

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPT 11, 2009

BY DAVE MEARS

(Note: Again, I apologize for the delay – work intruding, too many meetings! – but I should be caught up by next week.)

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

(SAT) Canadian Pacific celebrated the 100th anniversary of the construction of its famous spiral tunnels near Yoho, BC. Eastbound, the lower tunnel spirals leftward and the upper tunnel spirals rightward. Out of the tunnels, the trains continue upgrade to the summit of Kicking Horse Pass. CPR operated a special train from Banff, AB to Field, where celebratory activities were held. (ffd: Trains)

(TUE) The Wall Street Journal, which has in the past been critical of national passenger rail service, published a feature article on the \$8 billion in federal stimulus funding targeted for passenger rail corridor development. The newspaper noted that the development effort has “kicked off a scramble among states and railroads, train makers, construction firms and other companies angling to profit from the unprecedented stream of federal funding.” (ffd: Wall Street Journal)

(TUE) Missouri officials noted significant improvement in the performance of its state-supported passenger trains operated by Amtrak between St. Louis and Kansas City. Whereas these trains had in the past nearly always operated late, officials noted that they had been on time 97 percent of the time in June and 90 percent of the time in July. Officials credited the decline in “freight train interference,” a result of the recessionary decline in freight rail traffic, with having helped passenger train performance on the line. (ffd: Trains)

(TUE) The U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics reported that surface transportation trade between the U.S. and its NAFTA partners Canada and Mexico was down 31.5 percent in June, 2009 compared with June, 2008. The BTS noted that this was the sixth straight month with a year-to-year decline greater than 27 percent. (ffd: Railway Age, USBTS)

(WED) Chicago area commuter rail operator Metra debuted a new website allowing riders the long-sought ability to buy tickets and monthly passes with credit cards, as well as get email alerts when trains are running late. Other new features include a trip planner, schedules for all 11 Metra lines, a fare calculator, information about stations and parking, interactive maps and connections with CTA and Pace services. The upgrade is the first significant one to the website, <<http://www.metrarail.com/>>[www.metrarail.com](http://www.metrarail.com), since 1995. (ffd: Chicago Tribune)

(WED) Metro North announced that it was continuing to plan for some eventual train service from its Hudson and New Haven Lines into Manhattan's Penn Station, additional to its longstanding service into Grand Central Terminal. A MNR spokesman said that the plans, which at present have no implementation timetable, would have some Hudson Line trains to Penn Station during all time periods via Amtrak's Empire Connection along with the construction of two new stations on Manhattan's West Side; and some New Haven Line service to Penn Station during all time periods via the Hell Gate Bridge along with construction of three new stations in the Bronx. (ffd: MNR RR, Progressive Railroading)

(THU) The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority approved plans to extend commuter rail service from Boston to T.F. Green Airport in Warwick, RI, near Providence. A new \$267 million intermodal station on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Line and adjacent to the airport is currently under construction and set to open in February, 2010. (ffd: NARP)

(THU) New Orleans officials announced plans to seek federal funding to add three new streetcar lines. The lines would be a

“French Quarter loop,” a four-mile loop along North Rampart Street from Canal Street to Press Street, that would also include a 1.2-mile spur on Elysian Fields Avenue; a Convention Center Boulevard line that would connect with the existing Riverfront line behind the convention center, totaling 1.8 miles; and a 1.5-mile NOUPT line, that would use Loyola Avenue and Canal Street to serve New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal. (ffd: NARP, Times-Picayune)

(THU) The Iowa Interstate Railroad announced that it was testing biodiesel as a possible alternative to conventional diesel fuel. An IAIS spokesman said that locomotive performance was being analyzed to determine the effect of biodiesel fuel on horsepower, fuel economy and engine wear. The tests will continue into the winter to determine how biodiesel impacts locomotive performance in cold weather. (ffd: Omaha Times-Herald)

(FRI) The federal government made a \$28 million funding grant for further study of a possible high-speed, magnetic-rail project that would possibly link Philadelphia, PA and Pittsburgh, PA. The grant, which is being administered by the Federal Railroad Administration, will pay for pre-engineering work, financial estimates, an independent cost analysis, and related work. (ffd: wire services)

(FRI) The Long Island Rail Road dismissed one of its engineers, Ronald Cabrera. Mr. Cabrera's dismissal came after an investigation determined that he had allowed an LIRR passenger, William Kutsch, to operate his train for approximately 20 miles last July 2. Concurrent with the dismissal, which Mr. Cabrera's attorney has said he will appeal, Nassau County police arrested Mr. Cabrera and Mr. Kutsch for reckless endangerment, a misdemeanor, and made them do a “perp walk” for news media. (ffd: Newsday)

#### STATS:

(THU) For the week ending September 5, 2009 – which last year included the Labor Day holiday, but this year did not – U.S. rail volume grand totaled 30.5 billion ton-miles, down 5.3 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 6.7 percent – down 6.0 percent in the East and down 7.1 percent in the West – and U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 14.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 4.9 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was down 33.6 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was down 30.4 percent.

For the period January 1 through September 5, 2009, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 988.6 billion ton-miles, down 17.5 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 18.4 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 16.7 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 23.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 16.1 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was down 14.7 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was down 20.2 percent. (ffd: AAR)

(NOTE: Related to the above, and as has been the case, Canadian traffic totals include those of the U.S. operations of Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National.)

#### STATS CONTINUED – SAFETY FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2009:

(FRI) The Federal Railroad Administration reported that rail accidents and incidents generally declined, the first half of 2009 versus the first half of 2008. Total accidents and incidents declined 20.8 percent to 5,035; train accidents declined 30.3 percent to 892; trespasser fatalities declined 8.6 percent to 202; grade crossing fatalities declined 16.0 percent to 110; and on-duty employee fatalities declined 23.1 percent to 10. (ffd: FRA)

#### EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(WED) Reagent Chemical announced that it would build a new repair facility in Knox, IN. The new facility will be used to equip new tank cars with various components, and maintain and repair its existing fleet. The company uses the cars to transport hydrochloric acid between its distribution facilities and customers' plants. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) Colorado's Regional Transportation District filed to acquire approximately 33 miles of Union Pacific's Boulder Industrial Lead. The RTD will use the line for future mass transit serving Greater Denver; UP will retain freight service rights over the line. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Canadian National opened a new C\$14 million automotive terminal at its MacMillan Yard north of Toronto, ON. The new facility is able to accommodate 60 auto-carrying cars at once and has room to park up to 4,500 vehicles. (ffd: CN RR)

(FRI) Union Pacific filed to abandon approximately 16 miles of its Henderson Industrial Lead between Henderson, TX and Overton, TX. (ffd: STB)

#### APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(THU) Jay Walder was approved by the New York State Senate as the new chairman of the state's Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Mr. Walden was most recently a London-based management consultant and was earlier an executive with the MTA and Transport for London. (ffd: New York Daily News)

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

Cherry Hill, NJ