments: Ed Sims as VP-Commercial Strategy; Diane Duren as VP & GM-Chemicals, succeeding Mr. Sims; Paul Hammes, VP & GM-Agricultural Products; Bob Worrell as Senior AVP-Chemicals; Beth Whited as AVP & GM-UP Distribution Services; Sam Calabro as AVP-Automotive-General Motors, succeeding Ms. Whited; Thomas Gehl as Senior AVP-Marketing & Sales Operations; and Kenny Rocker as AVP-Automotive-Ford, succeeding Mr. Gehl. (ffd: UP Corp.)

(WED) Paul Lundberg resigned as GM of Boston, MA commuter rail operator Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad. Mr. Lundberg and the MBCR have come under intense criticism for mechanical failures and deteriorating service at a time when the MBCR has experienced a notable increase in commuter train ridership due to parts of the "Big Dig" tunnels under Boston and Boston Harbor having to be closed for repair. (ffd: Boston Globe, NARP)

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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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