

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

For The Week Ending SAT, September 11, 2004

By Dave Mears

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

(SUN) CSX reopened its line between Albany, NY. and Buffalo, NY., following a 37 car derailment the previous day. The accident occurred near Schuyler, NY. A CSX spokesman said that no one was injured in the derailment and that, although a car carrying hazardous materials was derailed, there was no hazmat release. (ffd: Herkimer Evening Telegram)

(TUE) New Jersey Transit opened an approximately 1 mile extension of its Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line. The extension serves 3 new stations: 2nd Street and 9th Street in Hoboken and Lincoln Harbor in Weehawken. An NJT spokesman said that a further northward extension of the line, to North Bergen, is expected to be completed and opened by Summer, 2005. (ffd: NARP, Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board reported a decreased number of rail transportation deaths in 2003 compared with 2002. The NTSB report noted 2 intercity rail passenger fatalities in 2003 versus 7 in 2002, 173 light rail transit, heavy rail transit and commuter rail fatalities in 2003 versus 220 in 2002 and 329 crossing crash fatalities in 2003 versus 357 in 2002. The downward trend contrasts with the nearly 25 percent increase in crossing crash fatalities reported the previous week by the U.S. Federal Railroad Administration for the first half of 2004 versus the first half of 2003. (ffd: NTSB, Railway Age)

(TUE) Rail IT supplier RMI announced that it had entered into an agreement with Union Pacific to provide car hire settlement and reporting services for approximately 50 shortline railroads connecting with UP. An RMI spokesman said that it expected to have all the shortlines online for these services by October of this year. (ffd: RMI Corp.)

(WED) The independent federal commission investigating the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks issued a supplementary report recommending that time and money be spent to protect U.S. passenger transport modes additional to aviation, including trains, transit and ships. "Other transportation modes are at risk and have significant vulnerabilities," said the report. Among the report's recommendations is the conversion of the existing "no-fly" list of possible terrorists to a "no-transport" list. (ffd: Los Angeles Times, wire services)

(WED) Pennsylvania's Susquehanna Area Regional Airport Authority approved a new proposal to construct and operate a station on Amtrak's Harrisburg Line adjacent at the recently expanded Harrisburg International Airport. An authority spokesman said that approximately \$8 million in funding is already in place for the station, estimated to cost approximately \$12.5 million, and that they were working with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to secure the remaining funding. The proposal reimburses Amtrak approximately \$2.8 million for necessary track, station and catenary improvements. (ffd: NARP, York Daily Record)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced the expansion of its Car-Rail Service for transporting privately owned vehicles between BNSF-served auto terminals and surrounding areas. A BNSF spokesman said that it would now also offer this service between Midwest cities and Phoenix, AZ. The spokesman added that an individual may either have their vehicle picked up at their residence or drop it off at a terminal, and that the cost for this service started at \$495. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(THU) The Association of American Railroads held its scheduled Fall Peak Season Service Forum in Kansas City, MO. At the conference, representatives of major U.S. railroads presented their plans for dealing with the peak season. Several representatives noted that the U.S. rail system is straining under increased demand, including Burlington Northern Santa Fe's Chief Marketing Officer John Lanigan, who said that BNSF had seen 3 years of "normalized growth" compressed into this past year. Several shipper representatives attending the conference, which one newspaper reported as a standing-room-only crowd, expressed skepticism of the railroads' ability to deliver service, including BP Solvay's Logistics Director Mike Scherm, who said it now took longer for his company to have its products delivered by rail than it did in 1995. (ffd: Financial Times, Dallas Morning News)

(THU) The Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, approved \$1.213 billion in funding for Amtrak for FY2005. The amount is approximately Amtrak's FY2004 appropriation, more than the \$900 million wanted by the Bush Administration, but less than the approximately \$1.7 billion Amtrak earlier said was necessary to correctly sustain its operations and maintenance. An industry newsletter suggested that a final appropriation may not be voted on by the full House and Senate until after the election or possibly early 2005. (ffd: NARP, wire services)

(THU) ABC News broadcast a report on the potential vulnerability of the U.S. rail system to terrorist attacks. The report singled out the transport of hazardous materials as a possible terrorist target and included interviews with several individuals who noted the potentially catastrophic impact of large hazmat releases at certain locations, such as on the rail line that passes through government and commercial office complexes in Southwest Washington, DC. NBC News also broadcast a similar report on Saturday. (ffd: ABC News, NBC News)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending September 4, which did not include Labor Day, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 10.8 percent from the comparable week last year, which did include Labor Day. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 27.4 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 12.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 12.2 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 8.7 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 30.4 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through September 4, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 3.6 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 10.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 8.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 0.7 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 3.0 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Twin State Railroad filed to abandon approximately 20 miles of line between St. Johnsbury, VT. and Lunenburg, VT. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Great Northwest Railroad filed to abandon approximately 28 miles of line between Orofino, ID. and Jaype, ID. (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(THU) Brock Adams passed away at Age 77. Mr. Adams was U.S. Secretary of Transportation for 2 years under President Jimmy Carter and was earlier a congressman from Washington State. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

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Weekly Rail Review 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 <<mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com>>weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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