

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 2011

BY DAVE MEARS

(NOTE 1: I am once again restarting my Weekly Rail Review, which I had to suspend without notice in mid-2010 due to other work and personal priorities. I will endeavor to resume it for as long as I can.)

(NOTE 2: In case it is helpful to anyone who may not have received the last edition sent due to it possibly having been caught in or deleted by a spam filter, please know that it was sent yesterday, January 25, for the week ending January 7. This edition is for the week ending January 14. The edition for the week ending January 21 will be sent shortly.)

(NOTE 3: Further Notes 1 and 2 above, thanks to all of you who have sent me renewed greetings and I'll look forward to replying back to you shortly!)

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

(MON) The Federal Railroad Administration released model legislative proposals for use in developing state legislation to improve safety at grade crossings without active warning systems. The proposals are especially intended to help states address obstructions that restrict a driver's view of an oncoming train. The FRA said that 29 states currently do not have laws or regulations covering such obstructions. (ffd: FRA)

(MON) Canadian National debuted what it said was the first environmentally-friendly container chassis in North America. A CN spokesman said that the new chassis, known as EcoRide, was designed with features that may allow fuel use reductions of between eight and ten percent. (ffd: CN RR)

(TUE) America 2050, a national transportation initiative group, released a report identifying the regional corridors that could attract the most ridership as a result of improved passenger rail services. In order of greatest potential demand, the corridors are New York-Washington; Chicago-Milwaukee; Los Angeles-San Diego; Tampa-Miami via Orlando; Atlanta-Birmingham; Portland-Seattle; and Denver, CO-Pueblo, NM. (ffd: NARP)

(TUE) A winter snowstorm worked its way up the U.S. East Coast, intensifying as it moved northward. The snow caused BNSF, CSX and Norfolk Southern to warn customers in the southeastern and northeastern states that their shipments could be delayed from 24 to 48 hours. When the storm reached New York and New England on Wednesday, Metro North and the Long Island Rail Road curtailed some train services and Amtrak canceled trains on its Northeast Corridor Line between New York and Boston, and between New Haven and Springfield. Amtrak restored service on these lines on Thursday. (ffd: Trains, wire services)

(TUE) The Surface Transportation Board announced that it would hold a public hearing in Washington, DC on May 3 on the current state of rail competition. The STB said that the hearing would serve as a public forum to discuss rail access and competition, and identify any measures it should consider to modify its competitive access rules and policies. (ffd: Railway Age, STB)

(WED) Texas's Sunset Advisory Commission, which advises the state of possible bureaucratic redundancies, has recommended to the state legislature that the Texas Railroad Commission's name be changed to the Texas Oil & Gas Commission. The advisory commission said that this change will recognize that the Railroad Commission no longer has anything to do with railroads but instead regulates the oil and gas industries in Texas. (ffd: San Antonio Express-News)

(THU) In an interview, new House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chair John Mica (R-FL) said that he hopes to advance several initiatives that would help shift more truck traffic to rail. "My goal would be to get more trucks off of the highway, and more cars off of the highway," said Mr. Mica. He also said that he hoped to use the federal Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan program to fund more rail projects with its \$34 billion in still-unused loan authority, and that he would also like to privatize Amtrak's AutoTrain so that this service that hauls passengers with their automobiles could be greatly expanded and perhaps broadened to include commercial trucks. (ffd: Journal of Commerce)

(THU) Canadian Pacific announced that it would undertake capital projects this year totaling up to C\$1.05 billion. Among these projects will be C\$680 million for basic track infrastructure renewal and \$80 million to improve its information systems. (ffd: CP RR)

(THU) The Pittsburgh Port Authority approved a 15 percent cut in Pittsburgh area transit service to address a projected operating deficit. The 15 percent cut was a substitute for an earlier planned 35 percent cut that was helped by \$45 million in emergency funding arranged by outgoing Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell. A PAT spokesman said that the cut will result in the elimination of 29 transit routes and the lessening of weekday service on 47 others. (ffd: RT&S)

(FRI) The Canadian Auto Workers union has approved strike actions against the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific. The CAW set a strike date of January 25 for CN and February 8 for CPR, if a new contract with each railroad cannot be agreed upon. The strikes would impact only these railroads' Canadian operations, although there would likely be some ripple effect on their U.S. operations. A CPR spokesman said they had 1,200 management employees standing by to protect service should their railroad be struck. (ffd: Wall Street Journal)

(FRI) Amtrak, Union Pacific, and the Illinois Department of Transportation announced agreement on the framework for operating passenger trains up to 110mph on the line between Chicago and St. Louis. When completed as a result of \$1.1 billion in mainly federally funded improvements, the fastest passenger train trip between the two cities will be 4 hours, 10 minutes – about a 30 percent reduction in the current fastest train time and faster than an automobile traveling non-stop at the legal speed limit. The agreement contain fewer potential penalties for UP than draft guidelines for such agreements issued by the Federal Railroad Administration eight months ago, guidelines that were eventually rescinded by the FRA. (ffd: State Journal-Register, NARP)

(FRI) Miami, FL commuter rail operator Tri-Rail said that it would begin installing a new automated fare system called the Easy Card. The system will allow passengers to load value onto ATM-type cards. Miami transit operator Miami-Dade Transit began using the Easy Card in 2009. (ffd: Sun-Sentinel)

(FRI) Washington, DC's Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority announced that it would accelerate capital improvement projects on its Metrorail subway system. A WMATA spokesman said that scheduled track projects would now be completed by round-the-clock work, with some service shutdowns during weekends. WMATA is spending \$5 billion over the next six years on subway system safety and repair needs. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach announced that their 2010 volume increased 16 percent over 2009, totaling 7.8 million 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs). Exports through the ports rose 10.3 percent to 1.84 million TEUs, surpassing the ports' previous export record of 1.78 million TEUs set in 2008. Imports increased 12.8 percent to just slightly less than 4 million TEUs. The ports are the U.S.'s busiest intermodal port gateway. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the first week of 2011 and comparing with the first week of 2010, U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 285,108 units, up 20.1 percent. Notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 55.7 percent and crushed stone, sand and gravel up 54.3 percent; notable traffic decreases include waste and nonferrous scrap down 9.5 percent and nonmetallic minerals down 8.9 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 8.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 5.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.4 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was down 1.1 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 2.9

percent.

(NOTE: Canadian counts include traffic from the U.S. operations of the two Canadian-based Class I railroads, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway.)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(WED) BNSF filed to abandon approximately 18 miles of line between Bisbee, ND and Rolla, ND. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The State of Maine took ownership of 233 miles of lines that had been posted for abandonment by the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway last year. Maine paid \$19.1 million for the lines, which was gained from several public funding sources. The state is now considering new operators for the lines. (ffd: Journal-Tribune, Trains)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(MON) Kansas City Southern appointed Michael Schuler as general director of sales operations. Mr. Schuler heads a new group formed to support KCS sales teams in the U.S. and Mexico. (ffd: KCS Railway)

Austin, TX's Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority appointed Melvin Clark its vice-president of rail operations. Mr. Clark was most recently with the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears