

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, JANUARY 15, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

(Editor's Note: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item represents "for further details" and suggests a reference source for further related information.)

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

(MON) Union Pacific suffered an on-duty employee fatality. Floyd Evans, a train conductor 52 years of age, was killed at a siding near Camden, AR., on UP's line between Pine Bluff, AR. and Longview, TX. "From what I've gathered, it was a foggy morning and he was tying his train down," said UTU Local Chairperson Frank Evans. "Another engine was coming, likely to assist him over the hill or something, and somehow he ended up in the path of the light power coming around a curve." (ffd: UTU)

(MON) A Texas county judge took on the unlikely roll of rail advocate. Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff said that he would campaign for a "national railroad solution comparable to President Eisenhower's interstate highway system." The judge presides in a county in Southwest Texas primarily served by Union Pacific that has seen several recent train accidents as well as increased train congestion. In a statement, the judge went on to recommend forming a national commission to explore federal, state, local and private partnerships to help provide \$100 billion in rail infrastructure improvements he said were necessary over the next 10 years. "The other option is putting more trucks on the highways and you know what that's like," added Mr. Wolff. (ffd: San Antonio Express-News)

(TUE) 5 days of torrential rains ended in Southern California and Southern Nevada. The deluge caused numerous floods and mudslides affecting rail operations in these regions, especially those of the Union Pacific. With 5 of its routes into and out of these areas knocked out-of-service due to washouts, mud- and rock-covered tracks and signal damage, UP embargoed its freight traffic moving to and from the Los Angeles Basin and from Santa Barbara, CA. to Moapa, NV., north of Las Vegas, NV. Also affected by service disruptions were Los Angeles area commuter rail operator Metrolink and Amtrak. On Thursday, Amtrak announced that its Coast Starlight train would not operate south of Oakland, CA. until at least February 1 and that its Pacific Surfliner trains would not operate north of Los Angeles until at least February 1. However, Amtrak was able to resume Pacific Surfliner train service south of Los Angeles on Saturday. Also on Saturday, UP modified its Tuesday embargo to eliminate restrictions on freight traffic originating in the Los Angeles and Las Vegas areas to "allow outbound movement to create space for the eventual increase in the volume of inbound shipments." Comparatively, Burlington Northern Santa Fe suffered only minor damage to its tracks and facilities in the affected areas and was able in most cases to continue normal operation. (ffd: NARP, Trains, UP Corp.)

(TUE) The Federal Railroad Administration issued a safety advisory relating to the previous week's train collision in Graniteville, SC. The advisory called for railroads "to document when a manually operated switch in non-signaled territory is changed from the main track to a siding and returned back to the normal position for main track movements" and "for these actions to be communicated to all crewmembers and the train dispatcher." The advisory follows mounting evidence that the crew of the NS train that took the siding in Graniteville inadvertently lined and locked the switch into the siding, with the other NS train then entering that siding and colliding with the first train. The accident killed 9 persons, including 8 bystanders in the surrounding community who were asphyxiated by one of the

derailed cars that leaked chlorine gas. At midweek and as evacuated residents were beginning to return to their homes, NS came under public criticism when interim expense checks issued by NS claims agents were found to have small print stating that endorsing the check constituted "a full, final and complete release of all claims growing out of" the accident. An NS spokesman said that the small print referred only to the recipients' current expenses and did not stop them from seeking future assistance or suing. (ffd: Charlotte Observer, Railway Age)

(WED) General Motors announced that it would sell its Electro-Motive Division for approximately \$500 million. A GM spokesman said that EMD was being sold to an investor group led by Rye, NY.-based Greenbriar Equity Group LLC and Berkshire Partners LLC of Boston. EMD has approximately 2,600 employees and has its principal manufacturing plants in LaGrange, IL. and London, ON. GM has owned EMD since the 1930s, which in recent years has manufactured approximately 500 to 600 locomotives annually for domestic and international use. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, Railway Age)

(THU) The New York City Transit Authority announced that it would begin operation in June of subway trains on its "L" line with one motorman and no conductor. The "L" line, which operates between Manhattan and the Canarsie section of Brooklyn, has been the subject of a major reengineering project over the last few years to improve its trains and infrastructure, including to allow one-man operation. A NYCTA spokesman said the subway system already had one-man operation on 6 of its lines, but that this would be the first line with that operation on trains of 8 or more cars. (ffd: New York Daily News)

(THU) Amtrak announced that it would operate its California Zephyr train only between Chicago, IL. and Denver, CO. through at least January 20. The train normally operates through to Salt Lake City, UT. and Oakland, CA. An Amtrak spokesman said that the train's operation was being limited due to severe winter weather prevalent on the train's route through the Sierra Nevada mountains, which has seen record snowfalls of up to 14 feet in recent weeks and has frequently delayed the train. Also and on Tuesday last week, the California Zephyr was derailed after it struck a large boulder just west of Grand Junction, CO., causing 3 of its locomotives and 5 of its cars to derail and causing minor injuries to 4 of its crew and 2 of its passengers. (ffd: Amtrak, NARP, wire services)

(THU) FreightCar America announced that it would lease a portion of Norfolk Southern's East End Car Shops in Roanoke, VA. to manufacture freight cars. A spokesman for the company, which was formerly operated as Johnstown America, said that it would spend \$5.5 million to improve the facility and hire 400 workers over the next 30 months. FreightCar America is headquartered in Chicago, IL. and has other manufacturing plants in Danville, IL. and Johnstown, PA. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) China announced that it would spend more than \$12.3 billion on railway improvements this year, almost double last year's amount. A spokesman for China's Ministry of Railways said that it would launch 58 new projects and continue 48 existing ones in 2005. The spokesman added that China's railways were only meeting one-third of potential demand, and that a lack of capacity has strained the country's overall ability to deliver coal and other vital commodities. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Canadian National announced that it had reached tentative agreement with the United Steelworkers of America, who represent approximately 2,250 employees who maintain CN's track and structures. A CN spokesman said that the agreement is retroactive from January 1, 2004 and runs through December 31, 2007. The spokesman added that CN is optimistic that it will soon conclude similar agreements with 3 others unions whose contracts have or are near to expiring. (ffd: Railway Track & Structures, wire services)

(FRI) Enola Yard across the river from Harrisburg, PA. marked its 100th anniversary of operation. The yard was opened January 14, 2005 by the Pennsylvania Railroad and has since been operated by the PRR, Penn Central, Conrail and Norfolk Southern, providing local and through freight car classification for these railroads. To celebrate the event, the East Pennsboro Historical Society announced plans to hold a banquet at a local country club – an atmosphere surely worlds' away from the likes of Enola Yard! (ffd: Harrisburg Patriot-News)

STATS:

(THU) For the first week of 2005, the week ending January 8, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.2 percent from first week of 2004, up 4.8 percent in the East, but down 1.4 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included lumber and wood products up 19.3 percent, metallic ores up 7.0 percent and coal up 4.7 percent; notable traffic decreases included waste and scrap materials down 16.1 percent, grain mill products down 13.6 percent and grain down 7.7 percent. Also for the week ending January 8, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.4 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was unchanged, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 7.7 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 4.3 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 9.7 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS:

(THU) The U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics released freight transportation data relating to weight and value. BTS reported that, in the U.S. in 2002, trucks carried 7.8 billion tons of freight worth \$6.2 trillion in value. Also that year, rails carried 1.9 billion tons of freight worth \$310 billion in value. For the 10-year period 1993 through 2002, all modes altogether experienced a 20 percent increase in weight, to 12 billion tons in 2002, and a 44 percent increase in value, to \$8.4 trillion in 2002. The data was part of the Commodity Flow Survey, which the BTS conducted in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau as part of the 5-year U.S. Economic Census. (ffd: USDOT)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Railroad Development Corporation of Pittsburgh, PA. announced that it had commenced its operation of Mozambique's Nacal Port and Railway. An RDC spokesman said that its new company operating the railway, the Corredor de Desenvolvimento do Norte, will immediately begin the rehabilitation of the railway and its adjoining port facilities, operating the system for a 15-year concession. (ffd: RDC)

(MON) New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson announced the acquisition, by the city of Santa Fe, NM., of the 18-mile rail line between Santa Fe, NM. and Lamy, NM. The governor said that the line had been acquired from the Santa Fe Southern Railway, which will continue to operate freight service over the line, with \$5.4 million in federal funds and \$4.6 million in state funds. The governor added that the acquisition is for future commuter rail service between Albuquerque, NM. and Santa Fe, NM. The governor reminded that commuter rail service between Belen, NM. and Albuquerque, NM. is nearing readiness and is expected to start service later this year. (ffd: Albuquerque Journal, Trains)

(MON) Pan Western Corporation announced that it would lease, to the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad, approximately 3 miles of line in and near North Las Vegas, NV., for the TTRC's operation. (ffd: Pan Western Corp.)

(TUE) Sierra Pacific Industries filed to abandon approximately 12 miles of line between Lone, CA. and Martell, CA. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced that approximately 49 miles of its line in and around Yakima, WA. would be leased to and operated by Central Washington Railroad. A BNSF spokesman said that this included the lines between Yakima and Gibbon, WA. and between Yakima and Moxie City, WA. (ffd: AAR, BNSF Corp.)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(MON) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced the following appointments in its Operating Department: Steve Goodall to Regional VP-North Operations; Mark Kotter to Regional VP-Central Operations; and Chris Roberts to Regional VP-South Operations. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(THU) Supplier Union Switch & Signal appointed John McGee COO. Mr. McGee was most recently SVP-Technology & Knowledge Services at EMCOR Facilities Services. (ffd: US&S Inc.)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, the entities of rail and transit. Send an e-mail to <<mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com>>weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,

Dave Mears

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