

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, September 28, 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) Albany, NY.'s Capital District Transportation Authority opened its new Amtrak passenger station in Rensselaer, NY. The new station locates directly south of the existing Amtrak station, which is Amtrak's 10th busiest. The station includes 2 high-level platforms serving 4 tracks, and its multistory station building and adjoining parking garage make it the largest building in Rensselaer. (ffd: NARP)

(MON) New Jersey Transit opened its new \$125 million, 50,000 square foot passenger concourse in New York, NY.'s Pennsylvania Station. The new concourse, which will improve access and mobility for New Jersey Transit passengers, is in the southeast area of the station and features a new waiting area, new ticket windows and 7 new escalators and 6 new stairways to and from station platforms used by NJT trains. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional administrator Tom Skinner debuted experimental improvements made to 7 locomotives operating in the Chicago, IL. area. The locomotives were modified with component parts that allow shut off instead of idle, but that still heat engine oil and coolant, charge batteries and power cab heaters while shut off. Mr. Skinner said that the experimental improvements have the potential to reduce noise pollution per unit up to 80 percent and reduce annual diesel fuel emissions per unit up to 90 percent, while also allowing significant fuel savings. (ffd: Chicago Sun Times)

(TUE) New Jersey Transportation Commissioner Jamie Fox said he had tried to halt construction of the new light rail line between Trenton, NJ. and Camden, NJ., but said that "it would cost as much money to stop the project as it would to complete the project." In testimony before the state legislature's Light Rail Panel, Mr. Fox called the line, now nearing completion, "ill-advised and ill-planned." He added that, due to low ridership expectations, it is the only light rail project in the U.S. being built without any federal funding assistance. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

(THU) The U.S. House Appropriations Committee approved a FY2003 appropriation for Amtrak totaling only \$760 million, approximately \$500 million less than the \$1.2 billion approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee and budgeted for by Amtrak. The House committee also at first included a clause denying a subsidy of more than \$200 per passenger on any Amtrak route, which Amtrak then said would result in the discontinuance of at least 5 routes, but that clause was later deleted. The committee's appropriation now faces debate by the full House and then reconciliation with the full Senate's appropriation. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Tropical Storm Isidore made landfall in southeastern Louisiana. In preparation for the storm's surge, New Orleans, LA., which sits below sea level, closed its floodgates surrounding the city, prompting serving railroads to suspend services in and out of town. Amtrak also suspended services, turning trains at stations east, north and west of the city. Later Thursday, the storm exited the region and moved on a northeasterly swing through the Midwest and Northeast before dissipating. Most railroad damage was found to be minor and railroads resumed serving New Orleans on Friday and Saturday. (ffd: Railpace)

(THU) The Railway Progress Institute and the Railway Supply Association announced that they had reached agreement "in principal" to combine the 2 trade associations into a single organization, to be known as the Railway Supply Institute. In a joint statement, the 2 associations said that a consolidated organization "will preserve the best and primary functions of each while strengthening the effectiveness of the voice of all companies involved in supplying products and services to the railroad industry." (ffd: Railway Age)

(THU) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board announced that it had compiled and published a report covering its activities between October 1, 1997 and September 30, 2001. An STB spokesman said that this is the third such report issued by the STB since its January 1, 1996 inception in replacement of the former Interstate Commerce Commission. More information on obtaining copies of the report, for which there is a charge, may be found on the STB's website. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Chicago, IL. commuter rail operator METRA said that it expects to double service on 2 of its lines by 2005. A METRA

spokesman said that construction work now underway on its North Central Line between Chicago and Antioch will allow an increase of from 10 weekday trains operating on single track to 22 weekday trains operating on double and triple track. The spokesman added that similar construction work also now underway on its Southwest Line between the Chicago Loop and Orland Park will increase service from 16 to 29 trains daily. (ffd: Chicago Sun Times)

(FRI) The U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics debuted its new TransStats feature on its website. A bureau spokesman said that the new feature allows access to more than 100 transportation-related databases and may be accessed via the bureau's website at transtats.bts.gov. (ffd: USDOT)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending September 21, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.1 percent from the comparable week last year, up 2.7 percent in the East, but down 2.3 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included nonmetallic minerals up 13.9 percent, metallic ores up 10.4 percent and motor vehicles and equipment up 10.1 percent; notable traffic decreases included primary forest products down 15.6 percent, grain down 15.0 percent and petroleum products down 10.8 percent. Also for the week ending September 21, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.6 percent, totaling 202,551 containers and trailers, a new weekly U.S. record. Also for the week ending September 21, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 11.0 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 14.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 31.6 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through September 21, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.0 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.5 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 9.7 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 1.2 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 6.8 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) SF&L Railway filed to abandon its entire line of railroad between La Harpe, IL. and Peoria, IL., totaling approximately 72 miles. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) Elk River Railroad filed to acquire, from CSX, and operate the portion of CSX's Elk River Subdivision between Gilmer, WV. and Hartland, WV., totaling approximately 62 miles. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Rail Management Corp. announced that it would lease, from St. Joe Corp., the Apalachicola & Northern Railroad. The acquisition of A&N, which runs between Port St. Joe, FL. and Chattahoochee, FL., brings to 13 the number of shortlines owned and/or operated by Rail Management. (ffd: AAR)

PERSONNEL CHANGES:

(TUE) Burlington Northern Santa Fe appointed Greg Fox VP-Engineering. Mr. Fox was most recently BNSF's VP-Technology Services and Chief Information Officer. BNSF also appointed Jeff Campbell as its new CIO. Mr. Campbell was most recently BNSF's Chief Sourcing Officer. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe appointed Dr. Thomas Pace AVP-Medical, Environmental and Health. Dr. Pace was previously divisional health and medical services director for Delphi Corporation. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(FRI) Union Pacific President Dick Davidson was appointed chairman of the newly created federal National Infrastructure Advisory Committee. The purpose of the committee, according to a White House statement, is to "make recommendations regarding the security of the cyber and information systems of the United States' national security and economic-critical infrastructures." Mr. Davidson will continue as Union Pacific president while serving on the committee. (ffd: Traffic World)

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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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