

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2010

BY DAVE MEARS

(Note: This was the week between the Christmas and New Years holidays, and included New Years Eve and New Years Day.)

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

(TUE) BNSF suffered an on-duty employee fatality. Sam Lundy, Age 44 with 17 years' railroad service, was killed when a car he was riding derailed and pinned him against a building next to the sidetrack he was switching. (ffd: Minnesota Public Radio)

(WED) The Surface Transportation Board reported the seven Class 1 railroads shed approximately 2,000 jobs between mid-October and mid-November, 2009, such that total Class 1 employment stood at 147,097 at the end of November. In their report, the STB noted that Class 1 railroad employee totaled approximately 600,000 persons in 1967. (ffd: Journal of Commerce, STB)

(THU) Officials of Chicago's Chicago Region Environmental & Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) noted completion of another project of the program, the upgrading of McCook interlocking. McCook locates approximately 13 miles west of downtown Chicago, where BNSF's Transcon Line crosses the CSX-Indiana Harbor Belt route between Blue Island and Franklin Park, IL. The upgrading allows trains to increase their speed through the interlocking from 10mph to 25mph. (ffd: Journal of Commerce, Progressive Railroading)

(THU) Despite budget pressures, the Chicago Transit Authority charged transit riders only a penny to use CTA buses and subways on New Years Eve and until 6AM on New Years Day. A CTA spokesman said that the penny fare called attention to the transit system as a "convenient, safe and affordable travel alternative for those out celebrating the New Year." (ffd: Chicago Tribune, wire services)

(FRI) The Alaska Railroad noted the 25th anniversary of state ownership. The railroad had been owned by the U.S. government since its 1923 start, but in 1983 President Ronald Reagan signed federal legislation that authorized the transfer of the railroad to the State of Alaska. In 1983, the railroad's total assets were valued at \$37.2 million, but by 2009 they were valued at \$854.1 million. (ffd: Anchorage Daily News)

STATS:

(WED) For the week ending December 26, 2009, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 22.1 billion ton-miles, down 0.9 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.1 percent from the comparable week last year, up 1.3 percent in the East, but down 2.3 percent in the West. 17 of 19 carloads commodity groups saw increases, including motor vehicles and equipment up 52.1 percent, lumber and wood products up 44.8 percent, and grain up 31.1 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 14.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 33.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 49.0 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 37.7 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 53.3 percent.

For the period January 1 through December 26, 2009, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 1.47 trillion ton-miles, down 15.4 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 16.3 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 14.3 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 18.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 14.2 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was down 9.5 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was down 12.9 percent. (ffd: AAR)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Texas's Regional Rail Right of Way Company filed to abandon, and the Dallas, Garland & Northeastern and Union Pacific jointly filed to discontinue trackage rights over, approximately 6 miles of line between Renner Junction, TX and Collin, TX. (ffd: STB)

(MON) Northern Plains Railroad filed to discontinue service over approximately 61 miles of the former Soo Line, leased from Canadian Pacific, between Bisbee, ND and Kramer, ND. Northern Plains also filed to discontinue service over approximately 27 miles of the former Soo Line, leased from Canadian Pacific, between Devils Lake, ND and Harlow, ND. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Burlington Junction Railway filed to lease, from BNSF, and operate approximately 4 miles of line, currently operated by the Missouri & Valley Park Railroad, in St. Louis, MO. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(MON) Eliot Keller passed away at Age 62, from complications from Lou Gehrig's Disease, in Iowa City, IA. Mr. Keller was a noted rail advocate for the State of Iowa and a reader of Weekly Rail Review. (ffd: Trains)

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